

1 COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
2 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
3 APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEARING

4 STATE CAPITOL
5 HARRISBURG, PA

6 MAIN BUILDING
7 ROOM 140

8 TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2016
9 11:54 A.M.

10 BUDGET HEARING
11 PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
12 OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE COMMISSIONER

13 BEFORE:

14 HONORABLE WILLIAM ADOLPH, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
15 HONORABLE KAREN BOBACK
16 HONORABLE GARY DAY
17 HONORABLE GEORGE DUNBAR
18 HONORABLE KEITH GREINER
19 HONORABLE SETH GROVE
20 HONORABLE SUE HELM
21 HONORABLE WARREN KAMPF
22 HONORABLE FRED KELLER
23 HONORABLE TOM KILLION
24 HONORABLE JIM MARSHALL
25 HONORABLE KURT MASSER
HONORABLE DAVE MILLARD
HONORABLE DUANE MILNE
HONORABLE MARK MUSTIO
HONORABLE MIKE PEIFER
HONORABLE CURT SONNEY
HONORABLE JOSEPH MARKOSEK, MINORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE LESLIE ACOSTA
HONORABLE MATTHEW BRADFORD
HONORABLE TIM BRIGGS
HONORABLE DONNA BULLOCK
HONORABLE MARY JO DALEY
HONORABLE MADELEINE DEAN
HONORABLE MARIA DONATUCCI
HONORABLE STEPHEN KINSEY
HONORABLE MICHAEL O'BRIEN
HONORABLE MARK ROZZI
HONORABLE KEVIN SCHREIBER
HONORABLE PETER SCHWEYER

1 ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:
HONORABLE BERNIE O'NEILL
2 HONORABLE STEVE BARRAR
HONORABLE JUDY WARD
3 HONORABLE DAVE ZIMMERMAN
HONORABLE MATT BAKER
4 HONORABLE RICK SACCONI
HONORABLE MIKE TOBASH
5 HONORABLE WILL TALLMAN
HONORABLE CRAIG STAATS
6 HONORABLE CRIS DUSH
HONORABLE STAN SAYLOR
7 HONORABLE KRISTIN PHILLIPS-HILL
HONORABLE KERRY BENNINGHOFF
8 HONORABLE MICHAEL DRISCOLL
HONORABLE BRYAN BARBIN
9 HONORABLE FLO FABRIZIO
HONORABLE VANESSA LOWERY BROWN
10 HONORABLE DAN FRANKEL
HONORABLE WILLIAM KORTZ
11 HONORABLE DOM COSTA
HONORABLE CHRIS SAINATO
12 HONORABLE MIKE LONGIETTI
HONORABLE JAMES ROEBUCK
13 HONORABLE STEVE McCARTER

14 COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:
DAVID DONLEY, MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
15 RITCHIE LaFAVER, MAJORITY DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CURT SCHRODER, MAJORITY CHIEF COUNSEL
16 MIRIAM FOX, MINORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TARA TREES, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Hello and
3 welcome everyone. I would like to reconvene the House
4 Appropriations Committee. We are in the 2016-17 budget
5 hearings and with us to testify is the Pennsylvania
6 Emergency Management Agency as well as the State Fire
7 Commissioner.

8 Director of PEMA is Richard Flinn. Good
9 morning.

10 DIRECTOR FLINN: Good morning, sir.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: No stranger to
12 this committee, former Representative, former State
13 Senator, now the Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioner
14 Timothy Solobay.

15 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Chairman, good
16 morning.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: And with you
18 gentlemen are Jeffrey Thomas, the executive deputy
19 director of PEMA.

20 MR. THOMAS: Good morning.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: As well as
22 Robert Mateff, deputy director of 9-1-1 PEMA.

23 MR. MATEFF: Thank you. Good morning.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Good morning,
25 gentlemen.

1 Also joining us is Representative Bill
2 Kortz and Representative Dom Costa. And it's the custom
3 of Representative Markosek and I, we invite the standing
4 chairs of the House standing committees and we will
5 introduce those gentlemen after your opening remarks, so
6 the mic is yours.

7 DIRECTOR FLINN: Thank you, sir.

8 I know you have my testimony, but I
9 wanted to take a perspective and focus in on some of the
10 things we've done to identify efficiencies since, again,
11 this is an appropriations meeting.

12 So Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek,
13 and members of the committee, I am Rick Flinn, director
14 of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. Thank
15 you for the opportunity to provide a statement and
16 appear before this committee to discuss PEMA's budget
17 request for 2016-2017.

18 Although we are a small agency, we have a
19 very large mission. Our mission is to direct and
20 coordinate state agency response and to support county
21 and local governments in the areas of disaster
22 preparedness, planning, and response to and recovery
23 from manmade and natural disasters.

24 My ultimate goal is to have the
25 Commonwealth's Emergency Management Agency be the best

1 in the country. I am focused on the need to ensure that
2 we are utilizing taxpayers' funds in the most prudent
3 and effective manner to achieve our critical public
4 safety mission to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

5 To that end, from the moment the Governor
6 appointed me, I've taken his theme of government that
7 works and conducted a comprehensive review of the
8 organization, our business practices, and tasked each
9 bureau with identifying efficiencies and improving our
10 customer service processes. We have implemented
11 cost-saving measures as small as turning off the lights
12 in vacant offices to reducing travel costs by utilizing
13 webinars and conducting conference calls for meetings
14 with our stakeholders. We centralized our office supply
15 system to reduce duplicate inventories, and maximized
16 efficiencies related to smart phone usage to reduce our
17 mobile phone costs by 2 1/2 percent.

18 In addition, PEMA is working on a project
19 with the State Fire Commissioner to reduce the overall
20 cost of training to the Commonwealth and counties.
21 We're in the process of reengineering our entire
22 training exercise program to continue to meet the needs
23 of our stakeholders while lowering costs.

24 For example, all county and municipal
25 emergency management coordinators are required to take

1 courses and conduct exercises for emergency management
2 certification. We're in the process of identifying
3 those courses that can be converted to either all or
4 partial classroom time to online training. We are
5 working with the Fire Commissioner, again the Department
6 of Health and the Office of Administration to find an
7 enterprise solution that will be more consumer-service
8 oriented and save time and money.

9 As you can see from our line items in the
10 budget, PEMA's a unique organization. Unlike many other
11 state emergency management agencies the majority of our
12 173-plus highly trained staff not only have their normal
13 day-to-day job in the area of preparedness, response,
14 recovery, and managing, administrating the 12 federal
15 and state grant programs, they also serve as an
16 emergency manager to either respond to the State
17 Emergency Operations Center, the county EOCs, or to the
18 site when a statewide emergency or disaster occurs. So
19 we all have two hats, if you will.

20 The majority of the funding PEMA receives
21 comes in the form of state and federal grants designed
22 to support state and local efforts to, again, prevent
23 and prepare for the threats and hazards we face. PEMA
24 serves as the administrative agency of these grants that
25 are passed to county and local governments.

1 reduce overall cost, we will have other state agencies
2 occupy the space, which includes PennDOT, the Department
3 of Human Services, and possibly, we are currently
4 working with the Department of Health to have elements
5 of their office of Public Health Preparedness co-located
6 with us.

7 As part of the comprehensive review of
8 our organization, I realized that the way it was
9 structured was not only inefficient, it was neither
10 mission-focused nor disaster centric. We developed a
11 reorganization plan to focus our efforts in four general
12 categories, which includes mission support,
13 preparedness, response, and the 9-1-1 program. We are
14 realigning staff expertise in the response areas and
15 identified experienced emergency management
16 professionals to lead our teams. We have developed this
17 proposed reorganization without increasing our overall
18 complement.

19 We also have and will continue to focus
20 on the reality that preparedness, response, and recovery
21 to disasters cannot be government-centered. We are
22 expanding our public outreach efforts to include the
23 private sector and enhancing engagement with the
24 volunteer organizations active in disaster.

25 I would be remiss if I did not take this

1 time to thank members of the general assembly and the
2 numerous stakeholders who were involved in passing Act
3 12 of 2015, the comprehensive rewrite of the 9-1-1 law.
4 The legislation created a uniform surcharge fee,
5 established a uniform fund for collecting the
6 surcharges, and updated the procedures for the
7 collection and distribution of the funds to the 69
8 public-safety answering points throughout the
9 Commonwealth.

10 October 2015 through December 2015 was
11 the first full quarter under Act 12 and it's the best
12 indicator of projected revenue to date. During that
13 time, \$79.8 million was remitted to the Commonwealth.
14 Should the quarterly average remain consistent, we will
15 meet the estimated revenue collections in the 9-1-1 fund
16 to support the 9-1-1 systems across the Commonwealth.

17 Again, on behalf of Governor Wolf, I
18 thank you, Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek, and
19 members of the committee, for your continued support of
20 PEMA and our partners in public safety across the state.
21 I believe that with the continued commitment of Governor
22 Wolf and your continued support of our mission, PEMA
23 will move forward and become a premier emergency
24 management agency in the nation. And again, I
25 appreciate the opportunity to appear today and I will

1 try to answer any questions you have.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

3 Commissioner?

4 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Chairman Adolph
5 and Markosek, thank you very much. I appreciate the
6 opportunity to share with you the activities of our
7 agency and you've all got the written statements and I
8 will just kind of paraphrase through most of those.

9 The Office of the State Fire
10 Commissioner's main responsibility is to train and
11 educate not only the firefighters, but the career
12 volunteers across the Commonwealth, but also make sure
13 we have ample instructors, fire instructors to handle
14 that position and that job. Also, we -- as you also
15 know -- are the administrators of the \$30 million grant
16 program that through the casino revenue dollars, it goes
17 back to fire departments across the Commonwealth and
18 ambulance services across the Commonwealth.

19 To date, we had this past year a pretty
20 much record number of applicants, over 2400, of which
21 about 1600 of those already have put in their grant
22 agreement paperwork and we're still waiting on the
23 remaining 800 or so folks to do that. We will be
24 getting you those names of those fire departments and
25 ambulance services that have not processed their

1 paperwork yet, so they can make sure they get their
2 funds.

