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FEMA Official Resigns Amid Concerns Over Bureaucratic Delays in Texas Flood Response

July 29, 2025

Categories: Breaking News



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A senior official from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has stepped down following growing frustration over bureaucratic delays during the federal response to severe flooding in Texas earlier this month.

Ken Pagurek, head of FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue Branch for over a decade, submitted his resignation on Monday, citing longstanding concerns over internal dysfunction and a growing disconnect between leadership and operational readiness.

The crisis unfolded over the Fourth of July weekend when catastrophic floods swept through multiple areas of Texas.

FEMA's response, according to internal sources, was slowed by procedural bottlenecks, particularly a new policy instituted by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) leadership that required personal approval from Secretary Kristi Noem for expenditures exceeding \$100,000. The delay in authorisation reportedly lasted 72 hours, hindering critical response efforts during the peak of the disaster.

Critics argue that FEMA's operational flexibility has been compromised by unnecessary red tape and shifting oversight priorities. While DHS defended the financial review policy as a measure of fiscal responsibility, the practical effect appeared to stall frontline support when it was needed most. Call centres staffed to support affected residents were overwhelmed, with reports that many calls went unanswered due to lapsed staffing contracts.

In his resignation letter, Pagurek refrained from naming specific incidents, writing only that his decision followed "much reflection and prayer." He added that he remained inspired by the agency's commitment to saving lives, despite systemic challenges.

A DHS spokesperson, responding to his departure, claimed it was "laughable" for a career public servant to resign over what they described as "standard financial oversight."

Supporters of reform within emergency management argue that transparency and efficiency must go hand-in-hand, especially in high-stakes disaster scenarios. Former

President Donald Trump recently signalled his intention to restructure FEMA operations altogether, suggesting future relief funds may be issued directly from the Executive Office.

Though Pagurek's resignation marks a significant loss for FEMA's experienced leadership ranks, it also highlights the tension between cost-conscious governance and the urgent needs of disaster-stricken communities.

As natural disasters become more frequent and intense, the stakes for timely, coordinated responses continue to rise. Whether Washington will prioritise streamlined action over bureaucracy remains to be seen.