

Remarks Prepared for
Linda Hall Daschle, Deputy Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
FAA Hurricane Awareness Seminar
Opening Remarks Video
August 1, 1995

Hello. I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the Hurricane Awareness Seminar, and to launch what I believe will be a very informative meeting.

FAA's emergency planning is critical because the aviation system is a vital lifeline in the event of a major disaster.

Your task, as FAA's emergency response experts, is to ensure the operation and integrity of that lifeline --the national aviation system -- before, during, and in the aftermath of a disaster.

In a very real sense, you are the linch pin of the federal disaster response program.

In addition to minimizing any disaster's effects on aviation, the FAA also supports the broader response by the Department of Transportation and FEMA.

Few missions are more challenging or of greater importance than yours.

You should take great satisfaction in knowing how important your work is to your fellow citizens.

Your agenda for the next few days is an ambitious one.

You will familiarize yourself with the FAA Crisis Response System and learn how it supports Federal Response Plans.

You also will acquire a better understanding of the many assets that the FAA can bring to bear in hurricane relief operations.

This is especially crucial this year.

Preliminary forecasts for the 1995 hurricane season indicate the potential for up to 8 hurricanes and 12 tropical storms -- a figure much higher than the norm.

For those of you who supported FAA's response to past disasters such as Hurricane Andrew and Typhoon Omar, you know what a difficult job it can be to restore the national airspace during and after a crisis, and to maintain the safety and integrity of the system.

That is why we have brought together a panel of both FAA and outside experts to provide you with extensive hurricane-related information and to share their expertise in disaster response.

The next three days will give you a great opportunity to increase your knowledge and to learn new disaster response skills.

I am sure all of you will gain valuable information and expertise from your attendance here this week.

And finally, I want to add that David Hinson shares my admiration for your dedication and professionalism.

He and I appreciate your contributions to the FAA and the American people.

Thank you.

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Linda Hall Daschle, Deputy Administrator
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Closing Remarks
August 3, 1995

I am delighted to be here.

As you can imagine, getting out of Washington to escape the hot steam from the Potomac and the politics is always a welcomed relief.

And, I'm especially delighted I arrived here at the end of the week -- after Hurricane Erin moved on.

I guess the timing of this seminar could not have been better for you to become more "aware" of hurricanes.

While we don't have hurricanes in my former home state of Kansas, we do have tornadoes.

I know how devastating such storms can be -- to people, to buildings, and to equipment.

And, I know the better prepared we are to meet those crises, the better off we are in recovering from them.

That's why this Hurricane Seminar has been a crucial exercise -- it helps the FAA better prepare for, and recover from future storms.

When a hurricane devastates an area, very few people understand the work it takes to keep the national aviation system operational.

They just expect the system to run safely.

The FAA has faced many natural disasters in the past, and has endured some devastating storms.

The scope of Hurricane Andrew in 1992, for example, was enormous and affected not only FAA facilities throughout south Florida, but also touched the personal lives of more FAA personnel than any similar catastrophe.

When Hurricane Andrew swept through south Florida it caused flight cancellations, damaged airports, and knocked out some FAA air traffic control facilities.

For example, after the hurricane hit, the VOR in Biscayne Bay was lost; Key West lost all communications lines and power; the Miami Automated International Flight Service Station received major damage and was out of service; the Tamiami Tower received major damage and was out of service; the Richmond Long Range Radar site was completely destroyed, and the VOR at Naples was shut down.

I can't even imagine the force it takes to destroy a facility such as the Richmond Long Range Radar.

And, to think, there were FAA personnel at the site during the storm.

As the storm was winding down, FAA emergency crews were already on their way to the damaged facilities.

Although complete recovery did not occur overnight, the Region's airspace users probably never really noticed any difference in the services they received.

While getting the equipment back on-line, agency employees also went above and beyond to help their colleagues.

Although no FAA personnel were seriously injured, approximately 144 had badly damaged or destroyed homes, and many others sustained lesser harm to their property.

A massive relief effort carried out by and for FAA employees provided shelter, food, and money to those in need.

As the FAA was rebuilding its Florida sites, Typhoon Omar struck Guam with winds of up to 150 miles an hour, causing major damage to an estimated 75 to 90 percent of all buildings.

The island lost all power.

But two days after the storm, the airport had reopened, but only for VFR/daylight operations.

Although no FAA families were injured, the storm left the FAA housing area in a shambles.

Storms such as Hurricane Andrew and Typhoon Omar underscore the importance of FAA's emergency operations plans.

Those plans prescribe what to do to prepare for such a storm and then outline recovery procedures.

Because of advance FAA emergency planning, it was not surprising how quickly and how thoroughly this agency's personnel pulled together during Hurricane Andrew -- to help one another and to maintain the integrity and safety of the national aviation system in the aftermath of that storm.

Despite our extraordinary actions, there were lessons to be learned from Andrew and subsequent storms.

FAA's emergency operations plan is constantly being examined and reviewed.

Our plan is a living document, one that must be revised and updated.

Seminars such as this one, give us the opportunity to undertake such revisions as we hone our skills and incorporate new knowledge.

When the next hurricane, flood, or any other disaster occurs we will be ready.

This week you have had the opportunity to discuss the FAA's disaster response work with professionals from other organizations, such as the National Hurricane Center, the NY/NJ Port Authority, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Federal Coordinator for Meteorology.

I think the ability to compare notes with and learn from others is an important component of any seminar . . .

. . . Because preparing for natural disasters is not a static business . . .

I think this week has also reinforced the idea that the key component of successful emergency response is TEAMWORK.

No one individual or office can maintain the integrity of the aviation system in a disaster. It takes teamwork.

It takes Air Traffic, Airports, Flight Standards, Security, Logistics, Airways Facilities, and many other FAA offices working together to meet the demands and challenges of a catastrophic disaster.

Without one another, pulling together as a well-trained unit, this agency could not survive the next natural disaster.

We need each other and we need to work in tandem as the FAA emergency response team.

I also hope the last few days have reinforced the idea that you can never be too ready to meet a disaster.

That is something I wish the public fully understood.

We prepare 365 days a year to be ready for any eventuality.

We cannot take the chance that the aviation system will be disrupted during a hurricane.

We are able to keep the national aviation system operational before, during, and in the aftermath of a disaster, because we plan, we study, we prepare, and we practice.

And then we do it all over again and again.

We can take no chances when it comes to safety.

Recovering from any storm takes incredible hard work and dedication.

In the past, such efforts have proven to be extraordinary ventures.

Those efforts have united FAA's managers, union members, and a wide variety of employees with diverse skills.

Maintaining that safety wouldn't be possible without dedicated professionals like you who plan for these worse case disasters.

I don't think very many people really understand the role of emergency response personnel who operate quietly and efficiently to prepare the agency to weather any disaster.

You are the agency's true heroes.

I want you to know how important this agency thinks your contributions are to making the U. S. aviation system the safest and finest transportation system in the world.

Without your efforts, we would not be as successful as we are in maintaining system safety every day, year after year.

For that I thank you.

And, I want to let you know how glad I am that I'm on your team.