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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Preliminary Observations on FEMA's Community Preparedness Programs Related to the National Preparedness System

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Homeland Security and Justice Issues





Highlights of [GAO-10-105T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

By preparing their families and property before an event, individuals can reduce a disaster's impact on them and their need for first responder assistance, particularly in the first 72 hours following a disaster. By law, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), located in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is to develop a national preparedness system (NPS)—FEMA includes community preparedness programs as part of the NPS. FEMA's budget to operate these programs made up less than one half of 1 percent of its \$7.9 billion budget for fiscal year 2009. These programs include the Citizen Corps program and its partner programs, such as Fire Corps, and rely on volunteers to coordinate efforts and assist first responders in local communities. DHS's Ready Campaign promotes preparedness through mass media. This testimony provides preliminary observations on (1) challenges FEMA faces in measuring the performance of Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign and (2) actions FEMA has taken to develop a strategy to encompass how Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign operate within the context of the NPS. This testimony is based on work conducted from February 2008 to October 2009. GAO analyzed documents, such as FEMA's strategic plan, and compared reported performance data with observations from 12 site visits, selected primarily based on the frequency of natural disasters. The results are not projectable, but provide local insights.

View [GAO-10-105T](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact William O. Jenkins, Jr., at (202) 512-8777 or jenkinswo@gao.gov.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Preliminary Observations on FEMA's Community Preparedness Programs Related to the National Preparedness System

What GAO Found

FEMA faces challenges measuring performance for Citizen Corps, partner programs, and the Ready Campaign because it does not have a process to verify that data for its principal performance measure—the registered number of established volunteer organizations across the country—are accurate and the Ready Campaign is not positioned to control the distribution of its message or measure whether its message is changing individuals' behavior. FEMA faces challenges ensuring that the information needed to measure the number of established, active volunteer units is accurate. For example, officials representing 17 councils GAO contacted during its site visits stated that 12 were active and 5 were not. FEMA officials said that the new online registration process FEMA plans to adopt in 2010 will result in some programs being removed from FEMA's registries. They said that FEMA expects to use the new process to collect more comprehensive data on membership and council activities. FEMA counts requests for literature, Web site hits, and the number of television or radio announcements made to gauge performance for the Ready Campaign, but FEMA does not control when its message is viewed because it relies on donated media, such as air time for television and radio announcements. Because changes in behavior can result from a variety of factors, including other campaigns, it is difficult to measure the campaign's effect on changes in individuals' behavior.

FEMA's challenges measuring the performance of community preparedness programs is compounded by the fact that it has not developed a strategy to encompass how Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign are to operate within the context of the NPS. In April 2009, GAO reported that FEMA's National Preparedness Directorate (NPD), which is responsible for community preparedness, had not developed a strategic plan. GAO reported that instead of a strategic plan, NPD officials stated that they used a draft annual operating plan and Post-Katrina Act provisions to guide NPD's efforts. However, the plan's objectives do not include key elements of a strategy, such as how NPD will measure its progress meeting goals and objectives or the potential costs and types of resources and investments needed. GAO recommended that NPD develop a strategic plan to implement the NPS that contains these key elements. FEMA concurred with GAO's recommendation and told GAO that it is taking actions to strengthen strategic planning. FEMA officials stated that they are reviewing implementation plans and policy documents, such as the *National Preparedness Guidelines*, and that community preparedness is a key element being considered in this process. FEMA has not set a date for completion of the National Preparedness System strategy, and the extent to which Citizen Corps, its partner programs, or the Ready Campaign will be included in the final strategy is not clear. GAO will continue to assess FEMA's efforts related to community preparedness programs as part of its ongoing work. FEMA provided technical comments on a draft of this testimony, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing to discuss federal efforts to encourage community involvement in preparing for all-hazard emergencies.¹ The public plays an important role in national emergency preparedness. By preparing their families and property before an event, individuals can often reduce a disaster's impact on them and their need for first responder assistance, particularly in the first 72 hours following a disaster. For example, having at least a 72 hour supply of food and drinking water on hand can both sustain the individual and family in a disaster's aftermath and reduce the immediate demands for food and water delivered by first responders whose priority may be search and rescue. They can also potentially support first responders as trained volunteers, since the average person will likely be the first on the scene of a disaster. However, research shows that Americans could be better prepared for disasters, particularly based on two key indicators—the degree to which people report having disaster supplies set aside and have a household emergency plan. A 2009 Citizen Corps National Survey estimated that over half (56 percent) of U.S. households did not have disaster supplies in their homes, and even fewer had supplies set aside in their car or workplaces.² Even those who responded that they are personally prepared may have only taken some of the actions recommended, such as having water set aside but not having extra batteries for their flashlights. Fewer than half (44 percent) of the 2009 survey respondents reported having a household disaster plan, a level consistent with the results of past surveys.³ Although it is unrealistic to expect first responders to assist everyone in a disaster, 30 percent of those surveyed said that the primary reason they were unprepared was because they believed emergency personnel would help them in the event of a disaster. Also, 61 percent expected to rely on emergency responders in the

¹Individuals, the public, and community are used interchangeably in this testimony when discussing preparedness for nongovernment community members. The terms encompass both citizens and noncitizens. Community nonprofit and private businesses are part of community preparedness, but were not within the scope of our work.

