



Position Statement

Cataloging and Validating Resources for Urban Search and Rescue Teams

The IAFC recommends that the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identify the National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Branch of FEMA's Operations Directorate as the sole entity responsible for the validating and cataloging of resources responsible for US&R-type missions.

Our National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System is a proven national resource. This nearly 6,000-member ready reserve is available to respond to a major disaster or incident of national significance, within four to six hours to assist local entities with complex structural collapse and/or flood/swiftwater search and rescue missions. Each of the 28 task forces are comprised of specially-trained personnel staffing 19 functional positions including structural collapse technicians, hazardous materials technicians, physicians, and structural engineers. These teams must be able to operate independently in hazardous conditions. In order to meet the training, equipment and logistical requirements of their mission, each US&R task force must adhere to stringent standards and requirements.

The IAFC and the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association are concerned that there is no clear direction at the highest levels to validate and catalog resources intended to provide a US&R-type mission response. An independent third-party, the Emergency Management Accreditation Program, has created an Urban Search and Rescue Standard that threatens to confuse the validation of the 28 federal US&R teams.

The National US&R Branch of FEMA's Operations Directorate should have the sole responsibility of cataloging and validating resources responsible for US&R type missions, including search and rescue in collapsed structures; search and rescue in flood/swiftwater environments; and search and rescue in the CBRNE-contaminated environment. Based on its demonstrated, years-long outreach and assistance provided to state and local resources that are not part of the federal US&R system, the FEMA National US&R Branch is uniquely positioned to continue to lead a comprehensive national resource cataloging and validation initiative.

Through various funding sources, our nation has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to prepare local, state and federal partners for the US&R mission. The challenge now is to ensure we have the right types and kinds of resources deployed to an event. Only FEMA's National US&R Branch can provide the "gold standard" for cataloging and validating the 28 teams in the federal US&R system.

Submitted by the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association
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