



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

### *Future of FEMA: Perspectives from the Emergency Management Community*

March 4, 2025

I want to thank our witnesses for engaging in a vital discussion regarding the future of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Our Nation's emergency managers and first responders are our first line of defense during emergencies and are an integral part of our communities.

Yet, President Trump continues to dismiss the emergency management community and has referred to FEMA as a "disaster," and even suggested he would get "rid of" the Agency.

Trump has demonstrated his blatant disregard for FEMA by directly causing a workforce crisis within the agency. At his direction, 200 FEMA employees were fired and more than 800 are resigning—resulting in a total loss of nearly 1,000 workers, including seasoned emergency managers. Apparently, firing seasoned emergency managers and forcing their resignation is Donald Trump's strategy for handling disasters

In addition to the mass exodus of experienced FEMA staff, Trump has handed Elon Musk – of all people – a "special government employee" appointment, giving him and his minions free rein to access sensitive FEMA data. This is data that, in the wrong hands, could wreak havoc on our Nation's security.

Despite Donald Trump and Elon Musk dismissing the importance of the agency and its mission, FEMA has repeatedly delivered critical aid to the American public, even amid staffing shortages and retention challenges.

We have all witnessed the devastating impact of catastrophic storms. In my own district, FEMA's assistance was indispensable during the March 2023 tornadoes that ravaged my community. Even now, we continue to rely on their support during our recovery.

Republicans have called this hearing to examine FEMA's future. I am worried for FEMA's future, especially with Cameron Hamilton, the Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA Administrator leading the agency.

Mr. Hamilton has little-to-no experience with being in charge of responding to large-scale disasters. In fact, he is firing employees with **more experience than him**. What is worse is that Mr. Hamilton reportedly promoted misinformation about FEMA after Hurricanes Helene and Milton on social media. This should be unacceptable to every member of Congress and the American public.

I am also gravely concerned about the future of homeland security grants to our communities. As someone deeply invested in emergency response, I have consistently advocated for these programs, which provide funding to State, local, tribal, and territorial governments to support everything from training first responders to investing in infrastructure that strengthens our Nation's resilience against natural disasters and terrorism.

Even after the White House allegedly rescinded the order to freeze grants, there are still reports of State and local governments and nonprofit organizations not being rightfully awarded grant funding—some of which is needed for disaster recovery.

Over the weekend, it was reported that the Trump administration is withholding “at least 140” grants across the country that is needed for wildfire prevention, flood mitigation, disaster preparedness, and programs that support “essential health, safety, and welfare.” Withholding this funding undermines our ability to prepare for and respond to emergencies and puts communities at risk.

Simply put, the Trump administration firing experienced FEMA workers and withholding critical homeland security funding puts the future of FEMA in doubt and makes America less safe.

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