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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

**Testimony for the House Appropriations Committee**

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Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency

Richard D. Flinn, Jr. Director

Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek, and Members of the Committee, I am Rick Flinn, Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee to discuss PEMA's budget for 2015-2016.

First and foremost, I want you to know that when Governor Wolf offered me the job as PEMA Director, he made it clear that his Administration would make a very strong commitment to public safety for all the citizens of the Commonwealth. Governor Wolf, his Cabinet Secretary designees, and his key staff came to PEMA the Thursday before he was sworn-in to get a briefing about the agency and how state agencies function during a disaster or emergency situation. The week after the inauguration we had a severe winter storm affecting the southeastern counties of the state; the Governor participated in the state weather calls, issued a proclamation of disaster emergency and came to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) during the event to oversee the operations. Since then, Governor Wolf and his Cabinet Secretary designees have been at PEMA for a table top exercise that focused on a disaster involving a train carrying Bakken Crude Oil. (This by the way was a week before the Bakken Crude train derailment had occurred in West Virginia). The Governor and fellow Cabinet Members will be again at PEMA in two weeks for yet another exercise. In short – Governor Wolf is very actively engaged in emergency management matters.

Since this is the first time before the Committee, I'd like to give you a quick overview of my background and emergency management experience. On January 20, Governor Wolf appointed me as his Director of PEMA when six days earlier I had been working for the Federal

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in Washington D.C. as the Deputy Director for Operations. My role was to assist the Director in overseeing the FEMA's national response capabilities including the National Response Coordination Center, the National Watch Center, the FEMA Operations Center in Mount Weather, the National Incident Management Teams and the National Urban Search and Rescue Program. Prior to going to FEMA, I served the Commonwealth as the Deputy Director of Operations for PEMA. One of my duties included overseeing the 9-1-1 Office. Prior to that, for 24 years I worked for the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council, which is the legislatively mandated statewide organization that advises the Secretary of Health on all aspects of Pennsylvania's Emergency Health Care System, and became their Executive Director. I recently retired after 35 years in the military and served as the Commander of Pennsylvania's Army National Guard Medical Detachment. I retired as a Colonel. I have been involved with emergency services since I was sixteen when I joined a small volunteer fire company in western Pennsylvania. I have been a firefighter, Fire Chief, Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic, Emergency Medical Technician and Fire Instructor, and local emergency management coordinator. I only relate that experience to you because I have been in the unique position of both being able to assist in developing our Commonwealth's emergency response system at the statewide level and serve the citizens as a first responder.

I want to now take this opportunity on behalf of Governor Wolf, to thank the tens of thousands of first responders who put their lives on the line for the citizens of Pennsylvania. Each day they see first-hand the horrible and tragic mini disasters individuals and families face. From the emergency managers, 9-1-1 operators, State and local police, career and volunteer EMT's,

Paramedics and Firefighters these men and women are truly on the front lines saving lives and protecting property. Their jobs are thankless and dangerous as witnessed these past four weeks when we collectively have lost a police officer, a firefighter and a paramedic in the line of duty. Your continued support for their programs and safety is certainly appreciative and needed. Every disaster is local and these dedicated men and women are truly the ones that are the point of the spear in Pennsylvania's disaster response.

Pennsylvania has had 15 presidentially declared disasters in the past 12 years, more than many states in the country. My mission as Director is to ensure that PEMA, all Commonwealth's Agencies and the Counties are prepared to respond to and recover in a coordinated fashion from any disaster emergency. Pennsylvania's number one threat is flooding; however we must also be concerned about tornados, tropical storms, major snow and ice storms and high wind or derecho events. In addition, the Commonwealth has five nuclear plants and one experimental nuclear reactor, 7000 Hazardous Chemical Sites with over 3200 of those having Extremely Hazardous Chemicals which require off-site plans, 10,000 plus Marcellus Well sites, 1068 high risk dams and a transportation network that carries all kinds of dangerous products over the highways, air, water and through pipe lines. This includes on average 60 trains that travel across the state each week through 30 counties that are carrying Bakken Crude Oil. Obviously we must also be collectively prepared to deal with the consequences of man-made threats from terrorists or criminals ranging from lone actors to organized groups and respond to the consequences of cyber-attacks. Finally as FEMA has recently mandated, we now must plan for Climate Change related events. Not to debate the science, but simply to state the facts that both our

Commonwealth and the Nation has experienced unique weather events in the past few years such as: more intense storms, frequent heavy precipitation, heat waves, drought, rising ocean waters and extreme flooding. We also have to deal with special events like; this year's Papal Visit to Philadelphia, which may have six million people present over the time he is there; the PGA Open that is being held in Lancaster this summer; and next year's Democratic National Convention, again being held in Philadelphia.

FEMA's primary mission is to support the states; PEMA's primary mission is to support the counties. Our collective goal is to stabilize any disaster within the first 72 hours. This means that disaster survivors are rescued, in shelters, and their basic needs are being met. To do that I have adopted the FEMA policy of "Go Big, Go Fast but Go Smart". Fundamentally this means I need to ensure that whatever resources the county may need to save or sustain a life, it has to be there before he or she asks for it. We have and will continue to lean forward by prepositioning teams, equipment and supplies when an emerging event occurs. One thing you never get back in a disaster is time.