²Department of Homeland Security, *Personal Preparedness in America: Findings From the 2009 Citizen Corps National Survey* (Washington, D.C.: August 2009).

³Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Citizen Preparedness Review: A Review of Citizen Preparedness Research, Fall Update* (Washington D.C.: 2007). For example, National Center for Disaster Preparedness national surveys estimated the percentage of the population with an emergency plan was 43 percent in 2005, 45 percent in 2006, and 43 percent in 2007.

first 72 hours following a disaster. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator and leaders in the emergency management community are encouraging citizens to take actions to become more involved in preparing themselves and their communities, not only to mitigate the effects of a disaster, but to decrease their reliance on the federal government for goods and services during a catastrophic event and allow governments at all levels to target resources where they are most needed.

FEMA encourages public preparedness through the Community Preparedness Division's Citizen Corps program, which is designed to bring together government and community leaders to involve citizens in all-hazards emergency preparedness and resilience, and the Ready Campaign, which makes literature and mass media content available to spread the preparedness message to individuals, families, and businesses.⁴ Citizen Corps is designed to promote the collaboration between local government and community leaders via local Citizen Corps councils. Individual councils are to promote preparedness activities and to encourage volunteering with federally sponsored programs that support first responders, referred to as Citizen Corps partner programs. Citizen Corps promotes five partner programs, two of which are supported by FEMA—the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Fire Corps.⁵ The operating budgets for community preparedness programs currently represent less than one-half of 1 percent of FEMA's total budget. In fiscal year 2009, FEMA's overall budget was about \$7.9 billion, of which about \$5.8 million was dedicated to operating community preparedness programs and \$2.1 million was for the Ready Campaign.

FEMA's national program office officials encourage state, local, regional and tribal governments and private and nonprofit community-based organizations to establish and sustain local Citizen Corps councils and partner programs, partly through federal funding for local efforts. Local

⁴According to FEMA officials, FEMA also encourages public preparedness through speaking engagements, the media, and social networking tools that were beyond the scope of our review. Regarding the Ready Campaign we focused on its efforts for individual and family preparedness. The Ready Campaign's Business and Kid Campaign were not within the scope of our review.

⁵The Department of Health and Human Service's Office of the Surgeon General within the Office of Public Health and Science administers a third partner program, the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). Also, the Department of Justice sponsors two other partner programs—Volunteers in Police Service and Neighborhood Watch.

Citizen Corps councils, CERTs, and Fire Corps all are considered “grass roots” organizations that use volunteers to operate programs in their respective communities. Citizen Corps councils and CERT programs are registered via the Internet and are potentially eligible to apply for federal grant funding through the state to support their program.⁶ According to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) data, approximately \$269 million in FEMA homeland security grants (including grants for Citizen Corps councils, CERT, and Fire Corps) were awarded for community preparedness projects from fiscal years 2004 through 2008. In fiscal year 2008, funding for community preparedness grants represented about 1.9 percent of the total FEMA grant funding. Specifically, in fiscal year 2008, approximately \$56 million went to community preparedness projects, out of more than \$3 billion awarded in DHS grants to strengthen prevention, protection, response, and recovery capabilities at all levels of government. Appendix I provides additional information on DHS grants awarded for community preparedness purposes from fiscal year 2004 through fiscal year 2008.

In April 2009 we issued a report that discussed, among other things, the national preparedness system—a continuous cycle of (1) establishing policy and doctrine, (2) planning and allocating resources, (3) conducting training and exercises to gather lessons learned, and (4) assessing and reporting on the training and exercises to evaluate preparedness, including identifying any gaps in capabilities.⁷ Assessments and reports resulting from the national preparedness system are to be used to inform decision makers on what improvements are needed and how to target finite resources to improve preparedness for disasters.⁸ Our report recognized that developing and integrating the elements of the national preparedness

⁶Under FEMA’s Homeland Security Grant Program, states, territories, urban areas and transportation authorities are eligible for FEMA grants to bolster national preparedness capabilities and protect critical infrastructure. These grants can be used to establish and sustain Citizen Corps councils; purchase equipment for CERTs, Fire Corps, or MRC; and support planning or training efforts. Local community preparedness organizations can also receive funding from state, local, or tribal governments or private and nonprofit community-based preparedness organizations.