3 Again, one of the other components of the
4 office is dealing with the 2-percent loan program. Back
5 in 2013, we had changed some of the legislation around
6 dealing with the amount of money that our fire
7 departments are able to borrow and ambulance services
8 are able to borrow to update capital projects within
9 their purview. And we have doubled the amount that they
10 can borrow, as well as doubled the amount of time that
11 they get to pay it back. So that's also been a very
12 well-received, well-used program that the office has,
13 and I could say that the hundreds of millions of dollars
14 that have been loaned out since that program began quite
15 a few years ago, the payback schedule and the payback
16 participation of the fire departments has been very
17 well. They have been very good stewards of the money we
18 have lent them and made sure that it comes back.

19 There's a handful that we deal with that
20 may either be late in payments or in some cases through
21 companies closing or are going out of business, we've
22 had to do some chasing to get some of those funds back,
23 but for the most part the program is very, very
24 successful. It's very viable at this point in time and
25 there still exists in the initial legislation that

1 allowed for the hundred-million-dollar bond issue to
2 make those moneys available. About \$50 million worth of
3 bonds yet to have even been sold out to add to the
4 program and we're probably sitting on a balance of about
5 49, \$48 million right now available for loaning out.
6 And each year, we probably loan out between 15 and
7 \$18 million. And the payments that come back, generally
8 are a little higher than what's been loaned out. So
9 that program also is going very well.

10 We also have the public education fire
11 prevention portion of things where we make sure that the
12 messages of good fire prevention gets not only to the
13 fire departments across the Commonwealth, but also to
14 the residents of the Commonwealth.

15 And of course, in the case -- and we hope
16 that this doesn't happen very often -- we deal also with
17 the line-of-duty deaths that occur within the
18 Commonwealth. Last year nationally, 86 individual
19 firefighters died in the line of duty. Unfortunately,
20 in Pennsylvania we had 10 that passed, so we had a
21 pretty high percentage in the overall. And uniquely
22 because, I think, of the training and the things that
23 have gone on, the incidents that did occur, the
24 unfortunates that did occur were those because of
25 health-related issues and not because of fire -- on a

1 fire scene itself.

2 We also, along with the director, have
3 been doing different things. The overall budget is much
4 smaller than some of the ones that have come and talked
5 to you, but this past year alone, over \$100,000, I
6 think, of savings from things of -- trying to go
7 electronically when we can, minimize paper, postage, and
8 those types of things, when it comes to loan agreements,
9 as well as the grant agreements, also some of the other
10 technology available with our instructors as far as
11 being able to do things via webcast as opposed to
12 bringing them into the academy or to some other site
13 where the costs are much higher.

14 And two of the big things we're really
15 trying to work on this year, not only reemphasizing and
16 reestablishing the Academy on the Road Program, which
17 also helps local departments get some of the same type
18 training and education that goes on at the academy, but
19 at a more local level and saving costs on both sides of
20 that equation. But as the director was saying earlier,
21 trying to develop an online training format that we can
22 utilize for firefighters.

23 We've found out that the younger folks as
24 we traveled across the Commonwealth, the millennials if
25 you would, like to do training and education from their

1 computers as opposed to sitting in a classroom. We have
2 over a 159 different programs, both certificate and
3 national certified programs that are available to be
4 done, so it will be a little bit of a challenge to get
5 this program started, but I think in the long run, it
6 will save both taxpayer dollars as well as our
7 firefighter dollars in getting them more engaged in the
8 training and education. And I, too, stand ready for any
9 questions you may have.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
11 gentlemen.

12 Chairman Markosek for opening comments.

13 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Thank you,
14 Chairman.

15 And Director Flinn, Commissioner Solobay
16 deputy directors, thank you for attending today. I
17 don't have any questions.

18 You know, I have to point out to every
19 former House member that comes before us that they --
20 once a House member, always a House member, I hope you
21 remember that. But I'm glad to see that --

22 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: I take it then the
23 questions will be very simple and easy to answer.

24 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: We give the
25 House members the most difficult ones. But I'm glad to

1 see there is life after.

2 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Thank you.

3 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: So welcome,
4 all of you and I'll let the members ask questions.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
6 Chairman.

7 I would like to acknowledge the presence
8 of Representative Saccone and Tobash.

9 And now, as I mentioned that we've
10 invited Chairman Barrar and Chairman Sainato. And the
11 first question will be asked by Chairman Steven Barrar.

12 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: Thank you,
13 Chairman Adolph.

14 Thank you for being here today,
15 gentlemen. If I could start with Fire Commissioner
16 Solobay.

17 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Yes, sir.

18 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: We had talked in
19 the past and I know I've heard you talk many times about
20 your efforts for retention and recruitment of new
21 volunteers. Can you give us an idea of what you're
22 currently working on?

23 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Sure. As some you
24 may know or not know, the biggest issue we're dealing
25 with for recruitment of new volunteers are family

1 requirements and more people are working, it gives them
2 too much time away from their home area of being able to
3 possibly volunteer in their community to time spent on
4 training. But the biggest key we're finding out is the
5 fact that they have had to become professional
6 fundraisers to maintain their department and be able to
7 make the purchases necessary to do the job that they are
8 doing and to volunteer for their community.

9 We spent a lot of time dealing with our
10 local municipal officials because at the end of the day,
11 the feds, the state government does help and make
12 participation into the overall operations of fire
13 departments and fire service, but at the end of the day,
14 it's the local municipal governments that have the
15 biggest responsibility for help in that case.

16 So from that perspective, we've been
17 really trying to talk to them and convince them of the
18 importance of their financial participation because
19 spending some money with their volunteers now could,
20 down the road, save them a whole lot of money, a whole
21 lot of local tax dollars if they have to increase their
22 local tax dollars because they have to bring a career
23 department in. You know, it's estimated -- the
24 volunteer fire service across the Commonwealth saves
25 taxpayers locally almost -- now, almost \$10 billion a

1 year by the services they provide. And that's billion
2 with a "B," and you can imagine, that's almost one-third
3 of the state budget that you're talking about right now.
4 So if that tax burden came onto local governments and
5 the local taxpayers, I think they would be somewhat
6 upset if they didn't take the opportunity now to help
7 their folks. There are some pieces of legislation that
8 would allow for the expansion of the relief funding bill
9 that will open up the door for some opportunities,
10 whether it be tuition assistance, other types of benefit
11 programs that can be paid for out of relief funds that
12 would enable folks and encourage them to maybe
13 participate and want to consider volunteering.

14 I know here in the House, you have the
15 legislation I think with the -- I'm sorry, it came from
16 the Senate first with the wage tax, being able to forgo
17 a volunteer's wage tax at a certain percentage. I
18 believe you also have a bill in the House that is
19 considering that. The only provision that I had asked
20 for and was hoping it would change is it's a may
21 provision versus a shall provision. So I don't know how
22 many municipalities would consider looking at that.

23 In the past year and two months that
24 we've been out there talking with folks, we have seen a
25 lot more increased participation from local governments.

1 I think they are understanding, I think they are being
2 made aware of the fact that the cost of what it is to
3 run a fire department and looking at that big ticket
4 item of having, you know, replacing a volunteer with a
5 career has also made them understand it as well.

6 So you know, we ask you to continue
7 looking at some of the incentive things legislatively
8 that could be done, that would give a benefit to
9 volunteers for giving their time, and of course, as I
10 mentioned with the relief funding, looking to do some
11 things that would hopefully expand the amount of money
12 that local companies would receive which would be able
13 to let them offer these incentives.

14 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: Have you had any
15 discussions with any of the people in the Governor's
16 Office about increasing the \$30 million grant program?
17 Have you any ideas of where we might be able to get
18 additional funding? We are looking at legislation to
19 reauthorize that for another four years and I would love
20 to see if there was any way we could increase that.

21 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Well, you know, we
22 hear constantly from firefighters that those that did
23 fundraising, especially things like bingo and other
24 types of games of chance that, you know, it would be
25 ideal if they could get some more of the gaming money

1 that would come across.

2 I know there's some bills being looked at
3 that would expand gaming that may get some additional
4 revenue to put in place. I know there's a bill being
5 looked at right now also dealing with the expansion of
6 fireworks in the Commonwealth, for consumer fireworks.
7 Although from a fire service perspective and an EMS
8 perspective, we're not real happy to see that expansion
9 because of the increased fires and/or increased injuries
10 that could occur from that, but if it does become a
11 reality, we want to make sure that there's a carveout
12 somewhere in there that the emergency services get some
13 additional funding because of the increased activity
14 that they're going to see if we expand the fireworks.

15 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: They're here
16 anyway, so we ought to take a look at that.

17 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: That's correct.

18 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: I agree with you.

19 Director Flinn, Act 12 you mentioned, and
20 I know we had that signed into law back in -- I guess it
21 was near the end of June that was signed into law.

22 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, sir.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: And one of the
24 tasks that Act 12 empowered you with was the
25 organization of the board and also to come up with a

1 funding formula. I think you have until, what, December
2 of next year?

3 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, sir.

4 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: Can you give us
5 an update on where you are? And another question to
6 throw in there, what are the counties receiving now, as
7 far as funding, are they receiving money under the old
8 formula currently?

9 DIRECTOR FLINN: Sure. And I'm going to
10 ask our director of 9-1-1 program to give the specifics,
11 he has the exactly information for you, sir.

12 MR. MATEFF: Good morning.

13 Since Act 12 was signed into law in June,
14 we've been able to establish the board, we had our
15 initial meeting in December, we have our next board
16 meeting, quarterly meeting at the end of March. So in
17 this meeting is where we are going to begin to form the
18 subcommittees and do the funding formula research, and
19 most importantly, the activity that we've been working
20 on currently is the inventory of all the PSAPs.

21 It was a mandate that we have a report to
22 you by the end of March, which we're on schedule to
23 deliver to the general assembly, which will identify our
24 current state of 9-1-1 preparedness across the entire
25 Commonwealth. So we've been collecting that information

1 and analyzing it, and we'll be able to prepare a report
2 to the board and then subsequently to the general
3 assembly for your consideration.

4 What that report will do, it will allow
5 us to identify the gaps and our current strengths and
6 weaknesses as it relates to 9-1-1 and 9-1-1 going into
7 the next generation as we transition away from our
8 Legacy Equipment. That will allow us, in consultation
9 with the board, to set plans and priorities for the
10 funding of the 15 percent that was set aside for
11 statewide interconnectivity and shared services.

