



## **The Emergency Management Assistance Compact – An Introduction**

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As hurricane season begins and experts predict another active year, many can't help but recall the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita almost two years ago. The price paid in terms of lost lives and property from a natural disaster was nearly unprecedented.

The resources that were deployed to the affected areas in response to the storms were also unparalleled. Much of the help came from other states via the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). Through EMAC, more than 66,000 personnel and \$830 million in equipment from across the country were sent to the Gulf Coast. The compact is considered a cornerstone in disaster response, familiar to the U.S. Congress, governors, as well as state and local officials.

EMAC is neither a federal agency nor part of the federal government. Administered by the National Emergency Management Association, the compact is an agreement among all states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, to provide assistance across state lines when a disaster occurs.

There are several important distinctions to remember about EMAC. First, it is a state-to-state agreement. EMAC doesn't move resources from county to county, city to city, or locality to locality. Local and county governments that want to offer aid must work through their state emergency management office. Next, EMAC follows the emergency management standards of incident command and control. Finally, the compact does not allow for deployment of individuals acting on their own accord.

EMAC deployments are legal contracts, not arbitrary mobilizations. This clearly defined mission means that EMAC is able to expedite and streamline the delivery of assistance between member states. To protect state sovereignty, the compact uses established protocols that allow reimbursement from the requesting state to all assisting states. EMAC also has procedures to resolve workers compensation, licensure and liability issues.

### **How EMAC Works**

Two things have to happen before assistance can be provided by the states under EMAC: 1) The governor of the impacted state declares a state of emergency and, 2) The impacted state must ask for help. In some states, the governor has the authority to declare a state of emergency if a disaster is imminent, for example when landfall of a hurricane is certain. This allows member states to request assistance through EMAC to pre-stage resources to or near the impacted area.

After these two things happen, the following process begins:

- NEMA EMAC Coordinator or the National Coordination Group (NCG) is notified, and if needed, an EMAC coordinating team known as an A-Team (Advance Team) works with the impacted state in determining its needs.
- Other member states are notified about the event and resource requests.

- The A-Team helps the impacted state determine the availability of requested resources and the costs through the Requisition for Assistance (REQ-A).
- Member states offer resources in response to those requests
- The impacted state and the A-Team review all responses, often accepting resources from the closest states first to speed up assistance.
- The impacted state completes the REQ-A accepting the resources for the estimated costs therein.
- Resources are sent to the requesting state.
- NEMA EMAC Coordinator tracks all requests, including fulfilled and cancelled requests on the EMAC Operations database for all member states to review.
- The assisting state asks for and receives reimbursement from the impacted state.

### **How EMAC Was Born**

Though officially ratified by Congress in 1996 as law, EMAC traces its beginnings to several years earlier when another Hurricane—Andrew—hit Florida in 1992. Considered one of the most destructive hurricanes in U.S. history, Andrew caused 26 direct deaths and more than \$25 billion in damages.

As the state struggled to rebuild, then Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles suggested that the 19 members of the Southern Governors Association establish some type of formal mechanism for states to provide help to one another in times of disasters. Originally known as the Southern Regional Emergency Management Assistance Compact, the agreement grew and evolved into EMAC. When it was signed into law (Public Law 104-321) 11 years ago, it became the first national disaster-relief agreement to be ratified by Congress since the Civil Defense Compact of 1950.

Now, it is considered a model mutual aid agreement, with a well-tested operational system that provides the necessary flexibility to manage the ebb and flow of any disaster.

For more information about EMAC contact your state emergency management agency or visit [www.emacweb.org](http://www.emacweb.org).