⁷GAO, *National Preparedness: FEMA Has Made Progress, but Needs to Complete and Integrate Planning, Exercise, and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-09-369](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2009).

⁸A key part of the system involves the development of quantifiable standards and metrics—called target capabilities, defined as the level of capability needed to prevent, respond to, and recover from natural and man-made disasters—that can be used to assess existing capability levels compared with target capability levels.

system is a challenge for FEMA, and more specifically the National Preparedness Directorate (NPD), the FEMA component responsible for carrying out the key elements of the national preparedness system, in coordination with other federal, state, local, tribal, nonprofit, and private sector organizations. We reported that the size and complexity of the nation's preparedness activities and the number of organizations involved—both public and private—pose a significant challenge to FEMA as it leads the nation's efforts to develop and sustain a national preparedness system. We further stated that, to develop an effective system, FEMA is to coordinate and partner with a broad range of stakeholders. As part of the nation's preparedness system, the status of citizen and community preparedness can affect the demands on first responders in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

As requested, today I will discuss our preliminary observations on (1) what challenges, if any, FEMA faces in measuring the performance of Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign and (2) what actions, if any, FEMA has taken to develop a strategy to encompass how Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign are to operate within the context of the national preparedness system. My comments are based on our ongoing review of Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign requested by the Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, the Chairwoman of its Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, and the Chairman of this Subcommittee. The final results of this review will be issued in a report later this year.

To address our objectives, we reviewed documentation, such as FEMA's strategic plan for 2008-2013, and interviewed officials at DHS's headquarters in Washington, D.C., and at 12 selected locations in five states—California, Florida, Nevada, Oklahoma, and Texas. We selected these states based on the frequency of declared natural disasters. In total, we conducted 41 interviews covering 53 organizations in the five states.⁹ The results from our interviews are not generalizable; however, they provide insights into the operations of local Citizen Corps and partner programs as well as their efforts to use Ready Campaign material to promote individual preparedness. We also analyzed FEMA's strategic plan

⁹This included 17 Citizen Corps councils, 12 CERT, 5 Fire Corps programs, and officials representing 19 other preparedness and emergency management organizations, such as local emergency managers and state officials in four of the five states we visited.

and NPD's 2009 Operating Plan and compared these documents with criteria in our past work that discusses the six characteristics of an effective national strategy.¹⁰ In addition we reviewed and analyzed data on the number of registered Citizen Corps and its partner programs to determine how FEMA measures the performance of its programs and compared FEMA's data with the results of our work in the five states with criteria discussing best practices for performance measurement.¹¹ Furthermore, we obtained and analyzed data on homeland security grants awarded from fiscal years 2004 through 2008. To determine the reliability of DHS grant data and data on the activities of FEMA Citizen Corps and partner programs, we interviewed DHS officials about their procedures for ensuring the accuracy of performance data and compared DHS's processes for compiling data on local community preparedness units with our past work on agency performance measurement. With regard to the Ready Campaign's tracking survey and data on donated media, we reviewed documents and interviewed Ready Campaign officials and Ad Council officials to discuss their process for ensuring data accuracy. We determined that these data were reliable for the purposes of this review.

We are conducting this performance audit from February 2008 through October 2009 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for

¹⁰GAO-09-369 and GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, GAO-04-408T (Washington, D.C.: February 3, 2004).

¹¹GAO-09-369; GAO-04-408T; GAO, *Results-Oriented Management: Strengthening Key Practices at FEMA and Interior Could Promote Greater Use of Performance Information* GAO-09-676; (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 17, 2009); *Influenza Pandemic: Gaps in Pandemic Planning and Preparedness Need to Be Addressed*, GAO-09-909T (Washington, D.C.: July 29, 2009); *Information Sharing Environment: Definition of the Results to Be Achieved in Improving Terrorism-Related Information Sharing Is Needed to Guide Implementation and Assess Progress* GAO-08-492 (Washington, D.C.: June 25, 2008); *Combating Terrorism: Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, GAO-04-408T (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2004); *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Further Refine Its Tax Filing Season Performance Measures*, GAO-03-143 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 22, 2002); *Agency Performance Plans: Examples of Practices That Can Improve Usefulness to Decisionmakers* GAO/GGD/AIMD-99-69 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 26, 1999); *Performance Plans: Selected Approaches for Verification and Validation of Agency Performance Information*, GAO/GGD-99-139 (Washington, D.C.: July 30, 1999); *Agencies' Annual Performance Plans Under the Reform Act: An Assessment Guide to Facilitate Congressional Decisionmaking*, GAO/GGD/AIMD-10.1.18 (Washington, D.C.: February 1998); and *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, GAO/GGD-96-118 (Washington, D.C.: June 1, 1996).

