National Incident Management System Guideline for Mutual Aid

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I.   Introduction

Mutual aid agreements establish the terms under which one party provides resources—personnel, teams, facilities, equipment, and supplies—to another party. Because most jurisdictions do not maintain sufficient resource levels to handle extreme events independently, mutual aid agreements provide a means for jurisdictions to augment their resources when needed for high-demand incidents.

Mutual aid agreements can support all mission areas; can be established before, during, or after incidents; and can be between all levels of government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector. Mutual aid does not include direct Federal assistance[1] or Federal response assistance provided under other department-/agency-specific authorities (e.g., the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan).

The National Incident Management System Guideline for Mutual Aid (Guideline) supplements the Resource Management component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) by providing guidance on different types of mutual aid agreements, the key elements of a mutual aid agreement, and the key elements of mutual aid operational plans used for implementation. This Guideline does not provide legal authority or direction and does not supersede applicable legal authorities and constraints at any jurisdictional level. Jurisdictional chief executives, department or agency heads, governors, tribal leaders, or private sector executives should consult with applicable legal authorities before entering into a mutual aid agreement or compact.

By identifying potential shortfalls and capability gaps through planning and exercises, jurisdictions can work with partners to establish mutual aid agreements as part of their preparedness actions. The mutual aid network—an integrated nationwide network of mutual aid systems—enhances the Nation's overall preparedness and readiness by allowing jurisdictions and organizations to account for, order, and mobilize outside resources efficiently and effectively.

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[1] Direct Federal Assistance (44 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 206.208) refers to when a state or local government requests that a Federal agency accomplish emergency work and/or debris removal because it lacks the capability. Such assistance is subject to the cost-sharing provisions and eligibility criteria. State or local governments submit requests for assistance to the appropriate FEMA Regional Administrator. If the request is approved, a mission assignment will be issued to the appropriate Federal agency.

II.   Types of Mutual Aid Agreements

Mutual aid agreements establish the terms under which assistance is provided between two or more jurisdictions within a state and between states, and can be with and between private sector entities, NGOs, and other whole community partners. These agreements facilitate access to potentially needed resources, both prior to and following incidents or planned events.

When reviewing, revising, and developing new mutual aid agreements, emergency managers should consider resources and capabilities across the whole community and ensure compliance with pertinent laws and ordinances.

There are several types of mutual aid agreements and jurisdictions may need to establish different types of agreements with different partners to ensure they are able to access sufficient resources meet anticipated needs.

Local Automatic Mutual Aid

Local automatic mutual aid agreements permit the automatic dispatch and response of requested resources without incident-specific approvals or consideration of entity boundaries. These agreements are usually basic contracts between or among neighboring local entities[2] and are used under conditions when time is of the essence to save lives, prevent human suffering, or mitigate property damage following an incident.

Examples:

- Local first responders may routinely provide emergency services to a nearby Federal facility that does not have organic capabilities. Or, this agreement may also include a Federal entity providing automatic response.

- A fire department from a military installation may respond to an automobile accident outside of its gate because it is the closest appropriate emergency resource, even though the area where the accident occurred is outside the fire department's area of responsibility.

Local Mutual Aid

Local mutual aid agreements between neighboring jurisdictions or organizations involve a formal request for assistance and generally cover a larger geographic area than local automatic mutual aid agreements do. Under these agreements, local resources may be used to assist Federal departments and agencies in fulfilling their missions under special circumstances, and vice versa. Incorporating private sector, NGO, and community-/faith-based organizations into the mutual aid network provides parties with access to significant additional resources.

Example:

- Utility companies, whether privately or publicly owned, typically enter into mutual aid agreements with local communities. While "utilities" can refer to a wide range of services provided to the public, common utility mutual aid agreements provide for electrical, water, wastewater, and other services, such as cybersecurity assistance. Emergency aid and

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[2] Local entities may include nearby governments (including Federal Government installations), private sector facilities, NGOs, and faith-based organizations.

assistance may be provided in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services, as necessary.

Regional, Intrastate, or Statewide[3] Mutual Aid

Sub-state regional mutual aid agreements are between multiple jurisdictions that are often sponsored by a council of governments or a similar regional body. Statewide/intrastate mutual aid agreements are often coordinated through the state and incorporate both state and local governmental and nongovernmental assets in an attempt to increase preparedness statewide. This approach can help reduce the number of local and jurisdiction-to-jurisdiction mutual aid agreements. In some instances, state law requires participation in an intrastate mutual aid system.

