

POLICY FOCUS

EMP Threats and Disaster Preparedness

RECIPES FOR RATIONAL GOVERNMENT FROM THE INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

EMPs (electromagnetic pulses) are created by natural or man-made causes, such as a terrorist attack. An EMP has the potential to critically damage our electrical grid and catastrophically disrupt communications, transportation, emergency services, and food and water supplies, possibly resulting in the loss of millions of human lives.

Most presume that the odds of an EMP must be highly unlikely, so there is no cause for concern. Yet analyses show that EMP is not an idle threat. We face two very real and serious possibilities: a solar flare event or a nuclear EMP attack. Indeed, experts say there is a **12-percent likelihood** of a solar superstorm happening in the next decade, and reports indicate that a nuclear EMP attack by a potential adversary is within the realm of possibility.

In 2004 and 2008, reports from the Congressionally-mandated EMP Commission urged that immediate action be taken to harden our electrical grid against EMP attacks. Despite this warning, however, the federal government has done little to address this threat and enhance EMP preparedness. Although certain tasks have been assigned, the Commission's recommendations have not yet been carried out.

Inaction is both unwise and unacceptable. Among government's core duties is to protect and defend our nation from significant security threats. Policymakers need to acknowledge EMP as a real concern and take meaningful steps towards preparedness, like securing the civilian electric grid.