our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

In summary, FEMA faces challenges measuring performance for Citizen Corps, partner programs, and the Ready Campaign because (1) it relies on states to verify that data for its principal performance measure—the registered number of established volunteer organizations across the country—are accurate and does not have a process for monitoring state validation efforts and (2) although the Ready Campaign controls the content of its message, it is not positioned to control the distribution of its message or measure whether its message is changing the behavior of individuals. FEMA officials said that FEMA expects to use a new, 2010 registration process to collect more comprehensive data on membership and council activities. Among other things, FEMA counts requests for literature, Web site hits, and the number of television announcements made to gauge performance for the Ready Campaign, but FEMA does not control when its message is viewed in various media because it relies on donated media, such as time to air television and radio announcements. Because changes in individuals' behavior can be the result of a variety of factors, including preparedness campaigns sponsored by other organizations, it is difficult to measure the Ready Campaign's effect on changes in individuals' preparedness behavior. FEMA's challenges in measuring the performance of citizen preparedness programs are compounded by the fact that it has not developed a strategy to encompass how Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign are to operate within the context of the national preparedness system. In April 2009, we recommended that NPD develop a strategic plan to implement the national preparedness system that contains such key elements as goals, objectives, and how progress in achieving them will be measured. FEMA agreed and reported that it is taking actions to strengthen strategic planning. FEMA stated that it is reviewing implementation plans and policy documents, such as the *National Preparedness Guidelines*, and that community preparedness is a key element being considered in this process. FEMA has not yet set a date for completion of the national preparedness system strategy, and the extent to which Citizen Corps, its partner programs, or the Ready Campaign will be included when the strategy is complete is not clear. We will continue to assess FEMA's efforts to measure the performance of the community preparedness programs and develop a strategy for integrating them into the national preparedness system as part of our ongoing work.

FEMA provided technical comments on a draft of this testimony, which we discussed with FEMA officials and incorporated as appropriate.

Background

The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (Post-Katrina Act)¹² required that FEMA establish the national preparedness system to ensure that the nation has the ability to prepare for and respond to disasters of all types, whether natural or man-made, including terrorist attacks. The Community Preparedness Division is responsible for leading activities related to community preparedness, including management of the Citizen Corps program. According to fiscal year 2008 Homeland Security Grant Guidance, the program is to bring together community and government leaders, including first responders, nonprofit organizations, and other community stakeholders. Serving as a Citizen Corps council, government and nongovernment stakeholders are to collaborate in involving community members in emergency preparedness, planning, mitigation, response, and recovery. Councils and partner programs register online to be included in the national program registries. The Division also supports the efforts of non-DHS federal “partner programs,” such as the Medical Reserve Corps, that promote preparedness and the use of volunteers to support first responders.¹³ The CERT program’s mission is to educate and train people in basic disaster preparedness and response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, and disaster medical operations, using a nationally developed, standardized training curriculum. Trained individuals can be recruited to participate on neighborhood, business, or government teams to assist first responders. The mission of the Fire Corps program is to increase the capacity of fire and emergency medical service departments through the use of volunteers in nonoperational roles and activities, including administrative, public outreach, fire safety, and emergency preparedness education.

FEMA also is responsible for a related program, the Ready Campaign, which works in partnership with the Ad Council, an organization that creates public service messages, with the goals of raising public awareness regarding the need for emergency preparedness, motivating individuals to take steps toward preparedness, and ultimately increasing the level of

¹²The Post-Katrina Act was enacted as title VI of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2007, Pub. L. No. 109-295, 120 Stat. 1355, 1394-1463 (2006).

¹³Citizen Corps also identifies program “affiliates” that may be available to help advance Citizen Corps’s goals, such as the American Red Cross and Home Safety Council.

national preparedness. The program makes preparedness information available to the public through its English and Spanish Web sites (www.ready.gov and www.listo.gov), through printed material that can be ordered from the program or via toll-free phone lines, and through public service announcements (PSA).¹⁴ The Ready Campaign message calls for individuals, families, and businesses to (1) get emergency supply kits, (2) make emergency plans, and (3) stay informed about emergencies and appropriate responses to those emergencies.

FEMA Faces Challenges Measuring Performance of Citizen Corps Programs and the Ready Campaign

FEMA faces challenges in measuring the performance of local community preparedness efforts because it lacks accurate information on those efforts. FEMA is also confronted with challenges in measuring performance for the Ready Campaign because the Ready Campaign is not positioned to control the placement of its preparedness messages or measure whether its message is changing the behavior of individuals.

