

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2025

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

REPLY TO:  
2107 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE  
BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4671  

---

504 BROADWAY  
LONG BRANCH, NJ 07740  
(732) 571-1140  

---

67/69 CHURCH STREET  
KILMER SQUARE  
NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ 08901  
(732) 249-8892  
<https://pallone.house.gov/>

Mr. President:

I write to call on you to immediately fire Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Acting Administrator David Richardson. All Americans grieved for the Hill Country communities in Texas ripped apart by the extreme flooding of the Guadalupe River on Independence Day. The disaster and FEMA's botched response have dominated headlines as one of the deadliest rain events in recent U.S. history. More than a quarter of the victims were elementary school children—some as young as eight—who washed away in the night while FEMA fumbled. The tragedy is particularly poignant for New Jerseyans as we carry the memory of upheaval and loss due to Superstorm Sandy in 2012 and Hurricane Ida in 2021.

In the aftermath of disasters of such magnitude, the knowledge that the federal government's top emergency management official is competent and proactively working to alleviate hardship is critical to Americans' faith in government. When it comes to disaster response, our nation should not "wing it" and yet that seems to be the leadership principle of your current appointee.

Based on all accounts, it is my assessment that Mr. Richardson lacks not only the qualifications but the basic human urgency in emergency management to care for the nation's people in our greatest hour of need. This is evident by several different measures.

First, Mr. Richardson has never worked in the emergency management sector you appointed him to lead. His lack of knowledge runs so deep that he was unaware of hurricane season and had no plan for it. In New Jersey, hurricane season and the power of an angry Atlantic Ocean is respected and feared, certainly not something FEMA leadership should regard flippantly. Richardson treated it like a scheduling inconvenience.

Second, Mr. Richardson has misplaced priorities. It seems he wants to work more as an auditor at the Department of Government Efficiency than as Acting Administrator of FEMA. Instead of supporting Americans in their darkest hour of need, he is distracted by carrying out your goal of abolishing FEMA – an objective you reiterated just a few days ago - which means ripping up cooperative agreements between states and the federal government for aid and canceling contracts to support survivor services.

Third, the Independence Day floods that killed at least 135 Texans were Mr. Richardson's first major test of leadership, and he simply failed to meet the moment. His short time at the head of FEMA put up new red tape that prevented search and rescue teams from being deployed for 72 hours and led to call centers failing to answer 15,323 calls from Americans in need. It was days before the Acting Administrator visited Texas to provide oversight of operations and only after a national outcry. Where was his sense of urgency?

Asking communities to face extreme weather alone is wrong. Emergency management isn't just FEMA's job, it's America's promise. That is why I call on you to immediately fire the Acting Administrator. We are approaching the height of hurricane season. Americans deserve competency at the top of FEMA, not someone who is out to lunch while kids are dying. Fire him now before another tragedy strikes.

Sincerely,

  
FRANK PALLONE, JR.