

**Statement for the
House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee
Wednesday, August 29, 2012**

PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Chairman Barrar, Chairman Sainato, and Members of the Committee, I am Glenn Cannon, Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement and discuss House Bill 2562 which will amend the Emergency Management Services Code, commonly referred to as Title 35.

Even though PEMA is a small agency, we have a very large mission. Our mission is to save lives; reduce suffering; and when possible, protect property and the environment. PEMA has the enormous responsibility to direct and coordinate state agency response and to support county and local governments in the areas of disaster preparedness, planning, and response to and recovery from man-made or natural disasters. When Governor Corbett 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. He has followed through on that commitment and this re-write of Title 35 is another important step in further enhancing public safety.

Title 35 contains the Emergency Management Services Code which governs how PEMA functions and provides the framework for how the Commonwealth and our local governments prepare for and respond to disasters. The current Title 35 has been in place for about 34 years and the last significant amendments to it were 16 years ago in 1996. The General Assembly last updated Title 35 in 1996 as a result of the winter storm and flood disaster responses.

Since 1996, there have been significant events and new federal law changes that necessitate changes to Title 35. Some of the significant events and federal law changes include: the 2007 Valentine's Day Winter Storm, Hurricane Katrina, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the creation of the Commonwealth's nine Regional Task Forces, cyber attacks that now are happening on a frequent basis, and new federal guidelines and programs relating to all-hazard disasters. Some of those Federal initiatives include the National Preparedness Goal, the National Incident Management System, the National Infrastructure Protection Program, the National Pandemic Preparedness Program, and the National Response Framework.

In addition, in August and September 2011, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee caused the most significant and widespread flooding in the Commonwealth since Hurricane Agnes in 1972. Across the board the response to those storms was remarkable and highly successful. But as always, we learned some lessons that will further enhance our emergency response capabilities in the future. Simply put, the requirements of emergency management professionals in 2012 are quite different

than those in 1996. It is no longer enough to be able to respond – we must work toward a comprehensive emergency management program focused on preparedness and the ability to prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from any disaster or emergency situation. Frankly, the changes needed to Title 35 are long overdue.

As a result of those significant events and changes to federal and state law, we conducted a comprehensive review of our entire emergency management program, including Title 35. In addition to our internal review, Mr. James Lee Witt, the highly regarded former director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Ridge Global with former Governor and first U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge as its principle, conducted independent reviews of the Commonwealth's disaster response framework and issued reports recommending enhancements to our current program. And -- most important -- over the past number of years PEMA conducted numerous meetings and had considerable outreach with those in the emergency community and elected officials associations to help draft changes to the current Title 35. Some of the outreach included: approximately eight meetings with the Keystone Emergency Management Association (KEMA) and county Emergency Management Agency coordinators; three regional statewide meetings with the emergency management community and elected officials; and meetings with associations or groups affected by the proposed legislation including elected officials associations (such as the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania State Association of

Township Supervisors, the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, and the Pennsylvania Municipal League), and first responder associations.

As with any piece of legislation that is this lengthy and comprehensive, I am sure there are some matters to which stakeholders may want to make some additional changes. PEMA is open to any change that makes this legislation better. For example, two weeks ago KEMA held a board meeting at PEMA. During that meeting, KEMA raised two changes that it felt was appropriate to the legislation. PEMA concurred with those changes and has drafted language to address those issues. Subject to those two minor changes, at the board meeting KEMA voted unanimously to support the current version of Title 35. Therefore, I do believe that this legislation will have broad and strong support from stakeholders.

PEMA's role in a disaster or emergency is to direct and coordinate state agency response and to support county and local governments. At the state level, this truly requires team effort among all agencies. In the proposed amendments to Title 35, we worked closely with our sister agencies to make sure their needs were met in the legislation. For example, with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) we worked to ensure that law enforcement sensitive information would be protected whenever information needed for consequence management was shared. This also will enhance appropriate information sharing with the Office of Homeland Security. With the Department of Health we worked to ensure that the public health isolation and quarantine measures fit their needs along with those of law enforcement. With the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of

Education, we worked to ensure that there will be enhanced dependent care facility planning in the event of a disaster or emergency. Cooperation and coordination among state agencies is essential in managing a widespread major disaster or a single incident. You had to be at the State Emergency Operations Center during Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee to fully appreciate how important a role the cooperation and coordination played in successfully responding to those storms.

With regards to the proposed amendments, the text of Title 35 is quite lengthy and comprehensive. Therefore, in consideration of our time today, I will not go into detail about each section of the proposed legislation but highlight that some of the key changes to the current Title 35 are:

- Enhanced Dependent Care Facilities Planning,
- More Clearly Detailing the Powers and Duties of County Emergency Management Programs,
- More Clearly Detailing the Powers and Duties Local Emergency Management Programs,
- Certification & Accreditation of Emergency Management Professionals,
- Support of County Animal Rescue Teams,
- Enhanced Coordination of Regional All Hazard/Counter-terrorism Task Forces,
- Enhanced Large Event Emergency Planning,
- More Comprehensive Workers Compensation Coverage for Emergency Management Volunteers and Workers,
- Enhanced Information Sharing for Better Disaster Consequence Management,
- Expanded Public Health Isolation & Quarantine Measures, and

- Promoting the Regionalization of Emergency Management Programs.

The overarching goal of the amendments to Title 35 is to provide a more efficient and effective way for the Commonwealth and local governments to prepare for and respond to all-hazard disasters.

The natural disasters of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, wildfires in the Western States, and the recent tragic shootings in Colorado and Wisconsin are a constant reminder of what our business is all about. Most days our agency is out of the public view. During those days we are behind the scenes doing the planning and preparing that is crucial to successfully respond to an incident. But when a disaster or emergency hits – sometime with advance warning, and many more times with no warning – we must come through for our citizens. As our new PEMA motto states: “Hope is not a plan, and failure is not an option.” I believe the proposed changes to Title 35 will further enhance emergency management capabilities across the state, county and local levels. The end result of enacting this legislation: the citizens of our Commonwealth will be better protected in the event of a future disaster or emergency.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for introducing HB 2562 and your leadership on this important matter. Also, I thank Chairman Sainato and the many members of the Committee that have co-sponsored HB 2562. On behalf of Governor Corbett and the twelve million Pennsylvanians we serve, I also thank the members of this Committee for your continued support of PEMA and our partners in public safety

across the state. I believe that with Governor Corbett's commitment and your support of our mission, PEMA will continue to move forward and become the premier emergency management agency in the nation.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and I will be happy to answer any questions that members may have.