FEMA Faces Challenges Measuring Performance of Community Preparedness Efforts Because It Lacks Accurate Information on Local Programs

According to FEMA officials, FEMA promotes citizen preparedness and volunteerism by encouraging collaboration and the creation of community Citizen Corps, CERT, and Fire Corps programs. FEMA includes the number of Citizen Corps councils, CERTs, and Fire Corps established across the country as its principal performance measure. However, FEMA faces challenges ensuring that the information needed to measure the number of established, active units is accurate. In our past work we reported on the importance of ensuring that program data are of sufficient quality to document performance and support decision making.¹⁵ Although not a measure under the Government Performance Result Act, FEMA programs report the number of local units registered as a principal performance measure; however, our work showed that the number of active units reported may differ from the number that actually exist.¹⁶ For example, as of September 2009:

¹⁴See <http://www.ready.gov/america/about/psa.html> for an example of a Ready Campaign PSA.

¹⁵[GAO-03-143](#).

¹⁶GAO/GGD-96-118.

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- Citizen Corps reported having 2,409 registered Citizen Corps councils nationwide that encompass jurisdictions where approximately 79 percent of the U.S. population resides. However, 12 of the 17 registered councils we contacted during our site visits were active and 5 were not.
 - The CERT program reported having 3,354 registered CERTs. Of the 12 registered CERTs we visited, 11 were actively engaged in CERT activities, such as drills, exercises, and emergency preparedness outreach, or had been deployed to assist in an emergency or disaster situation, although 1 had members that had not been trained. One registered CERT was no longer active.

State officials in two of the four states also said that the data on number of registered programs might not be accurate.¹⁷ One state official responsible for the Citizen Corps council and CERT programs in the state estimated that as little as 20 percent of the registered councils were active, and the state subsequently removed more than half of its 40 councils from the national Web site. Officials in the other state said that the national database is not accurate and they have begun to send e-mails to or call local councils to verify the accuracy of registrations in their state. These officials said that they plan to follow up with those councils that do not respond, but they were not yet certain what they planned to do if the councils were no longer active. These results raise questions about the accuracy of FEMA's data on the number of councils across the nation, and the accuracy of FEMA's measure that registered councils cover 79 percent of the population nationwide.

Some change in the number of active local programs can be expected, based on factors including changes in government leadership, voluntary participation by civic leaders, and financial support. FEMA officials told us that the Homeland Security Grant Program guidance designates state officials as responsible for approving initial council and CERT registrations and ensure that the data are updated as needed. According to FEMA officials, however, in practice this may not occur. Community Preparedness Division officials said that they do not monitor whether states are regularly updating local unit registration information.

¹⁷We interviewed state officials in four of the five states we visited—California, Florida, Oklahoma, and Texas. We did not interview state officials in Nevada. Our Nevada site visit interviews were related to observing exercises with CERT participation.

The Ready Campaign Faces Challenges Measuring Performance Because It Is Not Positioned to Control the Distribution of Its Preparedness Messages and Measure Whether Its Message Effects Individual Behavior

FEMA officials said that FEMA plans to adopt a new online registration process for Citizen Corps councils and CERTs in 2010, which will likely result in some programs being removed from FEMA's registries. They said that FEMA expects to use the new registration process to collect more comprehensive data on membership and council activities. According to FEMA officials, updating initial registration information will continue to be the responsibility of state officials. The Citizen Corps Director noted that the Citizen Corps program does not have the ability to require all local units to update information, particularly councils or CERTS that receive no federal funding. According to the Fire Corps program Acting Director, a state advocacy program initiated in 2007 may help identify inactive programs as well as promote the Fire Corps program. As of September 2009, there were 53 advocates in 31 states. We will continue to assess this issue as part of our ongoing work.

Currently, the Ready Campaign measures its performance based on measures such as materials distributed or PSAs shown. For example, according to a DHS official, in fiscal year 2008, the Ready Campaign had

- more than 99 million "hits" on its Web site,
- more than 12 million pieces of Ready Campaign literature requested or downloaded, and
- 43,660 calls to the toll-free call numbers.

The Ready Campaign relies on these measures because it faces two different challenges determining whether its efforts are influencing individuals to be more prepared. First, the Ready Campaign is not positioned to control the when or where its preparedness message is viewed. Second, the Ready Campaign is not positioned to measure whether its message is changing the behavior of individuals.

