

**Paradise, California
June 2024**

After making a trip and spending two days in Paradise, California, I have a profoundly changed view of emergency preparedness. I went down there to look at their new outdoor alert system (which FEMA paid for after the 2018 Camp Fire), but it had an unexpected impact. I came away with a sense of urgency to do more in our community to be better prepared for any type of disaster. The sense of loss was palpable.

We took a tour of the town with a Paradise city official, who pointed out rough spots in the pavement. It was places where cars had burned. It's a little eerie when you know somebody died in their car right on that spot. Eighty-five lives were lost in the Camp Fire.

Driving through town, we also saw hundreds and hundreds of concrete slabs from lost homes and businesses, burnt trees, businesses that are trying to come back, and houses that have been rebuilt with no trees around them. This is five years later.

If we don't do more to prepare for every kind of disaster, then we will be in the same shape. Even people who had fire insurance for their \$250,000 homes found that when they went back to rebuild, it cost \$350,000 to rebuild that same home. Many didn't have the extra hundred thousand dollars.

Wildfire is not the only threat we face. We are also at risk due to floods, earthquakes, extended power outages, high winds, winter storms and dam failure. We should all do everything we can to be prepared, even if a disaster doesn't strike for many years. We also need better and redundant warning systems when it does happen. It's one thing to save property. It's another thing to save lives!

A lot of people in Paradise, Lahaina and Phoenix/Talent didn't think it would happen to them. Many people in Shady Cove think it won't happen here. We need to learn from other disasters and be better prepared.

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