



Life in Brief

Born: 1958

Hometown: Warwick, RI

Current Residence: Washington, DC

Education

- MA, National Security and Strategic Studies, Naval War College, 2001
- BA, History, Rhode Island College, 1986

Family

- Wife, Susan
- Daughter

Work History

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 2018-Present
 - Administrator, 2020-Present
 - Acting Administrator, 2019-2020
 - Deputy Administrator, 2018-2019
- Director, Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA), 2015-2018
- Director, Providence Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and Office of Homeland Security, 2008-2014
- U.S. Marine Corps, 1977-2007

Professional Affiliations

- RI Association of Emergency Managers
- National Association of Emergency Managers
- International Association of Emergency Managers
- FEMA Regional Advisory Council
- Emergency Management Accreditation Program
- DHS State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Government Coordinating Council
- George J. West Elementary School Mentor Program
- WaterFire Salute to Veterans Committee
- International Emergency Management Group
- Northeast States Emergency Consortium
- RI Emergency Management Advisory Council
- RI Interoperable Communications Committee
- RI Cybersecurity Commission

Quick Summary

Former marine and emergency management specialist who leverages experience on the municipal, state, and national levels to cultivate a culture of preparedness, with an emphasis on continuity of operations

- Rhode Island native who served 26 years in the Marines, earning the rank of lieutenant colonel
- Oversaw Rhode Island's response to variety of natural disasters including blizzards and floods; success in this position earned him national attention and a position at FEMA
- In the Marines and at RIEMA, created and implemented a model for continuity of operations, the latter of which has been essential to Rhode Island's response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Sees emergency communication as a crucial capability in the midst of a disaster; at FEMA, prioritized expanding access to the federal Integrated Public Alert and Warning systems
- Proponent of funding and expanding the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), citing impact of the program on speed and cost of disaster recovery
- Response to Hurricane Dorian while at FEMA earned him a permanent position as the agency's Administrator with overwhelming bipartisan support
- Has pivoted from focus on natural disaster mitigation to public health as he heads the federal government's response to COVID-19

Approach and Motivations

Pushes locally executed, state managed, and federally-supported approach; says he prefers to keep out of politics

- Seasoned coordinator of multilateral efforts, both in the military and in government
- Believes that disaster recovery begins at the local level; says it cannot be achieved unilaterally and requires coordination with all stakeholders, citing tenure in local, state, and national agencies
- Hesitates to weigh in on political issues including climate change; calls himself a nuts and bolts guys

Policy Positions and Areas of Focus

Pushes to enhance capabilities at each stage of disaster recovery

Flood Insurance: *Emphasizes the importance of the NFIP for disaster recovery*

- Believes flood insurance is the best defense against the financial repercussions of climate disasters; calls the NFIP crucial for both coastal and non-coastal communities
- Has pushed for federal funding for the NFIP, citing impact on speed of disaster recovery and reduced cost for taxpayer
- Committed to overhauling the NFIP methodology to make the program more affordable and help participants understand risk

Emergency Management Communication: *Expanding real-time emergency alert systems*

- At RIEMA, launched initiative to provide all state cities and towns with emergency communication services for free through contractor CodeRED
- During his tenure at FEMA, added over 200 agencies to the list of state, local, territorial, and tribal authorities with access and ability to use the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System to send emergency alerts and warnings
- Provided technical alert and warning assistance to state and local agencies including for wildfires in California and for hurricanes in Hawaii

Continuity of Operations: *Stresses continuity of essential services in the wake of disaster*

- Head of Current Operations at Marine Corps HQ during and after 9/11, where he was responsible for “Continuity of Operations,” including reestablishing the destroyed Navy Operations Center with equipment and personnel
- Updated Providence’s hazard mitigation plan, becoming the first municipality in the United States to receive accreditation from the Emergency Management Accreditation Program
- At RIEMA, defined continuity of operations plans for 50 agencies, designating key personnel and alternative facilities; RI has widely relied upon Gaynor’s model during the COVID-19 outbreak

Core Communities

Relationships with leaders in government and emergency management at the city, state, and national levels

City of Providence: *Alliances with Providence mayors and involvement in local public school system*

- Appointed to Director of the Providence Emergency Management Agency by former Providence Mayor David Cicilline, who is now a U.S. Rep. (D-RI01)
- Subsequent mayor, Angel Taveras (D) kept Gaynor when she was elected and speaks highly of him
- Served on the Board of the Providence Public School District as the Acting Chief of Staff and later as the Acting Chief Operating Officer

