

Donald T. DiFrancesco
Acting Governor[Governor home](#) | [News](#) | [Speeches](#) | [Senate President](#) | [Photos](#) | [Biography](#) | [Schedule](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Radio Addresses](#) | [Directions/Maps](#) | [Key Initiatives](#)**DIFRANCESCO: RECOVERING, REBUILDING AND READYING NEW JERSEY IN
AFTERMATH OF WTC DISASTER AND ANTHRAX INCIDENTS**

In recent years, New Jersey has learned volumes about responding to crisis. We were hit by hurricane, then drought, then flood, then West Nile virus. Again and again our state's emergency management system responded well and, in the process, learned valuable lessons to apply to future emergencies.

Then came this year's acts of terror, which have placed truly extraordinary demands upon our system and tested us as never before. No drill could have fully prepared us for the World Trade Center disaster and its aftermath. No textbook, for that matter, was available to spell out exactly how to investigate and mitigate anthrax contamination from an unseen and unknown source.

For two months New Jersey has stood at the epicenter of terrorism on America, from bond traders killed in the Twin Towers to postal workers poisoned by anthrax. This crisis has tested our state psychologically, economically, and emotionally. Yet our resolve remains strong and our response has been remarkable.

From communities rallying around the families of victims, to commuters patiently enduring delays along overburdened travel routes, to law enforcement and haz-mat teams logging long days without relief, the people of New Jersey have performed admirably.

I am proud to say that state government has used its resources to maximum advantage. A prime example is the Family Assistance Center we opened at Liberty State Park, which combines all relevant federal and state agencies with nonprofits like the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross to give victims' families a central, wisely located venue for receiving the help they need and deserve.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation also reacted with quick and effective solutions to the problems that the collapse of the World Trade Center created. New bus, rail, and ferry services have been added, and new park-and-ride facilities were established literally overnight.

As New Jersey recovers from the terror of September 11, the Department of Health and Senior Services has been working round-the-clock to deal with the anthrax attack without adding to the stress our citizens already feel.

Our recovery continues. At the same time, New Jersey faces the task of improving our readiness for future emergencies and attacks. Ideally, our efforts will prevent terrorist acts. At the very least, we will enable ourselves to respond quickly and mitigate the effects of any attack.

One thing is clear: we can't do it alone. We need help from the federal government, which is entirely appropriate given that this was truly an attack upon all Americans.

My administration has developed a package of requests for federal assistance called the New Jersey Initiative, totaling more than \$900 million. Through the New Jersey Initiative we seek Washington's help in recovering costs already incurred in our response and recovery, and in providing the labor and resources to ready ourselves for future emergencies and attacks.

The New Jersey Initiative is a combination of funding requests. I anticipate that some of our needs can be met by reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Some requests can be met through existing federal grant programs. Still others will require federal budget items, and some will need new legislation from Congress.

A few items in the New Jersey Initiative will illustrate the breadth of challenges we face.

We are requesting funds to upgrade our emergency communications systems so that State and local police, fire fighters, ambulance and rescue workers all can communicate with each other when responding to a disaster. Just as happened in Oklahoma City and Columbine, problems in communicating among different units hampered the response.

We are also asking for reimbursement of expenses incurred by local fire and rescue teams as well

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as state agencies like the Department of Transportation, which provided everything from acetylene torches to light carts for the search-and-rescue effort at ground zero.

We hope for federal help in responding to the dramatic shift in commuting patterns. We need to add more buses and bus lines to accommodate the increased demand, resurface roads that suffered extraordinary wear and tear in handling diverted traffic when the Holland Tunnel was closed, and upgrade ferry service in Jersey City and Hoboken, where ridership has more than doubled since September 11.

We are seeking federal dollars to support our newly created New Jersey Domestic Security Task Force, including money for a State Police counter-terrorism unit.

Closely related, we are seeking Washington's help in dealing with the immediate challenge of anthrax contamination. New Jersey has had more confirmed human and environmental exposures than anywhere else in the world.

I have written to Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge to request more federal resources to respond to the anthrax incidents in our state.

Among other things, I requested federal support to enable environmental sampling of every postal facility in New Jersey, more medical detectives to identify tainted pathways, federal assistance at a lab we are setting up to analyze samples more rapidly, and assurances that enough medicine would be available to anyone for whom treatment is recommended.

As I stated, the national public health infrastructure must be mobilized to assist New Jersey's handling of these anthrax challenges just as the nation's emergency response infrastructure was mobilized to assist New York City after the attacks of September 11.

Clearly, we in New Jersey have a lot of work ahead as we respond, recover, and ready ourselves. Just as certain, we need to continue working closely with our colleagues in the federal government.

I am pleased to say that the members of our Congressional delegation have been outstanding advocates for New Jersey on Capitol Hill, and we will rely on them to gain the federal support we need. That bipartisan spirit was just as strong among my colleagues in the Legislature who worked swiftly to pass a package of relief and anti-terrorism legislation at the beginning of October.

With continued leadership from our representatives in Trenton and Washington, and with the cooperation and patience of our citizens, I am convinced that New Jersey will emerge from this crisis a better, stronger, and more secure state.

The bottom line is that with federal help we can make our best effort to be fully prepared for any emergency or attack. This is our job as public servants; this is our duty as Americans.

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