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For Immediate Release



Statement from IAEM Regarding the Department of Homeland Security Budget Impasse

March 18, 2026 (Falls Church, Va.) – The International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), representing over 6,000 emergency management professionals nationwide, urges the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to pass a full-year budget for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The current funding lapse threatens the stability of our nation’s emergency management system, which is being pushed to its breaking point.

While public discourse often focuses on the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), federal funding is not merely a "rainy day fund" for post-disaster recovery; it provides essential daily support for our agencies.

Impact on Readiness and Operations

The ongoing budget stalemate is now actively impairing the readiness of state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) agencies:

- **Training and Certification:** The FEMA Independent Study (IS) website, a key resource for professional development for thousands of responders, is currently offline or unmanaged. This platform provides the essential National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) training required by federal mandate for all emergency personnel. The outage prevents new staff and volunteers from obtaining the basic certifications needed to deploy to active scenes and hinders experienced responders from maintaining the advanced skills required for complex incident management. Additionally, the closure of the National Disaster and Emergency Management University (NDEMU) has removed access to critical training for emergency management and emergency management adjacent personnel. This has significant implications for our nation’s preparedness capacity
- **Grant Funding:** Programs like the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) and the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) are the primary sources of salary and equipment support for many local offices. Without an enacted budget, these funds are frozen, forcing local jurisdictions to cover the full financial burden, which can result in staff furloughs or equipment loss.
- **Rural Vulnerability:** Small and rural communities with limited tax bases are most severely affected, because they cannot sustain emergency operations without federal assistance. A delay in grants could mean the difference between having a functional Emergency Operations Center and having none at all.

- **Critical Decision Tools:** The shutdown threatens the National Hurricane Program, especially the Hurrevac support tool. With the contract expiring on March 27, the budget impasse makes renewal unlikely, risking the system going offline. This would deprive emergency managers of vital storm surge visualizations (SLOSH), exercise modules, and transportation modeling just as hurricane season approaches.

Emergency management is a non-partisan profession committed to safeguarding everyone in our community. We adhere to the principle of "all-hazards" readiness, but maintaining this readiness becomes impossible when the primary federal partner is incapacitated by a budget lapse.

"Our members serve on the front lines of every crisis, from wildfires and cyberattacks to hurricane," stated IAEM-USA President Josh Morton, CEM. "We cannot wait for the next disaster to realize that our preparedness infrastructure has been hollowed out by budget delays. Stability in Washington is essential for safety in our communities."

IAEM encourages Congress to act promptly to ensure the Department of Homeland Security has the funding and operational capacity needed to support the nation's overall readiness and resilience.

IAEM-USA, the nation's largest emergency management professional association, is a non-profit professional organization representing more than 6,000 emergency management and homeland security professionals for local communities, state and federal disaster officials, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and others involved in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all types of disasters, including acts of terrorism. IAEM provides access to the largest network of emergency management experts who can provide advice and assistance, the Certified Emergency Manager program, annual scholarships, a comprehensive monthly newsletter, and more.

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