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Raymond F. Kiernan
Commissioner

**City of New Rochelle
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June 17, 2011

Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

During the review of the federal response plans as required by PPD-8 the needs and capabilities of the Fire Service must be addressed in order for the Fire Service to be an intricate part of the federal response plan.

When the Department of Homeland Security was established after 9/11 the newly appointed Secretary Tom Ridge stressed the need for standardization, mutual aid, regionalization and interstate response in the Fire Service.

Adhering to this advice the Career Fire Chiefs of Westchester County, NY developed the Westchester County Special Operations Fire Task Force Concept.

The Task Force is a partnership of 9 communities protecting a primary population of 501,000 residents. The Task Forces mission is to be able to respond within minutes to natural or manmade disasters or WMD incidents. The 9 fire departments are organized into 6 squads who when responding together will operate under a unified Command. In a large-scale emergency or WMD incident, this Task Force is able to respond anywhere in an area of over 20 million residents, in less than one hour.

The squads are multi-mission units that are assigned a standard fire engine plus a squad support unit to carry additional equipment. Each squad is responsible for maintaining the standard duties of an engine company in the host department. These

duties include; emergency response to fires and medical emergencies, inspections and fire prevention duties, training and equipment maintenance. In addition the Squad must train for and respond to incidents involving WMD, Hazmat or Technical Rescue (confined space, building collapse, trench rescue, etc.).

In a large-scale emergency or WMD incident, the Task Force would use common equipment and training to provide an immediate response before any state or federal assets could arrive (6 hours for state resources and 24-48 hours for federal resources).

The Task Force Concept is the only way that fire departments with less than a thousand members (which tend to protect communities that are smaller than one million residents) can adequately prepare for and respond to a large-scale emergency or WMD incident. A number of fire departments in the northeast are interested in the Task Force Concept.

The Office of Fire Prevention and Control from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut endorsed the concept and attempted to develop a Tri-State Regional Fire Response Plan. Unfortunately, they were unable to dedicate personnel to develop the plan due to a lack of funding.

FEMA reviewed the Task Force Concept in 2005/2006 and decided it could be used as a proto-type for a National Fire Response Plan. FEMA requested the assistance of IEM, a consulting firm (at a cost of \$106,000), to develop a National Fire Response Plan. The USFA had no knowledge or input into the development of the National Fire Response Plan by FEMA. Only parts of the FEMA report have been released through an ongoing FOIA request (FEMA-09-860).

It is almost 10 years since 9/11 and we still do not have a National Fire Response Plan. Standardization and an inter-state response capability for the Fire Service can only be accomplished at the federal level and only by the USFA.

There is a need for the USFA to develop a National Fire Response Plan and the Task Force Concept would be an excellent proto-type

Very truly yours



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Fire Commissioner
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RFK:vad

cc: John O. Brennan
Charles E. Schumer
Kirsten Gillibrand
Nita M. Lowey
Peter T. King.