

State Energy Security Plan Optional Drop-In: Mutual Assistance

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This document was produced by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER) to aid states in the development of State Energy Security Plans (SESPs). States may choose to incorporate some or all of the provided material in their SESP (optional). States are encouraged to adapt or supplement the provided material as needed to better align with existing state roles, authorities, and plans; and to better address state-specific needs and situations. This document is not intended to be prescriptive or suggest non-statutory expansion of State Energy Office responsibilities. While this resource provides a baseline description of Mutual Assistance Programs, CESER encourages states to build relationships and coordinate with industry partners on emergency preparedness and emergency response activities.

Introduction

Emergency response starts at the local level – for both the public and private sector. Local government emergency managers engage first, and if local resources are exhausted or constrained, support is requested from the state. If a disaster depletes a state’s resources, aid from the federal government is requested. Similarly, the local electric utility or energy infrastructure operator impacted by an event or hazard are the first to respond. When needed, industry will also seek support to respond to a disruption or disaster. Both government and industry can request support to help respond through “mutual assistance” or “mutual aid” programs. These programs provide a framework for the sharing of skilled personnel and/or equipment from unaffected areas to those in need to expedite the restoration process.

Industry Mutual Assistance Overview

During major, widespread outage events, affected electricity and natural gas or petroleum companies may require additional resources to expedite service restoration given the scale and severity of infrastructure damage. Industry addresses these resource constraints by using mutual assistance programs – voluntary partnerships among utilities to provide personnel, equipment, and materials to expedite restoration during emergencies. Mutual assistance programs are designed to be scalable, with the ability to respond to resource demands from a localized event or a large regional disaster. These programs provide a formal yet flexible process for the sector to request assistance from one another, including the sharing and deployment of:

- Electricity line worker crews and bucket trucks;
- Gas utility crews with appropriate equipment for inspection and restoration activities;
- Distribution and transmission equipment, including electric transformers and substations; and
- Cybersecurity technical assistance.

Mutual assistance programs typically involve standing agreements between utilities that define the roles and reimbursement rates. These agreements can differ in content and format – some are contracts and others are memorandums of understanding (MOU) between utilities.

Electric Investor-Owned Utilities Mutual Assistance

Historically, most electric investor-owned utilities (IOUs) mutual assistance programs were established through bilateral agreements between utilities from neighboring or nearby locations. Although bilateral agreements still exist, IOUs represented by the Edison Electric Institute (EEI) participate in EEI’s [Mutual Assistance Program](#). EEI members have expanded their mutual assistance networks to form Regional Mutual Assistance Groups (RMAGs) as power systems have become more interconnected and emergencies have become broader in scale. RMAGs are groups of utilities in a state or region that have agreements to offer mutual assistance when a request is made. RMAGs facilitate the process of identifying available restoration workers and help utilities coordinate logistics and personnel to assist with restoration efforts when the affected area is regional in scope. There are seven RMAGs in the United States (see Appendix A).

Natural Gas Industry Mutual Assistance

Each Segment of the natural gas industry approaches emergency preparedness and response/recovery differently. For example, natural gas distribution companies generally participate in mutual assistance programs with other gas utilities and contractors, while upstream natural gas production and transmission companies have assistance programs which are more contractor-based, taking into consideration different business models and antitrust laws. Depending upon the segment of the value chain, the policies and practices may differ to best match the needs of, and regulatory restrictions on, the segment of interest.

The American Gas Association (AGA) offers a voluntary, no-fee [mutual assistance program](#) designed to suit the wide variation of needs of its member companies across the United States and Canada. The program is based on a coalition of AGA member companies who agree to a set of baseline provisions that govern mutual assistance and populate/maintain the AGA Mutual Assistance Database with company-specific emergency contact information, field capabilities, and other key resources available for mutual assistance. The purpose of the program is to supplement local, state, and regional mutual assistance programs and is intended for those unprecedented man-made or natural disasters requiring the dedication of response, recovery, and restoration resources outside the limits of existing mutual aid programs.

Natural gas distribution mutual assistance depends upon the extent of damage to the distribution system. If response and recovery can be managed using regional resources, the natural gas association in the region where the crisis occurs takes the lead to help coordinate activities of neighboring utilities. AGA monitors response and recovery efforts and offers a channel of communication to the federal government (e.g., requesting waivers for Operator Qualification requirements to be instituted) as appropriate. If needs exceed the capacity of regional resources, the regional association may call on AGA for additional mutual assistance support.

Public Power Mutual Assistance

The American Public Power Association's (APPA's) [Mutual Aid Network](#) provides a nationwide network for public power utilities to provide or receive assistance from other utilities. Over 2,000 public power or municipal utilities are part of the Network. The Network defines mutual aid roles and responsibilities for public power utilities at the local/state, regional, and national levels. The Network is built on a scalable framework able to respond to events of any size including multiple concurrent events. As needed, APPA serves as a liaison between federal authorities and impacted utilities during widespread power outages. APPA also provides members with the [Mutual Aid Playbook](#), which provides utilities with a process for coordinating activities, information, and resources across the Network.

Electric Cooperative Mutual Assistance

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) member statewide organizations ("Statewides") provide traditional [mutual assistance coordination](#) for electric cooperatives during incidents that impact the physical infrastructure of a cooperative's system. Statewides manage the coordination between states and cooperatives in need of assistance and states and cooperatives providing personnel and equipment. NRECA makes

available a model mutual assistance agreement, serves as a repository for signed agreements, and maintains a list of signatories. The Statewide Storm Coordinators are responsible for administering mutual assistance for physical incidents and hold an annual mutual assistance meeting that discusses issues in mutual assistance and plans prior to storm season.

