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ORGANIZATION SIGN-ON LETTER
FEMA and Climate Preparedness

Administrator Craig Fugate
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Re: Consideration of climate change in state hazard mitigation planning

Dear Administrator Fugate,

As highlighted in President Obama's speech on June 25, 2013, climate change is affecting the public health and safety of Americans across the country. We thank you for your attention to the issue of climate change, and your recognition that climate change is a growing threat that could affect FEMA's ability to fulfill its mission. The [FEMA Administrator Policy Statement on climate change adaptation](#), signed on January of 2012, was an important step to move FEMA and the nation in the right direction on climate preparedness and resilience. In line with both the President's climate action plan and FEMA's climate adaptation policy, we ask that FEMA update its planning guidance and tools for states to assess their hazard risks from climate change, and to clarify that states are required to consider climate change in their hazard mitigation plans.

[FEMA's climate adaptation policy statement](#) affirms: "the challenges posed by climate change, such as more intense storms, frequent heavy precipitation, heat waves, drought, extreme flooding, and higher sea levels could significantly alter the types and magnitudes of hazards faced by communities and the emergency management professionals serving them." In 2012, hundreds of people lost their lives and U.S. taxpayers covered nearly \$100 billion in damages due to climate-related disasters like hurricanes, extreme heat, drought, and floods.¹ Just focusing on extreme heat, one study estimated that a 2006 heat wave in California killed 655 people, sent 16,000 people to emergency rooms, and resulted in \$5.3 billion in health-related costs.² Due to climate change, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that heat-related premature deaths nationwide could climb from an average of 700 deaths per year to between 3,000 and 5,000 by 2050.³ Considering climate change is also projected to increase the frequency and severity of storms, floods, droughts, and wildfires around the country, FEMA has an important role to play in helping states and communities reduce their risks and prepare for climate impacts.

FEMA's climate adaptation policy statement, as well as the June 2012 Department of Homeland Security Climate Adaptation Roadmap, both refer to proposed Agency actions to minimize the effects of climate change on FEMA's ability to fulfill its mission. As you know, these proposed Agency actions that are critical to addressing the effects of climate change include: engaging communities in addressing climate

¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "Billion-Dollar Weather/Climate Disasters," available at <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/events>, [accessed July 5, 2013]; Natural Resources Defense Council, *Who Pays for Climate Change* (2013), available at <http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/files/taxpayer-climate-costs-IP.pdf>

² Knowlton K, Rotkin-Ellman M, Geballe L, Max W, Solomon GM. 2011. Six Climate Change-Related Events In The United States Accounted For About \$14 Billion In Lost Lives And Health Costs. *Health Affairs* 30(11):2167-2176 (Nov. 2011).

³ See information on CDC (2013) Climate and Health Program "Heat Waves" webpage, available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/heat.htm>.

impacts; reviewing guidance and standards to determine the feasibility of incorporating future climate change considerations; and encouraging the integration of adaptation measures into local planning and development practices.

Addressing climate change in state hazard mitigation programs is an important step for FEMA to further its goals of climate adaptation. Updating the tools, resources, guidance, and requirements for hazard mitigation plans will assist states and communities that need help assessing their climate change risks and developing strategies to mitigate those risks. Currently, many states rely solely on historical data of past hazards, but climate change means that past events are no longer a sufficient indicator of future risks. Many states have not yet considered climate impact projections and the subsequent changes to their vulnerability and loss estimates.

In a step that will further FEMA's climate adaptation goals, we ask that FEMA modernize the process for state hazard mitigation to address climate adaptation issues as soon as possible.

We urge FEMA to update planning guidance and tools for states to assess their hazard risks from climate change, and to clarify that states are required to consider climate change in their hazard mitigation plans. These plans must include climate change considerations in any sections addressing risk assessment and hazard mitigation goals or strategies.

Taking these actions will help states prepare for future disasters and build their climate resilience, saving lives, property, and money.

Sincerely,

[Organization, city & state]

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