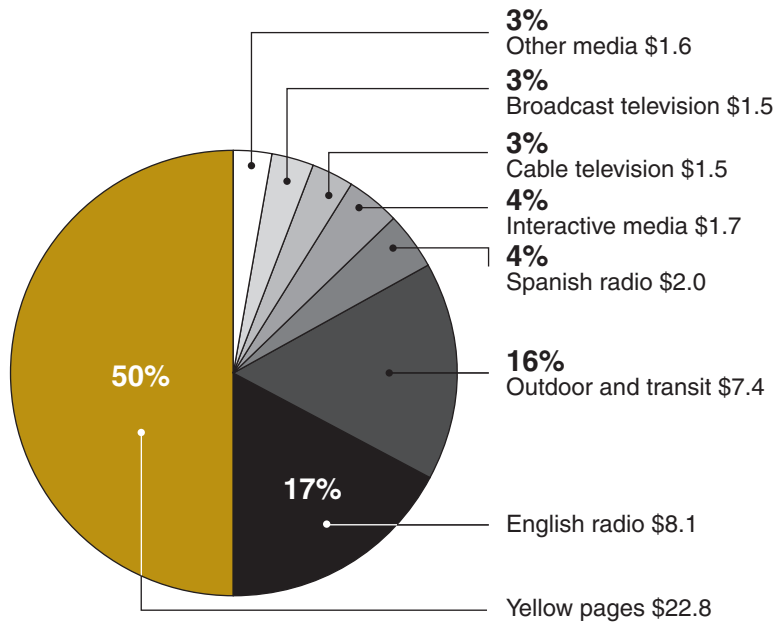
With regard to the Ready Campaign's ability to control the distribution of its message, our prior work has shown that agencies whose programs rely on others to deliver services face challenges in targeting and measuring results in meeting ultimate goals, and when this occurs, agencies can use intermediate measures to gauge program activities.¹⁸ However, according to FEMA's Acting Director for the Ready Campaign, funds are not available for the Ready Campaign to purchase radio and television time to

¹⁸ [GAO/GGD/AIMD-99-69](#).

air its PSAs; rather, the Ready Campaign relies on donations of various sources of media. As a result, the Ready Campaign does not control what, when, or where Ready Campaign materials are placed when the media is donated. For example, what PSA is shown and the slots (e.g., a specific channel at a specific time) that are donated by television, radio, and other media companies are not under the Ready Campaign's control, and these are not always prime viewing or listening spots. Based on Ad Council data, the Ready Campaign's PSAs in 2008 were aired about 5 percent or less of the time by English and Spanish television stations during prime time (8:00 pm to 10:59 p.m.), and about 25 percent of the PSAs were aired from 1:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. Similarly, about 47 percent of English radio and about 27 percent of Spanish radio spots were aired from midnight to 6:00 a.m. FEMA officials said that with the release of its September 2009 PSAs, they expect increased placement during hours where there are more viewers and listeners.

Just as the Ready Campaign has no control over the time PSAs are aired, it does not control the type of media (e.g., radio and television) donated. Based on Ad Council data on the dollar value of media donated to show Ready Campaign materials (the value of the donated media is generally based on what it would cost the Ready Campaign if the media space were purchased), much of the value from donated media is based on space donated in the yellow pages. Figure 1 shows the value of various types of media donated to the Ready Campaign to distribute its message during 2008.

Figure 1: Value of Media Donated in 2008 to Distribute Ready Campaign Message (in Millions of Dollars)



Source: GAO analysis of Ad Council data.

The Ready Campaign also faces a challenge determining the extent to which it contributes to individuals taking action to become more prepared—the program’s goal. Measuring the Ready Campaign’s progress toward its goal is problematic because it can be difficult to isolate the specific effect of exposure to Ready Campaign materials on an individual’s level of emergency preparedness. Research indicates that there may be a number of factors that are involved in an individual taking action to become prepared, such as his or her beliefs as to vulnerability to disaster, geographic location, or income.¹⁹ A basic question in establishing whether the Ready Campaign is changing behavior is, first, determining the extent to which the Ready Campaign’s message has been received by the general population. The Ad Council conducts an annual survey to determine public awareness of the Ready Campaign, among other things. For example, in the Ad Council’s 2008 survey:

¹⁹FEMA, *Citizen Preparedness Review: A Review of Citizen Preparedness Research*, Fall 2007.

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- When asked if they had heard of a Web site called Ready.gov that provides information about steps to take to prepare in the event of a natural disaster or terrorist attack, 21 percent of those surveyed said that they were aware of the Ready.gov Web site.
 - When asked a similar question about television, radio, and print PSAs, 37 percent of those surveyed said that they have seen or heard at least one Ready Campaign PSA.

Another factor is isolating the Ready Campaign's message from other preparedness messages that individuals might have received. The Ad Council's 2008 survey found that 30 percent of those surveyed identified the American Red Cross as the primary source of emergency preparedness information; 11 percent identified the Ad Council.

While the Ad Council survey may give a general indication as to the population's familiarity with the Ready Campaign, it does not provide a measure of preparedness actions taken based on the Ready Campaign's promotion, that is, a clear link from the program to achieving program goals. The Ad Council reported that those who were aware of Ready Campaign's advertising were significantly more likely to say that they had taken steps to prepare for disaster, but acknowledged that the Ready Campaign could not claim full credit for the differences. Further, as the 2009 Citizen Corps survey showed, the degree to which individuals are prepared may be less than indicated because preparedness drops substantially when more detailed questions about supplies are asked.²⁰ We will continue to assess FEMA's efforts to measure the performance of the Ready Campaign as part of our ongoing work.