Cyber Mutual Assistance

The [Cyber Mutual Assistance](#) (CMA) Program is an industry framework developed at the direction of the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC) to provide emergency cyber assistance within the electric power and natural gas industries. The CMA Program is composed of industry cyber experts who can provide voluntary assistance to other participating entities in advance of, or in the event of, a disruption of electric or natural gas service, systems, and/or IT infrastructure due to a cyber emergency. Participation in the program also establishes a voluntary information sharing agreement between CMA participants to improve the cybersecurity posture of all participants. In the event of a cyber emergency, any participating entity may make a direct request for assistance from other participating entities including services, personnel, and/or equipment. Entities representing electric and natural gas investor-owned companies, public power utilities, electric cooperatives, Regional Transmission Organizations (RTOs) and Independent System Operators (ISOs), and Canadian energy companies, participate in the CMA Program.

State Emergency Management Assistance Compact

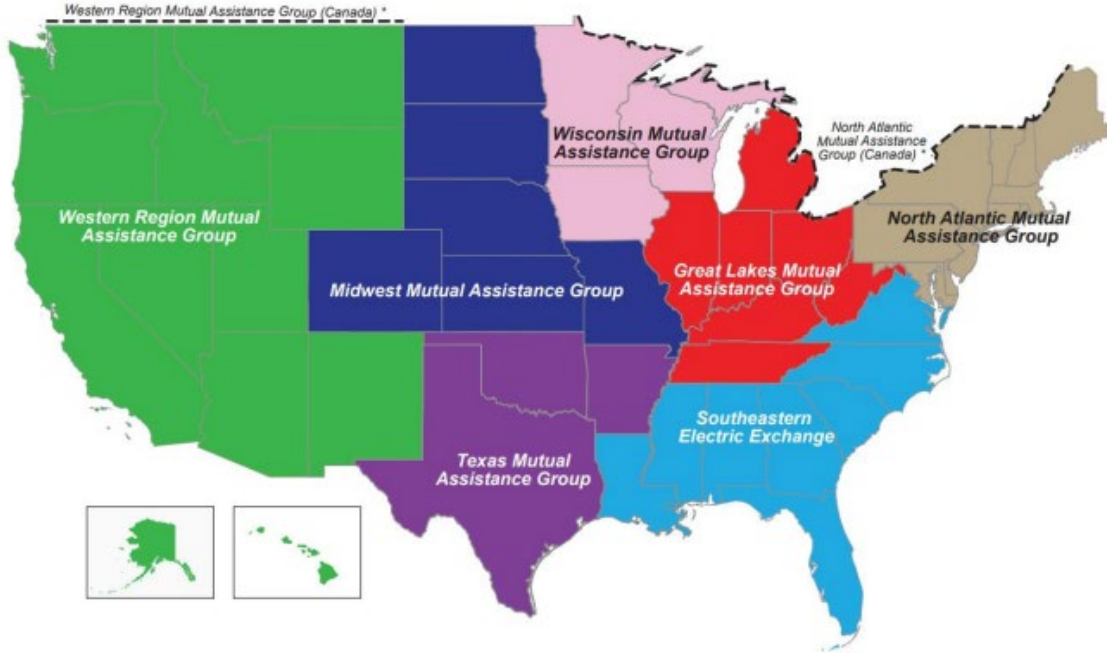
The [Emergency Management Assistance Compact](#) (EMAC) is an all-hazards/all-disciplines national disaster mutual assistance compact that facilitates the sharing of resources, personnel, and equipment across state lines. The EMAC was enacted into federal law in 1996 and establishes a firm legal foundation for sharing resources between states. The EMAC legislation solves the problems of liability and responsibilities of cost, and allows for credentials, licenses, and certifications to be honored across state lines. Fifty states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands have enacted legislation to become EMAC members. To use the EMAC, a state's Governor must declare an emergency or disaster that authorizes funds for response and recovery and activates the EMAC.

To accelerate the mutual assistance process, the EMAC uses Mission Ready Packages (MRPs) that clearly identify all the elements needed to conduct a mission (personnel, equipment, commodities, travel, lodging, meals and more) outside the home jurisdiction for a set period, including the associated costs. Resource providers develop and maintain their MRPs in the Mutual Aid Support System (MASS), which is a GIS-based inventory of MRPs.

NEMA administers EMAC, and the State EMA implements the framework within the state on behalf of the Governor. This provides a consistent and coordinated response across the nation. The state EMA is responsible for coordinating with resource providers from all jurisdictions (state, county, local, or private sector) to develop internal procedures for EMAC implementation, incorporate planning and lessons learned, resource allocation with neighboring states, conducting EMAC training and exercises, and developing MRPs. Optional tables for listing EMAC information are in Appendix A.

Appendix A

Exhibit 1. Regional Mutual Assistance Groups



Source: Edison Electric Institute

Exhibit 2. Optional Tables for Listing EMAC Information

State EMAC Coordinator Contact Info:

State Entity EMAC Resource Provider	Mission Ready Package (Check)
[State Entity Name]	<input type="checkbox"/>
[State Entity Name]	<input type="checkbox"/>