

News from
Congressman Christopher Carney
Representing Northeast and Central Pennsylvania

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**CARNEY STATEMENT FOR HOMELAND SECURITY
SITUATIONAL AWARENESS HEARING**

Washington, D.C.--Congressman Christopher P. Carney, Chairman of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight, issued the following opening statement for the Subcommittee hearing, "You Don't Know What You Don't Know: Has the Department of Homeland Security Improved its Ability to Maintain Situational Awareness Since Hurricane Katrina?":

"In the early morning hours of August 29, 2005, Katrina's waters overwhelmed the levees around New Orleans and began to fill the city.

"The National Weather Service knew it - and reported it.

"The Transportation Security Administration knew it--and reported it.

"Local officials knew it - and reported it.

"Indeed, throughout the day of landfall, federal, state, local, and even non-governmental organizations all were issuing reports that detailed the unfolding catastrophe.

"Yet somehow the Homeland Security Operations Center - what DHS called the "nation's nerve center for information sharing and domestic incident management" -did not get - or did not process - the message.

"That evening, even as the National Weather Service was urging New Orleans residents fleeing to their attics to "take an axe or hatchet with them so they can cut their way onto the roof to avoid drowning" the HSOC issued a situation report to the Secretary of Homeland Security - and to the President - that said that "preliminary reports indicate the levees in New Orleans have not been breached."

"Katrina was the HSOC's first major test, and it failed.

"But we are not here today to revisit those mistakes.

"Instead, we are here to assess what improvements DHS has made to ensure that they do better next time.

"And I'm pleased to say that there have been improvements - significant ones.

"Too often the tendency in Washington is to circle the wagons and to refuse to acknowledge error, even when it is staring you in the face.

"Today, however, we will hear about how it should be done.

"We will hear about what can happen when career public servants do the opposite - when they set pride and ego aside, and do a cold, hard appraisal of what went wrong and how to fix it.

"Our first witness is uniquely positioned to give us this perspective: he was Deputy Director of the HSOC during Katrina, and he led the difficult effort of trying to right what went wrong.

"The new National Operations Center has not yet faced a test even close to Katrina, and we won't really know if all the fixes have worked unless and until it does.

"But I am confident that even if some of the changes do not pan out, we are much better off today than we were on August 29, 2005.

"I look forward to the witnesses' testimony."

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