

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2026

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Karen Evans
Acting Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St. SW
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Administrator Evans:

We are writing to express our deep concern about reports that you plan to drastically cut the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) workforce in 2026.¹ After reportedly firing at least 65 staffers from the Cadre of On-Call Response and Recovery (CORE) team² on New Year's Eve, there have been more reports that state you plan to cut 1,000 CORE positions this month.³ We urge you to renew the contracts of CORE employees, refrain from further firings at FEMA, and abandon your plan to eliminate the agency.

Your proposed cuts will decimate FEMA's ability to respond to disasters. The CORE team, which you plan to cut by 41%, is vital to FEMA's response and recovery operations. This team provides critical assistance to FEMA permanent staff and makes up about 40% of FEMA's entire workforce. In areas such as Texas and Louisiana nearly 80% of those deployed in support roles are CORE employees. According to one former FEMA official, FEMA "can't do disaster response and recovery without CORE employees."⁴ Similarly, reporting indicates you plan to cut surge staffers by 85%. These staffers are standby workers who are often the first on the ground.

These cuts come on top of already-devastating cuts by your administration. Thousands of FEMA employees were either laid off or voluntarily left as a result of your administration's DOGE cuts in 2025,⁵ and this administration has stated its intent to eliminate FEMA.⁶

A robust federal disaster response agency is necessary for keeping our communities safe from increasingly frequent extreme weather events.⁷ FEMA helps communities understand and prepare for possible risks before a disaster strikes, provides recovery centers during a disaster, and supports recovery following a disaster. FEMA also works to mitigate future disasters.

Texas communities have already faced the grave consequences of FEMA understaffing. During the deadly flooding on July 4th weekend in Central Texas, your decisions to cut staff and slow walk urgent decisions

¹ Emails outline potential cuts affecting thousands of FEMA disaster responders". The Washington Post. 5 January 2026.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2026/01/05/fema-disaster-core-cuts-dhs-emails/>.

² "DHS begins slashing FEMA disaster response staff as 2026 begins" Cable News Network, 2 January 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/01/politics/dhs-cutting-fema-disaster-response-staff/>.

³ "FEMA Staff Bracing for Dismissal of 1,000 Disaster Workers" New York Times. 6 January 2026. https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/06/climate/fema-staff-cuts-1000-workers.html?utm_source=semafor/.

⁴ "'New Year's Eve Massacre': Trump Administration Makes Deep Cuts at FEMA as Climate Crisis Accelerates" Common Dreams, 2 January 2026. <https://www.commondreams.org/news/trump-administration-fema-cuts/>.

⁵ "Regional FEMA offices slashed by DOGE face further cuts; disaster response may suffer" Cascadia Daily News. 4 January, 2026. <https://www.cascadiadaily.com/2026/jan/04/regional-fema-offices-slashed-by-doge-face-further-cuts-disaster-response-may-suffer/>.

⁶ "The Trump administration says it wants to eliminate FEMA. Here's what we know". National Public Radio. 6 June 2026. <https://www.npr.org/2025/06/26/nx-s1-5430469/faq-fema-elimination/>.

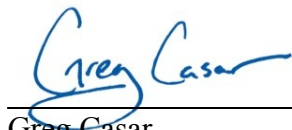
⁷ "Extreme Weather - NASA Science." NASA Science. 23 October 2024. <https://science.nasa.gov/climate-change/extreme-weather/>.

slowed FEMA's response, endangering many lives.⁸ Your decisions have already put the lives of our constituents at risk. It is unacceptable that you are doubling down and further jeopardizing disaster preparedness.

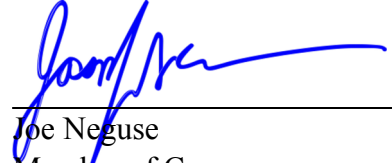
Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and intense. Instead of ensuring FEMA is fully-staffed and well prepared to assist states your administration has decided to shutter this crucial agency. We urge you to reconsider and ask that you extend contracts for the CORE employees, halt any other plans to cut staffing, and respond to the following questions by January 16, 2026:

1. Provide a full breakdown of the staff changes you plan to make at FEMA, including detailed information regarding which positions will be eliminated and an assessment of FEMA's operational capacity given these cuts.
2. How will each region be impacted by the reported plans that will cut about half of FEMA staff?
3. How will the New Year's Eve cuts to the Cadre of On-Call Response and Recovery (CORE) team affect FEMA response times to disasters?
4. How will cutting Cadre of On-Call Response and Recovery (CORE) employees make Americans safer?
5. What additional staffing cuts do you officially plan to make, and what is the timeline for future staffing cuts?

Sincerely,



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

⁸ "Federal records contradict what FEMA leader told Congress about Texas flood response" National Public Radio. 7 August, 2025.
<https://www.npr.org/2025/08/07/nx-s1-5489682/fema-call-center-dhs-funding-texas-floods/>.