



**National Fire Service
Intrastate Mutual Aid System (IMAS)**

**GUIDE TO
INTRASTATE MUTUAL AID PLANNING**

*Developed by the IMAS Stakeholders
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Denver, Colorado*

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PREFACE

This document is the result of input from representatives of state fire chiefs associations from across the country, who attended a meeting hosted by the IAFC in February 2006, as well as those who have undertaken the development of an intrastate mutual aid plan for the fire service. The intent is to provide a guide to assist the fire service in any state to develop or enhance intrastate mutual aid plans. Towards that goal, this guide includes: a generic planning process, recommended functional components of a plan, a section with best practice “tips” to help with planning, and a section with some obstacles and supporting factors that were identified as possibly affecting the development of a plan.



NATIONAL FIRE SERVICE INTRASTATE MUTUAL AID SYSTEM (IMAS)

Recommended Planning Process for Developing an Intrastate Mutual Aid Plan

NOTE: We have identified helpful tips for many of these planning steps. Please refer to pages 6-10 for sections on best practices, obstacles, and supporting factors.

1. Mission statement: identify the purpose (why are we doing this?)
2. Identify stakeholders
3. Hold a stakeholders meeting to create a strategic plan
 - a. Define mutual aid
 - b. Develop problem statement, goals, process and timeline
 - c. Establish working committee and subcommittees as needed
 - d. Develop an action plan and timeline, make assignments
 - e. Identify ownership of the plan
4. Complete a needs assessment
 - a. Identify, review existing plans
 - b. Identify what exists – what is the status of mutual aid planning in the state? (State, regions, county, local)
 - c. Analyze gaps – review and assess existing resources
 - d. What is needed to comply with NIMS?
 - e. Identify and address obstacles
5. Identify legislative authority and/or develop legislative strategy
6. Identify the approval process (legislative, association(s) buy-in, labor, and ancillary and support agencies).
7. Market the effort
 - a. Internally and with other emergency services organizations
 - b. Externally with politicians and the public
 - c. Tailor to the specific audience
 - i. Draft a concept proposal
 1. Benefits to community/stakeholders

2. Who, Why, What, When?

8. Plan development

- a. Common goal – to develop a formalized, comprehensive, detailed and exercised mutual aid plan.
- b. Examine best practices, examples from other states.
- c. Key elements and concepts to build a plan
 - i. Legislative authority
 - ii. Scope of plan: include all hazards as identified by the risk assessment in the subject state
 - iii. Definitions
 - iv. NIMS compliance, adoption of ICS
 - v. Address existing mutual aid agreements
 - vi. Funding mechanism to maintain the plan
- d. Functional components – see page 5

9. Circulate to the stakeholders and finalize

10. Roll out/implement

- a. Publicize and educate (especially responder organizations)
- b. Test the system
- c. Revise as needed
- d. Operationalize
- e. Train

11. Periodic review, evaluate, update

- a. Set schedule of reviews
- b. Required exercise

Functional Components of an Intrastate Mutual Aid Plan

The order of these components is flexible

- Concept and design
 - Purpose with justification
 - Scope of plan (fire only, or EMS, hazmat, others?)
 - Key concepts
 - Authority
 - Training competencies
 - State map with regions if applicable
 - Relationship to and coordination with state EOC
- Plan maintenance
 - Plan ownership and coordination
 - Organizational structure and responsibilities
 - Key positions
 - Revisions
- Activation of the plan
 - Request for assistance
 - Resource inventory and definitions (per FEMA)
 - Directions for completing the resource inventory
 - Deactivation protocols
- Deployment of resources
 - Critical concepts
 - Policy and procedures for dealing with self-dispatch
 - Resource tracking
 - Documentation
 - Demobilization
- Logistical support
 - Self contained minimum of 72 hours
 - Communications
 - GIS
 - Force protection
- Organizational liability
 - Workers compensations coverage
 - Automobile/vehicle liability coverage
 - General liability and public officials liability
- Reimbursement procedures
- Appendices
 - Plan activation
 - Checklists for key position responsibilities
 - State resource inventory/definitions
 - List of frequencies if applicable
- Forms
 - Request for assistance
 - Response to assistance request
 - Disaster team deployment form
 - Resource inventory form
 - All ICS forms

Best Practices and Considerations **“Tips For the Planning Process**

Mission statement: why are we doing this? –this is a list of possible considerations/justifications to consider if appropriate to your state.

