

*Alamo Area Council of Governments*

**REGIONAL  
MUTUAL  
AID**

**Guidebook**

**September 1, 2003**

## REGIONAL MUTUAL AID COMMITTEE

The RMA Guidebook was developed by the Alamo Area Council of Governments Emergency Preparedness Division to promote the acceptance and implementation of Regional Mutual Aid program. After the program is implemented, the AACOG Board of Directors and the Regional Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee will continue to provide policy-making guidance and oversight as needed. The Alamo Area Council of Governments will provide staff support for this effort.

### Regional Mutual Aid At a Glance

#### What It Does

- Provides the form and structure and identifies procedures and expectations.
- Solves potential problems and concerns related to liability, insurance, and reimbursement.
- Has the active support of all local government management and professional emergency responder member organizations.
- Does not interfere with existing state or local mutual aid agreements or programs.
- Provides a process needed to secure the reimbursement of all deployment-related costs from the Requesting Party to the Assisting Party or for the subsequent reimbursement of allowable costs from the federal government and/or the state government in the event of a federal disaster declaration.

#### Building a Capability

- The Regional Mutual Aid Guidebook is brief and open-ended by design. The ability to implement effectively and to provide for reimbursement efficiently will be developed over time based on lessons-learned from actual events.
- The Guidebook will be maintained on the web site of the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) at: <http://www.aacog.com/cjd/emergencypreparedness/RegionalMAid.pdf>

**REGIONAL MUTUAL AID  
GUIDEBOOK**

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# Regional Mutual Aid Program

## Introduction

The AACOG Regional Mutual Aid (RMA) program was developed to assist cities and counties to more effectively and efficiently exchange services and resources, in response to a disaster event where assistance needs to be provided from one area of the AACOG to another. RMA resolves inconsistencies and uncertainties concerning the insurance and liability coverage of emergency workers when deployed from one jurisdiction to another and takes full advantage of opportunities for federal/state reimbursement of deployment-related costs.

Local government officials, who have experienced a disaster event, can provide guidance to their counterparts who haven't recently experienced a major disaster.

## Purpose

This program is supplemental to, and does not affect, existing day-to-day mutual aid agreements between adjacent or nearby jurisdictions. The primary emphasis of RMA is to facilitate the provision of mutual aid between member jurisdictions that have signed an Authorizing Resolution.

## Program

The program consists of two parts. Under the Regional Mutual Aid Agreement Authorizing Resolution (see Attachment 1), cities and counties will participate in the concept of regional mutual aid thereby agreeing to provide assistance when asked, if they are able to do so, without compromising their ability to respond to a disaster event in their own jurisdiction.

During a disaster event, a Regional Mutual Aid Event Agreement (see Attachment 2) can be quickly developed and executed so that the specific manpower and equipment resources to be provided, the terms and conditions of the assistance to be provided will be identified and officially agreed to by both Requesting Party and Assisting Party.

Under the Regional Mutual Agreement any type of assistance may be requested and provided. It is expected that the types of personnel or task forces to be deployed will have been pre-identified. Insurance standards for Worker's Compensation identified by the Texas Workers' Compensation Act, Automobile and General liability coverage as established by the Texas Motor Vehicle Financial Responsibility law, Public Officials and Law Enforcement liability coverage will have been addressed. Each participating member jurisdiction must maintain Public Officials, Law Enforcement, General and Automobile Liability coverage for its own exposures. Each member jurisdiction must maintain Workers' Compensation coverage for its own employees and determine the extent of same coverage for potential emergency response personnel from volunteer and other non-governmental and/or contractual organizations. Volunteer fire and/or

rescue organizations should have policies that provide at least \$1,000,000 of liability coverage per occurrence.

Agreements relative to reimbursable expenses of personnel, equipment and materials will also have been addressed. In other words, form and structure will be provided in advance in order to establish common expectations and procedures for implementation.

Although guidance for reimbursements are provided, assistance under the RMA program should be requested and provided based only on the need and ability to respond to a disaster event, and should not be based on any anticipated federal/state reimbursement.

