



Why This Matters

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has obligated \$11.4 billion for Hurricane Katrina, which occurred on August 29, 2005, and Hurricane Rita, which occurred on September 24, 2005. It is essential that Louisiana's Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) have an effective strategic plan and supporting management information system to manage these grants. FEMA provides disaster recovery assistance to state, Tribal and local governments, and certain types of private nonprofit organizations so that communities can quickly respond to and recover from major disasters declared by the President.

DHS Response

FEMA officials generally agreed with our findings and recommendations. FEMA's written response is due within 90 days.

State of Louisiana Needs a Strategy to Manage Hurricane Katrina and Rita Public Assistance Grants More Effectively

What We Determined

Louisiana's GOHSEP implementation of the two recommendations from our January 2008 audit report improved some aspects of the problems that led to our report recommendations. However, GOHSEP has not established and implemented an effective strategic plan to manage and complete its nearly 20,000 Public Assistance projects in a reasonable time. Additionally, GOHSEP's current management information system does not adequately capture and aggregate available project data to track its progress in meeting strategic goals. As a result, the Hurricane Katrina and Rita Public Assistance programs risk remaining open indefinitely while management costs mount and institutional knowledge, supporting documentation, and access to contractor records are lost to the passage of time. Now, 8 years after the hurricanes, GOHSEP has closed projects totaling only \$279 million, or 2 percent of the \$11.4 billion in Federal funds obligated for the two disasters. GOHSEP also needs to better assess the performance of its Public Assistance employees and contractors.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Regional Administrator, FEMA Region VI, increase FEMA's oversight role in the Hurricane Katrina and Rita Public Assistance programs and direct GOHSEP to:

- 1) Develop and implement an effective strategic plan, including target completion dates, to close all disaster applicants and projects in a reasonable time based on objective performance metrics and staffing levels.
- 2) Enhance its management information system to capture and aggregate key information that can track project milestones, project status, and management challenges for large projects.
- 3) Establish goals, objectives, and time lines for the completion of work in a timely and cost effective manner.
- 4) Establish goals and tools for measuring the performance of its employees and contractors. These performance measurements should be reported to FEMA periodically to determine staffing and performance levels and to establish the reasonableness of costs.

For Further Information:

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