1. Limited resources
2. No lead agency or inappropriate lead agency: fire service needs to take the lead
3. Justification for funding
4. There is widespread support within the fire service for mutual aid planning
5. Common direction/goal
6. Reliable and predictable results
7. Rapid/prompt mobilization: define in terms of hours
8. Sustained response ability
9. Known resources (typing) –quality and quantity
10. Enhanced resource availability
11. Widespread buy-in for eliminating self-dispatch
12. Fulfills a critical local need cost-effectively
13. Special resources (hazmat, technical rescue, water rescue, etc.)
14. Known rules for indemnification
15. Simple system
16. Cost recovery
17. Credentialing
18. Predetermined coordination and resource sharing process
19. System in place fosters elected official and tax payer confidence in professional image
20. Increases performance
21. Legitimate authority

Identify Stakeholders

1. Stakeholders should include those who will help determine success or failure of this effort, politically, administratively and operationally. Planners should carefully consider who should be included and what their level of input should be, so as to keep the group size and the process manageable.
 - a. Contact your state emergency management agency at the beginning; explain the purpose and nature of a fire service intrastate plan, and how it fits into the framework of a statewide emergency response plan, i.e. an annex to the ESF-4 function.
 - b. Fire-related positions and groups: fire departments, fire chiefs associations, fire service organizations, unions, state fire marshal.
 - c. Other non-fire groups, such as: state emergency management agency, state forester, law enforcement, EMS/public health, 911 dispatchers, public and elected officials, state/federal offices of homeland security, private business partners, utilities, educational institutions, military as applicable.
2. Stakeholders meeting:
 - a. Emphasize inclusiveness
 - b. Stress concept of breaking this enormous job down into manageable tasks (eat the elephant one bite at a time!)

Identify legislative authority and/or develop legislative strategy

1. See “NEMA Model Intrastate Mutual Aid Legislation” (a pdf file) on the LINKS tab at www.iafc.org/mutualaid.

1. Does enabling legislation exist in your state? If so, review it to see how it affects what you are doing.
2. If not, develop a plan for getting legislation introduced. Consult legislative experts.
3. Look at existing agreements/plans; don't duplicate.
 - a. Consider expanding, modifying, or eliminating existing agreements if they conflict with the statewide goal.
4. Also allow for supplemental agreements between participants.
5. Keep legislation broad so it does not keep plan from being revised..
6. Allow jurisdictions to withhold resources if they don't have ability to respond.
7. Closely tie legislation/agreement to EMAC member states' legislation and SOP's for seamless escalation of disaster response and execution of mutual aid.
8. Make legislation opt-out. Most states have several hundred municipalities and other jurisdictions within their borders. To attempt to get everyone on board on an opt-in agreement could take years and never achieve a plurality of participation. By making legislation opt-out, everyone is a part of the system the day it becomes law.
9. To the extent permitted by applicable law, include automatic renewal language if there is agreement instead of legislation.
10. Agreements/legislation should mandate joint planning, training and exercise with liability immunity as if it were an actual emergency.
11. Have a liability/immunity article
 - a. Liability/indemnification could be: shared (pooled), assumed (by the responding agency), or taken on (by the receiving agency).
12. Consider arbitration of disputes concerning reimbursement.
13. Include a reimbursement provision with the following considerations:
 - a. Should clearly state that if an incident becomes eligible for FEMA reimbursement, then reimbursement between jurisdictions is enabled through the statewide mutual aid plan, and such provision supersedes any local mutual aid agreements that stipulate that there will be no reimbursement for local mutual aid.
 - b. May include an off-set for any insurance proceeds applicable to the costs claimed by the responding political subdivision.
 - c. The insurance claims process should not delay reimbursement.
 - d. Reimbursement shall not duplicate any state or federal assistance available for the costs.
 - e. Reimbursement only applies to responders in official request (not self-dispatched).
 - f. Different rates for career/combination/volunteer fire departments.
 - g. Reimbursement for hours worked, not 24/7.
14. Include a mechanism to update the legislation.

Market the effort

1. Develop a marketing plan
2. Use multiple ambassadors from the fire service; "champions" from the bottom to the top to advocate for the plan.
3. Different approach for different groups determined by asking yourself: "What's in it for them?"

