

Admiral James M. Loy, National Co-Chair
Former Deputy Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)

James Lee Witt, National Co-Chair
Former Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency
Chief Executive Officer, International Code Council

Is America Prepared for the Next Catastrophe?

“Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent sustained flooding of New Orleans exposed significant flaws in our national preparedness for catastrophic events and our capacity to respond to them. Emergency plans at all levels of government—including the 600-page National Response Plan that set forth the Federal government’s plan to coordinate all its departments and agencies and integrate them with State, local, and private sector partners—were put to the test and came up short.”

The White House, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned*,
February 23, 2006. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned/>

“It remains difficult to understand how government could respond so ineffectively to a disaster that was anticipated for years, and for which specific dire warnings had been issued for days. The crisis was not only predictable, it was predicted. If this is what happens after we have advance warning, we shudder to imagine the consequences when we do not. Four and a half years after 9/11, America is still not ready for prime time.”

U.S. House of Representatives Select Bi-Partisan Committee to Investigate the
Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, *A Failure of Initiative*, February 16,
2006. <http://halrogers.house.gov/media/PDFs/KatrinaReport-web.pdf>

“What I recognized then was that all emergencies of a certain scale require an integrated response at a local, state and federal level. And that means the key to our success, in creating this kind of security and response capability for America, is expanded partnership with state and local leaders, and the private sector, as we move forward together in the area of catastrophic planning.”

Remarks by Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff at the National Emergency
Management Association Mid-Year Conference, February 13, 2006.
<http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?content=5414>

“Without policy solutions, federal taxpayers in particular face unnecessarily large burdens for future disaster relief. The time has come for the federal government to convert what is *de facto* insurance—relief provided ‘after the fact’—into a formal reinsurance system that assesses the cost of such catastrophic risks before such events occur.”

Robert E. Litan, The Brookings Institution, “*Preparing for Future Katrinas*,” March, 2006.
<http://www.brookings.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb150.pdf>

“The scale and scope of the damage from Katrina and Rita are unique, but costly natural disasters are not. The Congress may wish to consider options to incorporate planning for such

events in the regular budget process. That planning may help evaluate policies for reducing the costs of future disasters and budgeting in advance for a greater share of those costs.”

Douglas Holtz-Eakin before the Committee on the Budget U.S. House of Representatives. *Macroeconomic and Budgetary Effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita*, October 6, 2005. <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/66xx/doc6684/10-06-Hurricanes.pdf>

“With regard to the status of emergency preparedness across the nation, we know relatively little about how states and localities (1) finance their efforts in this area, (2) have used their federal funds, and (3) are assessing the effectiveness with which they spend those funds.”

Government Accountability Office, *Emergency Preparedness and Response: Some Issues and Challenges Associated with Major Emergency Incidents*, February 23, 2006. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06467t.pdf>

“Although many of these efforts were successful, it appeared that Hurricane Katrina seriously challenged the capacity of organizations such as the American Red Cross and FEMA to provide expected services to certain populations and in certain areas and at certain times.”

Comptroller General David M. Walker on GAO’s Preliminary Observations Regarding Preparedness and Response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, February 1, 2006. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06365r.pdf>

“...money spent on reducing the risk of natural hazards is a sound investment. On average, a dollar spent by FEMA on hazard mitigation provides the nation about \$4 in future benefits. In addition, FEMA grants to mitigate the effects of floods, hurricanes, tornados, and earthquakes between 1993 and 2003 are expected to save more than 220 lives and prevent almost 4,700 injuries over approximately 50 years.”

National Institute of Building Sciences, Multihazard Mitigation Council, *Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: An Independent Study to Assess the Future Savings from Mitigation Activities*, December 19, 2005 http://www.nibs.org/MMC/MitigationSavingsReport/natural_hazard_mitigation_saves.htm

“Mississippi would have fared much better in Katrina if we had a modern building code in place. Instead, the current patchwork system of no code in some jurisdictions and minimal code in others left our building stock especially vulnerable to the devastation brought by Katrina’s winds.”

Marc Levitan, *New LSU Hurricane Center study shows stricter building codes and better construction practices will dramatically reduce damage from future Mississippi Gulf Coast hurricanes*, January 19, 2006. <http://appl003.lsu.edu/unv002.nsf/0/bec2b96b843b135a862570fb0064f3d4?OpenDocument>