12 So it's been, as the director indicated
13 in his opening remarks -- the fund currently in its
14 first full quarter generated around \$79 million. If we
15 amortize that over the full year, we're going to be
16 around 319 million which is slightly above the fiscal
17 note that was in the bill. So we've been able to
18 distribute that money within the time frame prescribed
19 by law, getting out currently 83 percent under the
20 internal formula to all the countries.

21 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: You know, there
22 were a lot of people pushing for a \$2 fee, a lot of
23 people were skeptical, a lot of stakeholders were
24 skeptical of the \$1.65 surcharge going forward and it's
25 great to see that that's bringing in actually above what

1 was projected. We're very happy about that.

2 The 15 percent that PEMA is authorized to
3 maintain and use for consolidation efforts and things
4 like that, what exactly -- now what will that go towards
5 in the future?

6 MR. MATEFF: Again, as we meet at the end
7 of the month, we're going to begin to analyze our gaps
8 and certainly look for all the interconnectivity issues
9 that the fund was dedicated toward. There are a number
10 of PSAPs that we have been facilitating conversations on
11 consolidation. And once we have the board's
12 recommendation on the plans and priority, we'll be able
13 to facility those conversations and fund those projects
14 and then build out statewide interconnectivity and the
15 shared services.

16 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: And that 15,
17 there was also some skepticism towards that 15 percent.
18 That 15 percent can only be spent with the board
19 approval, right?

20 MR. MATEFF: Consolidation, PEMA's
21 approval in consultation with the board, I believe, is
22 the language in the act.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: Can I do one more
24 question, Mr. Chairman?

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Yes.

1 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: I understand the
2 Pennsylvania State Police is in the process of
3 evaluating an alternative to the statewide public safety
4 radio system. Are you involved in that at all,
5 Director?

6 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, we are. We
7 participate with the STARNet program. We work very
8 closely with the major that's in charge of that and we
9 are in fact -- we are a consumer of the product, but
10 we're also very interested in, obviously, what's going
11 to eventually happen in relationship to that. I've
12 mentioned in the hearings that we talked about, for the
13 9-1-1 Act, the reality of it is we want to go ahead and
14 have a comprehensive public safety communication system
15 in the Commonwealth.

16 We have -- are on our way very much in
17 relationship to the 9-1-1 program. We need to link that
18 with a comprehensive radiocommunication system.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: I know our last
20 radio system try cost us, what, about \$750 million and
21 turned out to be somewhat of a debacle. I think it was
22 scheduled to cost about three, four hundred million,
23 ended up costing us 800 million and never really worked
24 anyway.

25 Are there safeguards in place to make

1 sure that we're not on the hook here again for another,
2 you know, \$800 million project that's going to end up
3 costing us, you know, a billion dollars or something
4 like that? You know, it was very disheartening. I
5 know -- I've heard about the statewide radio system
6 since I've been elected, which is 20 years, and it
7 seemed never to have caught on or work the way it
8 should.

9 DIRECTOR FLINN: I think one of the
10 biggest challenges we have is in its relationship and in
11 conversations with the 9-1-1 system, you know, we are
12 chasing technology. You know, technology improves so
13 significantly. Sometimes the costs come down, sometimes
14 they go up.

15 The reality of it is that we know that as
16 a consumer of the radio program -- because we have quite
17 a few 800 megahertz radios and we haven't had any issues
18 with them, I will say to you. But from our perspective,
19 we know there's been issues from troopers on the field
20 and from a state police perspective. But I would say to
21 you that one of the concerns is if we have to replace
22 all those radios. But I do know, as they describe the
23 P25 radio, it's a radio that will solve a lot of the
24 issues.

25 So again, that's a challenge that we face

1 with the fact that we want to go to new technology,
2 which would be a better system, but it's a cost
3 associated with replacing all those radios, will be a
4 challenge. And we're going to be, in answer to your
5 question, certainly intimately involved in discussions
6 relating to whatever new system occurs.

7 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: Great.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If there's a
9 chance for later on, I would love to do a few more
10 questions. Thank you.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

12 Chairman Sainato.

13 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: Thank you,
14 Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek.

15 Commissioner Solobay, Director.

16 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Sir.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: We appreciate
18 you guys' testimony, and Chairman Barrar took some of my
19 questions.

20 REPRESENTATIVE BARRAR: We think alike.

21 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: I know, we do.
22 We do.

23 We have a very good committee and we want
24 to thank all of your offices for working closely with
25 our committee. I think we're one of the most active

1 committees, I think, in Harrisburg. We've had a very
2 busy year, especially working on Act 12.

3 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, sir.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: And with your
5 input, we do appreciate your efforts.

6 Just a follow-up, Commissioner Solobay,
7 we were talking about recruitment and training, things
8 like that, it just seems there's just been so much
9 placed on a volunteer fireman today. And you know, I
10 know our committee is always trying to look for ways to
11 encourage recruitment, to encourage training, and I know
12 it's not easy, but -- to raise the money, to generate
13 the money.

14 And I have 10 volunteers and I also have
15 a paid department in my district, which is the city of
16 New Castle. And it's just so critical, the need. And
17 Chairman Barrar brought up the point, you said the cost
18 of \$10 billion if we did not have those volunteers out
19 there.

20 But the question of bingo came up and I'm
21 starting to see that and where I'm at -- you have a lot
22 of bingo, we had a lot of bingo. But with the onset of
23 the casinos in Pennsylvania, it's really had a dramatic
24 effect on local bingos. And what effect are you seeing
25 with our volunteer fire companies and bingo? Because

1 some of our fire companies, that's their main source of
2 fundraising.

3 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Well, you know,
4 Representative Sainato, one of the phrases I've been
5 using across the Commonwealth in a lot of my meetings
6 with folks is fundraising now for the volunteers should
7 be because they want to, not because they have to.

8 When you look at the overall cost of
9 equipment -- and I'll go back 40 years ago almost,
10 whenever I first got involved in the fire service. For
11 example, a class A engine pumper that we all have and
12 used to go to a fire call, it roughly cost about \$75,000
13 to be equipped and manufactured and the whole works.
14 Several months ago, I signed a contract for my home
15 department for a new engine very similar, only 40 years
16 newer and newer technologies for 10 times that amount of
17 money, \$737,000.

18 It takes a lot of fundraising or fish
19 fries, chicken dinners, whatever the case may be to make
20 that. It was tough back then, you know, when you had
21 300,000 volunteers helping make all this happen. Now
22 we're down to one-sixth of that number, 50,000. So the
23 pressure on them to try to raise the money or get the
24 money has become very tenuous, if you would. And that's
25 why a lot of people are walking away from it, plus given

1 the fact it's a dangerous position.

2 You know, we've talked about the fact
3 that after the disasters that occurred back in 2001,
4 there would be a big rise in volunteerism, things like
5 that. But when people realized that those folks didn't
6 come back out of the buildings, that went in to help
7 people -- why are they going to want to put that
8 commitment on their family and themselves to disrupt
9 their lives? So again, going back to my earlier
10 comments of local participation by municipalities, it's
11 very, very important for the existence of making things
12 happen.

13 We're trying to do other things, you
14 know, to increase the amount of money that they get.
15 You know, there was a conversation about doing some
16 things with the relief funding, the formula has been at
17 2 percent for quite a while. We wanted to try to see if
18 we couldn't bring it up to a 3-percent figure.

19 The cost per an individual, the impact
20 roughly -- we're hearing that your fire property
21 casualty insurance policies that we all have on our
22 homes -- the average in Pennsylvania is anywhere between
23 five and seven hundred dollars. That 1 percent increase
24 would have been either five or seven dollars increased
25 to your insurance, but yet, the benefits received by

1 that funding, not only from the fire service
2 perspective, but also even on the municipality pension
3 fund would have received almost \$100 million and the
4 general operating fund also would have received about 40
5 to 50 million. It would have then entitled us to an
6 additional 30-some million dollars to share with those
7 communities. There's a lot of them -- more than half of
8 them across the Commonwealth receive less than \$10,000 a
9 year from the relief funding. We would have been able
10 to add an additional 10 on what they were receiving, but
11 also that was -- the combo we were hoping to do with the
12 online training program that we want to establish in
13 conjunction with PEMA and several other agencies here in
14 the Commonwealth.

15 And thirdly, the remaining portion of
16 that money that didn't go into those two other items
17 would have been able to recoup the costs the fire
18 departments pay when they send folks out for traditional
19 training. There still are those folks that are going to
20 continue to do that regardless.

21 When we changed the formula of funding
22 community colleges several years back, where fire
23 training classes received the full-time equivalent for
24 reimbursement to community colleges, that went away, and
25 now fire departments have to pay for a lot of the

1 training that they go to or have done back in their
2 local areas. You know, it's still free if they go to
3 the academy, but then they still have room and board and
4 everything to worry about if they go up there. So that
5 was also going to create some moneys, be able to
6 reimburse companies back for any physical training they
7 went to.

8 We had some components from a statewide
9 perspective and we've constantly been working on the
10 local governments to also pick up their share of things
11 as well.

12 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: All right.
13 Thank you, Commissioner.

14 I know it's not an easy task what our
15 local fire chiefs have to deal with. I see it
16 firsthand, I talk to them, we work with them. They're
17 telling us they have a lot of concerns and I know that
18 our committee is concerned for them. And even our paid
19 firemen, I think most of the paid fire companies are
20 third-class cities and they're all in either Chapter 47
21 or they're close, so I mean it's not where they have
22 tons of money out there to be able to put in it as well.

23 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: That's correct.
24 It's funding for both from the online training and the
25 physical training, it would also aid our career

1 departments as well, so it captures both entities.

2 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: Thank you.

3 Director Flinn, Winter Storm Jonas, it
4 caused approximately \$55 million in damage. How's the
5 federal declaration going with that?

6 DIRECTOR FLINN: Going well, I believe.
7 And I say that from the perspective that I have been in
8 contact with FEMA. We have -- we put in for 31 counties
9 that met the record or near record snow. That was the
10 first caveat, and the second caveat was they had to meet
11 the thresholds defined for per capita. We -- as of
12 about three days ago, I think they had validated 14 of
13 those counties and we were up to 21 million, so we met
14 the Commonwealth threshold.

