

Don't Wait for FEMA

We all know that FEMA has far from a sterling track record. You don't even have to be a prepper to know that. Basically, all the news I every heard about the federal agency charged with helping citizens during times of disaster has been negative. It's not a question of whether the news will be negative or not; but actually, how bad it will be.

Yet there are still those who expect Uncle Sam to come through for them, in the form of FEMA, coming to the rescue, whenever a disaster strikes. And while I'm pretty sure that the people staffing the various FEMA offices get out to disaster areas, spreading red tape around, I'm not all that sure that their work is actually useful. Perhaps my opinion is colored by the reports I've heard; but what else do I have to go by? If anyone has any reliable reports of FEMA doing better than what I've heard, I'd love to hear them.

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Looking at the situation objectively, I would have to say that FEMA's 20,000 employees probably aren't enough to fulfill its mission: at least, not when they are dealing with a disaster. When hundreds of thousands of people are suffering the effects of a disaster, sending in a few thousand to help isn't enough. Making matters worse, in situations like the recent hurricanes, the bigger cities get most of the attention, while small towns might get one FEMA worker showing up, with a stack of forms for people to fill out, in the hope they will receive some government aid.

But getting that aid is another problem. While the federal government has a host of agencies which work together with

FEMA, trying to bring help, along with their own red tape, FEMA's budget just isn't enough to go around. They receive roughly \$30 billion per year out of the federal budget; but the thing I hear the most about that money, is that they've run out. They're broke. They don't know how they're going to help people for the next disaster; and that's long before the budgetary year is half over.

While I'm sure that the politicians who came up with the idea of creating a federal agency to offer disaster aid and relief had the best of intentions, I'm not so sure that it is even possible for the government to accomplish what FEMA was created to do. I don't see any evidence, looking at past disasters, and they didn't do any better with Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Granted, those two came back-to-back, hitting almost the same area; but maybe that just illustrates my point.

What Has Happened to FEMA?

One of the things that tends to happen to government agencies is that they morph over time, as one administration or another adds to and/or takes away from their mission. Perhaps the best example of this that I know is the Texas Railway Commission, which no longer has anything to do with railways. That work has been transferred to another agency. The Railroad Commission deals only with regulating the energy industry; mostly petroleum.

Similar things have happened to other government agencies, at all levels of government. This, of course, includes FEMA. I've read a number of articles lately, talking about how FEMA has been tasked with other missions, such as helping out people in the LGBTQ+ community, who the administration apparently feels are people who are living under constant stress, similar to that of people who have just survived a natural disaster. On top of that, the current administration has made it eminently

clear that they want disadvantaged people to be prioritized in receiving aid, which means that everyday taxpayers may not receive the help they need. Granted, disadvantaged people probably need the help; but that shouldn't preclude others receiving the help they need.

There also seems to be what some are calling a discrepancy in the priority the federal government is putting on disaster relief, when compared to the amount of money sent being to other countries, most specifically to the Ukraine. To be fair, the people pointing this out do not support Ukraine; but it's hard to argue with them when we have sent billions to Ukraine, but are only offering \$750 to Americans who have lost everything in the hurricanes.

FEMA and Your Disaster

I say all that to show just how little we can expect to be able to count on FEMA in the event that any of us are faced with a natural disaster. Please note that this is considerably different than dealing with a TEOTWAWKI event. There probably won't be any FEMA to help anyone in such as situation, as the people who work for FEMA will be busy trying to survive and take care of their families, assuming they're still alive. But it's also different for us, in that we know that there will be a return to some sort of normal, and it probably won't take more than a couple of months to get there.

The town of Roan Mountain, Tennessee was faced with this sort of situation, thanks to Hurricane Helene. It was two weeks before the first FEMA worker arrived in the town; and that was just to drop off forms for the locals to fill out, applying for assistance. That one visit was the only contact this small community had with FEMA in the wake of a devastating disaster.

Fortunately for the residents of that community, they really didn't need FEMA. Rather than wait for government assistance, the local population dug in and helped themselves. One of the

local churches opened their doors to become a combination shelter for those who needed it and the receiving station for donations of all sorts, which individuals made to help out those in need. Those who had chainsaws and heavy equipment started clearing the streets and even filling massive holes with rocks and dirt. It may not have been up to code; but those people had roads to drive on, rather than roads that were closed off by orange cones. People prepared food, including the same church that was taking in those whose homes were destroyed.

Of course, there are some organizations which are prepared for such disasters, as a matter of course. We've probably all heard about power and telephone companies staging work crews before the storms hit, so as to be ready to move in and begin repairs immediately. Some of those crews drove their company work trucks in from halfway across the country, sent by the companies they work for, in support of the local utilities in the affected areas.

Even so, the amount of work facing those crews is enormous and they are working long shifts to do everything they can. I'm sure they have a disaster protocol they work through, prioritizing areas where power and communications impact critical services. This leaves people in smaller towns, like Roan Mountain, to wait, while main trunk lines are repaired and service is returned to more populous areas.

But that didn't stop the people of this community; who could serve as case study in how communities can pull together, overcoming the problems that they jointly faced. Each person found their place to help, from school administrators who were directing traffic, to restaurant owners who were feeding the community without charge.

There's something that people in general and Americans in particular have deep within them, which causes us to bring out the best within ourselves, in times of crisis. Throughout our

history, Americans have reached out to help one another during these difficult times, walking through them together and becoming stronger for the experience. What makes us think that our friends and neighbors won't be able to do that again, the next time around?



I'll have to say, this attitude is probably much more prevalent in smaller communities, than it is in the big cities. There's something about living in a big city, which seems to take the love and brotherhood out of people. I'm not so sure they would be so quick to extend the hand... unless they were expecting others to fill that hand with something.

While I'm sure that FEMA does the best they can; I'm also sure that they can't do enough. We, the people, are going to have to take care of each other. Even allowing FEMA to help us can be dangerous, as they have the power to confiscate anything they want "for the greater good." That means they can take over stockpiles of necessary supplies, as well as the warehouses those supplies are in, kicking out the owners.

Obviously, none of this negates our need to prepare in any way. All I'm saying is that we shouldn't be so quick to write off those friends and neighbors when the next disaster strikes. Yes, there are some of them who will sit on their hands, waiting for the nanny state to take care of them. And yes, I'd write off looking to FEMA for help. But there's something about hard times which can bring out the best in anyone. Let's be part of that.