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APR 10 2012

State of North Carolina  
Department of Transportation  
Attn: Mr. Harold B. Thomas  
151 Hwy 24, Suite B  
Morehead City, NC 28557

Dear Mr. Thomas:

I am writing to commend the North Carolina Department of Transportation Ferry Division for a job well done. On August 27, 2011 Hurricane IRENE made land fall in coastal North Carolina. Though the storm was only rated as a Category 1 in strength, its slow movement resulted in widespread destruction. The storm built unprecedented surge and wave heights in various Sounds, destroyed millions of dollars in property, and breached the Outer Banks in several locations. One such breach was thru Highway N.C. 12 south of Nags Head that cut off vehicle connection to Hatteras Island from the mainland and stranded five thousand residents without food, water, or power. During this tumultuous time, the North Carolina Department of Transportation Ferry Division sprang into action and created a lifeline by water through the establishment of an emergency ferry route.

Leveraging past experiences, the Ferry Division established emergency back-up passenger terminals in the event that Hatteras Island was cut-off from a storm. However, the impact and duration of Irene's damage went far beyond what was expected. Implementing an Integrated Command System before the storm, Ferry Division employees shifted from their regular duties, executed their emergency functions to best serve the residents of the state of North Carolina, and deployed extra personnel to the Outer Banks.

Once the storm passed, the Ferry Division launched vessels into navigable channels to find safe routes as the storm greatly changed the waterway's topography and damaged or destroyed most aids to navigation in the area. The Rodanthe to Hatteras emergency route ultimately proved to be the sole lifeline to move first responders to Hatteras Island for many days after the storm's passing. Where 50,000 vehicles normally traveled each day via highway, NCDOT Ferries bore the entire load for an amazing 44 days. This herculean response was maintained throughout the construction of an emergency bridge over the breach south of Nags Head, often in mosquito infested heat, while also assisting residents who lost every possession.

The humanitarian response by the Ferry Division personnel is most heartily commended. Thank you for your continued devoted service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. D. Lee".

W. D. Lee

Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard  
Fifth Coast Guard District