Once a participating member jurisdiction signs the Authorizing Resolution, it will continue in perpetuity until terminated. The ACOG Emergency Preparedness Manager will keep the official record of, and periodically report on the status of the RMA.

## Implementation

Regional Mutual Aid (RMA) will be initiated by an official Event Agreement between two participating member jurisdictions. If a participating member jurisdiction experiences or expects to experience, a disaster event and needs assistance from another participating member jurisdiction, the Emergency Management Director or the Emergency Management Coordinator or pre-authorized designated person may activate the mutual aid by the following means:

### **1) ACTIVATION BY DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN MEMBER JURISDICTIONS**

The three-part RMA Event Agreement form (see Attachment 2) is the official form to be used by Participating member jurisdictions when requesting or providing assistance under this program. Each RMA deployment can be officially implemented only with the completion of this form. Each part requires the signature of the Emergency Management Director or the Emergency Management Coordinator or a designated person who has been pre-authorized to coordinate assistance under RMA to either request or provide assistance.

A completed RMA Event Agreement form constitutes a contract between Requesting Party and Assisting Party. The authorizing signatures of the Requesting Party (Part III) and the Assisting Party (Part II) constitute a contract for services to be provided.

Substantive changes to the terms and conditions in the original RMA Event Agreement that occur during the deployment may require a revised RMA Event Agreement. A copy of the original RMA Event Agreement form, and any revisions to the RMA Event Agreement must be included in the Request for Reimbursement package

Requests for RMA assistance may be initiated verbally when an urgent response is needed. However, verbal requests must be followed-up within 24 hours by completing and submitting Part I of the RMA Event Agreement form.

Part II of the RMA Event Agreement form is to be completed by the Assisting Party. The Assisting Party should provide necessary information about the personnel and resources

to be. The Assisting Party should also include a cost estimate for the assistance that is being provided. This information becomes the basis for the RMA Event agreement.

If the services to be provided, terms, and conditions reflected in Part II meet with the approval of the Requesting Party's Emergency Management Director, or Emergency Management Coordinator or a pre-authorized designated person he will sign Part III of the RMA Event Agreement form.

When the Emergency Management Director, Emergency Management Coordinator or the pre-authorized designated person or the RMA member jurisdiction receives a request for assistance (*i.e.*, a RMA Event Agreement form with Part I completed) from another RMA member jurisdiction it will:

Confirm the availability of the resources requested.

Respond telephonically to the request advising the Requesting Party of the extent to which the requested assistance can be provided.

Complete and submit Part II of the RMA Event Agreement.

Hint: During Part II of the RMA process, direct coordination between Requesting Party and Assisting Party's Emergency Management Director, Coordinator or a pre-authorized person is strongly encouraged. Each should have a working understanding of what is needed, what is going to be provided, and the terms of reimbursement. The logistical arrangements for the reception of Assisting Party personnel in the Requesting Party's locality (time, place, point-of-contact, lodging arrangements, etc.) should be included in Part II.

A pre-deployment briefing should be provided to persons to be deployed by the Assisting Party prior to their departure. They will need to know what working conditions to expect and how to keep the records needed for requesting reimbursement. Should an Assisting Party provide a strike team or other substantial in-the-field resources, it should also provide a Field Deployment Liaison Officer as a part of the deployment to document missions requested and assigned, assure that reimbursement documentation is maintained, and prepare a demobilization plan to return personnel and equipment in a safe and timely manner.

Within 10 days of the termination of mutual aid provided under this agreement, an after-action or summary report will be submitted by each Requesting Party to each Assisting Party and to the Emergency Preparedness Manager at the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG). It should include lessons-learned and suggested recommendations for improving the program.

## 2) **ACTIVATION BY CONTACTING THE REGIONAL DISASTER DISTRICT**

The Regional DDC EOC is activated, usually in conjunction with a "state of emergency" declaration by the Governor. The DDC will function as the primary coordination center for mutual aid. The DDC will locate the resources that have been identified by the Requesting Party. The DDC will advise the Requesting Party of the location and quantity of the resources that have been requested.