²⁰Similarly, public knowledge of the Ready Campaign may be less than indicated, based on the 2007 Citizen Corps survey. For example, the 2007 survey asked respondents about familiarity with federal preparedness programs and estimated that 16 percent of respondents had heard about Ready.gov. However when asked to describe the program, only 2 percent of respondents reported that they had a firm understanding of the program.

FEMA Has Not Developed a Strategy Encompassing How Citizen Corps, Its Partner Programs, and the Ready Campaign Are to Operate within the Context of the National Preparedness System

While DHS's and FEMA's strategic plans have incorporated efforts to promote community preparedness, FEMA has not developed a strategy encompassing how Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign are to operate within the context of the national preparedness system. An objective in DHS's Strategic Plan for 2008-2013 to "Ensure Preparedness" envisions empowering Americans to take individual and community actions before and after disasters strike. Similarly, FEMA's Strategic Plan for 2008-2013 envisions a strategy to "Lead the Nation's efforts for greater personal and community responsibility for preparedness through public education and awareness, and community engagement and planning, including outreach to vulnerable populations." FEMA's Strategic Plan delegates to the agency's components the responsibility for developing their own strategic plans, which are to include goals, objectives, and strategies. FEMA's Strategic Plan states that the components' strategic plans are to focus on identifying outcomes and measuring performance.

NPD has not clearly articulated goals for FEMA's community preparedness programs or a strategy to show how Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign are to achieve those goals within the context of the national preparedness system. In our past work, we reported that desirable characteristics of an effective national strategy include articulating the strategy's purpose and goals; followed by subordinate objectives and specific activities to achieve results; and defining organizational roles, responsibilities, and coordination, including a discussion of resources needed to reach strategy goals.²¹ In April 2009, we reported that NPD had not developed a strategic plan that defines program roles and responsibilities, integration and coordination processes, and goals and performance measures for its programs.²² We reported that instead of a strategic plan, NPD officials stated that they used a draft annual operating plan and Post-Katrina Act provisions to guide NPD's efforts. The draft operating plan identifies NPD goals and NPD subcomponents responsible for carrying out segments of the operating plan, including eight objectives identified for the Division under NPD's goal to "enhance the preparedness of individuals, families, and special needs populations through awareness planning and training." NPD's objectives for meeting this goal do not describe desired outcomes.

²¹ [GAO-04-408T](#) and [GAO-09-369](#).

²² [GAO-09-369](#).

For example, one of NPD's objectives for the Community Preparedness Division is to increase "the number of functions that CERTs will be able to perform effectively during emergency response," but the plan does not describe how many and what type of functions CERTs currently perform, what additional functions they could perform, and what it means to be effective.²³ NPD's draft operating plan also does not include other key elements of an effective national strategy, such as how it will measure progress in meeting its goals and objectives; the roles and responsibilities of those who will be implementing specific programs within the Community Preparedness Division, such as Citizen Corps or Fire Corps; or potential costs and types of resources and investments needed to meet goals and objectives needed to implement civilian preparedness programs.²⁴ As a result, NPD is unable to provide a picture of priorities or how adjustments might be made in view of resource constraints.

In our April 2009 report we recommended that NPD take a more strategic approach to implementing the national preparedness system to include the development of a strategic plan that contains such key elements as goals, objectives, and how progress in achieving them will be measured. DHS concurred with our recommendation and, in commenting on our report, stated that it reported making progress in this area and is continuing to work to fully implement the recommendation. NPD officials stated in September 2009 that DHS, FEMA, and NPD, in coordination with national security staff, were discussing Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 (National Preparedness), including the development of a preparedness strategy and an implementation strategy.²⁵ They said that community and individual preparedness were key elements of those discussions. However, NPD officials did not state when the strategy will be completed; thus, it is not clear to what extent it will integrate Citizen Corps, its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign. NPD officials stated that work is under way on revising the target capabilities, which are to include specific

²³NPD's other objectives relate to enhancing preparedness capabilities, strengthening partnerships, conducting emergency preparedness research, integrating community preparedness into grant guidance, holding a national conference, ensuring local implementation of the NET Guard Pilot Program, and developing a national strategy to collaborate with law enforcement partners.

²⁴[GAO-09-369](#).

²⁵Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8—National Preparedness (Dec. 17, 2003). In December 2003, the President issued guidance that called on the Secretary of Homeland Security to carry out and coordinate preparedness activities with public, private, and nonprofit organizations involved in such activities.

outcomes, measures, and resources. NPD officials said that the draft for public comment is expected to be issued in fiscal year 2010.

