Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 2, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem,

I write to express grave concern over recent reports that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through its Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations, interfered with and undermined the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) disaster-assessment work in flood-damaged neighborhoods across the Chicago area earlier this year.

Between July 25 and 28 and August 16 and 19, 2025, severe storms swept through Cook County and other parts of Illinois, unleashing torrential rainfall, destructive winds, and flash flooding that devastated homes and businesses.[1] Flood survivors are coping with health hazards, including mold and contamination from sewage backup—conditions that can lead to respiratory problems for children and older adults. [2] In the wake of these events, the State of Illinois requested federal disaster assistance to bridge critical resource gaps, but the Administration denied that request.[3]

Following that denial, FEMA personnel began conducting field surveys to document the extent of the damage and assess unmet needs. According to multiple accounts, FEMA had notified DHS in advance that its survey teams would be operating in specific areas and that ICE should not deploy in those same locations to avoid compromising FEMA's mission.[4] Despite this, residents and local officials reported a visible ICE presence in the very neighborhoods where FEMA teams were on the ground, surveying sites, and questioning individuals.

This reckless overlap not only jeopardized the safety of FEMA employees but also made it virtually impossible for them to carry out their duties. Residents who had still been reeling from extreme flooding were suddenly afraid to open their doors. Families who had lost everything hesitated to seek help, fearing that a knock from a FEMA inspector could be a pretext for detention. FEMA staff reportedly suspended their fieldwork after concluding that ICE's proximity had rendered their mission unsafe and unworkable.

This is unacceptable. Allowing one arm of the federal government to obstruct another's life-saving work is indefensible. DHS's interference with FEMA's operations in Illinois represents not just a failure of coordination but a profound breach of public trust. I urge you to provide a full accounting of these events and to take immediate corrective action to ensure that disaster relief efforts are never again subordinated to fear and intimidation.

In light of these deeply troubling reports, I respectfully request answers to the following questions by December 17, 2025:

1. Who within DHS or ICE made the decision to deploy ICE personnel into the neighborhoods where FEMA had already indicated it would be conducting disaster assessments, and what reasons were given for doing so despite FEMA's warning?

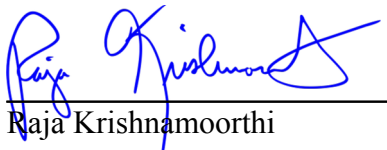
---

[1] https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/chicagos-west-southwest-sides-hit-by-flooding-twice/
[2] https://chicago.suntimes.com/environment/2025/11/24/pritzker-trump-flooding-disaster-money-fema-cook-county-chicago-southwest-side
[3] https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2025/11/22/fema-aid-illinois-pritzker/
[4] With ICE in the area, FEMA workers were pulled from storm damage work - The Washington Post

2. What specific activities were ICE personnel conducting in these areas during the periods in question, and how did DHS justify those activities occurring concurrently with FEMA's field operations?
3. What policies or internal guidance govern ICE's conduct around FEMA disaster-response missions, and how does DHS explain the apparent failure to adhere to—or enforce—those policies in this instance?
4. How does DHS assess the impact of ICE's presence on FEMA's ability to carry out its mission, including whether residents declined to engage with FEMA or whether FEMA personnel faced safety concerns that forced them to suspend fieldwork?
5. What corrective actions will DHS implement to prevent ICE operations from interfering with disaster-relief missions in the future, and will DHS conduct a review to identify the causes of this breakdown in coordination?

Thank you for your prompt attention to these urgent concerns. Flood survivors, local officials, and federal personnel deserve clear assurances that DHS will uphold its responsibility to protect—rather than hinder—life-saving work. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

cc:

Ms. Karen Evans
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024