

Brad Gair, FEMA Post/911 Recovery

Brad Gair: Good afternoon. Thank you all. We're going to talk a little bit about long term recovery this afternoon and many of us, or most of us got into emergency management because obviously we want to help people and also we have that first responder mentality that you want to be there, you want to do things, you like to operate under pressure. That's certainly why I came to FEMA and why I joined emergency management. But unfortunately, there is another side to emergency management and disasters that is very important and it involves none of those things for which a lot of us came to the agency, and that's long term recovery. There are no heroes in long term recovery. It's a lot of work that doesn't get much attention, but it's really critical because after a lot of the media attention fades and people go back to their ordinary lives, which is obviously the point of recovery, there is still a lot that needs to be done to get a community back together and back to where it needs to function. So I'd like to talk a little bit about that today, and especially on the heels of those very moving accounts of the last panel of speakers of their days and what happened to them in the early stages of this disaster, it is different in long term recovery. This is my third consecutive long term recovery assignment. The first one was in Hurricane Floyd in North Carolina and when that disaster occurred, I was working in Corpus Christi, Texas closing out a very small hurricane disaster there, watching all that flooding on TV moving up the east coast and thinking you know what a mess. I'd like to be there part of that. Well 6 months later they got around to thinking long term recovery and I was sent in to work on that. Last year while I was in North Carolina still working that disaster, in 2000 actually the Serra Grande fire happened in Los Alamos, New Mexico where the federal

government inadvertently burned down the town of Los Alamos and part of the nuclear lab, and I was in North Carolina seeing what a mess that was and what a challenge it would be and again about 6 months later I was sent in there to work long term recovery and it becomes very difficult on some of these assignments because long term recovery is something that really needs to start almost from day one. That's what's critical and different about this disaster and what I really appreciate about our agency, FEMA, and some of the ways that we responded to this disaster when all those things were going on that you heard about earlier and all of the people that were being brought in, the search and rescue teams and all that great work, and my *compadre* Mike Byrne was in charge of operations. They took time out very early on, the first couple of days and brought me in and set me aside from everything and said don't get involved at all in operations. Start working long term recovery. And I think that was really an important move that they made because in the heat of the battle, the disaster seems like those emergency operations are going to keep going for days and days. Everyone's working around the clock. And very absorbed in what they're doing. But then one day you wake up and here it was sometime around the 1st of October and all of a sudden you're switching gears and you're now moving into recovery. And because of the foresight of the management that we had here, we had a pretty smooth transition and did a lot of the ground work that would later help us move this disaster recovery along to where it is now and hopefully to see it on into the future. So I'm just going to talk for a few minutes about long term recovery and what I think it involves. It's not nearly as scientific as response. We've got that great President's federal response plan that was discussed a little bit earlier and it really blazed out what we do. We've got teams assigned to it. All those agencies, or ESC, Emergency Support functions know their roles, know what they're expected to do. Long term recovery is a

little bit different because every disaster affects communities in a different way and there's not always a necessary requirement for long term recovery. But when it is needed, it takes a little bit of an art to figure out exactly how to carry it off. So to start out I am Brad Gair. I'm a federal coordinating officer with FEMA. I'm not assigned as the federal coordinating officer of record on this disaster but that's part of the program that I work in. There are about 20 of us nation-wide and when the President declares a disaster, he names one of us to lead the disaster so I'm on special assignment on this particular disaster. Next slide please.

The principles of long term recovery and these are just somewhat intuitive but really the first and one of the most important is start early and recognize that all recovery is long term. None of these things are going to get fixed over night. We can do some things quickly to make a lot of things better for people but it is going to take time. A successful process really must be locally driven, unlike some of the early response things where the federal and state governments can do a lot to help guide you down the path, long recovery has got to be a local process and we'll support it in any way we can. Recovery planning, you got to do it. These things will happen regardless if you plan or not, so it just becomes a question of how coherent of a recovery do you want to have? Is it something that you're going to take advantage of because every disaster is also an opportunity. Everything that's torn down by a disaster you have a chance to build back better. And that's mitigation is obviously a part of that. But so is this whole concept of making your community something better than it was. Not just from a resistance standpoint, but from overall community perspective. How can you make things better? You need significant interagency cooperation that's true at any stage of a disaster. It's just a little more complicated

long term recovery because the roles are not as well defined. And you've got to tailor the federal assistance to each disaster. That's one of the most important lessons that we've learned is we've gone along is that there's no, there's no set programs for long term recovery so we have to make them up as we go along with the help of Congress and lots of other people who have inputs and good ideas. Next slide please. Just want to take you through each of these briefly and talk about it a little bit more. All recovery is long term. You're on the clock with the immediate response activities. The emergency response measures -- removing debris, the basic human needs; getting people in shelter, making sure they're fed; making sure they're safe. And some infrastructure quick fixes if there's bridges that can be repaired quickly or roads or whatever it is, water line, sewer. Doing some quick fixes to get them back up and running.

