

Mutual Aid for Building Departments

This fact sheet series is designed to inform local officials and community stakeholders of building department mutual aid support following a disaster. Because most building departments do not maintain sufficient personnel levels to handle the influx of post-disaster inspections, permitting and enforcement tasks, mutual aid agreements allow building departments to augment their personnel in times of need. Mutual aid agreements are established within and between states and territories to enable sharing of public- and private-sector personnel. For the states and territories of each FEMA region, the fact sheets will describe mutual aid agreements in effect and summarize select benefits and protections available to private-sector personnel.

Mutual Aid Agreements

In order to utilize mutual aid support, local building departments must request assistance through an established mutual aid agreement or system that describes the terms and conditions of the service. These agreements between states and among jurisdictions provide a mechanism to quickly obtain assistance in the form of personnel. The primary objective is to facilitate the rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and/or after an incident.

Mutual aid personnel can be classified in two categories: **Public-Sector Personnel**, also referred to as state assets and can include local, state, and federal officials; and **Private-Sector Personnel**. The following public- and private-sector resources are capable of assisting communities after disaster:

- Building Code Officials
- Floodplain Administrators
- Engineers & Architects
- Building Safety & Code Inspectors
- State NFIP Coordinators
- Technicians & Specialists

This fact sheet will discuss two types of mutual aid compacts. The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) establishes a fairly uniform mutual aid system *between* states and territories, whereas an Intrastate Mutual Aid System (IMAS) establishes a more unique mutual aid arrangement *within* a state or territory.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact

EMAC is an interstate mutual aid agreement, i.e., **between states and territories**, passed in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It also allows states and territories to give and receive liability protections and reimbursements for those shared personnel. See <https://emacweb.org/> for more information.



Enhanced EMAC: Provides benefits and protections to public-sector response personnel, while also providing some benefits and protections to private-sector response personnel. Private-sector personnel may be allowed to deploy through EMAC during disasters.



Standard EMAC: Provides benefits and protections to public-sector response personnel, but not to private-sector response personnel. Private-sector personnel may not be allowed to respond through EMAC during disasters.



Not Participating in EMAC: May not provide benefits or protections to any response personnel. Without an agreement in place, public- and private-sector personnel may not be allowed to respond outside of their home jurisdictions in an official capacity during disasters.



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Intrastate Mutual Aid System

An IMAS is a mutual aid system allowing political subdivisions **within a state or territory** to share their personnel during emergencies. An IMAS, unlike EMAC, exists in many different forms throughout the country, and not all areas have one. These fact sheets categorize each state and territory using the following four categories.



Statewide opt-out program: the state creates a mutual aid program and automatically integrates all of its political subdivisions into it, leaving the burden on jurisdictions to opt out if they so choose. Some states even forego an opt-out provision.



Statewide opt-in program: the state creates a mutual aid program but leaves the burden on individual jurisdictions to opt in to the program.



Individual compacts: Individual jurisdictions enter into mutual aid agreements with each other, often in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement. The shortcomings of this approach include geographic limitations for each individual agreement and the possibility for variations among individual agreements within a given area.



No known significant intrastate mutual aid system.

Funding for Building Department Staff

The Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018, Section 1206 (DRRA-1206) authorizes FEMA Public Assistance grant funding to support recovery staffing needs of local building code and floodplain management departments up to 180 days following the date of the major disaster declaration. DRRA-1206 can help reimburse communities that seek out trained and certified mutual aid responder teams through EMAC for interstate mutual aid, or within a state through an IMAS. Building code enforcement, floodplain management, and substantial damage determination activities for structures in a federally-designated disaster area in the jurisdiction of the applicant can be eligible for DRRA-1206 reimbursement if the work relates to the repair, replacement, or retrofit of the structures due to damage caused by the disaster. In addition, if the applicant participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), then the applicant must not be in a state of suspension or sanction within the program.

- Reach out to floodplain managers to coordinate efforts and requests for assistance, and to track progress, gaps, and unmet needs related to [DRRA-1206-eligible activities](#).
- Consult FEMA's [Public Assistance](#) and [Hazard Mitigation Grant Program](#) materials for assistance needs beyond mutual aid for 180 days, as DRRA-1206 mutual aid reimbursement is limited to 180 days after the date of a major disaster declaration.
- Reach out to your state's building code authority as they may have more specific details or plans for using mutual aid in your state.

For answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about DRRA-1206, refer to FEMA's FAQ [Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#).

This document contains references to non-federal resources and organizations. The references are solely for informational purposes and are not an endorsement of any non-federal entity by FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, or the U.S. government.

How to Use the Regional Fact Sheets and Pursue Mutual Aid

Local officials and community stakeholders can use the regional fact sheets to identify mutual aid agreements and systems and the protections they offer to personnel capable of performing post-disaster building damage assessments and recovery tasks. Mutual aid laws and protections vary from state to state. Before requesting or providing mutual aid assistance:

- Review the latest laws and regulations using the footnotes and references provided for each state as a guide
- Make sure the laws and regulations in the requesting and assisting states provide for the use and legal protection of private sector and volunteer responders, including liability protections and expense reimbursement
- Contact the local emergency management office or state agency to verify the limitations of public- and private-sector personnel and with any questions about the mutual aid laws and regulations

When allowed through a compact, trained and certified personnel associated with Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs) can be obtained from the state chapter organizations of:

- International Code Council (ICC)
- National Council of Structural Engineers Associations (NCSEA)
- Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM)
- American Institute of Architects (AIA)

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