15 What their intent is, obviously, is to
16 get as many counties in that initial declaration and
17 then that those counties that still will, in fact, have
18 the opportunity to add more costs, then they will be
19 added later on.

20 So we're close, sir. I know that all of
21 the states surrounding us -- I should say the FEMA
22 region, three states with the exception of West
23 Virginia, did get declared. So I'm pretty optimistic
24 that it's going to happen in the next week or two.

25 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: Okay, that's

1 great.

2 And just finally, the new building, how's
3 things going with that? I know we had that opportunity,
4 the committee did, to take a tour of that --

5 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, sir.

6 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: -- state of the
7 art, it was very impressive. When is it going to be
8 operational?

9 DIRECTOR FLINN: We have a phased-in
10 approach. It's going to be in the first week of May,
11 we'll begin to having individuals start to go over. And
12 it's going to take about eight weeks to get the entire
13 organization over. The last man standing will be myself
14 in the State Emergency Operation Center and I'll watch,
15 if you will. And again the intent would be, at the very
16 latest, an end of June time frame.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: Hopefully we
18 don't have too many disasters between now and then.

19 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, sir. I hope that
20 too.

21 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: Yeah. Because I
22 mean, that's a great facility and I think it's really
23 going to be helpful especially as we said with Jonas and
24 some of the disasters we saw this winter. I mean, we
25 need all the help we can get.

1 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, sir. That's true.

2 REPRESENTATIVE SAINATO: Thank you.

3 Thank you all for your service.

4 DIRECTOR FLINN: Thank you very much.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
6 Chairman.

7 Representative Karen Boback.

8 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you,
9 Chairman.

10 Director Flinn --

11 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, ma'am.

12 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: -- would you
13 please explain your efforts to work with other state and
14 local officials regarding the Safe School programs?
15 Specifically I'm looking for is PEMA the primary agency
16 responsible for coordinating this effort and developing
17 the emergency operation plan for schools? And number
18 two, what funding sources are used for and available for
19 this program?

20 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, ma'am. We work
21 very closely with the Department of Education. We
22 received through the Department of Education a grant
23 from the federal Department of Education, and we're
24 actually at the end of that grant year, that contract
25 year.

1 But we have been very aggressive in
2 working with the schools. In fact, we developed an
3 online grant developing program -- or excuse me, plan
4 developing program. And I've gone around to the schools
5 educating the superintendents, educating the schools
6 themselves to be able to facilitate an emergency
7 operations plan within their own schools. So it's not
8 that they have to start from scratch, it's an online
9 tool that we have used.

10 Again, we work very closely. We
11 recognize -- and frankly, I have children in schools --
12 how important it is for schools to have emergency plans.
13 And it's not just fire evacuation plans, we're talking
14 about everything from, obviously, the horrific thing of
15 a shooting incident, too, what we have seen before with
16 tornadoes that have come through. So it begins from the
17 standpoint of identifying what are the threats to their
18 community, what are the actions that need to be taken,
19 and a plan for that as well as a response.

20 And the other catch is working very
21 closely with their local emergency responders and their
22 local emergency management teams because they can't be
23 islands of their own. They have to actually work very
24 closely, especially if you are talking about evacuations
25 or shelters.

1 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: When they do a
2 program, do they submit a report to you or do they
3 notify you that they are going to do -- I think there is
4 a program called Shooter in the Schools Program; is that
5 correct?

6 DIRECTOR FLINN: We have that information
7 in the database, if you will, but I'll have to get back
8 to you on specifically whether we actually get a report
9 from the school on those type of specific courses.

10 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: I think that
11 would be interesting.

12 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, ma'am.

13 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: And also, do you
14 have access to how many school systems have an armed
15 officer on their premises?

16 DIRECTOR FLINN: I don't. I can do some
17 research to try to find that out, ma'am, but I don't
18 normally -- we don't normally get that information. But
19 I will certainly do some research and find out if we can
20 get it through PSB or some other agency.

21 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you, and I
22 appreciate that.

23 Commissioner Solobay, this one's for you.

24 Has the development of Marcellus Shale
25 changed how you address training or the equipment needs

1 for volunteer fire companies and your EMS?

2 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: It has. And
3 through Act 13, there's an annual appropriation that we
4 receive that has established an alternative energy
5 program up at the academy. We have established
6 different types of programs for emergency responders on
7 how they would handle or deal with a situation, whether
8 it be on a well site itself or dealing with other
9 incidents that occur with that.

10 Along with that program, this year we're
11 going to be starting a smaller grant program that will
12 allow the fire departments located within the Marcellus
13 region or the Utica region to be able to get some small
14 monitoring equipment that they may need to use for air
15 quality and things like that as they come onto the
16 scene.

17 Also working in conjunction with PEMA on
18 delivering some of the other training opportunities that
19 are out there. I'd have to say that a lot of the energy
20 companies have been great partners in helping establish
21 regional areas for folks to do training and education
22 from. I know in Williamsport, back in my home county,
23 in Washington County and I believe in Crawford County, a
24 lot of the energy companies have donated different types
25 of equipment that we can work with and see how they

1 operate.

2 Knowing though that there's never the
3 intent for a full out well blowout fire-type situation
4 that the local responders are going to deal with. That
5 would be -- they're going to kind of handle the area,
6 the surroundings around any area, the components, making
7 a perimeter or whatever, and watching that type of
8 thing. There is a company that stores equipment here in
9 the Commonwealth and has specialized teams that can be
10 within the Commonwealth in a matter of hours that would
11 handle that directly.

12 We had a situation several years ago in
13 Greene County where a well fire had occurred. And the
14 equipment is stored in, I believe it's in Cambria County
15 and we had those folks in to meet with the Governor. He
16 was very concerned, not only for the Marcellus side of
17 things, but also with the Bakken crude, making sure that
18 we had entities working in conjunction with our
19 emergency service providers that would help them in the
20 case of a problem.

21 So the company that a lot of the energy
22 companies are using is called Wild Well and they bring a
23 team up that handles the actual intricate thing. Again,
24 the local emergency responders cover the exposures and
25 the perimeter that they form around any particular area

1 and then these other more specialized groups that do
2 that -- that's all they do -- comes in and handles
3 things with the well.

4 So the Act 13 has been very, very helpful
5 from both agency perspectives for providing us funding
6 for training, education, and now hopefully soon, to
7 implement this small equipments grant program.

8 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: I thank you for
9 that.

10 And off the cuff, do you know where the
11 closest entity would be for the northeastern part of the
12 state?

13 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Williamsport --
14 yeah, Williamsport at Penn College has a training
15 facility that they have set up in conjunction with a lot
16 of the energy companies.

17 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: So they would,
18 like, be the first on the scene, you know, on the
19 periphery --

20 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Well, first on the
21 scene would still be the local responders, I mean, they
22 should all have been taking time to train and educate.
23 We've had -- the programs we have in place, I know this
24 is since Act 13 came into play and even prior to that,
25 there's been several thousand emergency service

1 providers that have gone through some of this basic well
2 pad training education.

3 So in each company, you know, hopefully
4 especially if they have a lot of that activity in their
5 area, they have sent folks for some of the preliminary
6 training. But again, it's like any other emergency, you
7 kind of look at the exposure problems that you have, see
8 where evacuations, if necessary, need to occur and
9 what's actually necessary. And working in conjunction
10 with a lot of the counties and the EMA coordinators, you
11 know, they also have been very well versed on this. And
12 the right calls -- everybody has the right numbers of
13 where to call to get the help and aid that they need.

14 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: I do thank you
15 for that.

16 Thank you, gentlemen.

17 Thank you, Chairman.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
19 Representative.

20 Representative Mike O'Brien.

21 REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: Thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman.

23 And good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you
24 for joining us.

25 Certainly a number of questions that I've

1 had today, that you've been so thorough in your
2 responses that you've answered them, but let me
3 piggyback on the previous question.

4 Certainly, Commissioner, I know your
5 commitment over the years with our conversations as
6 colleagues on continuing training and staying up with
7 the co-leagues. And certainly we have questions and
8 concerns about Marcellus Shale across the Commonwealth,
9 and I want to say that word again, across the
10 Commonwealth.

11 Here, where I represent, the city of
12 Philadelphia, in the port of Philadelphia, there's
13 ongoing movement for shipping natural gas out, you know,
14 warehouses on it. So now we have a situation of
15 transporting natural gas across the Commonwealth. And
16 this question is directed to both agencies.

17 What is the response for rail bringing
18 the gas across? What if there is an unfortunate
19 circumstance where the rail cars would blow? How does
20 the state respond to this?

21 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: You want to start?

22 DIRECTOR FLINN: I can. And you know,
23 again, from I think -- within a month after I got the
24 job, the Governor wanted a cabinet-level exercise. The
25 very first exercise was the Bakken crude train incident

1 in the city of Harrisburg at 3 o'clock on a Friday
2 afternoon. And we engaged all the cabinet and really,
3 the issues were the shock and awe to say, this is what
4 could go wrong and to focus in on each state agency to
5 see what their roles and responsibilities would be. In
6 relationship specifically to that, obviously, as you're
7 aware the Governor asked and had a comprehensive study
8 done, a number of recommendations came out and PEMA
9 had -- there were specific recommendations for PEMA.
10 We'll tell you what we've done.

11 We work very closely with both CSX and
12 Norfolk Southern, the two main carriers. We've done a
13 couple things. One, you know, the first question is how
14 do first responders know what's being carried? And so
15 both have developed applications that are vetted to
16 additional -- to official first responders, okay, that
17 they can get on to these, if you will, called SecureNow
18 and AskRail are these two types of apps. First
19 responders -- designated official first responders can
20 get this information. We have that information in the
21 State Emergency Operations Center 24/7, so we know what
22 in fact if there's an incident, each train is carrying.

23 The second part of that is we have been
24 working with, again, those -- and I'm going to do a --
25 conduct a comprehensive survey of those communities that

1 these rails, these trains go through. I will say to you
2 that the number of trains has dropped considerable over
3 the last few months. There has been, I think, an
4 estimate of 30 trains a day, if not higher and then it
5 actually has dropped down significantly, that's come
6 through.

7 But having said that, it is a combination
8 of working with the Fire Commissioner's Office and
9 having the emergency management community understand
10 from a planning perspective if this in fact happens --
11 and we're talking about evacuation, we're talking
12 shelters, and such -- then there's the first response
13 training. I'll turn that back over to the Commissioner
14 who's been heavily engaged with training and in fact
15 sending folks out over in the Midwest to get this
16 training.