The Ready Campaign is also working to enhance its strategic direction. According to the FEMA Director of External Affairs, the Ready Campaign's strategy is being revised to reflect the transition of the program from DHS's Office of Public Affairs to FEMA's Office of External Affairs, and the new FEMA Director's approach to preparedness. Program officials said that the Ready Campaign will have increased access to staff and resources and is to be guided by a FEMA-wide strategic plan for external communications. As of September 2009 the plan was still being developed and no date has been set for completion. We will continue to monitor this issue as well FEMA's effort to develop a strategy encompassing how Citizen Corps and its partner programs are to operate within the context of the national preparedness system.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my prepared statement. I would be happy to respond to any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

Contacts and Acknowledgments

For further information about this testimony, please contact William O. Jenkins, Jr., Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues, at (202) 512-8777 or JenkinsWO@gao.gov. Contact points for our offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this testimony. Major contributors to this testimony included John Mortin, Assistant Director, and Monica Kelly, Analyst-in-Charge. Carla Brown, Qahira El'Amin, Lara Kaskie, Amanda Miller, Cristina Ruggiero-Mendoza, and Janet Temko made significant contributions to the work.

Appendix I: Homeland Security Grant Funding for Community Preparedness, 2004 through 2008

Department of Homeland Security support for local community preparedness activities is provided through homeland security grants, specifically the Citizen Corps grant program, but community preparedness activities are also eligible for support under other homeland security grants. Citizen Corps grants are awarded to states based on a formula of 0.75 percent of the total amount available to each state (including the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico) and 0.25 percent of the total amount available for each U.S. territory, with the balance of funding being distributed on a population basis.

For other DHS homeland security grants, a state prepares a request for funding, which can include support for the state's community preparedness efforts, as allowed under the guidance for a particular grant. For example, the 2009 Homeland Security Grant Guidance lists "Conducting public education and outreach campaigns, including promoting individual, family and business emergency preparedness" as an allowable cost for state homeland security grants. Grant funding can be used to support Citizen Corps, Citizen Corps partner programs, or other state community preparedness priorities. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) grant reporting database does not categorize grants in a way that allows identification of the amount of funding going to a particular community preparedness program.

Table 1 summarizes the approximately \$269 million in DHS grants that were identified by grantees as supporting community preparedness projects from fiscal years 2004 through 2008. The amount is an approximation because of limitations in identifying grants for such projects. Our selection of projects for inclusion relied on grantees identifying their projects under one of three predefined project types that FEMA officials said are relevant for community preparedness or were projects funded with a Citizen Corps program grant. Not all grantees may have used these descriptions. We worked with grant officials to identify the most appropriate grant selection criteria.

**Appendix I: Homeland Security Grant
Funding for Community Preparedness, 2004
through 2008**

Table 1: 2004-2008 Homeland Security Grants for Community Preparedness Projects

Year	Citizen Corps	Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) ^a	State homeland security	Emergency Management Performance Grant	Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Grant	Other homeland security grants ^b	Total
2004	\$33,955,176	\$8,306,020	\$7,735,800	-	\$1,093,911	-	\$51,090,907
2005	13,485,705	8,687,292	11,775,517	\$595,825	248,988	\$414,329	\$35,207,655
2006	19,205,985	16,345,381	15,074,053	6,545,092	969,561	2,028,071	\$60,168,142
2007	14,549,998	23,608,893	15,754,809	1,026,336	6,705,907	4,895,079	\$66,541,022
2008	14,572,500	13,498,514	16,640,267	8,620,774	0	2,645,852	\$55,977,906
Total	\$95,769,364	\$70,446,099	\$66,980,446	\$16,788,026	\$9,018,367	\$9,983,331	268,985,634

Source: GAO analysis of FEMA grant reporting data for fiscal years 2004 through 2008.

Notes: Homeland Security grant projects included in this summary met at least one of the following four criteria: indicated the project was to establish or enhance (1) citizen or volunteer initiatives; (2) citizen awareness of emergency preparedness, prevention, and response measures; (3) Citizen Corps councils; or (4) was supported by the Citizen Corps program grant. For years with a zero value, a particular grant may not have been part of the Homeland Security grant package (e.g., the Emergency Management Performance Grant was not part of the 2004 grants package, and the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Grant in 2008 was not available for community preparedness purposes).

^aIncludes UASI and UASI transit and nonprofit grants. The UASI grant program provides federal assistance to high-risk urban areas to (1) address unique planning, equipment, training, and exercise needs and (2) assist them in building an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, prepare for, and respond to threats or acts of terrorism.

^bIncludes grants for transit security programs, Metropolitan Medical Response System, Intercity Passenger Rail Security, Interoperable Emergency Communications, Non-Profit Security, Regional Catastrophic Preparedness, and Buffer Zone Protection. The Buffer Zone Protection Program supports the implementation of preventive and protective measures outside the perimeter of selected critical infrastructure and key resource (CI/KR) sites throughout the United States. The program provides grant funding to jurisdictions to purchase equipment to extend the zone of protection around CI/KR facilities, expand preparedness capabilities, and enhance the security of surrounding communities.

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