



Interstate Mutual Aid and Assistance: **EMAC Tips for the Water Sector**

The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) provides a mechanism whereby drinking water and wastewater utilities can provide **interstate** (between states) mutual aid and assistance during times of emergency. EMAC has demonstrated its value in providing interstate mutual aid and assistance for multiple sectors and disciplines and can be used to share water sector resources such as equipment and personnel across state lines.

Background Information

- EMAC is the only congressionally ratified emergency management assistance agreement in which all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands participate.
- EMAC is a state-to-state compact accessed through your respective state Emergency Management Agency.
- The water sector should coordinate with Local and State Emergency Management Agencies during incidents. An intrastate WARN can assist with this effort.
- Additionally, a WARN in one state can request assistance from a WARN in a neighboring or distant state via the state EMAC.
- Requests must be approved by Requesting and Responding State Emergency Management Agencies before utility assets can be deployed.
- EMAC addresses liability and other legal issues that may arise between utilities from different states during the provision of assistance.

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) recommends establishing **intrastate (within a state) agreements** that encompass all local jurisdictions, public and private. This requirement ensures that coordination mechanisms within a state are in place before the more challenging task of coordinating across state lines is attempted.

Water and Wastewater Agency Response Networks (WARN), provide a framework through which utilities can provide/receive **intrastate** mutual aid and assistance. WARN can help facilitate communication with local and state Emergency Management Agencies, state EMAC Coordinators and the state primacy agency, during an emergency to coordinate the deployment of water sector resources under EMAC. The intrastate coordination of mutual aid and assistance resources that WARN provides can be invaluable if the need for interstate mutual aid and assistance through EMAC is needed in the future.

Listed below are tips the water sector can apply to utilize EMAC more effectively when requesting or providing mutual aid and assistance across state lines.

FOR BOTH REQUESTING & RESPONDING UTILITIES

Before an Event:

Learn more about EMAC. General information on EMAC can be found at www.emacweb.org.

Develop a relationship with your state EMAC Coordinator. All EMAC requests and/or offers of assistance must be sent through the state Emergency Management Agency. Your state primacy agency may be able to help you with this process. Contact information for state emergency management agencies can be found at <http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/statedr.shtm>.

Raise utility awareness. EMAC can be used to facilitate the deployment of utility assets across state lines in a fast and effective manner during a declared state of emergency. However, without a proper understanding of how to coordinate and properly request resources through EMAC, assets can easily be overlooked or go unused.

Continued on back...

Train and educate personnel. Develop information for mutual aid/assistance personnel on what personal items to take, what to expect during the deployment, what health and safety risks might exist, what legal protections they will have, etc. Have this information ready and provide training before teams are assembled for deployment.

Know the law. Consult with your emergency management agency, state primacy agency, and legal counsel to explore the legal mechanisms that might be available to deploy volunteers from public utilities. Although private utilities are typically not included in EMAC Missions, check with state authorities to determine if mechanisms exist within your state to deploy private resources.

Review all paperwork related to the official EMAC request. EMAC Missions are legally binding, and have important implications for reimbursement, acceptance of licensure, liability coverage, and worker's compensation. Like all reimbursement packages, upon return you must be able to show supporting documentation for all costs on that mission. Before you deploy, make sure that you have specified the exact number and type of personnel that you expect to deploy and that the cost is reasonable. Review the type of required information with the state EMAC Coordinator before the next emergency to better understand what is needed.

Work with other states to strengthen your state's system or to aid in the development of theirs. WARNs should coordinate between states to aid in mutual strengthening and development. Many WARNs have resources already identified, credentialed, and ready to deploy. Use your neighboring WARNs as resources to enhance your own system.

Learn more about WARN. Find general information on WARN at www.nationalwarn.org.

During an Event:

Promptly request everything that is needed. There is no standard list of what resources other states may have available for deployment, so do not assume that your request cannot be fulfilled.

Be specific about requests. Rather than requesting "personnel" and "supplies," specify what types of each are needed and in what quantities. Responding states will want to know if they should look for engineers, electricians, or other types of personnel. If you are uncertain how much of a resource you may need, estimate.

Use personal contacts to your advantage. If you know of a resource that exists in another state, you can save time by communicating in advance with the owner of that resource. Once you know that it is available, your state Emergency Management Agency must make a formal request to the state with the resource. Please give your state Emergency Management Agency the provider's contact information and the resource request description (what, how many, price, etc.) to facilitate the request.

Look to your closest neighbors first. Assets may be available from all over the country, but your neighboring states may be able to provide the timeliest assistance.

If possible, put out an early advisory through your state Emergency Management Agency and EMAC. This can be done in the early stages of a response to inform other states that your state may use EMAC in the near future to make requests for drinking water and wastewater personnel and equipment if mutual aid is needed. This will give state authorities the opportunity to plan appropriately to meet any potential requests.

Plan ahead. Develop cost estimates for assets that may be deployed along with any logistical needs (personnel, equipment, and length of deployment).

Consider yourself successful if you make your resources available. Sometimes your state may not be the first to respond or you might be asked to stand down due to a changing situation. Do not let these situations discourage you. Consider yourself successful in organizing and staging for being available to help.

Effective Use of Mutual Aid & Assistance

- Fully utilize statewide or intrastate mutual aid and assistance agreements, like WARN.
- Communicate with the appropriate local and state officials to coordinate the response actions and to gain access to the affected area.
- EMAC manages the challenge of addressing interstate response and liability, workers compensation, and reciprocity.
- EMAC is already signed into law and is available to the water sector.