



IAFF Policy Synopsis: Department of Homeland Security

Global Concerns

The central question facing the new Secretary of Homeland Security is whether the Department should be simply a terrorism-specific agency or whether its mission should be protecting Americans from all hazards. This overarching philosophical view manifests itself in several specific policy debates:

- *Should FEMA be an independent agency?*
- *Should the White House Homeland Security Council be folded into the National Security Council?*
- *Should the military's mission include responding to domestic disasters?*

In order to effectively protect Americans against all dangers, the IAFF believes that:

- Homeland Security is more than just preventing terrorism. It should focus on protecting Americans against all hazards/threats: natural and man-made, deliberate and accidental.
- Preventing terrorism is a key goal, but preparedness and response must remain as essential missions of a homeland security strategy. Consequently, we oppose consolidating the White House Homeland Security Council into the National Security Council.
- It is counterproductive to attempt to separate preparedness and response to acts of terrorism vs. other disasters. The same federal programs that protect Americans against terrorism also protect them against natural disasters and man-made accidents.
- America's fire service is the nation's domestic defender. We have the manpower, equipment, training, and deployment model to respond to any emergency anywhere in the nation. Fully utilizing the nation's fire service would negate the need for using the military for responding to emergencies on U.S. soil.

Specific Policies

The IAFF and all major fire service organizations fully support the current structure of DHS with FEMA as an integral, but distinct, agency with the Department. The current structure established by the "Post- Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006" creates a command structure that under normal operating conditions, the FEMA Administrator reports to the Secretary, but reports directly to the POTUS when a disaster is declared. The bi-furcated reporting structure allows for maximum efficiency under all circumstances.

There are several things the new administration can do to immediately begin improving the emergency response capabilities within FEMA:

- The National Response Plan should be revised to take full advantage of local emergency response capabilities. A new position should be created within FEMA to direct and coordinate local emergency response resources.
- The DHS emergency responder credentialing program should be fully implemented.



- The U.S. Fire Administration should be expanded to address the full range of emergency response services provided by the fire service, including EMS and response to WMD incidents.
- Grants to local emergency response agencies need to be better targeted to ensure they are being spent in ways that best protect the public.
- The IAFF supports re-authorizing both the Assistance to Fire Fighters Grant Program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program. We advocate changing the eligibility criteria and qualification matrices to ensure that the grant money is fairly distributed based on a formula based on population served, call volume, risk factors, and civilian and fire fighter safety considerations.

As part of any short term economic stimulus plan, DHS should advocate that a percentage of infrastructure and state/local aid funding be allocated to homeland security issues, including but not limited to: hardening critical targets, building and/or improving facilities for first responders, direct short term aid to local governments to avoid personnel reductions in first response agencies.

Personnel

The IAFF represents the frontline emergency responders who protect 80% of the U.S. population. Unfortunately, the views of the IAFF and the men and women we represent have been largely precluded from policy making in DHS. Organizations representing fire chiefs, volunteer fire fighters, and state emergency response agencies have been the primary partners with the Bush Administration. To address this shortcoming, we advocate:

- Placement of a front-line emergency responder as FEMA Administrator
- Placement of professional fire fighter as Administrator of the U.S. Fire Administration
- Placement of a person who recognizes the role of professional fire fighters in the Office of Grants Administration