



Senator Feinstein Calls on FEMA to Fill Regional Vacancies  
- *Eight of Ten Regions Lack Permanent, Appointed Directors* -

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**Washington, DC** –U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) is urging the Department of Homeland Security to fill vacancies at eight of the ten Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regional directorates.

FEMA is divided into ten regional offices. Each region is responsible for assisting several states to plan for disasters, develop mitigation programs, and meet needs when major disasters occur. Currently, eight of the ten FEMA regional directorates lack full-time directors. In a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, Senator Feinstein stressed that the absence of a permanent, appointed director not only undermines the leadership of the region but also places undue burdens on regional staff who are already stretched thin.

**“As the terrible destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina so vividly demonstrated, we cannot afford to wait until after disaster strikes to be prepared for the worst,”** Senator Feinstein said. **“FEMA’s regional vacancies are weakening the Federal government’s ability to marshal the full force of its resources to prepare, protect and provide recovery assistance in the event of a national emergency. I am particularly concerned about the people of the West Coast in FEMA Region 9, who are so vulnerable to the dangers of a catastrophic earthquake or other disaster. By filling these critical regional vacancies, we can move one step closer to ensuring the safety of millions and the economic security of America’s major metropolitan areas.”**

*Following is the text of the letter sent to Secretary Chertoff:*

“I am writing to express my deep concern regarding vacancies at FEMA that recently have been brought to my attention. It is my hope that I can count on your personal commitment to address these concerns and ensure the safety of millions of Americans.

Specifically, I have been advised that eight of ten FEMA regions do not have full-time regional directors. While these regions are being led by “acting” directors who may be very well-qualified, the absence of a permanent, appointed director not only undermines the leadership of the region but also places extra burdens on a staff that is stretched to meet the needs left by the vacancy. This is especially true now as the nation unites to provide all available assistance to communities on the Gulf Coast.

Of particular concern is Region 9, which covers much of the West Coast. Region 9 is vulnerable and faces the risk of an earthquake that could cause large disruptions to major metropolitan areas. The region is without an appointed director, yet faces the imminent threat of

a potentially catastrophic emergency. Without effective leadership and a fully staffed office, I fear the region is not being given the necessary resources to fulfill their responsibilities.

I am sure you can appreciate my concern and the need for immediate attention. Preparedness cannot wait until disaster strikes; the West Coast's citizenry and economy depend on us in government to proactively address the challenges an earthquake or other emergency will present. I will help in any way and look forward to your swift action to address these needs."

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