17 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Yeah.
18 Representative, not only -- you think about it, for
19 obviously many, many years we've had this type of
20 activity going on, but maybe not at the volume it has
21 been with the natural gas being shipped by rail as well
22 as the crude oil.

23 One of the things that's minimized that,
24 as the Director said, is the pipelines have made their
25 way across the Commonwealth. That's taken a lot of the

1 hazard away from the surface issues with both rail and
2 vehicle traffic hauling both of those materials. But
3 again, training and education of flammable liquids
4 and/or flammable gases have always been a major
5 component of the fire service from the academy
6 perspective as well as local level training.

7 With the advent of these two other --
8 with the Marcellus gas, Utica gas, and the Bakken crude,
9 we've had to ramp things up because of the fact the
10 volume we're seeing being transported is higher than it
11 used to be in the traditional. So as the Director said,
12 the class I railroads have been very actively involved
13 with not only working with our instructors from the
14 academy and making sure that we have the opportunity to
15 go to some of their training facilities outside of the
16 Commonwealth to get more specialized training, but also
17 enabled local emergency responders to also get that same
18 type training if and when they ask for it.

19 But there's a special -- the federal
20 government came out, after some of the incidents with
21 the Bakken crude, came out with a new training program
22 as well as guidelines for construction of tank car
23 vehicles and things like that. And the same kind of
24 follows over with the Marcellus gas as it's moving
25 through.

1 But truthfully, and I know it sometimes
2 is a very tenuous conversation, but the existence of the
3 pipelines have truly decreased the amount of concern
4 from surface issues by transporting it that way as
5 opposed to rail and/or truck.

6 REPRESENTATIVE O'BRIEN: Thank you,
7 gentlemen, for being on top of that, appreciate it.
8 Thank you for your service.

9 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
11 Representative.

12 Representative Keith Greiner.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chairman.

15 Good afternoon, gentlemen.

16 DIRECTOR FLINN: Sir.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Commissioner
18 Solobay, I have a couple questions for you, just quick
19 follow-ups.

20 I'm actually an officer back in my
21 hometown at the fire company and was happy to hear you
22 give a positive status report on the volunteer
23 companies' loan fund. And just recently a fire company
24 in my area, they were under the impression that because
25 of the budget impasse that they couldn't get any money,

1 so we clarified that. So it was nice to know we have
2 50 million, I think, in that fund available to still --

3 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Sure. An
4 additional 50 that's available to float for bonds, if
5 and when it becomes necessary.

6 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: I think that's
7 great for our volunteer fire companies. I think we are
8 blessed here in Pennsylvania to have a large number, you
9 know that of course.

10 How many loans right now are outstanding?
11 How many take advantage of that program or even like at
12 this point in time, how many loans are outstanding?

13 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: On the average --
14 and I know the numbers, but not necessarily the actual
15 or the total amount. There's roughly 15 to 18 million
16 dollars per year that's loaned out. And that's anywhere
17 from, you know, as low as maybe 30,000 on a used piece
18 of equipment to up to the max of 300,000 for some of the
19 newer pieces of equipment that are out there. I can get
20 the actual number of loans that are out there.

21 As far as outstanding loans that we're
22 maybe having concerns with or late payments, I bet
23 there's less than 10 or 12 right now that we are dealing
24 with on that, so everybody is paying. I believe up
25 until we changed the formula and allowing for a little

1 bit more money and a little longer payback period, we
2 were maybe lending out 10, 12, 14 million and getting a
3 probably 3 or 4 million more than that back in reloan
4 payments back. So even with the increase, I'm hoping
5 it's going to stay pretty standard.

6 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: So like with the
7 grants program, you said 2400 fire companies, and I
8 guess ambulance associations --

9 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: That's correct.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: -- applied, and
11 I mean, would it be 10 percent? I mean, I just think
12 for our own fire companies in Lancaster County, I don't
13 know how many people -- there are a few that have
14 outstanding loans right now. I'm just saying is it
15 10 percent of that, in other words is it 240? I was
16 just kind of -- and maybe you can get that number.

17 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: I can do that. I
18 mean you have to understand, if they borrow, they get,
19 you know, up to 20 years in some cases to get to pay
20 that back. So you know, they could have that payment
21 that's out there. So again, we're getting a return of
22 about 10 to 14 million dollars a year coming back from
23 loan payments, you know, that's a healthy number.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: And ambulance
25 associations can apply for that?

1 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: That's correct.
2 Yes, they can.

3 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Now let me ask
4 you, do they have, like, paid drivers or paid staff? I
5 know the ambulance -- that's a discussion I know we've
6 had too. Moving forward, things are changing in that.

7 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: As long as they
8 are a nonprofit entity, even if they have career folks
9 there, they are still eligible.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Okay. I
11 appreciate that and then let me just see, I think you
12 had talked about the grants program and of course, the
13 eligibility. And fire companies, am I mistaken, have
14 one year to spend that money when they apply or what's
15 the --

16 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Yeah. The normal
17 application period is the first part of September, the
18 grants need to be -- the application needs to be within
19 a 45-day period. We then have a couple months usually
20 towards near the end of the year to verify that all the
21 applications that have come in are true; the statements,
22 and find the total number out so that then we can take
23 that number and that entity, divide it into the
24 30 million and make a determination of what each grant
25 is going to be worth.

1 This year the base grant on the fire
2 departments was right around \$12,000, they have the
3 opportunity for an additional almost 2,000 if they have
4 up to 10 firefighters within their department that have
5 some type of national certification -- firefighter I,
6 II, EMT, things like that -- and that entitles them. So
7 I think the max out was almost \$14,000 this year for the
8 fire departments.

9 Obviously, from the ambulance services
10 that figure is a little bit less, their base figure and
11 then with the bonus that they may be able to obtain.
12 But you know, all \$30 million does get distributed.

13 And the problem we do have is sometimes
14 once that grant agreement -- and right now we're in the
15 process of the grant agreements being released. Out of
16 the 2400, about 1600 have turned in their paperwork with
17 the banking information of where the money needs to be
18 forwarded to. We still have about 800 that have not
19 done that. They've got till about the end of May to get
20 that information in. And we will be sending out to all
21 of your offices, those departments that have -- that are
22 eligible to get their grant that haven't turned their
23 paperwork in yet, so we can meet that.

24 Then by -- the closeout report needs to
25 be done sometime within the first part of August. And

1 then again, as long as we get the legislation passed to
2 reauthorize the grant, again in September we'll be
3 starting the new grant application all over again.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: I do appreciate
5 that list. I mean, I've used it to make sure that my
6 fire companies get their paperwork in and --

7 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Last thing we want
8 is somebody not to get their money when it's there
9 sitting for them.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GREINER: Exactly, so I
11 appreciate your service.

12 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
14 Representative.

15 Representative Dean.

16 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Good afternoon --

17 DIRECTOR FLINN: Good afternoon.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: -- and welcome.

19 Thank you, Commissioner and Director and colleagues, for
20 being here. I have one quick comment and one quick
21 question.

22 In terms of a comment, I'm hoping we can
23 do whatever we can at the state level to support the
24 grants program and other programs to support volunteer
25 firefighters.

1 In my community, we're serviced by many
2 really terrific volunteer firefighters and companies and
3 also paid EMS. And so that they can get the money --
4 the things that they talk to me about -- truly the EMS
5 is the carrying of naloxone, but also the funding for
6 the Lucas CPR compression device. What a lifesaver that
7 is and if they could only get more funding for that so
8 that they could have more of those available. They
9 literally, you know it better than I, are saving lives
10 with those things. So I'm in favor of anything we can
11 do to make sure our grant program is as robust as is
12 necessary.

13 On the question side, I live in
14 Montgomery County, Abington, and Upper Dublin Township,
15 so it's one of the older ring suburbs of Philadelphia.
16 We have a number of high-rise older buildings, 60-,
17 70-year-old buildings. And we have a variety of levels
18 of safety and fire security and I am worried about that.

19 We have some landlords and owners of
20 properties that sprinklered their building and brought
21 it up as high-tech as it possibly can. We have others
22 who are reluctant, I guess based on cost. We have a
23 very large high-rise in our community that has undergone
24 a complete renovation, but has avoided sprinkling the
25 building.

1 What can we do at the state level to make
2 sure that we retrofit older buildings so that they are
3 fire-safe, not only for the people living there, but for
4 the firefighters coming in to help?

5 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: It's a combination
6 of several things. Obviously, we could, you know,
7 mandate certain things -- I know people get nervous when
8 they hear that word -- through Labor and Industry.
9 There are certain codes and zoning things that tie into
10 that. Normally, if they're doing a major renovation,
11 I'm kind of surprised they were able to get around that
12 because normally in a multilevel building with a lot of
13 residential components to it, if they go through a major
14 renovation, they need to bring it up to existing code.
15 So it all depends, too, what the local community has in
16 place for zoning and codes as well.

17 But you know, there were some things tied
18 back before. Several years ago, that had a residential
19 component to it, which obviously, I was very much in
20 favor and kind of fought hard to try to keep it in
21 place, but that didn't occur. But usually in a
22 multistory buildings, both commercial, industrial, or
23 residential, there already is an existence of a lot of
24 regulations tied to that. It's just a matter of local
25 government enforcing those.

1 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Well, my local
2 government has tried as hard as they possibly can, this
3 has been litigated, this is a major 11- or 12-story
4 complex, a full gut and renovation. But they managed to
5 piece it together. So that they're appearing to do it
6 in pieces and have gotten around doing that.

7 So I just think we need some more uniform
8 code. They played the local ordinance off the state
9 code, off this, and it's just a real shame.

10 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: I agree.

11 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Thanks.

12 DIRECTOR FLINN: Ma'am, if I may, you
13 know, one of the things we look for from an emergency
14 management perspective is called resiliency. And
15 being -- doing whatever you can do to prevent or reduce
16 the damages associated with any kind of disaster
17 including fires. There's a program called 100 Resilient
18 Cities across the nation. Pittsburgh actually was part
19 of that, I think it is part of the Robert Wood Johnson
20 Grant.

