



**Hurricane Suiter
Emergency Support Function 6,
Mass Care & Emergency Assistance
After Action Report**

*State Emergency Response Team
State of Florida
June 24, 2009*

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State Emergency Response Team**

2009 Hurricane Suiter Exercise Mass Care After Action Report

Overview

The state of Florida, in cooperation with select federal agencies, private voluntary organizations and private sector vendors conducted a hurricane exercise from May 28 – Jun 3, 2009. During the exercise the state catastrophic plan was tested in response to Hurricane Suiter, a storm that struck Miami as a Category 4, crossed the peninsula and exited into the Gulf as a Category 3 storm in the vicinity of Ft. Myers, in Lee County.

During May 28 & 29 the State Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee was activated and the evacuation and planning phase of the exercise was conducted. There was no exercise play over the weekend, when the impact of the storm took place. During June 1-3 the exercise focused on the three initial days of Response post-impact. Over four hundred persons from state, federal and voluntary agencies as well as the private sector participated in the exercise.

Hurricane Suiter was one of the most intense and demanding hurricane exercises ever conducted in the state. The mass care portion of the exercise was one of the largest and most complex ever conducted in the nation. The difficulty of the scenario, the large number of participants, the variety of federal, state, voluntary and private sector organizations involved and the realistic design of the exercise created an excellent training experience and uncovered numerous lessons learned for mass care as well as the other emergency management disciplines.

The intent of this document is to share these mass care lessons learned with interested parties nationwide.

Two newly developed state mass care plans were tested and validated during this exercise. The draft Mass Care Feeding and Sheltering Annex to the State of Florida Catastrophic Plan was developed over two years in coordination with county, state, federal, voluntary agency and private sector participation. The draft State of Florida Multi-Agency Feeding Plan was adopted from a nationally developed template for state feeding plans. Many of the mass care participants in the exercise were involved in the development of, and therefore had an understanding of the roles, tasks and objectives specified for their agencies in these plans. Their familiarity with these plans contributed to the success of the exercise.

Principal Emergency Support Function 6 **Objectives for the Exercise**

- As prescribed in the State of Florida Multi-Agency Feeding Plan, establish an Emergency Support Function 6 Feeding Task Force with state Emergency Support Function 11, Food and Water, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the United States Department of Agriculture, private food vendors and the voluntary agencies to coordinate a centralized system for the procurement and delivery of food products sufficient to meet the requirements of the event.
- State Emergency Support Function 6 provides mass care staff to the Population Movement cell and conducts federal/state coordination as specified in Phase 1 of Mass Care Feeding and Sheltering and Population Movement portion of the catastrophic plan.
- State Emergency Support Function 6 conducts coordination for Reception, Staging, Onward Movement & Integration (RSO&I) into the disaster area of mass care resources arriving from outside the state as specified in Phase 1 of the Mass Care Feeding and Sheltering catastrophic plan.
 - Conduct coordination conference calls with Red Cross, Salvation Army and Florida Baptists
 - Establish Emergency Support Function 6 liaison at the State Logistics Response Center for coordination with the Movement Control Center
 - Identify Mass Care reception areas for arriving resources
 - Identify and request logistics required to sustain reception areas

Summary of Key Mass Care lessons learned

- In a catastrophic event, the state must take an active role in coordinating with the various voluntary agencies, private sector vendors, state agencies and federal partners involved in the delivery of Mass Care & Emergency Assistance.
- The nation is critically short of insulated food containers (Cambros) for an event of this size.
- The nation has a shortfall of trained mass care staff with experience coordinating statewide mass care operations in a large event.
- A daily state-led conference call with the various voluntary agencies, private sector vendors, state agencies and federal partners involved in the delivery of Mass Care is vital in ensuring all the various participants are acting in consonance and toward uniformly agreed upon objectives.
- Daily coordination meetings at the State Emergency Operations Center between the State Mass Care Team (State Mass Care Lead and voluntary agency liaisons) and the unified state/federal logistics team are critical to ensuring that the resources allocated to the mass care effort are equal to the size of the task.