Examples:

- The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) developed a *National Fire Service Intrastate Mutual Aid System (IMAS)* that ties local fire districts and departments into statewide mutual aid networks. IAFC uses the Mutual Aid Net tool to manage and dispatch all-hazard resources, individually or through mission-ready packages (MRP), in support of IMAS.

- The *Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS)* is a structured, planned mutual aid system for deploying fire, rescue, and emergency medical services personnel in a multijurisdictional and/or multi-agency response within a state. Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, and parts of Missouri and Iowa use MABAS. MABAS connects fire, emergency management services (EMS), and special operations teams in hazardous materials, technical rescue, subsurface ice/water rescue, fire investigations, incident management, urban search and rescue, and station backfill coverage with standby firefighting and EMS resources through mutual aid requests.

Interstate Mutual Aid – After Declaration

Out-of-state assistance through formal state-to-state agreements that support the response effort. Interstate mutual aid can be established through various types of vehicles, such as interstate compacts and agreements, Federal agreements, and sub-geographic plans. Many states have legislation to support these agreements.

An example of an interstate mutual aid compact is the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which is administered by the National Emergency Management Association.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)
EMAC is a congressionally ratified agreement that provides form and structure to interstate mutual aid during governor-declared states of emergency. Through EMAC, officials in a disaster-affected state can request and receive assistance (including personnel, equipment, and commodities) from other member states quickly and efficiently, thereby resolving four key issues: tort liability and immunity, license reciprocity, workers' compensation, and reimbursement. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted EMAC.

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[3] For the purposes of this document, "state" refers to the 56 states, territories, and insular areas (which includes any state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

States can use intergovernmental agreements, memoranda of agreement/understanding, intrastate legislation, or gubernatorial executive orders to deploy tribal personnel, private resources, and volunteers. Many states have their own mutual aid agreements, but interact with EMAC; however, EMAC does not cover interstate aid before a declaration.

Tribes can only deploy via EMAC with a supplemental agreement between the tribe and the state.

Jurisdictions operating under agreements that expressly require some form of declaration may need to establish other means of acquiring support, if such support is needed prior to or in the absence of such a declaration (e.g., in preparation for a special event or to position assets in anticipation of a hurricane).

Interstate Mutual Aid – Prior to or Without a Declaration

In some instances, jurisdictions may require additional resources from other states, tribes, or territories prior to a state or tribal emergency declaration, or when one is not appropriate. Since EMAC does not apply in those situations, jurisdictions need separate interstate agreements for such incidents or planned events.

Several approaches accomplish this objective, including neighbor-to-neighbor aid. Many states have enacted legislation to enable and support local interstate mutual aid agreements. Tribal nations also enter into agreements to assist tribes in other states.

Examples:

- The ***Mid-America Mutual Aid Consortium*** supports interstate mutual aid for emergency situations that do not result in a state or local declaration of emergency or disaster. The consortium helps parties recognize out-of-state professional licenses, certifications, or other permits when the state, or a county, city, village, township, special district, or other political subdivision or unit of local government, requests mutual aid from jurisdictions outside of their state. The consortium also provides certain persons with immunity from civil actions when acting pursuant to mutual aid agreements and maintains employee benefits and protections. Authority to participate is provided by inter-local agreements condoned through each participating state's statutory authorities.

- The United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET) ***Tribal Emergency Mutual Aid Compact (TEMAC)*** is the first emergency mutual aid agreement expressly for tribes in the United States. Developed in 2008, TEMAC provides mutual aid among USET member tribes within the context of tribal self-determination and self-governance. USET member tribes developed TEMAC for implementation by member tribes, but other tribes are free to model it.

International Mutual Aid

International mutual aid agreements are a legal means through which jurisdictions can share resources across an international border. Bilateral and multilateral agreement negotiated and managed through Federal agencies and/or the agreement is managed directly between U.S. states/regions and their international counterparts.

The International Assistance System Concept of Operations establishes policies and procedures for managing international assistance for domestic disasters declared under the Stafford Act. The Foreign Assistance Act and/or the authorities of the providing departments/ agencies govern U.S. foreign assistance.

