



One Hundred Thirteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515

November 17, 2013

W. Craig Fugate  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

Earlier this year, the House Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications held a series of hearings examining the use of social media and new technology in emergency management. This is an exciting new area in which FEMA and other partners have played a leading role and we appreciate that FEMA provided Mr. Shayne Adamski, to testify at one of these hearings.

In these hearings, the Subcommittee heard testimony from numerous representatives from the public and private sector that shared valuable insight on the current and future uses of social media and new technology in emergency management. One of the recurring themes we heard was the importance of data management and open data standards.

In May of this year, the Administration released an Executive Order – *Making Open and Machine Readable the New Default for Government Information*. Additionally, on May 9<sup>th</sup>, the Office of Management and Budget released a memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies that outlined specific steps agencies need to take in order to “...collect or create information in a way that supports downstream information processing and dissemination activities. This includes using machine-readable and open formats, data standards, and common core and extensible metadata for all new information and collection efforts.”

One of our witnesses, speaking about the desire for open data in the context of emergency alerts stated, “When data is not in open formats, many steps are required to share it and extra steps can keep critical information from getting to people in a timely manner. This is why we advocate using an open, secure, and common standard so that everyone has a consistent way to receive and share alerting information and to create useful visualization of the content.”

We agree that the proper and efficient use of government information will lead to increased efficiencies, reduce costs, and increase public access to valuable information. In addition to the benefits that are realized within the government, we also believe this approach to the management of data could be beneficial to the private sector and in turn spur innovation and job growth.

We also realize that the privacy of individuals and personally identifiable data must be protected in the adoption and utilization of open data standards. Lastly, we recognize that robust auditing and analysis of the use of source information systems is essential to effective oversight, confidence in data integrity by downstream users, and the preservation of public trust.

We are writing to determine how FEMA is implementing the Executive Order and the requirements outlined in the memorandum to Executive Departments and Agencies. Specifically, we would like answers to the following questions that are based on the requirements of the executive order.

- 1) To what extent is FEMA using machine-readable and open formats for information that is collected or created?
- 2) To what extent has FEMA collaborated with the private-sector in the development of open, machine-readable data standards?
- 3) To what extent is FEMA using data standards consistent with OMB Circular A-119 – *Principles for Federal Engagement in Standards Activities to Address National Priorities*?
- 4) To what extent is FEMA applying open licenses to information as it is collected or created?
- 5) To what extent is FEMA using common core metadata as information is collected and created?
- 6) To what extent is FEMA designing their information technology systems to be scalable, flexible, and facilitate the extraction of data in multiple formats and for a range of uses as internal and external needs?
- 7) Is FEMA making high volume data sets available to developers as bulk downloads, through open application programming interfaces, or other?
- 8) As required by the May 9<sup>th</sup> 2013 memorandum, has FEMA reviewed existing policies and procedures to strengthen data management?
  - a. As a result of this review, please provide a list of the policies and procedures modified and the modifications made.
  - b. Has FEMA created an enterprise data inventory? If so, is this inventory available to the public? If not, what are the reasons for not making this public?
- 9) To what extent does FEMA use tamper resistant audit logs to track data usage?
- 10) Has FEMA created a process to engage with stakeholders to help facilitate and prioritize data release?
  - a. If yes, how has FEMA engaged with stakeholders?

- b. If yes, how has FEMA prioritized data release?
- 11) Has FEMA clarified the roles and responsibilities for promoting efficient and effective data release?
- a. If yes, how has FEMA achieved this?
- 12) What measures has FEMA taken to ensure the privacy and confidentiality are fully protected and that data is properly secured?
- 13) To what extent is FEMA implementing common data standards for consistent tracking of audit records across systems?
- 14) To what extent is FEMA employing audit trails to both actively and retroactively investigate potential error and malfeasance in the use of information systems?
- 15) Has FEMA developed and maintained an Information Resource Management strategy consistent with 44 U.S.C. 3506 (b)(2)?
- a. If yes, to what extent has FEMA institutionalized and operationalized the interoperability and openness requirements contained in the May 9 memorandum into FEMA's core processes across all applicable agency programs and stakeholders?
- b. If no, what challenges has FEMA encountered?

We would appreciate answers to the above questions by December 19. We look forward to continue working with you on this very important issue.

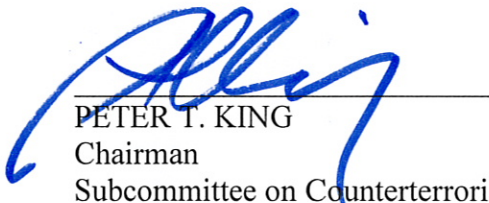
Sincerely,



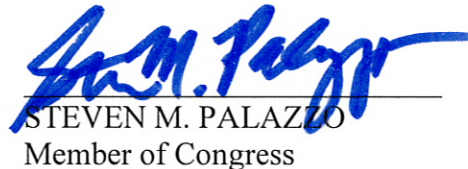
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