For long term recovery, forget about the stop watch. You need a calendar. You may need several calendars before you actually accomplish the whole mission. Unmet human needs start to emerge. There are so many great programs that the federal government, the state governments have and in this case the city has some terrific programs. And the unbelievable outpouring here from charitable contributions. I can tell you right now there will be unmet needs, unmet human needs even with all the money that appears to be flowing around, there are going to be quite a few people and categories of people that are simply going to fall through the cracks. And we'll have to find ways to address those. Those will continue to emerge over the next several months. Infrastructure reconstruction, modernization, that's one of the big issues here, do we just put everything back the way it was? The infrastructure as I learned early on in New York City is in many cases fairly antiquated, especially in this part of town. There's some nearly hundred year old utility systems still in place and functional, but now that we have a chance to do some

reconstruction, are we just going put things back the way they were or will we try and make Lower Manhattan more than it was before the disaster. And that's really what a lot of thought needs to be put into and modernization of course is part of that. Economic revitalization is always difficult. Doesn't matter what, where the disaster is, it's going to have an impact on your economy. And a place like New York City with such a vibrant economy, it's been able to successfully recover a lot more than other places would obviously, but some parts of the economy are severely impacted, it will take years to recovery. So we have to make sure that there doesn't continue to be a decline while lower Manhattan recovers, so all those are issues that that we need to work on, we need to start early and plan long to accomplish our goals. Next slide please.

The locally-driven process, that's key. Here we've got the State of New York, which has tremendous capabilities and of course the city of New York which is unmatched in its capabilities. There's nothing really that the federal government can do here that New York City can't do for itself other than provide some funding and perhaps a little bit of supports in some areas where we're able to help. But we're not going to come in any tell anyone how to rebuild lower Manhattan. That's the job of the locals and the governor and the mayor did such a tremendously smart move when they created this Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, it's still fairly new and it hasn't had a chance to get off the ground yet, but essentially it's a cooperative entity that is their members supplied by both the city and the state and they're going to oversee a lot of this long term recovery and try and make those difficulty decisions on not just what should go down on the World Trade Center site, but how all of lower Manhattan should

come back and all kinds of decisions could be made now that'll effect it's future. So I think they're right on track with this principle of making sure it's locally driven. And it sounds like they're working towards getting lots of the other groups involved, that should be involved a part of that decision making. So as far as this one goes, I give them an A+ so far. Next slide.

Developer recovery plan. This is something that, that is probably the hardest to do because there are so many different agencies that have a stake in what's going to happen in any disaster, particularly one that's complicated. It's very hard to get everyone to agree on a single plan, or even come together to talk about planning. But is some very simple steps that you need to go through in order to develop a good recovery plan. You obviously have to inventory your damages, what your needs are and what resources you have available. That's been done here and that's probably the easiest part. The second step is agreeing upon the recovery philosophy. And you can see that starting to happen here now. What is the what is the recovery philosophy? How is that 16 acres site going to be developed? That's gonna drive a large portion of it. But what's the philosophy in relation to rebuilding the economy of lower Manhattan. What's going to be the relationship with the businesses that have made their homes here, but maybe are now looking at other sites across the river in another state. Are they gonna come back, will we try and attract them back or attract new industry? What are we trying to get out of this recovery and it really takes more thought than you would imagine right off the bat. But it's something that needs to be agreed upon by all the agencies involved and then pursued pretty aggressively. Gaps, unmet needs and the desired enhancements. Those will continue to evolve but they do need to be articulated so that everyone's clear on what the path is. Those things are not going to come about

