



**Snohomish County
County Executive's Office**

For immediate release – Wednesday, June 07, 2006

Aaron Reardon
County Executive

Reardon names John E. Pennington as Director of the Department of Emergency Management

*Pennington, FEMA Director for Homeland Security Region X,
to lead Snohomish County's Department of Emergency Management*

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon announced today the appointment of John E. Pennington to the position of Director of Snohomish County's Department of Emergency Management (DEM). Pennington, who most recently served as FEMA Region X Director, will start July 13, as acting director until such time as the County Council makes the appointment official.

"Saving life, liberty and property during a disaster is of the highest priority for this County," says Executive Reardon. "As the former FEMA Region X director, John Pennington brings to this position vast experience and the respect of federal, state and local government as well as homeland security officials. He has my utmost confidence. I am pleased that he has accepted this position."

"Snohomish County has a good foundation on which to build. It is my goal to make this County a regional and national leader in emergency management services," says Pennington.

Early in his administration, Executive Reardon recognized the need in this post-9/11 world to expand the scope and capabilities of the formerly independent DEM. In an effort to develop a superior emergency services program for Snohomish County, Executive Reardon, with support from County Council and at the request of local stakeholders, took on management responsibility of DEM effective January 1, 2006.

As expected, during the transition to County government a detailed audit of DEM requested by Executive Reardon identified areas of administrative and organizational weakness that are currently being addressed. After the former DEM Director Roger Serra's abrupt departure at the first of the year, Executive Reardon appointed Martha Robins as interim director until the position could be filled.

“Martha stepped up to the task during a difficult transition. She has done an outstanding job and we are looking forward to her return to her previous duties in the executive’s office,” says Executive Reardon.

“We live in times of heightened risk from both human and natural disaster. We don’t have the luxury of complacency when it comes to our County’s safety and security,” says Executive Reardon. John is a strong and innovative leader. My expectation is that he will raise the bar of excellence for Snohomish County’s DEM.

Executive Reardon’s expectations are borne from his experience having worked with Pennington in the Washington State Legislature. Both served as Co-Vice Chair of the House Committee on Finance from 1999 to 2001. Pennington served four terms of elected office in the Washington State House of Representatives. During that span, he authored more than 30 bills that became law and held the distinction of being the youngest House Speaker Pro Tempore ever elected in Washington State, serving three terms in that position.

Pennington’s reputation as a leader in emergency management is well earned and widely valued among federal, state and local emergency management leaders.

“John is widely respected as one of this nation’s preeminent emergency management professionals. Snohomish County is very fortunate to have him dedicate his services to Western Washington,” says Major General Timothy Lowenberg, Adjutant General to Washington State, Director of the Washington Military Department, Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee for the Adjutants General of the United States Association and Homeland Security Advisor to the Governor.

Jim Mullen, Director of Washington’s Emergency Management Division, says, “I want to congratulate Snohomish County on an excellent choice. John Pennington has been a strong supporter of the region, this state, and has been an advocate for local governments throughout his tenure as Region X Director.”

“He builds partnerships, and has the vision and the courage to be an effective advocate for emergency management principles. I welcome the opportunity to continue working with John as he assumes his new responsibilities. He will be missed within Region X by my colleagues, but he has left a legacy and set a standard of excellence that will guide his successor there as well,” says Mullen.

Region X of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency includes the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska.

Work History

John E. Pennington was appointed Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region X Office in December 2001.

As FEMA Director, Pennington has over four years experience directing the geographically largest and most diverse FEMA Region in the nation. Region X includes more than half (272) of the nation's federally recognized tribal organizations and entities and covers one-third of the country's land mass in the four states of Washington, Alaska, Oregon and Idaho.

He had direct oversight of the operations and fiscal management for over twelve presidential declared disasters, and was appointed the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) for three emergency declarations (Washington, Idaho, Oregon) that handled the receiving of evacuees from Hurricane Katrina.

Highlights of Pennington's tenure as FEMA Director included some of this country's most challenging and publicized events of the decade. He was responsible for directing staff to support the shuttle recovery efforts by having our region take the lead in the task of mapping and recovery of debris from the explosion of the Space Shuttle Columbia. He also successfully deployed 75% of his staff last year to assist with the recovery efforts for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Pennington is also a trained and utilized Principle Federal Official (PFO). Under the newly adopted National Response Plan, Pennington was appointed by both Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretaries Tom Ridge and Michael Chertoff, to become one of only a select few individuals nationally to train as the single focal point for any federally driven disaster.

Locally, Pennington was the interim PFO for the 2003 Department of Justice exercise, TOPOFF 2, held in Seattle, and was Deputy PFO for a 5,000 person Department of Defense anti-terrorism exercise in Alaska last year called Northern Edge/Alaska Shield.

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Photo attached: left, Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon, right, John E. Pennington