

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Subcommittee on Superfund, Waste Management, and Regulatory Oversight
Hearing entitled, “Challenges Facing Superfund and Waste Cleanup Efforts Following
Natural Disasters”
December 6, 2017
Questions for the Record for Tracy Hester

Senator Carper:

1. This hurricane season three major hurricanes have made landfall in the United States. When that happens, we see wide-ranging destructive impacts and risks to the human health, some of which we discussed in the hearing. Obviously, climate change will make things like major hurricanes worse. Do you think that we are better off or worse off ignoring the effects of climate change when it comes to natural disasters?
2. When storms do make landfall, or when communities are at heightened risks for wildfires or other natural disasters, one way to limit the risk of negative impacts is to make communities more resilient to these impacts. However, in August 2017, President Trump revoked President Obama’s 2015 Executive Order on Flood Risk Management. In December 2017, he disbanded the Community Resilience Panel for Buildings and Infrastructure Systems, which helps local officials protect their communities from extreme weather. Do you think that we are better off or worse off taking away tools to help local communities make themselves more resilient to impacts of storms, wildfires, or other natural disasters?
3. Congress is currently putting together emergency aid packages to help the communities that have been ravaged by the recent hurricanes and wildfires. I’ve had a chance to visit Houston after Hurricane Harvey, and to visit Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands after their hurricanes, and it’s hard to comprehend the scale of destruction that’s happened in those places until you see it with your own eyes. Do you think that you are getting the resources you need to adequately recover and rebuild in a way that will reduce future risks? What should we be including in our upcoming appropriations bills to assist you that we’re not currently considering?
4. In June 2014, EPA’s then-Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (now the Office of Land and Emergency Management) finalized its Climate Change Adaptation and Implementation Plan. Are you familiar with that document, and do you support EPA proactively planning for future expected climate change impacts as part of its mission for protecting public health and the environment?
5. In many instances, FEMA and other agencies allow for the burning of storm debris and waste, either in trench incinerators, air curtain incinerators, or in some instances opening burning. Do you support this practice? What sorts of air quality monitoring do you believe should be in place around burn sites? Are there any conditions under which you believe burning should be curtailed or halted? How much priority should agencies place on exploring

and pursuing other options for disposing of green vegetative waste, such as mulching and/or composting?

Senator Whitehouse:

6. Do you believe that greenhouse gas emissions from human activity are driving climate change?
7. Please discuss some innovative ways to remove carbon dioxide directly from the atmosphere and suggest some policies the federal government might develop that would incentivize the development of these direct capture technologies.
8. When a Superfund site is hit by a natural disaster resulting in increased cleanup costs, is there any legal risk that the company responsible for cleanup may try and pass some of these additional cleanup costs on to taxpayers?