Example:

- The *State and Province Emergency Management Assistance Memorandum of Agreement (SPEMAMA)* is an agreement ratified by the United States and Canada that allows for participating jurisdictions from each country to enact or adopt it. SPEMAMA is open to all 50 states and U.S. territories, and to all 10 provinces and three territories in Canada. It provides a system and a set of processes to systematically and rapidly deploy mutual aid resources among participating jurisdictions.

III. Key Elements of Mutual Aid Agreements

Mutual aid agreements can vary considerably from agreement to agreement. The participating parties determine the content and structure of an agreement or compact. An organization or jurisdiction may enter into multiple agreements with varying formats and content. Common terminology and formats and writing in plain English help clarify expectations, promote unity of effort, and expedite mutual aid efforts.

When establishing mutual aid agreements or compacts, jurisdictions and organizations should address the following key elements to improve the understanding of the commitment, scope, and general procedures for all parties.

Purpose and Scope

Identify the agreement's conditions, length, and general legal scope or effect, such as the intent to bind parties or severability. Present the reason for the agreement and identify the parties, the types of services addressed, and any applicable mutual aid service limitations. Organizations often specify whether the agreement's intent is to provide resources for declared disasters or surge capacity prior to a disaster declaration.

Benefits

Outline the economic, logistical, or other benefits that the mutual aid agreement may provide to the parties entering into the agreement. Because owning and maintaining all of the resources needed to respond to extreme or high-demand incidents is cost-prohibitive for most communities, entering into mutual aid agreements provides economic and logistical efficiencies to support any gaps in resources and capability.

Authorities

Specifically state the legal basis for the parties to enter into the mutual aid agreement in an authorities section. This may include the state laws, local ordinances, tribal resolutions, regulations, or other applicable authorities.

Definitions

Define key terms in the agreement to ensure all parties share a common vocabulary, especially any terms that are specific or unique to the circumstances of the contract.

Governance Structure and Operations Oversight

The governance section should specify who is responsible for overseeing the agreement and how those personnel communicate policies and procedures to guide the agreement's implementation and operation. Being clear about the governance structure can expedite decision making, reduce the time required to request assistance, and ensure all parties understand the chain of command.

Parties to the agreement designate personnel to implement and operate the mutual aid agreement terms. Examples of personnel actions in the governance section include identifying who will complete the following tasks:

- Develop and approve procedures for implementation, operation, and documentation;

- Develop and approve complaint procedures, methods, and resolution;

- Provide personnel with procedures and training; and

- Conduct joint exercises for mutual aid requests, deployment, operations, and demobilization.

Recognition of Licensure and Certifications

Identify licenses and certifications that qualify individuals to perform specific duties (e.g., doctors, emergency medical technicians) and ensure receiving parties recognize licensure and/or certification across geopolitical boundaries. Mutual aid agreements that cross geopolitical borders should reconcile that practitioners licensed in one political jurisdiction retain the authorization to work at the level of their license or certification in other political jurisdictions as a part of the response.

Protocols for Interoperable Communications

Pre-arranged communication frequencies and procedures are critical for effective execution. Identify the overarching requirement for ensuring the necessary level of voice and data communications.

These protocols may include guidance on interoperability channels, data services, backup systems, and common alerting protocols that are necessary to establish on the-scene coordination and communications for multijurisdictional or multidisciplinary responses. Identifying common communication protocols in mutual aid agreements is particularly important when integrating mutual aid resources that may not have interoperable systems.

Tort Liability and Indemnification

Specify how parties will address tort liability. For mutual aid purposes, indemnifying the person or jurisdiction or holding them harmless is a way to address liability concerns.

State laws differ on governmental, or sovereign, immunity. State laws also differ on tort claims, volunteer protection, Good Samaritan protection, and other incident response factors. Effective mutual aid agreements contain provisions concerning liability and indemnification to protect the parties and responders.

Insurance

Address the parties' responsibilities to provide insurance coverage. Many political jurisdictions are self-insured, while private sector organizations tend to carry commercially available insurance. Mutual aid agreements often include provisions for insurance covering individuals and equipment.

Workers' Compensation

Address how parties will respond to workers' compensation coverage and claims, including those from private sector, NGO, and community-/faith-based organization employees and volunteers.

