



**Snohomish County**  
**County Executive's Office**  
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## **John E. Pennington confirmed by County Council as director of new Department of Emergency Management**

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**“We are on a fast track to create an emergency management department that our citizens can depend on when disaster strikes,” said County Executive Aaron Reardon**

The Snohomish County Council today, confirmed John Pennington as the Director of the County’s new Department of Emergency Management (DEM). Pennington, who most recently served as FEMA Director, Region X of Homeland Security had been acting as Director of DEM since July 13, after having been appointed to that position by Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon.

“In just five weeks on the job, John has managed to make significant improvements to DEM,” says Executive Reardon. “With Pennington as director of DEM, the County is building an emergency response system capable of meeting large disasters.”

“It is only a matter of when, not if a major disaster will strike in Snohomish County,” says Pennington. “To me, there is no, more important job than to protect the life and property of our citizens in times of emergency. I will use all resources available to me to insure that during crises everyone remains as safe and secure as possible.”

Executive Reardon, early in his administration had concerns about the ability of the formerly independent DEM to meet the need of a large catastrophic event. In an effort to develop a larger, more effective emergency management system 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.

Within weeks after assuming responsibility for DEM, Executive Reardon requested a performance audit to assist the County in identifying and rectifying long standing organizational issues at the DEM as established prior to becoming a County department.

He then sought out and hired after an extensive recruitment process, Pennington to take on the task of reinventing the new County DEM.

The results of the eight month performance audit of the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) coincided today with the confirmation of Pennington. “With my two most pressing measures implemented,” said Executive Reardon, “we are well on our way to improving the safety and security of our County.”

### **John Pennington Background**

“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.

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

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.

Pennington served as Co-Vice Chair of the WA State 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.

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