



STATE OF WISCONSIN

Legislative Audit Bureau

22 East Mifflin Street, Suite 500
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
(608) 266-2818
Fax (608) 267-0410
www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab

Janice Mueller
State Auditor

DATE: May 15, 2009

TO: Senator Kathleen Vinehout and
Representative Peter Barca, Co-chairpersons
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

FROM: Janice Mueller *Janice Mueller*
State Auditor

SUBJECT: Proposed Audit of Emergency Management Issues—Background Information

At your request, we have gathered some background information the Joint Legislative Audit Committee may find useful in considering a request for an audit of emergency management issues. Emergency management includes efforts taken by the State and local governments to prepare for and minimize the effects on citizens of natural or man-made disasters and hostile action. Grants awarded to the State by the federal Department of Homeland Security are a primary source of emergency management funding. From fiscal year (FY) 2003-04 through FY 2007-08, Wisconsin spent approximately \$218.6 million of Department of Homeland Security grants, including amounts spent directly by state agencies and amounts allocated through grant awards to local governments.

The Department of Military Affairs is the lead state agency in planning for and responding to emergencies. Its Division of Emergency Management is responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, and private emergency management activities statewide. The Office of Justice Assistance (OJA) administers some federal emergency management grants. Counties have primary responsibility for coordinating emergency management activities within their borders.

Recent events have raised concerns about how the Department of Homeland Security funds have been spent and whether they have facilitated Wisconsin's ability to respond effectively to emergencies. In February 2008, a winter storm stranded approximately 2,000 motorists on Interstate 39/90 for more than 12 hours. A September 2008 report prepared by the Wisconsin Homeland Security Council cited examples of poor interagency coordination during the storm. In addition, media reports have indicated that it is difficult to track how the Department of Homeland Security funds are used, given the number of government agencies and grants involved.

An audit of the State's use of Department of Homeland Security funds for emergency management purposes could:

- determine the amounts and allowable uses of the Department of Homeland Security funds the State has received in recent years;
- analyze whether the funds have been spent appropriately, given the particular emergency management needs in Wisconsin;
- assess the extent to which the funds have been spent to improve communication among the state agencies responsible for coordinating responses to emergencies; and
- analyze the State's preparedness to respond to an emergency that requires a large-scale, coordinated response and, if necessary, recommend ways to improve the State's preparedness.

If you have any additional questions regarding this request, please contact me.

JM/DS/bm

cc: Senator Robert Jauch
Senator Mark Miller
Senator Robert Cowles
Senator Mary Lazich

Representative Andy Jorgensen
Representative Mark Pocan
Representative Bill Kramer
Representative Samantha Kerkman

Brigadier General Donald Dunbar
Adjutant General of Wisconsin
Department of Military Affairs

Dave Steingraber, Executive Director
Office of Justice Assistance

Johnnie Smith, Administrator
Wisconsin Emergency Management
Department of Military Affairs