- In a catastrophic event, the state government with federal assistance must take an active role in securing logistic support for field kitchens, primarily through the acquisition of food, material handling equipment, fuel and trailers.
- The Emergency Support Function 6 Feeding Task Force concept, adopted from the nationally developed State Multi-Agency Feeding Plan template, was validated and proved extremely useful as a mechanism to coordinate the acquisition of food during a disaster.
- The process for the government (state or federal) acquisition of food provided by private sector food vendors for mass care feeding must be standardized nationwide so that these vendors can react in a consistent and timely manner.
- The adoption of the “one-pot meal” menu concept for initial food orders for field kitchens will generate desirable efficiencies in the delivery of food commodities and the subsequent production of meals during the initial stages of disaster feeding.
- Ordering food in a disaster is more than purchasing truckloads of commodities - field kitchens require specific foodstuffs suitable for rapid preparation in large quantities, delivered in standardized menu packages with the necessary cleaning supplies, paper products and logistical support.
- Private food vendors can more efficiently forecast trailer quantities of food for field kitchens if they receive orders for three days of food for each site.
- Standardized menus allow private food vendors to plan for catastrophic events, thereby increasing capacity and decreasing the time necessary to identify and procure food stocks.
- The Interim Contingency Guidance for the state catastrophic plan speaks of two areas of interest: Host communities and Impacted communities. The plan should be adjusted to specify three areas of interest: Host, Impacted & Catastrophically Impacted.

Discussion of Key Mass Care lessons learned

- In a catastrophic event, the state must take an active role in coordinating with the various voluntary agencies, private sector vendors, state agencies and federal partners involved in the delivery of Mass Care & Emergency Assistance.

Discussion:

The voluntary agencies respond to hundreds of local incidents nationwide with mass care support. As the scale and intensity of the incidents increase, they are able to direct national assets to the disaster to order to meet the needs of the survivors. The resources available to the voluntary agencies are finite, however, and in catastrophic disasters the government must augment the mass care effort with additional resources. To address

this situation state representatives at the state emergency operations center must coordinate with the mass care experts in the voluntary agencies in order to determine: 1) the required level of mass care support to meet the needs of the survivors, 2) the level of mass care support that the voluntary agencies can provide to meet this need, and 3) any shortfalls by quantity, type and kind of resources needed to meet the required levels of sheltering, feeding production, feeding distribution or logistical support. Once these shortfalls are identified, then the state must take action to secure these resources either from state assets, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact or through an Action Request to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

- The nation is critically short of insulated food containers (Cambros) for an event of this size.

Discussion:

The state estimated for this event that an additional 18,000 Cambros were needed to support the distribution of the food production requirement for 1.6 million meals/day service. According to the information available to exercise participants, adequate stocks were not available either from the Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the supplier to meet this demand.

Specific information on the available national inventory of Cambros or other suitable insulated food containers would be very useful to mass care planners. Additionally, information on the manufacturer's ability to generate additional stock within a specific timeframe would also be useful.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency sponsored catastrophic planning projects currently underway across the nation could provide a baseline for a desired national inventory level. The costs and benefits of maintaining such an inventory must also be examined.

- The nation has a shortfall of trained mass care staff with experience coordinating statewide mass care operations in a large event.

Discussion:

The unified state/federal structure for the State Emergency Response Team expanded dramatically to meet the extensive and complex coordination requirements for the event. Four Area Commands were established in the state, subordinate to the State Emergency Operations Center, in order to bring the span of control of the state for the large number of affected counties down to a manageable level. Additional

Emergency Support Function 6 staff was required for all these locations, as well as for the State Logistics Response Center.

Very few states have Emergency Support Function 6 staff dedicated to a mass care coordination role in the event of a disaster. For those states that do have dedicated staff, like Texas and Florida, the number is very small. Therefore, the ability of states to bring in additional Emergency Support Function 6 staff through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact is very limited.

The American Red Cross and Salvation Army have trained and experienced mass care staff, but their personnel requirements would also be considerable in such an event. Additionally, these voluntary agency staff would not have the expertise or authority to act on behalf of the state.

