

RELATED TERMS

- Specialized Capabilities
- Resource Typing
- Mass Casualty Incident



Lessons Learned Information Sharing

www.LLIS.gov

PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Emergency Management
- Fire
- Emergency Medical Services
- Law Enforcement

BEST PRACTICE

Mutual Aid Agreements: Addressing Terrorism

PURPOSE

This Best Practice describes the importance of mutual aid agreements in meeting the challenges of terrorism.

SUMMARY

Terrorism presents daunting challenges to emergency responders, particularly if chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or high explosive (CBRNE) weapons are employed. Responses to such incidents may demand a large volume and/or specialized types of resources. Mutual aid agreements can address shortfalls in the requirements for terrorism preparedness and dramatically improve response in the event of a large-scale terrorist attack.

DESCRIPTION

Most jurisdictions are simply not prepared for the impact of terrorist and CBRNE threats even with existing mutual aid agreements, according to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). But mutual aid is the key to taking a broad regional approach to these threats and meeting challenging preparedness goals.

Local and regional capabilities can be easily overwhelmed in a terrorist incident because of:

- The sheer size and scope of the incident; and
- The potential need for specialized resources to address biological, chemical, radiological, and mass casualty aspects of the incident.

Mutual aid agreements provide opportunities to meet both challenges through the identification and procurement of key resources during an emergency.

Mutual aid agreements also allow response agencies to take a consortium approach to specialized resources. By sharing the costs of special teams, such as technical rescue or hazardous materials (HazMat), agencies can enhance terrorism preparedness in a cost-effective manner.

Below are additional steps a jurisdiction can take to determine the need for new or modified agreements to address the special concerns of CBRNE terrorism.

Participants in Illinois' [Mutual Aid Box Alarm System \(MABAS\) Division III](#), in addition to making joint purchases of fire trucks, engines, ambulances, tools, hoses and equipment, share special teams such as HazMat and technical rescue. Similarly, fire departments in Boston's [Metrofire](#) mutual aid system jointly develop regional HazMat teams.

Needs Assessment

A large-scale incident may require mutual aid resources for conventional response functions, such as firefighting, emergency medical services, and public information support. A CBRNE attack will require scarce resources, such as radiological monitoring or decontamination equipment. In both instances, mutual aid agreements that properly address identified needs can fill gaps in local and regional capabilities.

A jurisdiction or response agency can better identify the resources it should seek out in mutual aid agreements by reviewing requirements, capabilities, and shortfalls. A needs assessment, such as the one required to qualify for federal funding under the [State Homeland Security Grants](#) program, serves this purpose. This assessment must consider the importance of working with state and federal assets to respond to a terrorist attack. For more information, please see the Mutual Aid Assessment Best Practice.

Resource Typing

An effective mutual aid agreement enables responders to rapidly identify the availability and location of needed resources. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), "To make mutual aid more effective, resources must be clearly described by function and capability in common and universal terms and classified by levels of capability or capacity." Resource typing will help jurisdictions identify and request resources for use in a large-scale incident.

Resource typing is particularly useful for identifying scarce and/or specialized resources. Specialized equipment might be required for such emergency functions as:

- Decontamination
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Sampling
- Detection and Monitoring
- Evidence Collection
- Mass Casualty Victim Care
- Urban Search and Rescue
- Hazardous Materials Cleanup
- Mass Casualty Mortuary Services
- Law Enforcement/Security Resources

The ongoing process of resource typing by the federal government has led to the tentative identification of several CBRNE resource types. For more information, see the [Resource Typing/Database Best Practice](#).

Resource Database

Once capabilities and shortfalls have been identified and resources have been "typed," a database should be compiled to give a comprehensive picture of local, regional, and statewide capabilities. Emergency operating procedures at the state or local level may require such a database already.

A resource database is a key to giving emergency planners a local, regional, and statewide view of domestic preparedness. For more information, please see the Resource Typing/Database Best Practice document.

Developing Agreements

Once the requirements of terrorism preparedness are understood and any shortfalls in local capabilities are identified, emergency planners should seek to address the gaps. New mutual aid agreements should be developed only as part of regional planning efforts. For guidance on developing agreements, see the [Developing Agreements Best Practice](#).

For more information on mutual aid and terrorism, see:

- FEMA's Managing the Emergency Consequences of Terrorist Incidents: Interim Planning Guide for State and Local Governments:
https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=8934
- The Department of Homeland Security on Mutual Aid:
<http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=63&content=237&print=true>
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Introduction to State and Local EOP Planning Guidance:
<http://www.fema.gov/preparedness/introstate.shtm>
- FEMA's National Mutual Aid & Resource Management Initiative:
<http://www.fema.gov/doc/preparedness/glossaryterms.doc>
- FEMA's State and Local Guide (SLG) 101: Guide for All-Hazard Emergency Operations Planning:
https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=131

DISCLAIMER

Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov) is the US Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's national online network of lessons learned, best practices, and innovative ideas for the emergency response and homeland security communities. The Web site and its contents are provided for informational purposes only, without warranty or guarantee of any kind, and do not represent the official positions of the US Department of Homeland Security. For more information on *LLIS.gov*, please email Feedback@llis.dhs.gov or visit www.llis.gov.