21 But the idea of having cities and being
22 totally engaged, not only from the business community,
23 but obviously government and volunteer organizations, to
24 be able to go ahead and do a serious look at what their
25 community is, what the threats are. And in fact,

1 whether it be codes, whether it be getting folks out of
2 harm's way from a hazard mitigation program, elevating
3 those kinds of things, to be able to build a community
4 that whether it's an earthquake, whether it's a fire,
5 whether it's tornadoes, that that community not only can
6 have the number of damages reduced, but come back.

7 Unfortunately, across the nation -- and
8 we haven't had too many in Pennsylvania, but if a
9 catastrophic event occurs, there's small communities,
10 especially from a business perspective, that if they get
11 wiped out, the community is dead. And so from an
12 emergency management perspective and again, from working
13 with the fire service -- but that idea of a resilient
14 community getting that information out. And I would say
15 to you that whatever the legislature can do to help to
16 get that information out, we would definitely be willing
17 to work with you to get those major communities or any
18 community, whether it's small or a large city, to be
19 able to jump on that bandwagon.

20 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Well, I appreciate
21 that. Thanks for the suggestion.

22 DIRECTOR FLINN: You're welcome.

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
24 Representative.

25 Representative Jim Marshall.

1 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: Thank you,
2 Mr. Chairman.

3 Good afternoon, gentlemen.

4 My question today is for Director Flinn.

5 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, sir.

6 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: Many small
7 communities in Pennsylvania are impacted by floods. And
8 I'm aware of what your department does in reacting to
9 those situations. But could you give me more
10 information on how you can be proactive and more in
11 flood prevention for those communities?

12 DIRECTOR FLINN: Absolutely. Now the
13 good news is there's a couple different programs that
14 exist. If in fact we get a federal disaster
15 declaration, it's typically by county.

16 Now, again hoping to get the snow
17 disaster declaration -- but then you get all 67 counties
18 eligible for what's called hazard mitigation. And
19 hazard mitigation is an outstanding, good news story
20 where in fact you actually, as mentioned, take residents
21 out of harm's way. You build the houses up or you in
22 fact buy them out. And there's other things, including
23 we bought 20-some generators last year using those kind
24 of funds. So there's the pre-disaster mitigation
25 program that exists, as well as the mitigation program

1 associated with the post-disaster.

2 And we work very closely with the
3 communities. The caveat to it is each community,
4 working through their county, has to have a hazard
5 mitigation plan and you're talking about individuals
6 getting together -- and there's a lot of technical
7 assistance that we provide -- to get those plans in
8 place to be able to identify what are the risks, what
9 are the things we can do to reduce those risks, and then
10 apply for those grants, those federal grants that come
11 into play.

12 There's only a certain dollar amount
13 that's given. So there's a prioritization that happens,
14 but again, every time we get a disaster, we're eligible
15 for additional funds.

16 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: What about a
17 historic downtown area?

18 One area in particular that I represent
19 is the historic downtown Harmony Borough in Butler
20 County. And we really can't raze the buildings and
21 folks really don't want to move away. Their concern is
22 maybe if activity, whether it's growth and buildings and
23 earth movement and municipalities surrounding them,
24 would impact them. And one of their top concerns is
25 flooding. What can we do --

1 DIRECTOR FLINN: Sure.

2 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: -- to help,
3 really help them to be more comfortable with the growth
4 in their area?

5 DIRECTOR FLINN: That's a tough question
6 from the standpoint of emergency management perspective.
7 I will tell you that every time there's been a
8 mitigation programs that's been defined, there's a
9 requirement that both the environmental and cultural and
10 historical review that occurs at FEMA headquarters. So
11 they actually go in and send a team in to look at
12 what -- we don't want to do anything that's going to
13 destroy that cultural or historical perspective, that's
14 all part of the grant process.

15 But in relationship to what happens
16 surrounding that, sir, again looking at if -- whether it
17 be, again, aggressive flood mitigation program that
18 surrounds those communities, that certainly would be
19 something that we would want to take a look at.

20 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: And is FEMA
21 more involved in clearing debris in streams or is that
22 more of a DEP issue?

23 DIRECTOR FLINN: That's more of a DEP
24 issue. And I will tell you that's a challenge always,
25 especially when you talk about federal reimbursement for

1 it because the question is, was the debris there before?
2 And I have actually been involved in some disaster
3 responses and that's a challenge associated with it,
4 when you talk about who's going to pay for that. But
5 PEMA is engaged with FEMA when you get those
6 declarations.

7 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Also kind of rolls
8 into the stormwater management plans --

9 DIRECTOR FLINN: Absolutely.

10 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: -- that counties
11 would encompass for a pre-disaster situation.

12 So those municipalities that are affected
13 downstream, you know, it's a very important -- again,
14 that's usually working with the DEP to get those type of
15 plans in place, but again, there's a cost factor
16 associated with that. But again, everybody can do
17 everything right in this community, but if upstream,
18 they do nothing, you know, then those downstream get the
19 effects of what the inactivity or the inability for
20 those upstream communities to do something properly.

21 But that would be through stormwater
22 management and the county plan is usually very helpful
23 in that sense.

24 REPRESENTATIVE MARSHALL: Okay. Thank
25 you, Commissioner and Director, and Mr. Chairman.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
2 Representative.

3 Representative Maria Donatucci.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you,
5 Chairman.

6 And good afternoon.

7 DIRECTOR FLINN: Good afternoon.

8 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: My first
9 question is for Commissioner Solobay.

10 A few months ago, the Veterans Affairs
11 and Emergency Preparedness Committee held a hearing on
12 Act 46, the firefighter cancer presumption law, which of
13 course designates cancer as an optional disease for
14 firefighters and extends the period for making claims.

15 As we approach the five-year anniversary,
16 can you provide us with a brief update on the status of
17 this law?

18 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Sure. I was -- I
19 believe I was still in the House whenever we did pass
20 this legislation. It was very encouraging first to get
21 it to happen. And I know the career firefighters were a
22 major thrust and push to see that this happens, both in
23 Philadelphia and from the city of Pittsburgh.

24 You know, when we had that conversation,
25 the biggest concern was what impact was it going to have

1 on local municipalities' workmen's comp rates and how it
2 was going to be challenged. At the time we were told
3 there wouldn't be an issue, but we have come to find out
4 very quickly afterwards that -- and the look-back
5 scenario that was tied to the legislation. That first
6 year we had about 60 or 70 folks that filed claims,
7 which all of a sudden, I think, added a concern to the
8 insurance industry, is this going to be the normal
9 situation, which I don't think it has been.

10 There was a change though in the
11 legislation. I just recently, within the past few days,
12 have found out information dealing with it from a
13 volunteer perspective -- is that the presumption, again,
14 from the volunteer side -- obviously, from the career
15 guys, it's presumed through the reporting system and
16 everything else they use, that it -- their proof of
17 burden isn't as great as it has been. Now on the
18 volunteer side -- and if there's a PennFIRS, which is
19 our Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System that
20 all fire departments put information in. What we're
21 finding out now is that on the volunteer side of things,
22 first of all, if they're not doing reporting -- and we
23 changed the company that we've been using last year or
24 this -- yeah, last year, and actually they have a lot
25 more. Up over 50 percent of the fire companies that are

1 reporting and using the PennFIRS System, which is good.
2 Our goal, obviously, is 100 percent. And because of the
3 cancer presumption, it's very important that they do
4 that because if they're not reporting, then that
5 individual -- if it's especially in a volunteer
6 firefighter -- has nowhere to be able to get the
7 benefits. They're denying the benefits because they're
8 not doing the reporting.

9 The other thing we found out in place
10 also is that, again, be very specific in the narrative
11 of the incident, what the fire officer puts in the
12 narrative of that incident to make sure they make
13 comment of the fact that class A carcinogens were
14 probably in the incident. You know, that the person was
15 subjected to some type of class A carcinogen. If that
16 is not listed, then their insurance companies are
17 fighting the claims to give the benefits to the
18 volunteers.

19 So we're constantly trying to impress on
20 volunteers that they need to move forward to get into
21 the reporting system and also make sure they document
22 things the right way of who's been on a call and the
23 fact that there's certain carcinogens probably in the
24 atmosphere of the fire itself. From the career
25 perspective, it's been a little bit easier for them to

1 be able to receive benefits if -- God forbid -- they end
2 up contracting some type of cancer or disease.

3 The key now with this five year is to
4 evaluate truly how many incidents have been brought
5 forth, how many folks have filed petitions with
6 workmen's comp, and see if we can't get the rates back
7 under control from where they were because they've all
8 skyrocketed. A lot of companies won't even write
9 workmen's comp insurance anymore because of it.
10 Companies have had to return to the state system, the
11 SWIF product, and even that, the premium costs have been
12 somewhat increased because of this legislation.

13 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you.

14 My next question is directed to Director
15 Flinn.

16 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, ma'am.

17 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: I have a
18 question regarding the PEMA meteorologists.

19 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, ma'am.

20 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Has there been
21 any discussion with state agencies about everyone using
22 the same weather person and reducing the amount of
23 contracts we have with AccuWeather? And also what is
24 the meteorologist's yearly salary and how is it paid?

25 DIRECTOR FLINN: Sure. When -- and just

1 to go back real quick. This was my idea and I take full
2 responsibility for it, but I worked with meteorologists
3 when I was at FEMA. We had one FEMA meteorologist in
4 the National Hurricane Storm Prediction Center as well
5 as at headquarters. And the value of having an
6 individual for emergency management-related purposes and
7 understanding emergency management is just absolutely
8 tremendous. I can tell you numerous examples since he
9 has been brought on board.

10 When the idea came, I said, you know,
11 first of all, let me do the research. So I looked at
12 across the Commonwealth -- across the country, worked
13 with the National Emergency Management Association of
14 what states actually hire meteorologists, and there were
15 about a dozen that, in fact, in the emergency management
16 world that do, and those are states that have very
17 leading forward type of emergency management programs.
18 Additionally, I went to the other state agencies to say,
19 "hey, would you be interested in helping, if you will,
20 to share the costs?"

21 I went to PennDOT. Obviously, PennDOT is
22 in a contract with AccuWeather, so they couldn't -- and
23 it begins from January to December -- they couldn't do
24 anything in relationship to coming on board with us.
25 And I think they have a little different -- I don't know

1 the exact wording in the contract, but their contract is
2 a little different from the perspective of what they do
3 with that information, what AccuWeather provides.

