

For Immediate Release

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Governor Musgrove Thanks First Responders, Urges Federal Support of their Efforts

(Jackson, MS) – Governor Ronnie Musgrove today thanked Mississippi’s first responders, saying their silent efforts to protect Mississippians during the recent elevation of the threat level to “high” (orange) did not go unnoticed. The Department of Homeland Security lowered the threat level back to “elevated” (yellow) status last week.

“We are here today to thank our first responders in Mississippi – for their commitment to protecting the public safety and for their dedication to duty,” Musgrove said. “Fire departments, police departments, regional HAZMAT teams, and emergency management agencies all went to the next level of preparedness to protect us.”

Musgrove also urged President George Bush and Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge to release federal funding to support first responders at the state level, saying states cannot afford the costs on their own during a national recession. Mississippi could receive as much as \$3 to \$5 million in federal funds to assist the homeland security effort at the state level.

“No American is free from the threats before our nation – and no American should question the ability of their community to respond to those threats,” said Musgrove. “We cannot support our first responders by ourselves. Support is needed from the federal level, and that support is needed now.”

Musgrove has led efforts to improve emergency preparedness in the state, particularly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Initiatives include the establishment of five regional HAZMAT teams, a statewide series of bioterrorism exercises with local and county officials, and a 53 percent increase in the number of local emergency management directors (since October 2000). The state’s second summit on domestic preparedness will be held March 17-20, 2003, in Philadelphia, MS.

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