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PEMA: House GOP Budget Would Compromise Public Safety

Harrisburg, PA – In a letter sent last month to the four chairmen of the House and Senate committees on Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness, Richard D. Flinn Jr., director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, said that proposed budget cuts in House Bill 218 – the House Republican budget proposal – would severely limit the agency’s capacity to serve counties and citizens of the commonwealth.

“We are dedicated to using our limited resources wisely and efficiently, in support of a cooperative and seamless government that works for all Pennsylvanians,” Flinn wrote. “A spending cut of this magnitude, unfocused and on top of the changes we have already proposed, would cause significant difficulties.”

Flinn said the proposed 6.5 percent cut in General Government Operation (GGO) funding will result in staff furloughs that would impact the 24-hour Commonwealth Watch and Warning Center (CWWC), training and exercise staff, and specialized technicians and personnel who deploy and work directly with emergency personnel in counties impacted by disasters and emergencies.

In addition, House Bill 218 cuts \$4.7 million in disaster relief funding that is required under the terms of the federal Public Assistance program as a state match to the \$38 million available to dozens of applicants in Bradford, Centre, Lycoming and Sullivan counties after devastating flooding last October. Flinn said the proposed cut means repair efforts in those communities likely would not be completed.

On top of reduced state funding, Flinn said the potential loss of \$10 million in federal funding through the Homeland Security Grant Program and the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program would force the agency to cut an additional 20 positions and result in the loss of funding for 35 county emergency management positions.

Flinn thanked the chairmen for their continued support of PEMA and encouraged them to contact him to discuss the impact of the proposed state budget cuts. The full text of the letter can be viewed [here](#).