

Testimony of the Honorable A.C. Wharton

Mayor

City of Memphis

October 18, 2011

Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee

Good morning. Honorable Chair Boxer, Honorable Ranking Member Inhofe, members of this distinguished committee, and Tennessee's capable and highly respected Senator Lamar Alexander, I thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Memphians and the Historic Mississippi Flood of 2011.

Our City faced a daunting challenge in managing and recovering from this natural disaster. Our first responders worked diligently to protect and save lives, and minimize the loss of property and possessions of our citizens. The President, our congressional delegation, and the Governor of the State of Tennessee acknowledged the historic work of our first responders and the countless number of volunteers.

However, despite the admirable actions of the Office of Preparedness, First Responders, and the volunteers of United Way of the Mid South, some of our citizens are still in transition as they rebuild homes and lives. For a few minutes, I would like to give you an overview of the 2011 Mississippi Flood.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USACE, was an excellent partner during the 2011 Mississippi flood event. The USACE staff is to be commended for their professionalism, conduct, and competency. The City and USACE worked collaboratively and diligently to ensure that the flood control/protection systems were installed correctly and the functioned as designed. Overall, the City was able to count on the USACE to assist the City with its expertise, resourcefulness, and sense of teamwork during the course of the flooding event.

The Flood impacted our local community. Fortunately for the City of Memphis, the existing flood control and protection systems constructed to protect the City functioned as designed and undoubtedly saved thousands of properties from flooding, including businesses which were protected, as well as St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Most of these systems had never been tested or put into service before and were understandably a point of major concern.

However if it had not been for the floodwalls and levees, buildings such as our City's Pyramid would have had 8 to 10 feet of water within the structure. Hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions, in damages would have been suffered.

The City did not escape unaffected:

- Across the area nearly 390 properties were damaged including three mobile home parks whereby every home was destroyed.
 - Numerous businesses were significantly impacted, and some businesses were forced to shut down in the already weak Main Street economy.
- DeWitt Spain Regional Airport, a local regional airport under the Memphis and Shelby County Airport Authority, was flooded. The facilities on site suffered significant damages and the estimated cost for repairs and other flood related activities are \$3.1M plus additional losses in revenue due to the closure of the facility.
- Several streets and bridges were damaged by flood waters and had to be repaired.
- Hundreds of streets had to be cleaned and cleared of debris.
- The City of Memphis's two Waste Water Treatment Plants handled up to an additional 250 million gallons a day due to flood conditions.
- The Memphis U.S. Coast Guard facility had to be evacuated and relocated.
- Port of Memphis/Presidents Island suffered the greatest damages:
 - ½ mile of shoreline damaged
 - Erosion damage to berm structure along 4 miles of levee
 - Nearly 800 acres of farmland damaged
 - 2.5 miles of erosion damage to containment walls
 - 3 miles of levees needed to be cleaned
 - Major dredging work of the harbor is needed
- The City of Memphis costs for the flood event was approximately \$ 5.0M

Our Immediate and long term recovery needs are in three areas:

- The Port of Memphis will need to be funded either through the USACE or by local/state funds:
 - Estimated cost to repair shorelines: \$20 to \$30M
 - Estimated cost for dredging work needed: \$2.5M, at a minimum
 - Estimate and additional \$5.0M in repairs needed, at a minimum
Depending upon further assessments.
- Evaluate the existing flood protection and control systems.
 - Flood control infrastructure and systems are aging and will need rehabilitation.
 - The City has grown in size, thus additional flood control and protection systems are needed to protect expansion/development areas.
- Funding for the development and application of technologies such as Geographic Information System (GIS).

Finally, but equally as important as the information I shared with you, we asked forty of our survivors identified through the FEMA process to complete a questionnaire. The summary of those responding is in the appendix of our handout.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.



City of Memphis Performance Questionnaire

1. Are you a Flood Victim as identified by the Federal Emergency management Administration?

Response: Yes – 39 No – 1

2. Did government provide adequate notice of the impending flood (on a scale of 1 – poor to 5 – good)?

Response: Average score of 40 responders 3.7

3. How well do you think the media performed in advising citizens of the impending flood, relief efforts and ongoing flood recover (on a scale of 1 – poor to 5 – good)?

Response: Average score of 40 responders 3.8

4. Were you advised to evacuate and if so, were you given sufficient notice (on a scale of 1 – poor to 5 – good)?

Response: Average score of 40 responders 2.9

5. If you evacuated, did you stay in a shelter or with friends/family?

Hotel 4 Family 20 Shelter 3 No Response 4

6. If you stayed in a shelter, how would you rate the experience (on a scale of 1 – poor to 5 – good)?

Response from five responders 4.0

7. If you were advised to evacuate, did the government provide transportation assistance to the Shelter Assistance Center?

Yes 3 No 23 N/A 14

8. Was your home tagged by the City's Code Enforcement?

Response: Yes 11 No 24 N/A 6

9. If so, what color tag did you receive?

Response: Red 10 Yellow 4 Green 0 N/A 13 No 6
No Response 6

10. If your home received a red tag, have you received free assistance in removing drywall and items submerged in flood water?

Response: Yes 5 No 13 N/A 11
No Response: 8

11. Do you know who to call to receive free assistance with clean-up of your home?

Response: Yes 8 No 29 N/A 3

12. From the options below, please select the one that most closely fits your situation:

I lost all my belongings.
I lost 50% of my belongings.
I lost 25% of my belongings.

Response: 19 Responders lost 56.22% of their possessions.

13. From the options below, please select the one that most closely fit your situation:

FEMA reimbursed me for my entire loss
FEMA reimbursement only covered 50% of my loss
FEMA reimbursement only covered 25% of my loss
I received no FEMA reimbursement

Response: 36 Responders received an average of 26% of coverage for their loss from FEMA

14. If you received FEMA and insurance benefits, will that be enough to help you in restoring your home?

Response: Yes 6 No 23 N/A 8 No Response 3

15. Do you believe you've fully recovered from the flood and your life has returned to normal?

Response: Yes 6 No 33 N/A 1

16. If not, what would it take for you to fully recover?

Response: Funds 11 Rebuild Homes 8 Time 5 Other 7
Other includes: Clothing, Furniture, Utility Assistance, Auto Supplies

17. Do you believe that you or members of your household were traumatized by the flood?

Response: Yes 23 No 15

18. If so, will the affected member(s) seek counseling?

Response: Yes 11 No 19 N/A 1 No Response 9

19. If you have children, will your child start a new school because of the flood?

Response: Yes 6 No 30 No Response 4

20. How many times has your home flooded in the last 10 years?

Response: One Time 16
Two Times 8
Three Times 1
None 10
No Response 3

21. Were you a resident of a mobile home park that flooded?

Response: Yes 1 No 34 N/A 3

22. Have you ever heard of **2-1-1**?

Response: Yes 16 No 23

23. If so, did you dial **2-1-1** to access social and human services to assist you with your needs after the flood?

Response: Yes 8 No 27 N/A 3

24. Do you know what a long-term recovery committee is and what it does to assist victims of disasters?

Response: Yes 9 No 29 N/A 1