

#### RELATED TERMS

- Dispatch
- Multi-jurisdictional Operations
- Incident Command System



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## LESSON LEARNED

#### PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Fire
- HazMat
- Emergency Management
- Law Enforcement

## Mutual Aid Agreements: Following Staging Instructions

### SUMMARY

To avoid confusion at the incident scene, dispatch should maintain contact with mutual aid units and coordinate their deployment. Assisting units must follow instructions and remain at staging areas until instructed otherwise.

### DESCRIPTION

The Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD) activated several mutual aid agreements during the response to the September 11 Pentagon attack. Some mutual aid units followed standard protocol and awaited dispatch to the scene at staging areas, but problems were encountered with other partners. The after-action report (AAR) noted that, in some instances, there was a lack of initial coordination between ACFD and mutual aid units, which added to the confusion at the scene.

Some mutual aid units operated entirely outside of the incident command system (ICS) and ignored instructions from dispatch. These mutual aid units deployed directly to the Pentagon instead of staging in pre-designated areas. They also responded with pieces of equipment that were not requested by ACFD. Many private ambulance services also dispatched directly to scene. These units were not requested and Arlington County had no formal mutual aid relationship with them.

Arlington County determined that responding mutual aid units should report to staging areas, maintain contact with dispatch, and await instructions. The AAR also recommended developing memoranda of understanding with private ambulance services requiring them to respond directly to staging areas. In both cases, the AAR recommended that agreements clearly address command relationships to which all parties agree in advance.

### CITATION

Titan Systems Corporation. *Arlington County After-Action Report on the Response to the September 11 Terrorist Attack on the Pentagon*. May 30, 2002.  
([http://www.co.arlington.va.us/Departments/fire/edu/about/docs/after\\_report.pdf](http://www.co.arlington.va.us/Departments/fire/edu/about/docs/after_report.pdf))

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