4 I went to the Department of Environmental
5 Protection, Department of Conservation and Natural
6 Resources, and the Department of General Services. They
7 all agreed to participate. So of the 62,000 annual
8 salary, 50 percent of that is by federal funds and the
9 rest is shared by four separate agencies.

10 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Okay. Thank
11 you.

12 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
14 Representative.

15 Representative Seth Grove.

16 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman.

18 To follow up on the state weatherman, at
19 what point was he hired?

20 DIRECTOR FLINN: At what point?

21 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Yeah.

22 DIRECTOR FLINN: I'm trying to think what
23 was the exact date here.

24 MR. THOMAS: Probably April -- March,
25 April.

1 DIRECTOR FLINN: March, April time
2 frame -- we can get that exact date for you, sir. I
3 just don't know off the top of my head.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: That was prior to
5 the hiring freeze, correct?

6 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, sir. It was.

7 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So that was -- he
8 was actually hired not during the impasse. Correct?

9 DIRECTOR FLINN: That's correct.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: But it was
11 reported during the impasse that he was hired.

12 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: That's a very
14 helpful time frame because that I don't think was
15 reported in the notice.

16 DIRECTOR FLINN: Okay.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: I want to pull up
18 your Act 146 waivers. You had applied for about
19 \$3 million for local municipal emergency relief funds, a
20 total of 3 million. So there was a September 4th or an
21 August 12th waiver request for 2 million, a
22 September 4th request for 1 million, and then a
23 September 14th request for \$3 million. The total was
24 \$3 million, correct?

25 DIRECTOR FLINN: Just to go back, we're

1 look at the '15 time frame, it was \$2 million that was
2 in that particular budget specifically for that
3 nonfederally declared disaster portion. The other
4 million I think was associated with -- I'll turn it to
5 the director here.

6 MR. THOMAS: It was a project that I
7 believe was in Marcus Hook area that was not -- never
8 went through.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: All right. All
10 those dollars, were they hangover to go to local
11 municipality payments? Between the '14 -- the waiver
12 request for fiscal year 2014, so those were hangover
13 dollars that weren't appropriated in '14?

14 DIRECTOR FLINN: Okay. I'm not sure
15 exactly what the hangover dollar question is.

16 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So a lot of these
17 waivers are for contracts. Contracts that were
18 executed --

19 DIRECTOR FLINN: Oh, I see.

20 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: -- in 2014. They
21 weren't fully executed, so they moved them to the '15
22 year.

23 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yeah. What exactly
24 is -- so we didn't have any applications for that fund
25 in the previous year, so that money was taken over.

1 Then we actually had the disaster in the summer, that --
2 primarily Delaware County -- the five counties in the
3 southeast had severe storm damages. They -- we went
4 ahead and initiated -- just like we would for a FEMA
5 declaration -- meeting with the municipalities, getting
6 the costs, and we are now -- we are in the process of
7 gathering all that information together to be able to go
8 ahead and release those funds to those counties and
9 municipalities, and it's related to the specific costs
10 that they incurred.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So all those local
12 municipality relief funds that were brought in '14 and
13 '15 were used in that storm?

14 DIRECTOR FLINN: Will be used.

15 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Will be used.

16 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, sir.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. I
18 appreciate that.

19 Your other waiver was for your GGO line
20 items pulling from the 2012 fiscal year and 2014 fiscal
21 year. Your 2012 waiver request to support extraordinary
22 requests during an emergency or event that does not
23 elevate to the level of a state or federally declared
24 disaster. This funding will provide some assurance that
25 there is a fiscal capability to manage and respond to a

1 specific emergency where alternative funding is
2 available. Included in that request would be dollars --
3 unknown amount of dollars allocated towards expenses for
4 PEMA's new headquarters facility which do not meet the
5 requirements of the capital project facility fund to
6 receive or are in direct support of PEMA and would be
7 transitioned to the new facility. And \$140,000 to
8 facilitate creating a, quote, statewide plan for
9 domesticated animals, end quote.

10 Can you breakdown those GGO allocations
11 for your 2012 waiver between those three requests?

12 DIRECTOR FLINN: I would have to get back
13 to you specifically on that survey because that was --
14 it was obviously before my time, but we will go ahead
15 and get back to you on that.

16 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: When did you
17 start?

18 DIRECTOR FLINN: Beginning of this past
19 year, in January of 2015.

20 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: '15? Okay. This
21 request came in June 29th, 2015.

22 DIRECTOR FLINN: Okay. But you're
23 referring to 2012 funds?

24 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Well, 2012 funds
25 that were expended in 2015.

1 item for the '15-'16 budget approved or vetoed by the
2 Governor?

3 DIRECTOR FLINN: The line item itself was
4 approved.

5 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Approved.

6 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes.

7 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So --

8 DIRECTOR FLINN: But these add-ons were
9 not, if that's what you're referring to. I'm talking
10 about the GGO funds specifically for operations.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. And your
12 2014 GGO waiver request, that was for -- you waived all
13 the commitments and available funds. The funds are
14 being requested to be waived to support extraordinary
15 requests during an emergency or event that is not to the
16 level of state or federally declared disaster. And then
17 a hundred thousand dollars of it is to be used for the
18 PEMA Special Deployment and Response Office. This money
19 will be utilized to support maintenance and operational
20 costs of the warehouses and inventory for state-owned
21 equipment for emergency situations.

22 Is that the same, where that money was
23 not expended as of yet?

24 DIRECTOR FLINN: Has not been spent.

25 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. So all that

1 money is currently available in prior years' lapses.

2 Thank you very much.

3 DIRECTOR FLINN: You're welcome, sir.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

5 In case no one has noticed, we have been
6 joined by a group of Pittsburgh youth that are guests of
7 Representative Wheatley. This group is called NEED.
8 NEED provides career and college access services which
9 empower youth in the Pittsburgh region to aspire to
10 learn about and prepare for higher education.

11 Welcome, folks.

12 The next question will be asked by
13 Representative Warren Kampf.

14 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: Director Flinn --

15 DIRECTOR FLINN: Sir.

16 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: I'm sorry, I'm
17 sorry, Fin.

18 DIRECTOR FLINN: It's Flinn. It's okay.

19 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: Forgive me, that's
20 terrible.

21 Director Flinn, we received federal
22 dollars for domestic preparedness, roughly \$130 million,
23 and my understanding is that about 80 percent of that
24 goes out through task forces, regional task forces, nine
25 of them. Could you explain to me how that money is

1 spent? Also, I guess 20 percent of it you have access
2 to how that money is spent.

3 DIRECTOR FLINN: Sure.

4 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: And then, so I
5 don't have to come back at you, do we need all nine task
6 forces?

7 DIRECTOR FLINN: Okay. Yeah. Again,
8 it's a Federal Homeland Security Grant program. And I
9 will tell you that its inception, obviously, after
10 the -- prior to actually the 9/11 event, the focus is
11 really being -- the initial focus was relationship to
12 terrorists. They changed it over the years to be
13 all-hazards focused.

14 The funds are required to be only used
15 for planning, training, equipment, and exercises. And
16 we have, in Pennsylvania -- and it's probably been very,
17 very cost efficient by organizing it through, as we call
18 these, task forces. They were originally called counter
19 regional terrorism task forces, but they're regional
20 multicounty organizations that -- and I will say to you
21 that the funds have to be spent on what we call those
22 priorities defined in the State Preparedness Report.

23 FEMA identifies 31 capabilities that
24 you've got to be able to be prepared for, to respond to
25 any kind of, all hazards in the early days, again,

1 terrorist-type events. Each year, there is a state
2 preparedness report that's developed after a statewide
3 threat assessment is done. So each year -- and again,
4 it's a self-assessment that the areas do, as well as a
5 comprehensive assessment that the state conducts. The
6 funds are in fact provided for -- there's an authorized
7 equipment list, so they can only purchase those pieces
8 of equipment that's on that list itself, again,
9 authorized training, and again it's for planning
10 purposes.

11 And I will tell you that unfortunately,
12 the money -- depending on one's perspective -- the money
13 has gone down significantly. When the program first
14 started, the Commonwealth received over \$30 million.
15 This past year, this 2015 year, we're looking at
16 \$10 million for the State Homeland Security Grant
17 Program itself. And again, now we actually are having a
18 homeland security symposium today, as we speak, to bring
19 in all the task forces to work on their applications and
20 their investment justifications to reduce that threat or
21 enhance the capabilities.

22 Answering your question in relationship
23 to whether there's nine -- or whether there is a need
24 for nine. The Commonwealth needs to be covered, again,
25 in recognizing that threat exists higher in municipal

1 areas or large cities from a terrorist perspective, but
2 it doesn't eliminate the threat that could exist in a
3 smaller community, whether it be -- and we've just
4 noticed one of the biggest issues that we have to work
5 on closely with the Office of Administration is cyber
6 issues.

7 Just last night a sewage and water
8 treatment facility was attacked from a cyber attack
9 perspective which could be a significant issue in any
10 community in the Commonwealth, in Pennsylvania.

11 But whether there's a need for nine or
12 whether there's a -- the key is that all of them are,
13 all 67 counties are included in this process. It's
14 important. I think they broke it up and years ago, this
15 was really not done by a state mandate as much as the
16 locals getting together. And for example, the southwest
17 region has 13 counties and actually are adding another
18 county moving from another task force. So I think the
19 key is not so much the number of task forces, as much as
20 the Commonwealth is covered, all 67 counties.

21 REPRESENTATIVE KAMPF: Thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman.

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Representative
24 Sue Helm.

25 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you,

1 Mr. Chairman.

2 And welcome.

3 I would like to talk about flooding. My
4 district -- the Susquehanna River wraps around it and
5 you did talk about the role that PEMA plays as it
6 pertains to hazard mitigation planning, you also talked
7 about stormwater management. But talking about the
8 flood maps, they are changing and more people are
9 becoming mandated to be incorporated into the flood
10 insurance programs. Can you explain to the committee
11 the reason, the purpose for these changes? Like we've
12 had a lot of talk about property taxes, but now I'm
13 getting so many calls because flood insurance rates are
14 going up.

