



October 28, 2013

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6256

The Honorable Nick Rahall
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6256

Dear Chairman Shuster and Ranking Member Rahall:

On behalf of the 300,000 members of the International Association of Fire Fighters and the 10,000 fire and emergency medical services' leaders of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, we express our support for H.R. 3300, the FEMA Reauthorization Act of 2013. This important legislation will improve the nation's ability to respond to national disasters caused by all hazards, both natural and human-made.

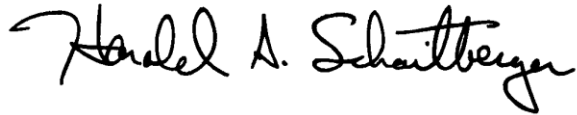
Besides reauthorizing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through Fiscal Year 2016, the legislation also includes two other important sections. It provides a formal Congressional authorization for the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), which uses a variety of technologies to impart important life-saving information to the American public. The bill also establishes an advisory committee, with representatives from the emergency response community, to develop recommendations for the effective management of the IPAWS.

The bill also includes a comprehensive authorization for the National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) System. The US&R system is an internationally-recognized system of teams that provide lifesaving rescue response during major disasters. H.R. 3300 will clarify issues relating to liability protection, licensing, and compensation for US&R team members.

As the committee continues to review issues relating to post-disaster recovery, we urge you to consider legislation that will address challenges to post-wildland fire mitigation. After wildland fires race through communities, there may no longer be vegetation and the soil may be too burned to absorb water. This problem creates a threat of flash flooding in areas devastated by wildland fires. Currently, states, tribes, and communities that receive funding through FEMA's Fire Management Assistance Grant program do not receive funding to take steps to mitigate this threat. We urge you to consider legislation that will allow communities to receive post-fire hazard mitigation assistance to take the short-term action necessary, such as re-seeding burned land and installing flood control and erosion control barriers, to prevent post-wildland fire flooding.

Thank you again for your leadership in authoring this important legislation. The FEMA plays a vital role in the nation's emergency response system, and the authorization language in this bill will clarify important issues relating to the IPAWS and US&R systems. We look forward to working with you to pass this legislation in this Congress.

Sincerely,



Harold A. Schaitberger
General President, IAFF



Chief William R. Metcalf, EFO, CFO, MIFireE
President and Chairman of the Board, IAFC