If the DDC has identified the resources as being covered as a state asset, the DDC will make the necessary arrangements for deployment and documentation of associated costs.

If the DDC has located resources that are not covered as a state asset, the Requesting Party must initiate a RMA Event Agreement with the Assisting Party by following the procedures in 1) above.

The DDC as part of its normal duties reports all known mutual aid activities in the region for inclusion in the daily Situation Report from the State EOC to the Governor's Office. These reports will be provided until all deployed personnel have returned to their home locality at which time a final status report will be prepared.

This final report will serve as the basis for the Assisting Party developing its Request for Reimbursement package that will be submitted to the Requesting Party.

## **How to Implement Regional Mutual Aid At A Glance**

- Sign-on through an Authorizing Resolution.
- Study and understand the Guidebook.
- Incorporate RMA into your existing plans and programs.
- Attend training when provided. Monitor the ACOG RMA program web page.
- Be prepared to implement.

### **Requesting Party**

- In response to a disaster event, complete Part I of the RMA Event Agreement requesting assistance from one or more RMA member jurisdictions. A direct verbal request followed by the form within 24 hours is acceptable.
- Request guidance and assistance in implementing RMA from the Regional DDC, if needed.
- Coordinate with Assisting Party and be specific about what is needed and what is being provided.
- Receive a completed Part II with authorized signature from the Assisting Party via fax.
- Upon acceptance of the services, terms and conditions presented, execute the RMA Event Agreement by signing and returning Part III to the Assisting Party via fax.
  
- Receive deployed personnel and make work assignments as needed in accordance with the RMA Event Agreement.
- Maintain all required documentation.
- Within 10 days after the return of all deployed personnel, provide a RMA After Action Report to the Assisting Party.
- Coordinate with Texas Division of Emergency Management to request federal/state reimbursement as appropriate.

### **Assisting Party**

- Inventory personnel and resources including volunteers. Consider insurance coverage and liability protection for those selected for potential deployment to another jurisdiction.
- Receive the RMA Event Agreement Part I or verbal request for assistance" from a Requesting Party. Determine your response capabilities.
- If your jurisdiction can help, respond directly to the Requesting party. Coordinate to determine the personnel, conditions, and terms of the assistance to be provided.
- Obtain an RMA Event Agreement Part I from the Requesting Party if not yet provided.
- If there is a verbal agreement, complete and submit a detailed RMA Event Agreement Part II to the Requesting Party. If accepted, a completed Part III will be provided by the Requesting Party.
- Mobilize for deployment. Prior to deployment, brief the team about what to expect and the documentation needed for reimbursement.
- Deploy and assist.
- Mobilize and return.
- Submit a Notification of Intent to Seek Reimbursement within 10 days to the Requesting Party and an official Request for Reimbursement package within 30 days of the return of deployed personnel.

## **REIMBURSEMENT UNDER RMA**

The Requesting Party should officially acknowledge receipt of each letter of notification and of its intent to reimburse the Assisting Party for expenses incurred and documented.

The Assisting Party will prepare and submit a Request for Reimbursement package to the Requesting Party within 30 days of the return of deployed personnel. Each Assisting Party is responsible for the development of its own Request for Reimbursement package.

While, there is no provision in the mutual aid resolution for waiver of reimbursement, a participating jurisdiction may assume or donate in whole or in part the costs associated with any loss, damage, expense or use of personnel, equipment, and resources provided, by advising the Requesting Jurisdiction that you are willing to assist without fee.

If you agree to provide the assistance without fee, you may be waiving any possible funding reimbursement from Federal or State sources.

In the spirit of RMA, Assisting Parties are expected to accomplish a cost-effective deployment while providing a much-needed service. The extent to which this is accomplished will be reflected in the RMA Summary Report of each disaster.

