



**FEMA**

January 10, 2007

Dear FLTRO Employees:

"So, what's next?"

At the beginning of a new year, it is not uncommon for people to ask themselves this question. It is the question that sets forth high hopes and plans for fruitful New Year's resolutions. It is a question that each of us should ask ourselves personally and professionally. It is also the very question that begs an answer at this start of a new year, as we look forward, in Florida's long-term recovery.

Shortly after our arrival in Florida in May 2005, we went through a significant rightsizing to streamline duties and increase accountability. As of last week this office shrunk again, by nearly 120 people, bringing us to an appropriate size for the current workload. While some have chosen to go another direction in their careers, many have decided to remain in the FEMA family by taking appointments outside of Florida or joining a DAE cadre. For that I am grateful, for I firmly believe there is no better grooming ground for FEMA employees than on this ground, in the state of Florida.

In a few months this office will have been on Florida soil for two years. We arrived to the cries and complaints of unsatisfied, neglected, frustrated and angry applicants. And we answered loud and clear. We changed. We didn't dig in our heels or get defensive; we didn't try to justify the 'the way it's always been done.' We simply changed the way we did business – we put the customer first, we stood by our promises and we, in fact, changed the way Floridians viewed FEMA.

We expanded when called upon – responding to and recovering from Hurricanes Dennis, Katrina, Rita and Wilma – and we have contracted again, without being called upon. Remarkably, we are currently at one quarter of the staffing numbers we once were. Only a truly adaptable, forward-thinking organization, like ours, can make such massive adjustments without missing a beat.

Thank you for conquering these challenges.

I ask you now to renew your commitment to the recovery missions from 2004 and 2005. Had another disaster been declared in Florida could we have handled it? Without a doubt in the world. With the number of victories achieved by this office over the past 20 months, the addition of another disaster would simply be added to the long list. But the time has come for us to narrow our focus; to define our final victory in Florida as the closing down of the long-term recovery office. Though we all know that there is still much work to be done and that transitions do not happen overnight, we will move swiftly towards our goal with clarity and conviction. In the end, we will have proven that we can expand and contract, take on new disasters and close them out, all the while becoming more efficient and more effective while serving our customers – the victims – with expedience and grace.

Our dedication to this state is well known. Our service to its residents is well documented. Our commitment has been second to none. Let's refocus and refine our work to close-out 2004 and 2005 with the swiftness and dignity that our operation has defined in Florida.

Please join me tomorrow morning, January 11, at 10:30 in the atrium, as there will be an all-hands meeting to address any questions that you may have and discuss the way ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott R. Morris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Scott R. Morris  
Director, Florida Long-term Recovery