Deployment Notification

It is a best practice to include acceptable deployment notification protocols and documents in mutual aid documents to discourage unrequested resources. This section should address the documentation that will be considered official authorization to deploy, such as orders, an EMAC Request for Assistance (REQ-A), or travel authorizations citing a specific purpose. Having explicit deployment notification will discourage self-deployment of unrequested resources.

When responders come to an incident area without being requested, they may interfere with incident management and may place an extra logistical and management burden on an already stressed system by:

- Creating additional supervisory, logistical, and safety needs;

- Depleting the resources needed to provide continued services to their home community;

- Complicating resource tracking and accountability; and/or

- Limiting the access of formally requested resources.

Reciprocity/Reimbursement

Mutual aid agreements must specify how the receiving party will compensate the sending party. This compensation may be provided using the following structures:

- *In-kind agreements* state that the party receiving services will reciprocate by providing the same type of services over time.

- *Equity agreements* state that the parties will exchange equitable services, though not of an in-kind nature. The value of the services exchanged under an equity agreement is equal.

- *Reimbursable agreements* provide the terms of the exchange of services for payment. Contracts specify the costs of various types of services and the payment mechanisms parties will use. In some incidents, sending parties cannot afford to lend their services and resources for extended periods of time without reimbursement.

Mutual aid agreements that involve direct payment often include the following provisions:

- Conditions that would trigger the start of reimbursable time for resources provided through mutual aid,

- Eligibility and documentation requirements for expenses that are reimbursable (e.g., a travel reimbursement policy),

- Jurisdictional or organizational policies related to specific reimbursable costs. Examples of such costs include the following:

  – Personnel Pay: Salary, overtime, backfill, and other employee-related costs, including insurance, retirement, and workers' compensation are often addressed in cited policies.

  – Travel/Transportation: Travel costs usually include airfare, luggage fees, mileage reimbursement, rental vehicles, parking, tolls, fuel (if not included in the equipment rates

described below), lodging, meals, and transport/shipping costs (bulk items, large equipment, and vehicle transport).

- – <u>Equipment Rates</u>: Reimbursement costs for equipment should address hourly or daily usage rates, fuel, maintenance, and other commodities (if not included in a flat rate), and costs for loss, damage, and repairs to equipment. The providing organization or jurisdiction usually determines these rates or sometimes bases the rates on standardized regional, state, or Federal rates, such as FEMA's equipment rates.

- – <u>Commodities</u>: These are expendable and durable commodities that often include office supplies, sandbags, dust masks, trash bags, printer paper, and batteries.

- – <u>Other</u>: These are costs that do not fall into one of the above categories (e.g., fees for laundry services, mobile phones, decontamination, vaccination).

Termination

Specify how and when parties may terminate the agreement and the notification time period. Documenting this information minimizes cost and risk to all parties.

Dispute Resolution

Include methods and timelines for personnel to make, process, and investigate complaints, and define the dispute resolution process. This includes how personnel make formal complaints, the adjudication method, timeframes for each step, and the implementation of resolution.

Modification and Amendment Management

Identify the methods and timelines for the periodic review of the agreement by all parties, the process for parties to propose modifications or amendments to the document, and the process for approving changes.

Operational Plan and Procedures Requirements

Specify any requirements concerning the development of a mutual aid operational plan, including procedures, the timeline for completion, and the process for approving and implementing the plan. Typically, this includes procedures for how mutual aid resources and personnel who were mobilized to support an incident or planned event continue under the operational control of their day-to-day leaders. It often also includes details on how the receiving party's existing Incident Command System (ICS) structure integrates resources and personnel, as well as how the receiving party maintains control over the incident and makes organizational and strategic goals and objectives and tactical assignments to the mutual aid resources through the chain of command.

Supplemental Information Based on Declaration Status

Include supplemental information on authorities and procedures that are triggered under governor-declared disasters, such as provisions to:

- Implement intergovernmental agreements, memoranda of agreement/understanding, intrastate legislation, or gubernatorial executive orders to deploy tribal personnel, private resources, and volunteers;

- Incorporate resources that provide form and structure to interstate mutual aid during governor-declared states of emergency; and/or

- Request and receive assistance from other member states quickly and efficiently, resolving four key issues: tort liability and immunity, license reciprocity, workers' compensation, and reimbursement.

