

# GAO: More Comprehensive Strategy Needed for FEMA's Community Preparedness Programs

Friday, 26 February 2010 14:55 Press Release Latest National News



Washington, D.C.--(ENEWSPF)--February 26, 2010. Today, Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, and Rep. Laura Richardson (D-CA), Chairwoman of the Committee's Emergency Communication, Preparedness and Response Subcommittee, announced the release of a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled "Emergency Preparedness: FEMA Faces Challenges Integrating Community Preparedness Programs into Its Strategic Approach."

The report examines FEMA's citizen and community preparedness activities, specifically the Citizen Corps Program (CCP), its partner programs, and the Ready Campaign (Ready) and makes the following conclusions:

- FEMA is unable to measure the performance of CCP and Ready because it relies on states to verify CCP data and participation. FEMA does not control the distribution of the Ready messages or have the ability to capture whether Ready is changing individual behavior.
- FEMA has not developed a strategy for integrating community preparedness programs into the National Preparedness System (NPS).
- At the request of the Committee, FEMA developed a draft strategic plan for community preparedness, but it lacks timelines and milestones for completing this strategy.

GAO recommends that FEMA examine ways to verify local CCP and partner programs' data and develop timelines and milestones for completing its community preparedness strategy and its NPS strategy.

Chairman Thompson released the following statement with the release of the report:

"The administration has correctly placed an emphasis on promoting individual preparedness but FEMA still has much work to do to strengthen citizen readiness. I am encouraged that the agency is taking GAO's recommendations seriously, and is finalizing its strategy to strengthen community preparedness and develop tools to better evaluate the effectiveness of its citizen preparedness programs. We cannot wait until the next disaster to better inform the public about what steps they should take in an emergency. I look forward to working with Chairwoman Richardson to ensure that FEMA has the resources necessary to move forward and implement this strategy."

Rep. Richardson, Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Communication, Preparedness and Response, released the following statement:

“Anyone who has lived through a major disaster knows that their ability to survive through it, and to rebuild their lives after it, depends on how well prepared they are before the disaster strikes. That is why the concerns raised in the GAO’s report about FEMA’s citizen preparedness programs are a serious issue for all Americans. With thoughts of the way people suffered after the fires, earthquakes and mudslides in my home state of California still on our minds, support for individual readiness programs must remain a priority for the Administration.

While FEMA recognizes the seriousness of this issue and is moving forward to improve how these programs function, it must still develop a clear vision for FEMA’s role in promoting individual preparedness. I look forward to seeing the progress that FEMA makes in this area and will work with Chairman Thompson, the Committee on Homeland Security, and FEMA to improve program operations and make the completion of this strategy a top priority.”