on their own and funding as we get farther and farther from the disaster, becomes difficulty to come by. In the first days after the disaster, those who were working operations had everything at their disposal that they could ever want. You saw that in the earlier presentation. It's fantastic the way we were able to respond. Everyone sort of takes off their bureaucratic gloves and said what do we need to do to get the job done? As time passes, things become more complicated. We have a war in Afghanistan and world-wide now perhaps. We have other disasters that will be happening. We have election years and all those sorts of things that all of a sudden everybody steps back and talks about well can we afford to do this? Or is this the right time to do different things for New York City. So it's very important to identify what your needs are and make those very clear so that any funding that is available can be targeted to right where it's needed. You've got to have a flexible recovery plan. Things are going to change constantly as you're doing long term recovery. We have to have built-in capabilities to change your direction en route while maintaining the basic philosophy that you've established early on. And an implementation strategy is critical. You've got to have someone champion the cause. Again hopefully here it'll be the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation that's guiding the implementation, has a plan for how they're going to get this done. This is going to be probably one of the largest coordination construction effort anywhere that's taken place in the United States and it's going to be as bad as you may think it would be considering that in with all the complexities, it'll be ten times worse once it actually begins and I think people doing things now will lessen the blow. It's going to take a lot of patience and hard work all down the line to make it work. Next slide.

Significant inter-agency cooperation. These are the players on any disaster. The City, the State, the federal government and the private sector. And everyone's got to work together to make this work. Hit that one more time please. Yeah. There's the target right there. This is where long term recovery takes place and it is a very difficult spot to find where we all can come together. We all can agree on what we can do. What our appropriate roles are and find a way to accomplish those in concert. Next slide.

One of the things that we did here for interagency cooperation one of the things the federal government can bring to the table is just a little bit of coordination sort of in the post disaster framework. Right after the disaster, the President set up a revitalization task force in Washington headed by a dozen agencies, looking at how to help New York City basically. We were charged here in New York City with forming a mirror organization. We created a similar task force here that's continued to meet weekly and discuss how we can better deliver the aid to New York City. How we can help eliminate bureaucracy and streamline the processes that are in place. And in order to make that effective, we formed a number of work groups and I'm just showing an example here, infrastructure recovery work group that started meeting just a few days after the disaster when everybody was still sort of trying to figure out what they had on their hands. What was the magnitude of their own issues. Starting to think about how we're going to put it all back together and the very first meeting that group had on a Saturday, there were only five people that were actually in attendance and but we talked about it, realized it was the right thing to do so that we could communicate the needs from the local agencies up through the federal hierarchy and try and get the help that was needed. Next slide please. And that infrastructure recovery work

group from that first weekend and five agencies has now grown to a group that continues to meet weekly. And you can see we have numerous agencies right now. We continue to add partners all the time. We've got lots of involvement, even by our partners in New Jersey now who realize this is really a regional situation and it will take cooperation on both sides of the river to help the recovery process speed it's way along. So this kind of cooperation is really critical to the long term recovery effort. Next slide please. And in tailoring the federal aid to disaster, that's one of the most difficult parts. We've got such good programs in place that FEMA that were described earlier. The Public Assistance Program for governments and their facilities. The individual assistance programs for people with the mortgage assistance and disaster and unemployment, all those great things. Long term recovery, there really are no programs in place so what we try to do is piece things together as we see the disaster unfolding, and couple of things to think about when that happens is using existing programs to the maximum extent possible. Everything that there is to be done in New York City, there's a program already existing in the federal governments that will allow you to do it. It may not be disaster specific, but it is a program that will accomplish the end that you desire. If you can use existing programs, you avoid start-up delays because any time there's a new program created, we have to draw up regulations and take comments on it and implementation at times gets delayed. So what we've tried to do here is funnel money through existing programs and just before Congress went out of session, they did exactly that. They put \$2 billion dollars of aid through the HUD community development block grant program, which is a very flexible program. Can be used for a tremendous amount of things. So we don't have to draw up a new rule book on how that happens. The money is there. It's now

