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LESSON LEARNED

Mutual Aid Agreements: Improving Mutual Aid Agreements

SUMMARY

Automatic aid agreements are important tools for enhancing general emergency preparedness. Older mutual aid agreements can be limited in scope and often fail to provide adequate levels of automatic mutual aid, leading to complicated and burdensome procedures for requesting additional aid in large emergencies. By reviewing existing agreements for gaps and shortfalls, jurisdictions can create new agreements to enhance preparedness.

DESCRIPTION

In 2000, the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) conducted a review of regional mutual aid agreements and determined that they were limited in scope. In their review, the GBC noted that Baltimore had existing mutual aid agreements with the State of Maryland for Baltimore/Washington International Airport and with the City of Annapolis, as well as with Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard Counties.

They determined that these agreements had been interpreted as prohibitive of automatic dispatch and free flow of apparatus between jurisdictions. Calls for assistance had to be made by the municipality desiring assistance after their personnel arrived at the scene of the incident.

The GBC found this type of mutual aid system to be burdensome and a waste of valuable time. In addition, the system failed to utilize resources in neighboring counties, as automatic assistance from these counties was provided only on first alarms. In sum, the GBC recommended that the City and surrounding jurisdictions establish a true automatic mutual aid system available for incidents of any size.

The Baltimore Fire Department accepted the recommendation and implemented automatic mutual aid with adjacent jurisdictions to maximize coverage and public safety.

CITATION

Greater Baltimore Committee. "Managing for Success: Report to the Mayor." July 2000. (<http://www.gbc.org/Mgmt%20Studies-1/Mgmt%20Studies.htm>)

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