- A daily state-led conference call with the various voluntary agencies, private sector vendors, state agencies and federal partners involved in the delivery of Mass Care is vital in ensuring all the various participants are acting in consonance and toward uniformly agreed objectives.

Discussion:

As a result of lessons learned in Florida from the storms of 2004, the state began to hold mass care conference calls with the stakeholders during the 2005 hurricane season. This conference call routine was particularly effective during Hurricane Wilma. As a result of this experience, a mass care conference call was incorporated as a concept into the Multi-Agency Feeding Plan template.

During the Hurricane Suiter exercise, a mass care conference call was scheduled daily. During the pre-landfall calls, the principal purpose was to determine the overall feeding requirement for the event. The feeding requirement was an important decision because it drove the resource allocations of all the agencies involved. The conference call allowed the state to draw on the collective expertise of everyone on the call to make an informed decision on the daily meal count requirement for the event. On subsequent calls, as the track of the storm changed, the requirement was adjusted.

The conference call also allowed the state to determine the production and distribution capacity that the voluntary agencies were able to bring to the disaster. In the Hurricane Suiter scenario the feeding requirement exceeded the capabilities of the voluntary agencies. Therefore, the state had to submit Action Requests for additional resources from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to meet the anticipated demand.

- Daily coordination meetings at the State Emergency Operations Center between the State Mass Care Team (State Mass Care Lead and voluntary agency liaisons) and the unified state/federal logistics team are critical to ensuring that the resources allocated to the mass care effort are equal to the size of the task.

Discussion:

As the size and scope of the mass care requirements were identified in the morning mass care conference call, these requirements were coordinated with the unified state/federal logistics team during their afternoon meeting. As shortfalls were identified between the mass care requirements for the event and the resources that the voluntary agencies were able to provide, then this meeting was used to determine what state resources, if any, could be used to meet the shortfall. Where shortfall resources could not be met by the state, then these resources were requested from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

- In a catastrophic event, the state government with federal assistance must take an active role in securing logistic support for field kitchens, primarily through the acquisition of food, material handling equipment, fuel and trailers.

Discussion:

The voluntary agencies committed over thirty-five field kitchens to the disaster and the logistical resources required to sustain these assets were considerable. At the request of the voluntary agencies, the state and federal government committed to purchasing and delivering the food to the field kitchen sites. After coordination with unified logistics, State Emergency Support Function 6 requested material handling equipment, trailers for use as food storage on site, bottled water and ice for each site. State Emergency Support Function 6 also coordinated with State Emergency Support Function 12 Fuels and requested propane and diesel deliveries to these sites.

The possibility exists that an event of this magnitude would have required additional kitchens due to distances and demands. Thus, the logistics support for the kitchens would have been even greater than estimated during the exercise.

- The Emergency Support Function 6 Feeding Task Force concept, adopted from the nationally developed State Multi-Agency Feeding Plan template, was validated and proved extremely useful as a mechanism to coordinate the acquisition of food during a disaster.

Discussion:

When the procurement of the meals requires state or federal support, in accordance with the state Multi-Agency Feeding Plan, the food orders for each field kitchen come to the state feeding task force. The feeding task force (normally at the State Emergency Operations Center) will have the voluntary agency representation, subject matter expertise, food vendors, and logistic liaison personnel necessary to resolve any feeding / substitution procurement issues, and the contracting procurement authority will be able to place the order at that time. The federal feeding support would work with this task force for federal procurement assistance. This allows all ordering and kitchen support (logistics elements for fuel, sanitation, waste etc.) decisions or substitutions to be readily addressed by this support group to ensure orders can be processed in a timely manner. The use of the feeding task force by any state, if done in accordance with the Multi-Agency Feeding template, does not require the voluntary agencies to change their existing operational procedures for disaster feeding.

- The process for the government (state or federal) acquisition of food provided by private sector food vendors for mass care feeding must be standardized nationwide so that these vendors can react in a consistent and timely manner.

Discussion:

The private sector food vendors (Sysco and US Foodservice) indicated that their ability to respond to a disaster in a timely manner and with adequate food supplies was hindered by the lack of a standardized procedure for government purchase of these supplies. Ideally, the disaster food purchase process should be consistent for the food vendors, regardless of whether the purchase is made by a voluntary agency, state government or federal authority.