IV. Key Elements of Mutual Aid Operational Plans

Mutual aid operational plans support mutual aid agreements, and guide the sending and receiving parties in managing and providing effective mutual aid. Though not required, these plans are essential to identify specific resources, tasks, personnel, asset allocations, roles, responsibilities, integration, and actions that mutual aid participants execute respective to their assignments.

Mutual aid operational plans:

- Supplement mutual aid agreements, either as an appendix to the agreement or as a separate document;

- Identify specific resources, tasks, personnel, asset allocations, roles, responsibilities, integration, and actions that mutual aid participants execute respective to their assignments; and

- Help requesting or receiving parties manage mutual aid assets during a planned event or following an incident.

The following subsections present key characteristics and components of effective mutual aid operational plans.

Implementation, Schedule, Training, and Exercises

The mutual aid operational plan should include a schedule of training and exercises to validate the concepts and actions in the mutual aid operational plan prior to implementation. Mutual aid-based exercises provide responders the opportunity to practice their procedures and responsibilities. Exercises test operational plan design, concept, and implementation in addition to testing the communications, logistics, and administrative structure needed to support the plan.

Sound operational plans, coupled with training and opportunities to exercise plan components, help build a solid foundation for implementing mutual aid. Listing scheduled training or exercises, as well as learning objectives for each, in an operational plan is a best practice. In addition, the operational plan should list any requirement for minimum training standards between the parties.

This section should include an implementation schedule for individual and joint training and validation exercises.

Identifying Mutual Aid Resources

Entities use various mechanisms to organize, develop, train, and exercise certain response and recovery resources prior to an emergency or disaster. These mechanisms are developed by mutual aid system managers ahead of time for anticipated mission requirements, as well as on an ad hoc basis. Managers assemble existing teams and organize them based on a mission's specific requirements.

Typically, resources are identified in accordance with NIMS resource typing. These organizational mechanisms are important to mutual aid because they allow rapid identification, location, request, order, and tracking of specific resources quickly and effectively during an emergency. This structure reduces the span of control and minimizes incident management and

communication complexities. For example, all parties should know that an Emergency Medical Task Force, Type 1, consists of an operational grouping of five EMS resource teams with common communications and a leader, including vehicles, staff, equipment, and supplies.

Mission Ready Packages

Mission Ready Packages (MRP) are a specific mechanism that uses NIMS resource typing criteria to describe expected mission parameters and select the resources. MRP details typically include a statement of the mission capability needed, descriptions of conditions that might impact the mission, required logistical support (including the space needed to stage the resources and sustain them while completing the mission), and the estimated cost of providing the resources.

Many states have MRP templates. Entities looking to develop their own MRPs can reach out to other states or can leverage MRP templates and tools on the EMAC website.[1] If using MRPs, it is a best practice for an operational plan to identify general protocols or procedures for using the NIMS resource typing definitions, inventory systems, and standardized templates for MRPs.

Inventorying Resources

Include procedures to identify the immediate and future resource needs and priorities of the incident, including what and how much is needed, where and when it is needed, and who will be receiving or using it, based on incident response experience and specific damage assessments.

A variety of sources can provide resource requirements, depending on the nature of the emergency and the public and private sector entities and NGOs operating in the affected areas. Appropriate planning requires that jurisdictions communicate potential resource needs requirements in advance of any incident to prospective resource providers. To assist in this process, maintaining an inventory of resources "owned" by parties in the agreement is a best practice. This inventory should include specifics on capabilities, maintenance requirements, operational status, and deployment information. The inventory may be based on the NIMS Resource Typing Definitions, the Incident Resource Inventory System, and standardized templates for EMAC MRPs. Specific details may include the following:

- *Name*: The unique name of the resource.

- *Aliases*: Other names for the resource, whether formal or informal. These can be radio call signs, license numbers, nicknames, or anything else that may help users identify the resource.

- *Resource Typing Definition or Job Title*: The resource typing definition or job title that applies to the resource. This can be either a standard NIMS resource typing definition or job title/position qualification or a local, state, or tribal definition.

- *Status*: The status of the resource (available, assigned, or out of service).

- *Mutual Aid Readiness*: Whether the resource is ready for deployment under mutual aid.