already being planned for how it will be used. And that will be really critical to the recovery. Seek special appropriations when they're needed. They are needed. Congress is a well that's available to go to. There's a limit to how many times you can go and exactly what you'll get out of that. But it definitely when you go you need to make sure that you're not identifying a need that's already addressed elsewhere. We've already noticed a couple of times in this disaster that special appropriations have been done for things that FEMA or another agency already can fund. And so what that ends up doing is it doesn't result in a real new increase for New York City, it simply means that maybe Department of Justice will pay a little more and FEMA a little less, but we're not we're not increasing the amount of resources available to New York City. So we've got to be really careful when we get those special appropriations. Same thing with avoiding the duplicating of other programs and benefits. Federal agencies are banned from duplicating benefits so we can't give any agency the money twice for the same thing. So when we create these special appropriations we often create problems where we're duplicating programs. And identify opportunities for streamlining. We've done a pretty good job of that here with the way the funding has been geared, we've also worked on some environmental streamlining with the NEPA processes so that as facilities are ready to come back on line, we're not all of a sudden and bogged down in a lot of environmental bureaucracy. We've got local, state and federal agencies working together on how we can move quickly through an environmental process and get these projects started up again as soon as their designed and ready to go. Next please. This is another part of the coordination of the federal task force here at the local level. All of these agencies meet weekly together. We talk about the problems, we talk about the solutions and we talk about how we can help find some funding for those and that's really been a cooperative effort that

that's helped up along in our dealings with the local state agencies, and in our dealings with Washington, we sort of serve as an intermediary and I think that's proven very useful. Next slide. This is obviously one of the larger cities you would ever want to work in and since this is an Urban Hazard Forum, I thought I'd just say a few things about some special issues here. Obviously there are more political jurisdictions involved. Tremendous numbers of them. Ones that I certainly wasn't even aware of when I first got here, now we keep adding them on every day. But all of them have to be accounted for. Its not like in a rural disaster where you may have the luxury, sometimes like when I the disaster as that in Los Alamos, New Mexico, the city and county are a combined government so we only really had one agency to deal with on a lot of that disaster. And they also owned all the utilities, so it was a very, as far as that goes, it was a very simple coordination effort. It has other complexities with radioactive material unfortunately burned up and distributed around the area, but as far as coordination of jurisdictions goes, you couldn't ask for a simpler one. The infrastructure here is very complex. Jerry McCarty you're out there somewhere, one of the first things he told me was that the underground of New York City is like a spaghetti bowl. When something gets abandoned or upgraded, it's never taken out -- there's just more things stuffed in there. And if you if you get a chance to go down to Rector or Murray Street, which are open right now for construction, you'll see that incredibly complicated infrastructure. And if that in and of itself is not enough, the subways below there, the process of building all that back without redundancy, we don't want to fix the streets and then find out we need to go back in and fix the utility and then fix the streets again and then find out we need to tear it all up to do the subways. We're trying to do it right once. But the complexity of the

infrastructure is definitely a special issue here. We definitely have a more diverse economy in New York City and that's been a blessing for the city as a whole, but some sectors are very hard hit. But again that's very different from a rural environment. One of the first disasters that I worked on was the Oklahoma City tornado and the tornado hit another small town about 40 miles away from Oklahoma City where the only industry in town was an outlet mall. And the only thing in the town that was hit by the tornado was the outlet mall. It was completely destroyed and so essentially everyone was unemployed, and the economy was shot in a matter of seconds. Here again we've got a more diverse economy but those parts of it that are damaged, are a huge dollar value components of the economic sector that's going to take a lot of work to prop those back up. More local capabilities and resources. There's everything here in New York City you could possibly need that's made our job tremendously easier. You heard the great presentations from the City and the Port Authority. They have far more resources than we can draw upon. And that's certainly will speed the long term recovery. Sophisticated and demanding clientele that's always a challenge in an urban environment. I come from the west from Arizona, and we're a less sophisticated and probably not as demanding. When we have disasters in the west, we assume things will eventually get taken care of and the recovery will take it's own pace. Here I found very quickly that that everyone talks fast and expects fast action. So we're trying to respond to that. The people here are also very attuned to the programs. They understand how governments work. They understand how systems work and, rightfully so, they expect us to work at our at our peak capabilities after a disaster like that. So hopefully we'll be able to live up to it. And for the same reasons some more time sensitive process. Some of the opportunities that we have right now won't last long. Other priorities will take the nation's attention away from

New York City. We've got to get as much going as fast as we can so that when ultimately much of that attention is gone, we still have enough momentum to carry this out, carry this through all the way to the finish line. And next slide. That's all I prepared for today to talk about long term recovery is something that's really, as the federal government we have a very unique role in because it is a local process and we're just there to provide some back-up. But it's a critical function. It's one that I think without FEMA taking some role in, lots of places wouldn't recover all well as they do. So when the spotlights are out and the camera crews have gone and there's still working going on, you'll know that it's long term recovery still in action. Thank you.