- The adoption of the “one-pot meal” menu concept for initial food orders for field kitchens will generate desirable efficiencies in the delivery of food commodities and the subsequent production of meals during the initial stages of disaster feeding.

Discussion:

The first 3-day increment should be single pot type meals. This allows kitchens to increase their production regardless of whether all support systems are in place or not. These single pot meals are canned products so that refrigeration / storage is not an issue. These first 3-day order menus were developed and are ready to implement for all future

operations. Food vendors have agreed to increase rotational supplies of these items to be ready for hurricane operations or disasters in the future because these are common items with existing turn over.

The question of one-pot meals is still subject to further development to ensure decent nutritional balance. For example, ravioli may not be appropriate as a one-pot meal; however beef stew with extra vegetables might be; or chicken and dumplings with vegetables added.

Additionally, further discussion as to the serving size for one-pot meals is needed. One participant recommended that the serving size be twelve ounces.

- Ordering food in a disaster is more than purchasing truckloads of commodities - field kitchens require specific foodstuffs suitable for rapid preparation in large quantities, delivered in standardized menu packages with the necessary cleaning supplies, paper products and logistical support.

Discussion:

The voluntary agencies have developed specialized techniques for field kitchen sites in order to produce large numbers of meals in an austere environment during a disaster. These techniques require foods that are canned, pre-cooked frozen or in a boil-in-a-bag configuration, delivered in specified menu proportions so that the product of the field kitchen is a healthy, nutritious meal. Cleaning supplies and paper products are required with the food deliveries in order that the voluntary agencies can meet the necessary safety and sanitation requirements.

The coordination designed into the Feeding Task Force ensures that as supplies of the specialized products are exhausted in a large event, then the subject matter experts are available to coordinate with the food vendors and approve substitutes as they are required.

- Private food vendors can more efficiently forecast trailer quantities of food for field kitchens if they receive orders for three days of food for each site.

Food orders constructed to supply kitchens with 3 days of production capacity will assist with forecasting the future stock levels required for requests beyond the initial orders. Both Sysco and US Food Service state that with a full three day lead time they can meet most reasonable food order demands.

All shipments to a kitchen will contain full meal orders for the 3-day order period. Entrees will not be split to meet a meal demand (i.e. cannot mix two entrees together to meet volume requirement, as kitchens cannot cook two items simultaneously or one after the other and make the production requirement). Pots must be cleaned before commencing another entrée and that would offset the production schedule and make it ineffective. No raw meats or non pre-cooked entrée foods can be utilized at these field kitchens.

Two meals a day per person will be used as the baseline for calculating the quantity of food necessary for the safety and health of survivors as much as possible. Shipment trailers will contain full supply orders for the meal components (expected 20K for a 53' trailer). Two compartment refrigerator trucks are valuable in order to defrost frozen food for the next meal cycle while maintaining a refrigerated section as well.

- The Interim Contingency Guidance for the state catastrophic plan speaks of two areas of interest: Host communities and Impacted communities. The plan should be adjusted to specify three areas of interest: Host, Impacted & Catastrophically Impacted.

Discussion:

The question during the exercise became one of where in the impact area would the techniques and procedures developed for the catastrophic plan be used and where would the “normal” way of doing business be employed. The best example was the question of where to put the Baptist field kitchens. Normally, the kitchens are co-located at Baptist church sites because the land is readily available and the kitchen crews have a place to live in the church buildings. In the catastrophic plan, the intent was to locate the field kitchens at the largest congregate shelter sites because this alleviated many of the distribution issues that arise from a shortage of vehicles, Cambros and fuel. There are also disadvantages with locating at the shelters, primarily security of the kitchens in a food shortage environment, but this was a choice dictated by the plan due to the aforementioned logistical constraints. Therefore, the overriding question during the planning for deployment of the kitchens became one of which areas are catastrophically impacted and which areas are merely impacted.