- *Home Location*: The resource's permanent storage location, base, or office, including the home location's associated latitude/longitude and U.S. National Grid coordinates, to ensure interoperability with mapping and decision support tools.

- *Present Location*: The resource's current location, base, office, or deployment assignment, including the present location's associated latitude/longitude and U.S. National Grid coordinates, to ensure interoperability with mapping and decision support tools.

- *Point of Contact*: Individuals and relevant information for those who are points of contact for communication related to the resource and their relevant information.

- *Owner*: The agency, tribe, company, person, or other entity that owns the resource.

- *Manufacturer/Model*: The manufacturer, model name, and serial number for equipment.

- *Contracts*: Purchase, lease, rental, or maintenance agreements or other financial agreements associated with the resource.

- *Certifications*: Documentation that validates the official qualifications, certifications, or licenses associated with the resource.

- *Deployment Information*: The information needed to request a resource, which includes:

  - Minimum Lead Time (in hours): The minimum time a resource needs to prepare for deployment.

  - Maximum Deployment Time (in days): The maximum time a resource can be deployed or involved in a response before its owner needs to pull it back for maintenance, recovery, or resupply.

  - Restrictions: Any restrictions placed on the resource use, capabilities, etc.

  - Reimbursement Process: Any special information regarding the reimbursement process.

  - Release and Return Instructions: Any information regarding the release and return of the resource.

  - Sustainability Needs: Any information regarding resources or criteria for maintaining a capability during a deployment.

Mobilizing Resources (Request, Dispatch, and Response)

Describe the process for making resource requests, dispatches, and responses through mutual aid, such as formal requests from emergency operations center to emergency operations center for specific resources, or emergency-in-progress notifications by dispatchers regarding law enforcement pursuit of suspects spanning jurisdictional borders.

An Incident Commander makes initial and ongoing assessments of resource requirements and requests additional resources as needed with specific guidance on exact reporting location (e.g., U.S. National Grid, latitude and longitude). Parties can request resources individually by type, or in aggregate in predefined task forces, strike teams, or MRPs. It is a best practice to describe the process for requesting mutual aid, evaluating offers, agreeing to operational terms, and indicating how support (e.g., food, fuel, lodging, repair parts) will be provided to resources as part of the operational plan. Specific details may include:

- Response area;

- Incident check-in location;

- Specific assignments (e.g., position, team designation);

- Reporting time;

- Communications instructions (e.g., incident frequencies);

- Special support requirements (e.g., facilities, equipment transportation and off-loading); and

- Travel arrangements (if needed), including authorization for air, rental car, lodging, meals, and incidental expenses.

Performance Criteria and Metrics

Parties establish performance criteria and metrics during the development of the mutual aid operational plan. Metrics may include size, quantity, essential elements, set of conditions or processes, personnel specifications, equipment, and team makeup. During preparation, parties document general performance criteria and metrics in mutual aid agreements and participate in developing resource typing documents. The requesting and providing parties may refine general performance criteria and metrics to specify what is actually needed and/or available. When parties invoke mutual aid, they apply the performance criteria and metrics. Having agreed-upon performance criteria and metrics in a mutual aid operational plan ensures all parties share an understanding of performance expectations of resources.

FEMA recommends that plans document general performance criteria and metrics of each resource, unit, or team.

- Specific criteria may include size, quantity, essential elements, set of conditions or processes, personnel specifications, equipment, and team makeup.

- Metrics are quantitative or qualitative levels against which achievement of a task can be assessed. They describe how much, how well, or how quickly an action should be performed. Metrics vary depending for each resource.

Management and Coordination

Provide a protocol for integrating mutual aid resources into the management and coordination structure. This protocol should include specifics on who assumes operational control of mutual aid resources and how the sending party integrates mutual aid resources into the requesting party's command and control structure.

Engagement Rules

Describe the rules for how outside resources get to the scene and accomplish missions. These rules may differ for each mobilization as local, regional/metropolitan, state, tribal, territorial, insular area, and Federal requirements and protocols vary. This section should indicate any specific guidelines or standard operating procedures (SOP) for the circumstances and limitations under which the mutual aid resources will operate.