Plan development

1. Use NIMS as a guide (NIMS document web site: www.nimsonline.com/nims_3_04/index.htm)
1. Review and examine IMAS model state plans – don't hesitate to pick and choose the elements that fit your state.
2. What factors can you build in that would act as incentives to participate?
3. Consider flow and span of control, and whether or how a regional system might fit your state. (NOTE: Regional collaboration is a US Dept. of Homeland Security priority, and may be a factor in consideration for grant funds).
4. Key concepts:

- . Should include a clear statement acknowledging situations when jurisdictions do not have the ability to respond.
 - . Level of response (maintain capability in jurisdiction; i.e. 80 % home, 20% sent to assist)
 - . NIMS compliance—for details see:
http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/nims_compliance.shtm
 - . Expand the concept of interoperability throughout the plan, not just in communications and apparatus.
 - . Logistics support should assume self-sustaining for a minimum of 72 hours.
 - . Consider how much time is “donated” or free to the requesting agency before reimbursement is required. SEE #14 ABOVE UNDER LEGISLATIVE SECTION
11. Determine how this plan will interrelate with the state emergency operations center, as well as providing support to the National Response Plan. Consider using regions currently delineated by the state emergency management agency.
 12. Consider how information will be transferred to other agencies, to assure timely sharing of critical incident details.
 13. Keep it simple. Use plain language.
 14. Include a glossary of terms used.
 15. Require use of (NIMS compliant) standardized incident command/management system consistent with that used by the state and all departments.
 16. Include a state and locally defined, identifiable communications process.
 17. Consider putting into annexes or appendices the components of the plan that will be subject to change upon evaluation, exercise and activation review—such as the operations and mobilization protocols.
 18. Establish a state resource database and provide for maintenance.
 19. Develop forms to facilitate requests for aid, record-keeping regarding movement of equipment and personnel and reimbursement. These should be standardized across agencies.
 20. Delineate deployment ground rules, including:
 - . Code of conduct
 - . Ethics
 - . Requestor responsibilities
 - . Responder responsibilities
 25. Reimbursement will be strongly tied to thorough documentation.
 26. Decide which entity will be responsible for planning and executing training.
 27. Determine frequency of exercises.
 28. Identify costs of training and possible source(s) of funding.

Training

1. Table top exercises
2. Regional exercises
3. State exercises

Plan revision

1. Develop a formal mechanism and timetable for review and revision
2. Use event after action reports

Possible Obstacles or Barriers to a Formalized Plan

These are issues and situations that you may need to address as you design your state plan. Not all are applicable to all states.

1. Funding/fiscal concerns
2. Workers compensation and liability, insurance (apparatus)
3. Conflicts with existing agreements/mutual aid plans (need to take what is already working locally and incorporate those plans and agreements, otherwise buy-in will be reduced).
4. Legislative cycle (timing)
5. Labor agreements
6. Legislation and/or regulations that conflict with purpose
7. Unwillingness to provide mutual aid documentation
8. Competing/conflicting demands for resources
9. Self dispatch
10. Credentialing/certification—personnel not qualified/equipped (NFPA 1582, money)
11. Turf/ego issues/personal agendas
12. Career/volunteer conflicts
13. Resistance to change
14. Non-traditional stakeholders
 - a. Tribal
 - b. Private industry
 - c. Military
15. Unserved/unprotected areas
16. Difficulty of achieving common standards
17. Lack of exercising the plan
18. Difficulty creating accurate and current database/inventory (resource typing)
19. Weak commitment and discipline
20. Consensus of goals
21. Trust in the plan
22. Increased bureaucracy
23. Response equity in regard to exchange of services
24. Local government support
25. Sufficient resources to participate
26. Apathy
27. People who do not see a necessity
28. Lack of or wrong lead agency
29. Fear of losing local control
30. Communications
31. Lack of technical skills to write the plan
32. Liability/legal
33. Accountability for actions on scene
34. Reimbursement – who pays when it is not a federal disaster

Factors Supporting the Planning Process

These are some of the factors that could make your planning process go more smoothly.

1. Enabling legislation that is not too specific, not too broad--such as the NEMA Model Legislation
2. Buy-in from stakeholders
3. Local government support
4. Local attorney agreement/support
5. Use process to update existing agreements/plans
6. Inclusiveness of stakeholder involvement
7. NIMS compliance
8. Marketing and education
9. Marketing to fire chiefs association members from the very beginning
10. Timeliness—while public is still focused on need for preparedness planning
11. Incentives to participate