15 DIRECTOR FLINN: Sure.

16 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: The people that get
17 these maps and I see that they're in the floodplain, but
18 you know, they don't want to be paying these high rates
19 for their insurance.

20 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, ma'am. And you
21 know, again, that's one of those issues that we're faced
22 with as the consumer because the federal government
23 defines -- FEMA defines the flood mapping and it's
24 certainly a challenge that we've seen. But recently we
25 actually have been working with the insurance -- the

1 state insurance commissioner on looking at alternatives
2 that exist for lower cost flood insurance. We
3 actually -- the insurance commissioner released a news
4 release on the options that exist and we're working with
5 them to get that information out and put it on our
6 website.

7 Unfortunately, as I said, that's a
8 congressional issue that needs to be addressed in
9 Washington and we don't have any control over what
10 FEMA -- that flood mapping side of it.

11 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: I did ask the
12 insurance commissioner about commercial flood insurance
13 and she really wasn't looking at that because commercial
14 buildings are affected just as much as residential.

15 DIRECTOR FLINN: Sure.

16 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: But let's talk
17 about the historic snowstorm that hit on January 22nd
18 and 23rd of this year. I just -- could you explain how
19 the agency interacted with state and local responders
20 and what was your overall impression of the response to
21 this storm and, in your assessment, what worked and what
22 didn't? Like I felt that everything was handled pretty
23 well. I know there were a few major things, but on the
24 whole, I thought you did a really good job and would
25 just like you to talk about that little.

1 DIRECTOR FLINN: Thank you.

2 Yeah. Again, you know, you go through
3 the process and one of the very first things in the
4 value of having our meteorologist on board and looking
5 at it from a perspective of being able to go ahead and
6 see a week ahead, 10 days ahead where the models are
7 coming, what's happening. And then identifying where
8 the high risk or the critical areas are going to be
9 affected.

10 So we go through this planning process
11 and we go through the very first thing is public
12 information and preparedness. And we started our
13 preparedness message very early on, including with the
14 Governor having preparedness messages over at PEMA,
15 telling folks it's coming, be prepared, stay off the
16 roads, those kinds of things.

17 Then we work with our counties. Our
18 counties are our primary customers, if you will. And so
19 we support them and any particular needs that they may
20 have. We initiated a -- and we have a warning
21 operations brief, but we started weather calls then that
22 week ahead and talked to the counties and asked from
23 their perspective what the preparedness activities were
24 going to be.

25 Then you go through, in fact,

1 prepositioned assets if you need to. We went ahead and
2 requested a pre-declaration of emergency. I call it a
3 pre-dec, but it was a declaration, but we did it before
4 the event happened. So we are able to use the resources
5 that would be available through that declaration, one of
6 which was having the Pennsylvania Army National Guard
7 stood up and identified a number of soldiers.

8 So then we go ahead and have the event
9 happen. And the event itself, again, I can tell you
10 that, it's a record snowfall in 31 counties, very
11 significant across the state. But I will tell you both
12 the resiliency and the patience -- and from the public's
13 perspective, they did well. People did stay off the
14 roads. The number of incidents were fairly small.

15 We worked with the -- two days ahead and
16 got on the power outage utility calls with the Public
17 Utility Commission. And the reason behind this is
18 because we really anticipated there were going to be a
19 lot of power outages. The good news is there were very
20 few power outages. But we were prepared to work with
21 both the utilities as well as the critical
22 infrastructure if the power was going out.

23 So in answer to your question, you know,
24 you go through the preparedness and response side, and
25 then obviously now we're doing the recovery side in

1 relationship to, hopefully, getting that federal
2 declaration.

3 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you. And
4 your new building is in my district, so I hope I get an
5 invite for a tour.

6 DIRECTOR FLINN: Absolutely, ma'am.
7 Anytime, we'd be happy to get you over there.

8 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.
10 Representative Bullock.

11 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,
12 Chairman.

13 Good afternoon, gentleman. I'm over
14 here.

15 I, too, share the concerns of my
16 colleagues of particularly the oil trains that are
17 traveling through our Commonwealth and the concerns that
18 many of our residents have around the potential for a
19 disaster there as well as other potential disasters
20 across our Commonwealth. Could you share with us your
21 department's outreach and public outreach activities,
22 particularly around ReadyPA?

23 DIRECTOR FLINN: Well, again, from the
24 public side of the house, you know, the focus
25 obviously -- a lot of effort in -- and the Commissioner

1 mentioned it in relationship to training first
2 responders and emergency managers. On the public side
3 of the house, obviously we are -- we focus in on all
4 hazards. And we ask, you know, the communities to
5 really work with their local communities to determine
6 what their threats are. I think one of the common
7 statements I hear is that the general public just
8 doesn't know.

9 I will tell you though, although the --
10 and I think the Commissioner will agree with me having
11 been involved in the fire service and as a fire chief
12 for quite a few years -- the threat of the Bakken crude
13 is, although very significant, there are a significant
14 number of other threats that travel in all the
15 transportation roads throughout the Commonwealth every
16 single day. So being aware of what's traveling in your
17 community is important.

18 Now having said that, there's things that
19 are very important in relationship to not only being
20 prepared before an incident happens, but making sure
21 that you have the capability to know that an incident is
22 going on.

23 And we all have cell phones, you can turn
24 off your emergency alerts on your cell phones. We don't
25 want people to turn off their emergency alerts. You

1 know, in fact, what was very evident in the tornadoes
2 that struck Lancaster a few weeks ago, those warnings
3 occurred and people were saved because the warnings
4 initiated.

5 So going back to that, you know, from a
6 public perspective our emphasis on ReadyPA is in fact
7 preparedness not only from the perspective of having a
8 plan, being ready to respond if something happens, but
9 also being tuned into your situation and situational
10 awareness.

11 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you. And
12 I agree with that, in addition to the preparedness, we
13 must also have awareness. And you're absolutely right,
14 many residents aren't even knowledgeable of the
15 potential disasters that could happen in their
16 communities.

17 Shifting gears a little bit, can you tell
18 me what your current complement levels are and do you
19 feel, in both of your departments, whether those
20 complement levels are sufficient to address your
21 agency's mission?

22 DIRECTOR FLINN: Globally it's 198, so
23 PEMA has 173 and the Fire Commissioner --

24 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: 25.

25 DIRECTOR FLINN: 25.

1 And to answer your question, yeah. I
2 mentioned in the opening statement, obviously I think
3 everyone would love to have more staff, but I recognize
4 the realities, but I also recognize we need to find
5 efficiencies. And I've said that when I came in, my
6 first effort was to look at the organization, look at
7 the agency, look at the folks we have, and we have got a
8 tremendous staff, tremendous team. And I'm sure the
9 Commissioner can say the same for his.

10 But in the way the organization was
11 structured, I had planners in three different bureaus.
12 I had the idea of trying to deal with the public in,
13 again, three different organizations. So I'm proposing
14 and I'm waiting for interim approval to get a
15 comprehensive reorganization and I'll tell you it
16 follows the FEMA model where -- focusing on the mission,
17 so I have mission support and again, preparedness
18 response and recovery and 9-1-1.

19 But the idea is being able to take the
20 individuals who have the knowledge and skills and put
21 them in the right positions and making sure that
22 everyone is gainfully employed all the time and that's
23 my efforts.

24 So having said that, I'm comfortable with
25 the complement level I have.

1 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: And likewise from
2 our end, presently I have one opening up at the academy
3 that we're in the process of doing interviews and
4 things. It was part of the complement that was approved
5 before any of the bans.

6 You heard me maybe mention earlier about
7 the online training. Obviously there is curriculum
8 specialists we may be going back and asking for some
9 help and assistance to try to tie into that.

10 Likewise, with some of the efficiencies,
11 we're trying to approve going electronically on a lot of
12 things, will hopefully help speed up the process of the
13 grants and loans and how that works. But you figure
14 different times of the year they get inundated with a
15 lot of things and we've been able to use some of the
16 annuitants to pick that up.

17 But I also, when I'm out talking,
18 encouraging folks to try to process things the right way
19 the first time, so it's not reworked, which obviously
20 takes away from folks being able to get things done
21 quickly. That's why oftentimes we'll reach out to you
22 as well and ask, you know, to make sure the folks are
23 getting their things in in a timely manner so that it
24 doesn't delay things out and make it tough on the folks
25 that are there trying to do the job.

1 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Chairman, I have
2 one last question, I'll wrap up here.

3 In regards to your workforce, could you
4 please share your current diversity levels and any
5 efforts that you are undertaking to increase diversity
6 and particularly -- I understand the need to have
7 qualified personnel when we're talking about the safety
8 of our Commonwealth, but could you expand a little bit
9 about where you are today and what you are doing to
10 improve your percentages in the future?

11 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: From a male/female
12 perspective, we're almost 50/50 male/female in our
13 complement. Maybe slightly higher on the male
14 component.

15 DIRECTOR FLINN: And we have 64 percent
16 of our employees are female and in general supervisory
17 33 percent are in general supervisory; and 16 percent of
18 our complement is minority.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: That was
20 16 percent?

21 DIRECTOR FLINN: Yes, ma'am.

22 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: And Fire
23 Commissioner, what was your minority percentages?

24 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Minority
25 percentages, 25 -- it depends if, you know, you are not

1 considering females as minority or just --

2 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Racial/ethnic
3 minority.

4 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Racial/ethnic
5 minority, we have 1 minority out of the 24 presently.

6 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you,
7 gentlemen. Have a great day.

8 Thank you, Chairman.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
10 Representative.

11 Gentlemen, I want to thank you for being
12 here today and testifying before this committee.
13 Obviously, public safety is a big concern for everyone
14 on this committee and we're looking forward to working
15 with you between now and the end of June.

16 DIRECTOR FLINN: Thank you, sir.

17 COMMISSIONER SOLOBAY: Thank you,
18 Chairman.

19 DIRECTOR FLINN: Appreciate it.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: For the
21 members' information, the House Appropriations Committee
22 will reconvene at 2:30 with the Department of Education.

23 Thank you.

24 (The hearing concluded at 1:27 P.M.)

25

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I hereby certify that I was present upon the hearing of the above-entitled matter and there reported stenographically the proceedings had and the testimony produced; and I further certify that this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

Dated in Lebanon, Pennsylvania this 7th day of April 2016.

Summer A. Miller, Court Reporter
Notary Public