Rhode Island EMA & Politicians: *Deep ties to state emergency management bodies; support from political leaders*

- Various leadership positions in state emergency management operations, including as RIEIMA Director, Chair of the State Interoperable Communications Committee, Chair of the State Emergency Response Commission, and Vice Chair of the State Emergency Management Advisory Committee
- At RIEMA, worked closely with Deputy Marc Pappas, who took over as Director when Gaynor was nominated for FEMA Deputy Administrator
- Support from state politicians, including Governor Gina Raimondo (D), for whom he worked as a policy advisor to on emergency management matters, and U.S. Sen. Jack Reed (D) who offered a strong endorsement of Gaynor as FEMA Administrator

FEMA: *Well-respected at the federal level*

- Worked as Deputy Administrator to former Administrator Brock Long
- Friendly relationship with his deputy Daniel Kaniewski and Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf

Relevant Financial Information

No campaign contributions or notable financial disclosures

Publications, Media, and Speaking

Updates the public on emergency response in local and national outlets

Publications: *Publishes on national security and emergency management in professional journals*

- Favorite Subjects: Weather hazard response, IED attacks, information sharing
- Preferred Outlets: Marine Corps Gazette, Government Security News, Journal of Business Continuity and Emergency Planning

Media: *Appears in state and national media to provide updates on management of emergencies and natural disasters*

- Favorite Subjects: Extreme weather, COVID-19, Hurricane Dorian
- Preferred Outlets: National broadcast outlets including NBC and ABC; local stations including WPRI
- Social Media Habits: Active on Twitter

Speaking: *Discusses building regional resilience at emergency management forums*

- Favorite Subjects: Coordinating regional disaster response, extreme weather
- Preferred Audience: Regional emergency management conferences including the Northeast Disaster Recovery Information X-Change, Domestic Preparedness Workshop, and the MetCalf Institute

Congressional Testimony: *Statements before the House Committee on Homeland Security on strategies for emergency preparedness*

- Testified before the House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications on alerts and early warning systems (2018)
- Testified before the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications on defense support of civil authorities (2015)

Family and Personal Background

Enlisted in the Marines as a high school graduate; educated in Rhode Island

- Joined the Marines straight out of Warwick's Pilgrim High School in 1977
- Attended community college in 1982 and moved on to earn his bachelor's degree in history from Rhode Island College in 1986 before returning to the Marines as an officer
- While in the military, was responsible for the security of Camp David, headed the Marine Corps headquarters during the September 11 attacks, and coordinated combat operations for the Marines and multinational forces in Iraq
- Regarded by Marine Lt. Col. Michael R. Regner as a standout officer; credits Gaynor for risking his own life, without hesitation and in dangerous fiery conditions, to save the lives of the two pilots during a helicopter crash

Criticisms and Controversies

No notable controversies

COVID-19 Update

Leads national response to COVID-19 through interagency coordination, bringing resources and strategy to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments

Actions: *Coordinates with government agencies to distribute necessary medical resources to states; extended FEMA economic relief programs*

- Works with the Department of Defense to fill urgent medical gaps across the country with personnel and PPE
- Announced that supplies, including N-95 masks, were being shipped from the national stockpile; announced Project Airbridge to cover the cost of shipping critical medical supplies to the U.S. from overseas factories
- Works with the Healthcare and Public Health Sector Coordinating Council to prioritize where the federal government and private sector companies distribute critical supplies and equipment
- Extended the grace period to renew flood insurance policies from 30 to 120 days
- Suspended rent payment through July for disaster survivors living in FEMA-purchased temporary housing units in California, Florida, North Carolina and Texas
- Established Community-Based Testing sites to test healthcare facility workers and first responders in CDC-prioritized locations across the country

Messaging: *Emphasizes multilateral nature of his role; inconsistent statements on the Defense Production Act*

- Says his job is to bring the whole of government and the whole of the nation together
- Urges emergency managers to follow protocol and to use data to inform decision-making
- Has contradicted Trump on the Defense Production Act (DPA), saying FEMA would use the DPA to secure test kits, only to be clarified later, when the agency said "at the last minute" they were able to procure the test kits from the private market without using the act

COVID-19 Update (Continued)

Public Reception: *Criticized for hesitancy to take responsibility for COVID-19 response and delay in releasing supplies*

- Has been criticized in the press for initially seeking to deflect responsibility for the pandemic's damage by saying the Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for public health
- Agency has faced backlash from Governors and hospitals who have been unable to procure sufficient supplies, accusing FEMA of "seizing" supplies as they prioritize distribution to the most severely affected states