



February 29, 2024

Deanne Bennett Criswell  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street, SW  
Room 828  
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Criswell:

I am working on behalf of the Coalition for Fire Fund Fairness, representing the interests and voices of the victims impacted by the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire.

We have learned of the February 22, 2024, posting for the Director of Operations for the New Mexico Joint Recovery, with a closing date of February 29. This rapid closure of the application window, open only for 5 business days, raises significant concerns about the seriousness with which FEMA is treating our call for this position to be filled by an individual with the appropriate legal expertise and administrative experience to effectively manage the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Relief Fund and claims office. As we have expressed to FEMA on multiple occasions, we strongly believe these qualities would be well-met by a New Mexico judge or appellate justice. The short time frame for applications hardly seems reasonable or sufficient to attract and evaluate candidates who fit this vital profile.

Ongoing shortcomings—including flawed determination letters, inaccurate site inspections, unexplained processing delays, the lack of an appeals process, and other operational missteps—underscore the necessity for leadership that can navigate the legal and functional realities at play here. It is crucial that the directorship is filled by someone with the right expertise who can rapidly get the claims process on track and steer the recovery effort toward transparency and justice.

To ensure a fair and thorough selection process, FEMA must extend the application period by at least 2-3 weeks to allow time for qualified candidates, who embody the characteristics necessary for this role, to apply.

We trust that FEMA shares our commitment to a just and effective recovery process and will take immediate action to address these concerns.

Respectfully,

Manny Crespín Jr.  
Founder, Coalition for Fire Fund Fairness