

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074  
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<https://oversight.house.gov>

July 11, 2025

Mr. David Richardson  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of FEMA Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Richardson:

We urgently request answers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) about the catastrophic flash flood event that struck Central Texas over the July 4th holiday weekend. This disaster has led to an unprecedented loss of life, with the death toll currently exceeding 100, including at least 30 children, and search efforts continuing for those still missing.<sup>1</sup> Our primary concern is the apparent delay in FEMA's response efforts caused by the politicization of the agency and its funding.

According to reports, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem's new policy, which requires her personal approval for contracts and grants over \$100,000, caused significant delays to FEMA's ability to deploy search and rescue teams in a timely manner responding to the catastrophic flooding. Reports suggest that Secretary Noem did not authorize the deployment of these teams until Monday, July 7, 2025, a full 72 hours after the flooding began. Texas had also requested aerial imagery from FEMA to aid its search and rescue operations, which was also delayed by the need to secure Secretary Noem's personal approval.<sup>2</sup> Texas residents are also facing longer wait times when calling FEMA's disaster call center as FEMA staff wait for Secretary Noem's authorization to contract for additional support staff.<sup>3</sup> We are deeply concerned not only that Secretary Noem may have effectively crippled the agency's ability to respond to this crisis, but also that she failed to personally act to ensure a timely response.

While many facts are still unclear in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, we are concerned about its implications for FEMA's ability to respond to emergencies and natural disasters in the future and to effectively carry out its search and rescue functions, as well as subsequent recovery efforts. Flooding has been a constant threat in Texas communities, and the

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<sup>1</sup> *Death Toll Reaches at Least 119 in Texas Floods, With 173 Missing*, New York Times (July 9, 2025) (online at [www.nytimes.com/2025/07/09/us/texas-floods-missing-search.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/09/us/texas-floods-missing-search.html)).

<sup>2</sup> *FEMA's Response to Texas Flood Slowed by Noem's Cost Controls*, CNN (July 10, 2025) (online at [www.cnn.com/2025/07/09/politics/fema-texas-flood-noem](https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/09/politics/fema-texas-flood-noem)).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

Guadalupe River Basin is known as one of the most dangerous areas for flash flooding in the entire country.<sup>4</sup> We know that extreme weather events, including unpredictable flooding, will increase in frequency and intensity in Texas and beyond.<sup>5</sup> Further, the administration's plan to begin "phasing out" FEMA after the 2025 hurricane season risks serious harm to nationwide disaster response.<sup>6</sup> FEMA must be able to respond quickly to these disasters, and bottlenecks within the agency are unacceptable.

The tragic loss of life suffered underscores the urgent need to understand what contributed to this disaster. Rigorous oversight is needed not only to provide answers to grieving communities in Central Texas, but to save lives in future extreme weather events. In order to better understand FEMA's preparedness for future disasters, we request that the agency provide us with the following information and documents by no later than July 25, 2025:

1. All communications between Secretary Noem, officials in the Office of the Secretary, any other of the Secretary's direct reports, and FEMA officials regarding the July 2025 flooding in Central Texas;
2. A detailed and comprehensive list of every contract, grant, or other funding request from DHS and/or FEMA to Secretary Noem related to the July 2025 flooding in Central Texas, including the date the request was made and the date that it was approved or denied by Secretary Noem;
3. All documents and communications regarding requests from state and local partners to DHS and/or FEMA related to the July 2025 flooding in Central Texas;
4. Any policies, procedures, memos, or internal reports detailing the DHS Secretary's authority related to spending rules; and
5. Any written directive, policy, memo, or other document related to the requirement to get Secretary Noem's approval for any contracts or grants over \$100,000.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

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<sup>4</sup> *What to Know about the Central Texas Floods: Death Toll, Map and More*, New York Times (July 7, 2025) (online at [www.nytimes.com/2025/07/07/us/texas-floods-kerr-county.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/07/us/texas-floods-kerr-county.html)).

<sup>5</sup> *The U.S. Faces More Frequent Extreme Weather Events, But Attitudes and Actions Aren't Keeping Up* (July 9, 2025) (online at [www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/us-faces-frequent-extreme-weather-events-attitudes-actions-arent-keepi-rcna217780](https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/us-faces-frequent-extreme-weather-events-attitudes-actions-arent-keepi-rcna217780)).

<sup>6</sup> *Trump's Plan to Begin 'Phasing Out' FEMA After Hurricane Season Burdens States, Experts Warn*, Associated Press (June 11, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/fema-hurricane-season-trump-eliminate-state-funding-25fb7714414e17fa51156be7e91a4474>).

Mr. David Richardson  
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Sincerely,



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Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



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Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress



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Robert Garcia  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman