



Emergency Support Function #9 Urban Search and Rescue Annex

Primary Agency:	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Support Agencies:	Department of Agriculture Department of Defense Department of Health and Human Services Department of Justice Department of Labor Agency for International Development National Aeronautics and Space Administration

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

Emergency Support Function (ESF) #9 — Urban Search and Rescue rapidly deploys components of the National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System to provide specialized lifesaving assistance to State and local authorities in the event of a major disaster or emergency. US&R operational activities include locating, extricating, and providing on-site medical treatment to victims trapped in collapsed structures.

B. Scope

The National US&R Response System is an integrated system of US&R task forces, Incident Support Teams (ISTs), and technical specialists.

1. The system is built around a core of task forces prepared to deploy immediately and initiate US&R operations on implementation of ESF #9 of the Federal Response Plan (FRP). These task forces are staffed primarily by local fire department and emergency services personnel who are experienced and trained in collapsed structure search and rescue operations. On activation by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), US&R task forces become Federal assets.
2. ISTs provide coordination and logistical support to US&R task forces during emergency operations. They also conduct needs assessments and provide technical advice and assistance to State and local government emergency managers. Teams are formed with personnel from US&R task forces; Federal, State, and local government emergency response organizations; and private sector organizations.
3. Technical specialists provide expertise in various US&R disciplines. They are mobilized as needed from around the United States.

II. Policies

- A. The National US&R Response System assists and augments State and local US&R capabilities. Personnel assigned to task forces of the National US&R Response System are highly trained and may possess specialized expertise and equipment not available to local responders.
- B. As primary agency for ESF #9, FEMA develops national US&R policy, provides planning guidance and coordination assistance, standardizes task force procedures, evaluates task force operational readiness, funds special equipment and training requirements, and reimburses task force costs incurred as a result of deployment under the FRP.
- C. ESF #9 addresses only urban search and rescue. All other forms of search and rescue (e.g., water, wilderness, subterranean) are managed under different authorities and do not fall under the functional purview of the ESF.

III. Situation

A. Disaster Condition

Disasters and emergencies vary widely in scope, degree of devastation, and threat to human life. For example:

1. In situations that entail structural collapse, large numbers of people may require rescue and medical care.
2. Because the mortality rate among trapped victims rises dramatically after 72 hours, US&R must be initiated without delay.
3. In the course of response, rescue personnel may encounter extensive damage to the local infrastructure, such as buildings, roadways, public works, communications, and utilities. Such damage can create environmental safety and health hazards, such as downed power lines, unsafe drinking water, and unrefrigerated food.
4. Following an earthquake, aftershocks, secondary events, and/or other hazards (such as fires, tsunamis, landslides, flooding, and hazardous materials releases) may compound problems and threaten both disaster victims and rescue personnel.
5. Weather conditions such as temperature extremes, snow, rain, and high winds may pose additional hazards for disaster victims and rescue personnel.
6. In some circumstances, rescue personnel may be at risk from terrorism, civil disorder, or crime.

B. Planning Assumptions

In a major disaster requiring Federal US&R assistance:

1. State and local US&R organizations will be overwhelmed and will not be able to respond to all requirements.

2. Local residents, workers, and/or converging volunteers may initiate search and rescue efforts, but will usually lack specialized equipment and training. Spontaneous volunteers will require coordination and direction within the local incident command structure.
3. Access to damaged areas will be limited. Some sites may be initially accessible only by air or water.
4. Following an earthquake, both disaster victims and rescue personnel may be threatened by aftershocks, secondary events, and/or other environmental disturbances.

IV. Concept of Operations

A. General

FEMA, as primary agency for ESF #9, will activate the National US&R Response System for any incident or anticipated incident that is determined likely to result in collapsed structures that would overwhelm existing State and local US&R resources. The likelihood of activation depends on the nature and magnitude of the event, the suddenness of onset, and the existence of US&R resources in the affected area.

B. Organization

1. National-Level Response Structure

- a. The National US&R Response System consists of US&R task forces, Incident Support Teams, and technical specialists. More than 5,000 individuals make up the national system. At the core of the system are 27 task forces sponsored by State and local government emergency response organizations and formed into a coherent, nationally deployable resource by FEMA. Each task force is composed of 62 individuals organized into 31 positions. The positions are organized into five functional teams (management, search, rescue, medical, and technical), with each team staffed to permit around-the-clock operations.
- b. ISTs are organized, trained, and mobilized by FEMA Headquarters. In a disaster, one or more ISTs may be dispatched to the affected area to:
 - (1) Conduct a comprehensive US&R needs assessment;
 - (2) Provide technical US&R assistance, support, and advice to Federal, State, and local officials;
 - (3) Provide US&R management and coordination assistance and expertise to the Emergency Support Team (EST) ESF #9 Leader, the Emergency Response Team (ERT) ESF #9 Leader, and the Federal Coordinating Officer at the Disaster Field Office (DFO);
 - (4) Under the direction of the ERT ESF #9 Leader, provide coordination of the operations of multiple task forces in the field; and

- (5) Coordinate logistical support of deployed task forces beyond their initial 72-hour period of self-sufficiency with the Regional Operations Center (ROC), ERT, and EST Logistics Sections, ensuring compliance with FEMA property management procedures.
- c. Task force and IST resources may be supplemented with technical specialists in various US&R disciplines. When needed, technical specialists are mobilized by FEMA Headquarters.

2. Regional-Level Response Structure

Initial Federal field response to incidents that may require US&R assistance usually begins at the regional level. Each FEMA Regional Office is responsible for staffing an ESF #9 position on its ERT. The Emergency Services Branch Chief or Operations Section Chief on the Advance Element of the ERT (ERT-A) may perform initial ESF #9 functions. Extended US&R operations will require supplemental staffing and deployment of national-level resources by FEMA Headquarters.

C. Notification

1. Headquarters

- a. Notification of incidents with the potential for structural collapse may be received by FEMA Headquarters from a number of sources, including FEMA's National Emergency Coordination Center, Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) Detachment Operations Centers, regional offices, national news media, State or local governments, and National US&R Response System members. Upon notification of an incident, US&R Response System staff will immediately notify ESF #9 EST staff, support contractors, FEMA's Military Support Liaison Officer, and the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Emergency Preparedness of a potential need for US&R response. EST staff also will notify FEMA's Office of Financial Management of the potential need to activate task force, IST, and EST support agreements.
- b. When the need for US&R assets has not firmly been established, the EST may issue an Advisory to all National US&R Response System task forces, indicating that an event has occurred that may require the deployment of US&R assets. EST staff may also begin alerting IST regular or Advance Element (IST-A) staff of the potential for immediate deployment. Activation Orders for IST or IST-A staff will be issued by the EST when required.
- c. As soon as the need for US&R assets has been established, EST staff will develop recommendations for FEMA management on the type and quantity of resources to be alerted or activated. When approved, Activation Orders for task forces and IST members will be issued by the EST Director. Activation Orders specify that task forces should fully mobilize and be prepared to depart from their

pre-designated Point of Departure airfield within 6 hours. In addition to activation of task forces and IST members, additional task forces may be issued Alert Orders, placing them in a state of heightened readiness to respond if subsequently activated. Alert Orders will generally state the time frame within which activation decisions are expected.

2. Regions

If not previously notified, EST staff will notify the FEMA Regional Office responsible for the affected area. Copies of all Advisories and Alert and Activation Orders issued by the EST will be transmitted to the regional US&R point of contact for the affected region, as well as for those regions whose resident task forces have been alerted or activated. Generally, the regional US&R point of contact for the affected region will maintain close contact with the EST and the ERT-A during the initial response period. Initial recommendations on US&R resources to be alerted or activated will be coordinated with the regional US&R point of contact. Regional US&R points of contact for regions with alerted or activated task forces will generally be in contact with the sponsoring States and the task forces themselves.

D. Response Actions

1. Initial Actions

a. Headquarters

- (1) Immediately following initiation of operations, EST staff in the ESF #9 cell will establish and maintain a chronological log of US&R events and information obtained from the field. During the initial stages of the disaster or emergency, the EST will serve as the single point of contact for responding task forces and IST members for situation information and response status of US&R resources.
- (2) Initial staff in the EST will develop commitment documents and activate support agreements for supplemental staffing of the ESF #9 cell in the EST. The level of staffing will depend on the nature and magnitude of the incident and the response actions already underway.
- (3) When Alert and Activation Orders are issued to task forces and IST members, EST staff will develop commitment documents to ensure that response costs are reimbursed, in accordance with task force memorandums of agreement and support agreements for the reimbursement of IST members.
- (4) EST staff will ensure that passenger manifests are prepared by the task forces and ISTs and forwarded to the EST for record-keeping purposes. A related requirement is the verification that documentation required for legal and liability purposes (e.g., Application for Federal Employment, Appointment Affidavit, Employee Transmittal Sheet) is on file for each

individual being deployed. If required documentation is not on file, EST staff will work directly with task force leaders and IST Commanders to obtain it prior to deployment of the task force or IST. This documentation ensures that legal protections are available to all responders.

- (5) EST staff will also prepare Requests for Federal Assistance (RFAs) that generate mission assignments for air transport of task forces from their pre-designated departure airfields to Base Support Installations, mobilization centers, or other aerial ports of debarkation designated by the ERT. These RFAs will be coordinated with ESF #1 — Transportation and the Movement Coordination Center at FEMA Headquarters. IST members normally deploy via commercial air carriers; however, unique circumstances of a particular disaster or emergency may result in issuance of mission assignments to other Federal agencies for their transport. Ground transport of task force and IST members within the affected area may involve the use of commercial or Federal carriers between any of the following locations, as the situation dictates: aerial port of debarkation, Base Support Installation, mobilization center, staging area, operating site(s).
- (6) EST staff will also develop cost estimates and commitment documents to provide funding for commercial credit cards that have been issued to selected ESF #9 Leaders within the National US&R Response System. These credit cards are used to support immediate needs that arise during task force and IST deployments. They provide limited interim procurement authority until ESF #9 resources in the field can be fully integrated into a functioning DFO staffed with qualified procurement specialists.
- (7) EST staff will collect assessment information from damage assessment teams, IST-A members, FEMA regional officials, and State and local government officials for inclusion in situation reports and for decision making regarding the need for US&R resources.

b. Regions

- (1) At the onset of the disaster or emergency, FEMA officials from the affected region will designate an initial point of contact for ESF #9. This individual will generally be part of the ERT, and may be represented on the ERT-A. While US&R task forces and ISTs are activated at the national level, the regional ESF #9 contact has a critical role in providing information on the need for US&R resources. Regional officials have the lead role in processing State requests for Federal US&R assistance.
- (2) The regional ESF #9 Leader also will take the lead in preparing for the arrival of task forces and IST members and ensuring that the IST is fully incorporated into the region's ERT structure. The regional ESF #9 Leader will provide overall management and coordination of all deployed US&R resources through the IST. The ESF #9 Leader will coordinate all US&R activities with the functional groups of the ERT. The ESF #9 Leader will keep the ESF #9 Leader in the EST informed of all US&R field activities.

2. Continuing Actions

a. Headquarters

- (1) Based on recommendations developed by the ESF #9 Leader in the field and the IST, decisions will be made at the national level on the deployment of additional US&R resources. EST staff will issue additional Advisories and Alert and Activation Orders as required.
- (2) In the event that the disaster requires the utilization of all national-level US&R assets, the EST will be responsible for developing strategies for providing additional US&R support, including the use of international US&R assets, the deployment of other task forces from existing sponsoring organizations (without equipment), and the employment of US&R resources of unaffected States.
- (3) The EST will act on unmet requirements for equipment and supplies that have been forwarded from the ESF #9 Leader in the field. The EST will forward issues involving competing requirements and scarce resource allocation to the Catastrophic Disaster Response Group (CDRG) as appropriate.
- (4) The EST will use the demobilization plan developed by the IST as the basis for decisions on demobilization of US&R assets. Based on these decisions, the EST will issue Demobilization Orders to task forces and IST members. Demobilization Orders will include specific guidelines on personnel and equipment rehabilitation allowances for US&R assets. When coordinated with the EST, Demobilization Orders may be issued by the ERT.

b. Regions

- (1) The ESF #9 Leader and IST Commander will establish contact with the local Incident Commander and develop a plan to integrate national US&R resources into the local incident command structure. The ESF #9 Leader will work with the local Incident Commander to develop written delegations of authority to national US&R resources as appropriate.
- (2) In the event State and local emergency medical services resources are overwhelmed, the ESF #9 Leader on the ERT, in conjunction with the IST Commander and IST Medical Unit Leader, will coordinate with field representatives of ESF #8 — Health and Medical Services to develop procedures for the transfer of victims extricated from collapsed structures to Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs) for stabilization and transport to definitive medical care locations.
- (3) The IST will develop a mechanism for resupply of task forces operating in the affected area. The ESF #9 Leader will work with regional ESFs to obtain required equipment and supplies. The ESF #9 Leader will pass unmet or competing requirements to the EST for further action.

- (4) The ESF #9 Leader, in conjunction with the IST Commander, will continually monitor the situation and develop recommendations on additional resources needed, as well as demobilization of existing resources. The IST will develop a demobilization plan for the concurrence of the ESF #9 Leader. The demobilization plan will include recommended guidelines on personnel and equipment rehabilitation allowances for US&R assets. Recommendations contained in the demobilization plan will be passed to the EST for decision making at the national level.
- (5) For incidents of extended duration, the ESF #9 Leader will issue a funding document to ensure feeding, shelter, salary reimbursement, and other logistical support of US&R task force and IST resources when required.

V. Responsibilities

A. Primary Agency: Federal Emergency Management Agency

1. Serve as national-level ESF #9 coordinator;
2. Establish, maintain, and manage the National US&R Response System. This responsibility includes pre-disaster activities such as training, equipment purchase, and evaluation of operational readiness;
3. Dispatch one or more ISTs to the affected area(s);
4. Manage US&R task force deployment to, employment in, and redeployment from the affected area;
5. Coordinate logistical support for US&R assets during field operations;
6. Develop policies and procedures for the effective use and coordination of US&R assets; and
7. Provide status reports on US&R operations throughout the affected area.

B. Support Agencies

1. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

- a. Develop standby agreements with US&R task forces to provide equipment and supplies from the National Interagency Cache System at the time of deployment; and
- b. Develop contingency plans for use of National Interagency Fire Center contract aircraft by ESF #9 during disasters.

2. Department of Defense

- a. Serve as primary source for the following assistance:
 - (1) Fixed-wing transportation of US&R task forces and ISTs from base locations to mobilization centers or Base Support Installations. Target time frame for airlift missions is 6 hours from the time of task force activation;
 - (2) Rotary-wing transportation of US&R task forces and ISTs to and from isolated, surface-inaccessible, or other limited-access locations;
 - (3) Through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, provide trained Structures Specialists and System to Locate Survivors (STOLS) teams to supplement resources of US&R task forces and ISTs; and
 - (4) Through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, provide pre-disaster training for US&R task force and IST Structures Specialists;
- b. Serve as secondary source for the following assistance:
 - (1) Ground transportation of US&R task forces and ISTs within the affected area;
 - (2) Mobile feeding units for US&R task forces and IST personnel; and
 - (3) Portable shelter (i.e., tents) for use by US&R task force and IST personnel for eating, sleeping, and working.

3. Department of Health and Human Services

- a. Provide administrative support to US&R task force medical teams to:
 - (1) Ensure that medical team personnel who are not Federal employees have appropriate and valid licenses to practice in their States, and that they are provided Federal tort claims liability coverage for the practice of medicine;
 - (2) Develop an appropriate pay scale for US&R task force medical team personnel and obtain FEMA concurrence; and
 - (3) Register medical teams of each National US&R Response System task force as specialized teams under the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS);
- b. Provide operational support to US&R task force medical teams and IST from ESF #8 — Health and Medical Services, as requested by FEMA, to provide liaisons; medical supplies, equipment, and pharmaceuticals; supporting personnel; and veterinary support; and
- c. Provide NDMS patient evacuation and continuing care after entrapped victims are removed from collapsed structures by US&R task force personnel, when State and local emergency medical services resources are overwhelmed.

4. Department of Justice

- a. Provide assistance with the development and maintenance of tort liability claims coverage for US&R task force and IST personnel while they are engaged in training, mobilization, deployment, and field operations; and
- b. Provide Federal Tort Claims Act guidance and claims resolution services in support of US&R training activities and field deployments.

5. Department of Labor

- a. Provide assistance with the development and maintenance of workers' compensation programs for US&R task force and IST personnel while they are engaged in training, mobilization, deployment, and field operations;
- b. Provide workers' compensation guidance and claims resolution services during and following US&R field deployments;
- c. Provide skilled claims specialists during US&R field deployments; and
- d. Provide policy guidance, interpretation, and assistance on compliance with Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations both before and during US&R field deployments.

6. Agency for International Development, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance

Act as the single U.S. Government point of contact for coordinating the use of international search and rescue resources.

7. National Aeronautics and Space Administration

- a. Provide personnel in appropriate technical disciplines to support US&R task forces and ISTs;
- b. Provide and maintain training sites for use of US&R task forces and IST members;
- c. Assist FEMA with identification as well as research and development of new technologies for technical search; and
- d. Provide temporary use of facilities for mobilization centers and staging areas for US&R assets.

VI. References

- A. FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Response System — Field Operations Guide, September 1993.
- B. FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Response System — Operational System Description and Mission Operational Procedures, July 1992.

- C. FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Response System — US&R Incident Support System Operational System Description, Interim Document, June 1996.
- D. Emergency Support Team Operations Handbook, Draft, September 1996.

VII. Terms and Definitions

A. Aerial Port of Debarkation

Arrival airfield in or near the area affected by the disaster or emergency. In the National US&R Response System, also known as the Point of Arrival.

B. Aerial Port of Embarkation

Departure airfield in the vicinity of a US&R task force's home base. In the National US&R Response System, also known as the Point of Departure.

C. Base Support Installation

Any military installation of any service or agency designated by the Department of Defense to provide civil authorities with specified, integrated support of disaster operations. The installation is normally located outside, but within relative proximity to, the disaster area.

D. Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT)

The basic deployable unit of the National Disaster Medical System, which is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. Staffed with physicians, nurses, other health care professionals, and support staff, DMAT capabilities include triage and stabilization of patients at a disaster site and provision of austere medical services at transfer points during transport to definitive medical care locations.

E. Incident Support Team (IST)

An overhead team used to conduct needs assessments, provide technical advice and assistance to State and local government emergency managers, coordinate the activities of multiple US&R task forces in the field, and provide logistical support for US&R task forces beyond their initial 72-hour period of self-sufficiency. The IST reports to the ESF #9 Leader on the ERT.

F. Incident Support Team — Advance Element (IST-A)

An advance element of the IST, utilized to conduct needs assessments, provide technical advice and assistance to State and local government emergency managers, and prepare for incoming US&R task force and IST resources. The IST-A reports to the IST Commander.

G. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Tripartite written agreement between FEMA, the sponsoring organization for the US&R task force of the National US&R Response System, and the State of the sponsoring organization. The MOA outlines responsibilities of each signatory in the event of an activation of the National US&R Response System. The MOA serves as the basis for reimbursement of task force operational expenditures during activation.

H. Mobilization Center

A temporary facility at which emergency services personnel and equipment are temporarily located pending assignment, release, or reassignment. A Base Support Installation may serve as a mobilization center.

I. Operating Site

The location of a structural collapse where US&R operations are being conducted.

J. Staging Area

A location set up at or near an incident where resources can be placed while awaiting a tactical assignment.

K. System to Locate Survivors (STOLS)

An acoustic listening device used by specially trained personnel from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the location of victims trapped in collapsed structures.