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Experts: Shift Underway From "Government-Centric" Approach to Emergency Management

By Joseph Straw

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A shift is underway from government-led emergency management toward a stronger, multi-sector, collaborative approach, experts told federal lawmakers Thursday.

A shift is underway from government-led emergency management toward a stronger, multi-sector, collaborative approach—one that government can foster but the private sector must lead—experts [told](#) [1] federal lawmakers Thursday.

Author and homeland security Stephen E. Flynn, now president of the Center for National Policy, [said](#) [2] the country must cast aside the 20th Century mindset in which public safety and security are entitlements provided by the government to citizens, who in crises are purely victims. The new century, he said, has shown that non-military threats to society are too big for the government to handle on its own.

“We can’t get there from here without all hands. It’s got to be an open, inclusive process,” Flynn told members of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Ad Hoc Subcommittee on State, Local, and Private Sector Preparedness and Integration.

Fellow witness Jack Harrald of the Virginia Tech Center for Technology, Security and Policy, [said](#) [3] the shift is “both necessary and possible. This paradigm shift will fundamentally effect how both the private and public sectors react strategically and operationally to these events.”

The new model’s leading advocate is now head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency: Craig Fugate. As head of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, Fugate [told](#) [4] *Security Management* that the private sector can satisfy society’s critical needs far better than government. Therefore, he said, getting businesses reopened following an event must be a primary goal of immediate emergency response.



As FEMA director, Fugate has urged a move away from “government-centric” emergency management, which he explained in a recent [interview](#) [5] with the *The Washington Post*.

Flynn offered a series of hypothetical scenarios in which the private sector can provide resources and services to major disaster responses, from providing mobile power generation equipment to offering unused buildings and property for shelter and logistical operations.

The process begins with communication and collaboration. The overall result, however, is institutional and community resilience, which offers benefits not only in any crisis but day-to-day, in improved planning, operational efficiency, and reduced costs, [said](#) [6] witness Stephen C. Jordan, executive director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Business Civic Leadership Center.

Jordan and the other panelists listed several incentives—government and corporate—that can affect broader private-sector work in resilience and emergency management. Companies active in planning and resilience programs might be offered tax breaks or first crack at post-disaster government grants or reduced insurance rates, they said.

◆ Photo of FEMA's Craig Fugate's confirmation hearing by [FEMA/WikiMediaCommons](#) [7]

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703-519-6200 | fax 703-519-6299 | www.asisonline.org



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