

April 17, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR: Margaret H. Graves  
Acting, Chief Information Officer  
Office of the Under Secretary for Management  
Department of Homeland Security

FROM: Charlene D. Myrthil  
Director, Records Management Division  
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer  
Mission Support

SUBJECT: Emergency Approval for OMB Control# 1660-NEW, **Post-Sandy Survivor Research** for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Under Secretary for Management, Office of the Chief Information Officer is requesting emergency authorization for Post-Sandy Survivor Research conducted through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Individual and Community Preparedness Division (ICPD) pursuant to 5 C.F.R § 1320.13(a)(1)(i)(ii),(2)(ii)(iii). Due to the decay of the quality, detail and accuracy of survivor memories over time, this emergency authorization is necessary to protect the accuracy and scientific validity of the data.

FEMA's mission to *support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate all hazards* directly supports the necessity of this collection pursuant to 5 C.F.R § 1320.13(a)(1)ii. In support of our citizens, it is critical that the agency fully comprehend the experiences of disaster survivors. This collection seeks vital information from survivors about why and how they responded to the threat of Hurricane Sandy as well as what skills, supplies and information best supported them post-disaster. Only through these experiences, can FEMA determine the utility of recommended protective actions, assess the reach of pre-disaster education campaigns and identify opportunities to improve overall community resilience.

With regard to the time sensitive nature of survivor observations and the unpredictability of a disaster like Hurricane Sandy, ICPD cannot reasonably comply with the normal clearance process as doing so would irrevocably jeopardize the collection (5 C.F.R § 1320.13(a)(2)iii). Research strongly suggested that newly formed memories remain labile, or easily altered, and are susceptible to corruption overtime<sup>1</sup>. This

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<sup>1</sup> Nader, K., Schafe, G. E., & LeDoux, J. E. ( 2000). The labile nature of consolidation theory. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 1, 216- 219.

collection focuses specifically on the respondent's state of mind, decision making and thought processes in certain time periods immediately preceding and subsequent to landfall of the hurricane. Loss of this data could endanger groundbreaking work in the National Community Preparedness Initiative, a nationally coordinated effort under Presidential Policy Direction 8 (PPD-8) designed to increase the effectiveness of preparedness messaging, education and outreach to more fully engage the whole community.

#### Background Information

On October, 29 2012 Hurricane Sandy made landfall as a tropical storm impacting large portions of the East coast including New York City and the surrounding metropolitan area. Due to the size and impact of the storm, this event provides a unique and powerful opportunity to research individual and community level preparedness and resilience. By investigating the practicality and effectiveness of current recommended actions, such research can improve current and future efforts to limit loss of life and property damage.

In an effort to capture the valuable experience of Sandy's survivors, ICPD will conduct a series of focus groups and utilize a quantitative survey to analyze the individual and community-level attitudes and behaviors present immediately before, during and after the event. Focus groups will be created according to the varying degrees of impact and will be further segmented by race/ethnicity, income, age and caregiver status to provide a deeper understanding of the socio-economic influences involved. The telephone survey will be administered to approximately 3,000 adults, including oversamples for the specific population sub-groups targeted in the focus groups.

#### Attachments:

Information Collection Request package for OMB Control# 1660-NEW, Post-Sandy Survivor Research