

# Gracia B. Szczech



Gracia B. Szczech is the Regional Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region IV. Appointed in February 2015, she leads and coordinates all activities in support of FEMA's mission with state and tribal partners in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Szczech joined FEMA in 2000 as one of the first members of the new Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) cadre. After four years, she left briefly for a position in the private sector, rejoining the agency in May 2005 as operations section chief in the Florida Recovery Office following the devastating 2004 hurricane season. She returned to the FCO cadre a year later.

Szczech earned the designation of Type I FCO, held by only four people and signifying FEMA's highest level of emergency management expertise. She has served as FCO in numerous presidentially declared disasters, including Hurricane Isabel in 2003; tornadoes in Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama; floods in Georgia, Rhode Island, and Tennessee; and in New Jersey with Superstorm Sandy.

Before joining FEMA, Szczech spent four years with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) as assistant director of operations, managing contingency planning, as well as radiological emergency and hurricane preparedness.

Szczech's interest in disaster response was sparked when she read a newspaper article on the American Red Cross (ARC). She joined the organization as a volunteer and later as a staff member in Savannah, Georgia. With ARC, she gained extensive emergency management and leadership experience supporting hurricane, flood, and earthquake response.

In 2017, Szczech completed the Capstone General and Flag Officer course, an advanced military leadership training program offered to Capstone Fellows at the National Defense University. She has completed the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security's Homeland Security Executive Leaders Program, and the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative's Executive Education Program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Szczech has also earned the Certified Emergency Manager® designation from the International Association of Emergency Managers.