Credentialing

Include details on incident personnel credentialing processes. Credentialing means providing documentation, typically badges or identification cards, which verify an individual's identity and qualifications to fulfill an incident-related position. The *NIMS Guideline for the National Qualification System* provides the guidance and tools for jurisdictions and organizations to implement their own qualification and certification process in a way that enables them to share resources more seamlessly with other jurisdictions and organizations.[4] The Guideline includes information that helps the private and nonprofit sectors, faith-based organizations, and all levels of government establish credentialing protocols and can be used as a resource.

Specific details of credentialing may include:

- *Applicability*: Which parties are subject to the credentialing protocols?

- *Identification*: Verification and documentation of personnel identity and qualifications to ensure an appropriate level of trust in the individual's identity and capability.

- *Qualifications*: Details on the minimum qualifications a person must demonstrate for a specific incident position.

- *Certification*: Certification of personnel based on identity vetting and position qualifications.

- *Badging*: Guidelines for issuing an identification card to personnel after parties' complete certification of their identity, qualifications, and typing.

- *Authorization and Access*: Such items as order numbers, EMAC REQ-A, EMAC Mission Order Authorization Forms, or travel authorizations.

- *Revocation*: The revocation of credentials and qualifications if an individual's employment changes or qualifications expire.

Health and Safety

The dangers and environmental hazards that responders may encounter during the incident dictate protocols for health and safety. This section should provide health and safety protocols and plans. Provide or reference the types and levels of personal protective equipment, respiratory equipment, or other protection, as well as associated training on that equipment, that are necessary to ensure responder and patient health and safety.

Voice and Data Interoperability

Transmission of data in a common format enables sending and receiving parties to share pertinent information. Include information on protocols for voice and data interoperability that allow common interfaces among disparate communications and data management systems. This includes processes for how parties integrate information into a common operating picture and facilitate decision making during mutual aid. Key elements of these SOPs should include a list of communications capabilities, a list of approved frequencies, guidelines for usage and training,

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[4] The *NIMS Guideline for the National Qualification System* incorporates guidance for credentialing personnel. (www.fema.gov/national-qualification-system).

and potential cost recovery mechanisms available for use during state- or Federally declared disasters.

Documentation and Reporting

Include standardized protocols for documenting and reporting procedures to help parties maintain situational awareness and give personnel access to critical information.

Demobilizing Resources

A best practice is to include demobilization guidance in mutual aid operational plans to detail the process for demobilizing resources.

Glossary

Agency: A government element with a specific function offering a particular kind of assistance.

Automatic Aid: Services provided under an agreement between parties to respond with the nearest available resource to an incident regardless of boundaries. Parties usually establish this type of aid on an in-kind or non-reimbursement basis when sending parties provide resources without a receiving party's formal request.

Badging: Assigning physical incident-specific credentials to establish legitimacy and permit access to incident sites. See *Credentialing*.

Compact: A contract between parties, which creates obligations and rights capable of being enforced, and contemplated as such between the parties, in their distinct and independent characters.

Credentialing: Providing documentation that identifies personnel and authenticates and verifies their qualification for a particular position. See *Badging*.

Demobilization: The orderly, safe, and efficient return of an incident resource to its original location and status.

Dispatch: The ordered movement of a resource or resources to an assigned operational mission, or an administrative move from one location to another.

Emergency: Any incident, whether natural, technological, or human-caused, that necessitates responsive action to protect life or property.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC): A congressionally-ratified agreement that provides form and structure to interstate mutual aid. Through EMAC, a disaster-affected state can request and receive assistance from other member states quickly and efficiently, resolving two key issues up front: liability and reimbursement.

Entity: A governmental jurisdiction, tribe, NGO, private sector organization, or community-/faith-based organization. When entities enter into a mutual aid agreement, they become parties to the agreement.

Incident: An occurrence, natural or manmade, that necessitates a response to protect life or property. In this document, the word "incident" includes planned events as well as emergencies and/or disasters of all kinds and sizes.

Interoperability: The ability of systems, personnel, and equipment to provide and receive functionality, data, information, and/or services to and from other systems, personnel, and equipment, between both public and private agencies, departments, and other organizations, in a manner enabling them to operate effectively together. Interoperability allows emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations to communicate within and across agencies and jurisdictions via voice, data, or video-on-demand in real time, when needed and when authorized.

Mission-Ready Package (MRP): A specific combination of resources with the capabilities to address an anticipated functional need. Entities organize MRPs based on standardized resource typing definitions.