## **RECORD KEEPING – REQUESTING PARTY AND ASSISTING PARTY**

The following records will be maintained by each Party:

- Official completed RMA Event Agreements
- Summary report of each RMA conference call
- Copies of e-mail messages among participating member jurisdictions
- EOC Situation Reports reflecting all assistance requested and provided
- Manning document for all RMA-deployed personnel requested and provided.

## **Reimbursement At A Glance**

### **Assisting Party**

- Attend training.
- Develop procedures to document RMA deployment-related costs based on existing personnel, payroll, and travel policies.
- Prior to deployment, brief personnel on documentation requirements. Assign one team member to be responsible for facilitating and collecting the needed documentation.
- Send a Notice of Intent to Request Reimbursement to the Requesting Party within 10 days of the return of deployed personnel.
- Complete the Request for Reimbursement package. Coordinate with the e Requesting Party to ensure that you have put together a complete package.
- Submit the official Request for Reimbursement Package to the Requesting Party within 30 days of the return of deployed personnel.

### **Requesting Party**

- Attend training.
- Receive a Notification of Intent to Request Reimbursement from the Assisting Party. This notification is due within 10 days of the return of deployed personnel. Acknowledge receipt.
- Receive the official Request for Reimbursement package from the Assisting Party. This request is due within 30 days of the return of deployed personnel. Request any additional documentation needed. Acknowledge receipt.
- Request federal and/or state reimbursement as appropriate.

## **Training**

RMA is a regional program designed to facilitate mutual aid during disaster events.

Local governments and their emergency services personnel should be thoroughly familiar with the procedures associated with the RMA. The AACOG Emergency Preparedness Manager will provide training to assure that all participating member jurisdictions have a good working knowledge of the RMA program.

The AACOG web site will provide the latest version of the RMA Guidebook, to include a listing of participating member jurisdictions with authorized points-of-contact and the forms needed for implementation.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

For the purposes of this Guidebook, the terms listed below will have the following meanings:

1. "DISASTER EVENT".
  - a. "HOMELAND SECURITY ACTIVITY" – any activity related to the prevention or discovery of, response to, or recovery from a terrorist attack, natural or man-made disaster, hostile military or paramilitary action, or extraordinary law enforcement emergency.
  - b. "CIVIL EMERGENCY" – the unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting consequences thereof within the geographic limits of a given jurisdiction that calls for immediate action or for which there is an urgent need for assistance or relief to protect the general citizenry.
  - c. "DISASTER" -- any occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural or man-made cause, including fire, flood, earthquake, wind, storm, wave action, oil spill or other water contamination, volcanic activity, epidemic, air contamination, blight, drought, infestation, explosion, riot, hostile military or paramilitary action, energy emergency as defined in Chapter 418 of the Texas Government Code, acts of terrorism, and other public calamity requiring emergency action.
  - d. "DISASTER THREAT" -- a disaster that is likely to clearly exceed local capabilities and require a broad range of state and federal assistance.
2. "EVENT AGREEMENT" -- a contract between two member political subdivisions entered into at the time of emergency in which the Assisting Party agrees to provide specified resources to the Requesting Party under the terms and conditions specified in the Agreement.
3. "REQUESTING PARTY" -- the member political subdivision requesting aid in the event of an emergency or disaster and participating in the Regional Mutual Aid Program pursuant to the terms and conditions of this Resolution.
4. "ASSISTING PARTY" -- the member political subdivision furnishing equipment, services and/or manpower to the Requesting Party, and participating in the Regional Mutual Aid Program ("the Program") pursuant to terms consistent with those in this Resolution.
5. "AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE" -- an officer or employee of a member political subdivision having written authority from that entity to request, offer, or provide assistance under the terms of this Resolution.
6. "COG" – Alamo Area Regional Council of Governments..
7. "IMPLEMENTATION GUIDEBOOK" -- Guidance document promulgated by the COG to assist member political subdivisions with regional mutual aid activities,

by providing procedures and minimum standards for participation, and compliance with state and federal reimbursement requirements.

8. "POLITICAL SUBDIVISION" – means county or incorporated city.
9. "DDC" – means District Disaster Committee as established in each Texas Department of Public Safety Region.