



OFFICE OF SENATOR
Eulogio Shawn Gumataotao

38th Guam Legislature | *I Mina'trentai Ocho Na Liheslaturan Guåhan*

Guam Emergency Management Modernization Act of 2025 Introduced

OPA Findings and Government Corruption Cases Involving Office of Civil Defense Employees Require Legislators to Challenge the Status Quo

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Senator Shawn Gumataotao today introduced the Guam Emergency Management Modernization Act of 2025. Bill No. 179-38 (COR) abolishes the Office of Civil Defense and assigns emergency preparedness and response activities to a proposed Guam Fire Department (GFD) Bureau of Emergency Management.

“Since 1985, GFD continues to maintain a modern emergency response infrastructure and 24/7 readiness to protect life and property during times of natural and manmade disasters,” said Senator Gumataotao. “Together with the Guam Police Department, the Mayor’s Council of Guam and other local emergency response agencies in cooperation with their federal and military counterparts I believe that GFD has the vision and leadership to serve as the government of Guam’s lead department responsible for all emergency management coordination in Guam now and into the future.”

As legislative oversight chair of emergency management, Senator Gumataotao led an inquiry in January linked to two scathing reports by the Guam Office of Public Accountability (OPA) focused on the Operating Costs of the Guam Homeland Security/Office of Civil Defense (GHS/OCD). OPA Report No. 24-07 found that from Fiscal Year 2018 to Fiscal Year 2023; despite claiming 100% federal funding for its operations, GHS/OCD’s operating costs were funded by the General Fund without direct local appropriations. At the time of the OPA investigative audit, the General Fund had yet to receive full reimbursement for transactions incurred due to FEMA holding funds because of GHS/OCD’s repeated noncompliance with guidelines and regulations. OPA Report No. 24-12 found that the organization’s overtime costs in the same period were non-compliant with Federal and local law and has led to indictments in the Superior Court of Guam by the Office of the Attorney General of Guam.

Also, Chairman Gumataotao led his Committee Members on a May 6, 2025 “Mission Check” of the Emergency Operations Center in Agana Heights that revealed poor readiness and facility conditions and questioned priorities by GHS/OCD.

If approved, Bill No. 179-38 (COR) supports the modernization and integration of emergency management responsibilities within GFD, by establishing the Emergency Management Fund to be administered by the Department. Additionally, the measure provides the legal mechanism for the appropriation of emergency management funds provided to the government of Guam by the U.S. Government and appropriations authorized by the Guam Legislature for expenditures supporting disaster preparedness and emergency response in Guam.

Bill No. 179-38 (COR) directs GFD to assume all funding, facilities, equipment, supplies, records, and obligations required by contract, memoranda of understanding, rule, regulation and executive order from the Office of Civil Defense. The Fire Chief is required to modify GFD's organizational chart to include the Bureau of Emergency Management and is authorized to assume any Office of Civil Defense employee in the classified service consistent with the operational requirements of the new Bureau.

"The nearly 75-year-old law has run its course and will make way for a structure and culture that will be helpful for our modern-day emergency activities," said Senator Gumataotao. "The command structure has evolved, and with it processes that can better utilize critical local and Federal funds-the long road of accountability and credibility for our emergency management teams will be helped with this policy."

Additionally, Bill 179-38 (COR) will mandate that Guam Hazard Mitigation Programs will be added to the work of the Guam Department of Public Works which has had decades of success in implementing federal highway and traffic safety programs. The Office of the Governor of Guam will remain accountable for Recovery Office activities with the numerous ongoing disasters to include the COVID-19 Global Pandemic and Typhoon Mawar that struck Guam in 2023.

For more information, please contact Senator Gumataotao's office at (671) 647-1409/1411 or via email at office.senatorshawn@guamlegislature.gov.