Mobilization: The processes and procedures used by all organizations—local, state, tribal, and Federal—for activating, assembling, and transporting all resources that have been requested to respond to or support an incident.

Mutual Aid: The timely and efficient sharing of capabilities in the form of resources and services upon request.

Mutual Aid Agreement: A written or oral agreement between and among agencies/organizations and/or jurisdictions that provides a mechanism to quickly obtain assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate the rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and/or after an incident.

National Incident Management System (NIMS): A systematic, proactive approach to guide all levels of government, NGOs, and the private sector to work together to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the effects of incidents. NIMS provides stakeholders across the whole community with the shared vocabulary, systems, and processes to successfully deliver the capabilities described in the National Preparedness System. NIMS provides a consistent foundation for dealing with all incidents, ranging from daily occurrences to incidents requiring a coordinated Federal response.

Nongovernmental Organization (NGO): An entity with an association that is based on the interests of its members, individuals, or institutions. An NGO is not created by a government, but it may work cooperatively with government. Such organizations serve a public purpose, not a private benefit. Examples of NGOs include faith-based groups, relief agencies, organizations that support people with access and functional needs, and animal welfare organizations. NGOs provide relief services to sustain life, reduce physical and emotional distress, and promote the recovery of disaster survivors.

Party: A person or entity involved in an agreement.

Planned Event: An incident that is a scheduled non-emergency activity (e.g., sporting event, concert, parade).

Position Qualifications: The minimum criteria necessary for individuals to fill a specific position.

Protocol: A set of established guidelines for actions (designated by individuals, teams, functions, or capabilities) under various specified conditions.

Receiving Party: The party in the mutual aid agreement that receives resources.

Reimbursement: A mechanism to recoup funds expended for incident-specific activities.

Resource Management: Systems for identifying available resources at all jurisdictional levels to enable timely, efficient, and unimpeded access to resources needed to prepare for, respond to, or recover from an incident.

Resource Typing: Defining and categorizing incident resources by capability.

Resources: Personnel, equipment, teams, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment to incident operations and for which status is maintained. Resources are described by kind and type and may be used in operational support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at an emergency operations center.

Sending Party: The party in the mutual aid agreement that provides resources.

Strike Team: A set number of resources of the same kind and type that have an established minimum number of personnel, common communications, and a leader. In the law enforcement community, strike teams are referred to as resource teams.

Task Force: Any combination of resources of different kinds and/or types assembled to support a specific mission or operational need.

Type: A NIMS resource classification that refers to capability of a specific kind of resource that applies a metric to designate it as a specific numbered class.

United States National Grid: A point and area location reference system that FEMA and other incident management organizations use as an accurate and expeditious alternative to latitude/longitude.

List of Abbreviations

EMAC	Emergency Management Assistance Compact
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IAFC	International Association of Fire Chiefs
ICS	Incident Command System
IMAS	Intrastate Mutual Aid System
MABAS	Mutual Aid Box Alarm System
MRP	Mission-Ready Package
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NIMS	National Incident Management System
REQ-A	Request for Assistance
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPEMAMA	State and Province Emergency Management Assistance Memorandum of Agreement
TEMAC	Tribal Emergency Mutual Aid Compact
USET	United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

Resources

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)

- A congressionally-ratified mutual aid compact that defines a non-Federal, state-to-state system for sharing resources across state lines during an emergency or disaster. Signatories include all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

- https://www.emacweb.org

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

- The NIMS document includes comprehensive guidance regarding incident resource management, including the preparation and typing of resources including personnel.

- The Resource Management section of NIMS contains specific information regarding the qualification, certification, and credentialing of incident management and support personnel. It also defines the use of pertinent terms to ensure common terminology among all qualification system users.

- https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system

NIMS Guideline for the National Qualification System

- The NIMs Guideline for the National Qualification System supplements the Resource Management component of NIMS by establishing guidance and tools to assist stakeholders in developing processes for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing deployable emergency personnel.

- www.fema.gov/national-qualification-system

NIMS Webpage

- This webpage provides links to the NIMS documents, such as this Guideline, as well as information regarding training, implementation guidance, the latest updates, and contact information for FEMA's regional NIMS coordinators.

- https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system