

Good morning.

I'm glad to join you today to talk about the importance of the work that you do.

I think the significance of your efforts to protect our communities should not be underestimated.

Simply stated: Emergency management is more important now than it ever has been.

All of our lives changed forever on September 11.

And yours might have changed more than most, because in addition to facing the same fears and uncertainties as your fellow citizens, you have the additional responsibility of helping to maintain homeland security.

Think about that.

For the first time in the entire history of the United States, our country has felt the effects of a war within its continental borders!

On September 11 they hit us hard.

And both Homeland Security Chief Tom Ridge and President Bush have made it clear that we can expect to be hit again.

We don't know when.

We don't know where.

We don't know who will deliver it.

And we don't know the method of delivery.

So basically, your job is to take practical steps to prepare for an unknown, intangible, vague danger.

And you've done a wonderful job of beginning to accomplish that task!

You have made the state of Minnesota—and programs like the Minnesota Incident Management System—a national leader in emergency management.

You've done it by working together through efforts like multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency exercises.

By acting as resources for each other, you are engaging in the highest levels of communication, and are proving that teamwork is truly the key to making our cities, states and our country safer for citizens.

Your cooperation is impressive, and I encourage you to continue learning from these exercises and being diligent in your preparations.

Homeland security begins at home, with you, because you are often “in first and out last” in emergency and disaster situations.

I thank you, and I hope you will let my office and Commissioner Weaver know what we can do to support you and your work.

But before I go I want to leave you with one other message.

As you know, as a result of the recession we are in a bit of a budget crisis. Over the past couple months the legislature and I have been in a great debate over how to address the budget shortfall.

I thought it would be good to do some long-term fiscal management to ensure that we would be prepared in case another disaster should hit and cause additional damage to our economy.

The legislature disagreed. They think everything is going to be hunky-dory and so they used up every single dollar of our reserves and patched up the budget just to get us through to the election this fall.

The legislature won that debate by overriding my veto of their very political and irresponsible short-term fix.

They passed a budget fix that will essentially leave the state broke by the beginning of the next budget cycle.

The question I have for them now is this:

What will we do for money if there is another terrorist attack on our country and the economy takes another hit? Do we wait for it to happen and then panic or should we plan ahead for such a possibility?

In your work, planning for an emergency is an absolute necessity. As I said earlier, your job is to take practical steps to prepare for an unknown, intangible, vague danger.

I believe that when it comes to the management of the people’s money, the legislature could take a lesson from you when it comes to preparing our state for a fiscal unknown.



If you do agree, I hope that next time you see one of your legislators you will give them a lesson on long term management and careful planning for natural, war and fiscal disasters.

Have a great day, and please continue to work together. We are all on the same team.

We are all public servants. We are all Minnesotans.

We are all Americans. Thank you.