The question of Impacted or Catastrophically Impacted areas also affected the planning for movement of resources into the areas. State Logistics set up a large site at Interstate 4 and U.S. Highway 27 to control movement into the impacted areas. Movement control, in this instance, is related to “when” the kitchen would be sent forward, not “where” the kitchen would

be sent. As specified in the state Multi-Agency Feeding Plan, the feeding location of the kitchen is ultimately determined by the agency owning the asset.

Yet, there was no need to constrain all movement into the impacted areas, only into the catastrophically impacted areas. In some lesser-impacted areas, the field kitchens could have been sent directly to pre-identified church locations without routing them through the Logistics movement control site. Coordinating movement through the Movement Control Center, while necessary, is difficult and resource intensive, in terms of time and labor. A part of this burden could be alleviated by designating certain areas as catastrophically impacted.

The Interim Contingency Guidance of the state catastrophic plan should designate the State Emergency Response Team Chief as the individual who decides which areas are impacted, and which are catastrophically impacted. This decision would be made based on a recommendation from the Plans and Operations Chiefs, who are evaluating the information received from the counties and the reconnaissance teams. Once, for example, Dade County is designated as Catastrophically Impacted and Broward, Glades and Lee are Impacted, the State Emergency Response Team can take uniform actions accordingly. Even better, it would be advantageous to see counties designated as Catastrophic or not as a planning assumption pre-landfall. This would help greatly in coordinating how and where the mass care resources should be deployed.

Comments or questions on this report

Comments or questions on this report should be directed to:

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ESF 6 Participants and support agencies during the exercise

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American Red Cross

Karen Hagan – Disaster Officer, Florida
Inaki Rezola – ARC Exercise Coordinator
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Richard Hinrichs – San Diego Chapter, ARC
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Holly Martin – San Diego Chapter, ARC
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Culinary Standards

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Florida Baptist Convention

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Kevin Smith – Disaster Director, TSA Florida Division
Nick Simoncini – TSA State liaison

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Rob Cassell – Senior Director of Emerging Chains

Nancy Brooks – Sysco ARC account manager

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Cythia Wheeler – SERO SE Region

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US Food Service

Dave Wolfgam – District Sales Manager

Robert Limehouse – Vice President, Sales

Exercise comments from State Emergency Support Function 11, Food & Water:

- 1 May want to give some consideration for those with special diet requirements, i.e., Kosher, Hallal, elderly, vegetarians, etc. This may not be possible right away, especially in the aftermath of a catastrophic event, but needs to be considered when planning longer term, after 7 – 10 days. It was also mentioned during one of the meetings that rabbis and imams can give dispensation to their congregations (for Kosher and Hallal foods respectively) in the event of an emergency. This needs to be explored and ground proofed – perhaps ESF 15 can help obtain the information through their faith-based network. Would a dispensation need to be granted each time or is it automatic during an emergency and a known fact for the people who practice it?

- 2 When building kitchen loads, some USDA commodity products may be integrated into the load. While the bulk of the order must be acquired from the commercial food vendors, products such as canned vegetables and canned or single serve fruits are USDA commodity items usually available at the state-contracted warehouses in some quantity. Additional orders can be placed with USDA for resupplying. Need more discussion to determine how the USDA commodities would be delivered to the kitchens to ensure arrival at the same time as the rest of the kitchen load. Possibility: When loading up at the commercial food vendor ensure sufficient space left for rest of the order and have truck swing by warehouse to pick up the rest of the order?

Exercise comments from the Florida Baptists:

- We would like to emphasize that in a catastrophic event, the ESF6 Feeding task force is a must.
- We would also like to recommend that the ESF6 Feeding Task force be used during most declared disasters that involve multiple organizations and agencies are providing mass feeding of more than 100,000 Meals Per Day.
- We strongly recommend that the task force continues to develop both push order and replacement order spreadsheets to standardize and simplify the ordering process. The task force worked on the menu plans and food orders. We now need to get the food orders in a spreadsheet format that could be easily completed, sent back to the task force, allowing orders to be placed with the food vendors. It would be best if we can have 1 spreadsheet that both food vendors can use instead of one for US Foods and one for Sysco. Deadline for full spreadsheet development needs to be July 31, 2009.
- We have concerns that the movement control center will delay our units being operational by as much as 2-3 days.
Reasoning- One of the hallmarks of Southern Baptist DR feeding units has been that they are on station and operations within 24-48 hours of a storm clearing the area. Typically we have pre-identified sites, pre-assigned units, had field personnel quickly asses the sites immediately after a storm and allowed the units to deploy as soon as they felt it safe to move. This, plus deploying feeding units with chainsaw units to gain access to their assigned has greatly expedited our deployment. It also reduces the need to wait for DOT or Public Works to open secondary roads for our access. It is our assessment that the process of scheduling and deploying through the movement control center that is also trying to coordinate movement of all other non ESF6 support will become a slow, time consuming process. We would like to continue to work with the leadership of movement control to try to find a way to ensure that the feeding units are not delayed anymore than absolutely necessary.
- We understand the desire to locate feeding units at the shelter sites to reduce the impact of distribution and cambro support. If feeding units are stationed at shelters, the following challenges must be considered and addressed.
 - There must be designated outside space for the feeding operation. Shelter POVs and support vehicle traffic must have a separate access from kitchen operations.
 - Feeding volunteers must be housed separately from shelter population. This is necessary due to the fact that feeding volunteers typically bed down early (9 PM) and wake up early (3:30-4:00 AM) Experience tells us that this becomes a huge point of contention for everyone at the shelter site.

- Security to keep shelter population out of the kitchen area must be provided. Food safety guidelines mandate this. The continual movement of forklifts, semis, ERVs and Canteens create a safety hazard for shelter residents that are wondering through the work area. Kitchen teams typically do not bring personnel to monitor this.
- Meal serving times must be posted and made clear to shelter population. Serving lines cannot be kept open continuously. Set meal times are required.
- Serving lines must be located away from the kitchen.
- Baptist DR officials need to provide tentative kitchen site lists to ESF6, ARC & TSA 72-48 hours before landfall to expedite kitchen site support. ESF6, ARC & TSA must not distribute the Baptist tentative kitchen site list beyond key personnel. This is do to Baptist church notification procedures that must be followed but sometimes are not completed until just before or just after landfall.
- Kitchen site survey teams need to have free access to move about in the disaster area immediately after the event. Local agencies should be informed of the use of these teams and they should share this information with law enforcement personnel who is manning checkpoints. Discussions should be held with State EOC and Baptist DR officials prior to landfall to discuss credentialing and letters of authorization challenges.
- Baptist DR kitchen teams may need to be divided into 2 groups. A delivery team that is responsible for delivery and set up of the kitchen equipment and the primary cooking team. Delivery teams may need to travel separate and ahead of the cook teams to expedite. Kitchen crews and equipment may need to stage at Florida Baptist Conference facilities at Eustis and Marianna.

Exercise comments from U.S. Foodservice:

- The greater the lead time that is given to the Food Distributors, the greater the opportunity for operations to succeed. 3 days lead time would be very helpful.
- U.S. Foodservice will have a representative present if an event were to happen.
- Due to the planning of the Task Force, U.S. Foodservice has been more proactive building the floor stock of certain products with the manufacturers.
- It is understood that trailers will be sent to our location for loading. Logistics for trailers to be backed up and loaded will be handled by appointment through our Task Force member and operations center. (3 trucks at 10 am, 3 Trucks at 11 am ect.)
- We will be happy to create order guides that will meet the needs of the task force. We will give our opinions on best practices, but will fashion the order guide any way to suit the Task Force. All order guides should not have item numbers on them so the order guides can be used for U.S. Foodservice and Sysco. The Items should have good descriptions and pack sizes.
- We have run several different 20,000 meal combinations through our system and it will take a 53' trailer. A 48' trailer can be used but it is a very tight fit. One other thing that we need to be concerned about, the weight limits are pushing just above DOT regulations. No more than 20,000 meals can be sent on one trailer.

I believe that this exercise has been beneficial. I commend you and the state for having the foresight to be so proactive in planning for a catastrophic situation. Please let us know whatever you need and we will make it happen.