



## DIANNE JACOB

SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT  
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May 18, 2011

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W. Craig Fugate, Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate:

It has been brought to my attention that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is attempting to recover money from residents of San Diego County who suffered damage during the October 2007 firestorm. Unless FEMA is pursuing a matter of fraud, I'm deeply troubled by this turn of events. First, FEMA's recoupment efforts four years after the 2007 fires call into question the agency's ability to adequately perform its core responsibilities to victims during and after disasters. Second, based on information provided to me regarding San Diego victims, the reimbursement burden seems ill-defined, unreasonable and forces the victims to relive the disaster based on FEMA's own mistakes. Finally, FEMA's recoupment efforts set a terrible precedent for victims of future disasters because future victims may be discouraged from seeking federal aid to their own serious detriment.

One particular case involves Don and Veronica Lytle who survived the deadly Harris Fire in the southeastern portion of San Diego County. The Lytles' home was filled with ash during the Harris Fire and the structure sustained damage to its roof. Although the Lytles received only \$1,647.43 in assistance from FEMA, the cost of cleaning and repairing their home was reportedly much greater. The Lytles did not have insurance. It is my strong belief that people who lived through the harrowing firestorms of 2007 will be distressed to learn that FEMA is trying to recover 100 percent of the assistance provided to Mr. and Mrs. Lytle. That the error, if there was one, was caused by FEMA and not the Lytles is especially offensive.

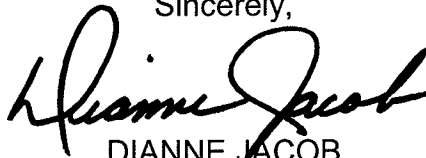
Please provide me with documentation on the standards FEMA used to determine that Mr. and Mrs. Lytle are no longer fire victims. In addition, please let me know how many other victims of the October 2007 firestorms received similar letters from FEMA, and the total amount that FEMA is trying to recover. Finally, please provide me with the number of fire victims from the October 2003 firestorm that FEMA recovered money from, and the total amount of money that was recovered.

Although there may be an appeal process, the mere fact that FEMA is forcing victims to further justify their losses is beyond callous. These are people that were originally approved by FEMA to receive federal assistance. FEMA's recovery practice will deter victims of future disasters from seeking financial help from FEMA. After Hurricane Katrina, this is yet another example of FEMA eroding the public's trust.

I urge you to reconsider your effort to recover money from victims of the October 2007 firestorm. This region has suffered enough from firestorms over the past decade. Thousands of homes have been destroyed and lives have been lost. Fire victims should not continue to suffer because of FEMA's mistakes.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter. If you need additional information, please feel free to contact me at (619) 531-5522.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dianne Jacob". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dianne" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Jacob".

DIANNE JACOB  
Supervisor, Second District

DJ:jc

CC: Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Barbara Boxer  
Congressman Duncan Hunter  
Congressman Bob Filner  
Congressman Darrell Issa  
Congressman Brian Bilbray  
Congresswoman Susan Davis