As you can see from our line items in the budget, PEMA is a unique organization, unlike many other state emergency management agencies. The majority of our 190 plus dedicated and highly trained staff, not only have their normal day to day jobs in the areas of preparedness, response, recovery, and managing and administrating the 12 federal grant programs, as well as the 9-1-1 program, they must also wear a second hat as an emergency manager to either respond to the

State Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the County EOC's, or the site when a statewide emergency or disaster occurs.

This year, the top legislative priority for PEMA is the re-write of the 9-1-1 law which sunsets on June 30, 2015. It also is the top priority for the County Commissioner's Association of Pennsylvania. Each year, Pennsylvanians call 9-1-1 about nine million times. Every one of those calls is important and they are the lifeline for the callers since it starts the emergency response for assistance. That is the reason the 9-1-1 re-write is so crucial to public safety across the commonwealth.

As you know, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) issued a report in May 2012 entitled: "Pennsylvania's 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone System: Funding, Expenditures and Future Challenges and Opportunities for PEMA." The LBFC report rang the alarm bell that we urgently need to fix the current 9-1-1 system. The overarching problem this report brings to light is that the current levels of 9-1-1 operations are on an unsustainable path. Without a major sea change in how 9-1-1 programs are funded and operated in the coming years, public safety across the Commonwealth is likely to be compromised.

Over the past 18 months there has been considerable work on the re-write and PEMA has held numerous stakeholder meetings on the matter to discuss the 9-1-1 re-write and to work on the concepts that should be incorporated in the legislation. We all agree that the re-write needs to be

a collaborative effort to ensure that help in an emergency remains only a phone call away for every Pennsylvanian. All the stakeholders share common ground on just about all of the major goal issues involved in the re-write. Governor Wolf's vision is a comprehensive new funding plan. This new plan will replace the current structure. He would like a system that imposes a percentage based fee assessed on the broad range of communications modes. The Governor also wants a strong, uniform, and fair reimbursement to counties. The current structure is not sustainable over the long term and he believes in fixing the structure of 9-1-1 funding once and for all. Governor Wolf firmly believes that to meet challenges the commonwealth faces "we need to think differently and do things differently."

There are two things that are absolutely essential in the final bill. First, all the stakeholders agree that statewide interconnectivity is essential to integrate Next Generation technology across the commonwealth. The final bill must apportion part of the 9-1-1 fund for statewide interconnectivity. If the state does not do statewide interconnectivity, it is almost certain that the sixty nine (69) Public Safety Answering Points ("PSAPs" or "9-1-1 Centers") will have different Next Generation solutions and capabilities across the commonwealth. The end result is that different levels of public safety will exist across the commonwealth. Moreover, statewide interconnectivity done at the state level will reduce county network costs in the short term and long term. Second, PEMA's current authorities to oversee 9-1-1 must not be diluted. If PEMA's current authorities are diluted, it will make it very difficult to manage the 9-1-1 program, provide the appropriate oversight regarding fund uses, and control expenditures.

I again want to reinforce that the counties are PEMA's primary customer and we will provide them the support they need to protect our citizens. This includes planning assistance and tools, training and exercises and through the 9 task forces, equipment. Disasters however cannot be only government-centric, as has been addressed at the federal level, the private sector, the voluntary organizations involved in disasters, the faith based groups and the general public are critical stake holders and we will continue to bring these partners in before, during and after an event occurs. We are going to organize a State Business Emergency Operations Center based off the National Business Operations Center that will bring in private sector partners to help gain situational awareness of businesses and industries that are open or closed and the resources they may be able to bring to the disaster fight. We also will continue to host and work with the Pennsylvania Voluntary Organizations Involved in Disasters to again assure that their collective response and recovery efforts are synchronized and coordinated. Finally we will continue and enhance our outreach efforts to educate the public in their roles in preparing for disasters.

These outreach efforts include ReadyPA. The purpose of ReadyPA is to motivate Pennsylvanians to take action to prepare for a disaster. ReadyPA encourages all Pennsylvanians to: Be Informed, Be Prepared, and Be Involved. Nationwide experience has shown that, in major emergencies or disasters, the public needs to be prepared to make it on their own for a period of time. Local officials and emergency relief workers will respond after a disaster, but they may not be able to reach everyone right away. As happened in Hurricane Irene, Tropical Storm Lee, and Hurricane Sandy, it may take significant time after an emergency for things such as power or water to be fully restored. That is why it's critical for everyone to be prepared to survive on his or her own for at least 72 hours in the event of an emergency. The on-going purpose of

ReadyPA is to make our citizens fully aware of this reality and have them fully prepared if such a situation occurs. The ReadyPA web site can be found at: [www.ReadyPA.org](http://www.ReadyPA.org).

In closing, I again want to assure the Committee that Governor Wolf has made a very strong commitment to public safety for all the citizens of the commonwealth. It is a core governmental function. This budget maintains his commitment to public safety and provides the necessary funding for PEMA to accomplish its mission. I believe that with his commitment -- and your continued support of our mission -- PEMA will continue to move forward and become the premier emergency management agency in the nation.

On behalf of Governor Wolf, I thank you Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek, and Members of the Committee, for your continued support of PEMA and our partners in public safety across the state. I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today and I will try to answer any questions you might have.