

Pete Gaynor

Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency

Speaker Bio:

Peter T. Gaynor was officially confirmed by the U.S. Senate to be FEMA Administrator on January 14, 2020.

Gaynor has more than 11 years of experience in emergency management. Prior to coming to FEMA, Gaynor served as the Director of Rhode Island's Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) in 2015. During that time, RIEMA responded to numerous small and large disasters, including one presidentially declared disaster and at least seven pre-existing active federal disasters. Gaynor oversaw response and recovery efforts to blizzards, floods, tropical storms and public health emergencies. He also coordinated evacuations, mass care, special events, and school safety.

Gaynor served as the policy advisor to Governor Gina Raimondo on emergency management matters. He was also the Chair of the State Interoperable Communications Committee, the State Emergency Response Commission, and was Vice Chair of the State Emergency Management Advisory Committee. Additionally, he served as a Commissioner and a member for the Program Review Committee for the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP), which fosters excellence and accountability in emergency management and homeland security programs across the nation.

From March 2008 to December 2014, Gaynor served as the Director of the Providence Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and Office of Homeland Security, where he was the only Certified Emergency Manager assigned as a municipal emergency manager in Rhode Island. He was responsible for ensuring the planning and operations of the agency, coordinating community exercise programs, managing the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and advising the Mayor of the City of Providence on local government emergency operations.

During his tenure at RIEMA and PEMA, Gaynor oversaw multiple response and recovery operations and managed numerous federally declared disasters.

Under Pete Gaynor's leadership, in 2010, PEMA became the first municipality in the United States to receive accreditation from EMAP. In 2017, Rhode Island became the 36th state to be EMAP-accredited, making Gaynor the first emergency management director awarded EMAP accreditation at the local and state levels. In January 2018, under Gaynor's direction, Rhode Island was the first state designated as StormReady by the National Weather Service.

Gaynor was awarded the International Association of Emergency Managers USA & Global Partners in Preparedness Award for Operation SMART EXIT , a planned full-scale evacuation of several high-rise commercial buildings in Downtown Providence, RI.

Prior to his experience as an emergency manager, Gaynor served for 26 years as an enlisted Marine and Infantry Officer in the United States Marine Corps. During his tenure in the Marines, he was assigned as the Executive Officer responsible for the security of Presidential Retreat, Camp David; assigned as the Head of Plans, Policy, & Operations at the Headquarters Marine Corps during the September 11, 2001 attacks; and deployed in support of Iraqi Freedom with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force where he coordinated combat operations in the Al-Anbar Province of Iraq for Multi-National and Marine forces.

Gaynor received a bachelor's degree in history from Rhode Island College and a master's degree in national security and strategic studies from the Naval War College in Newport, RI. He is also a graduate of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security's Executive Leaders Program.