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Advocacy Position Statement

**Public Works and Statewide Mutual Aid Agreements**

Statement of Purpose:

The American Public Works Association (APWA) seeks to inform APWA members, elected officials, regulators, policy-makers and decision-makers and the public at-large of its stated position on statewide mutual aid agreements.

Statement of Position:

As the demand for responding to disasters and emergencies of all types across the nation has increased and become more complex, emergency management agencies at all levels of government are turning increasingly to the use of mutual aid as a means for providing the resources and capabilities on both inter- and intra-state events to augment disaster response capabilities of state, tribal and local governments.

Public Works is a recognized first responder. (Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-8: "The term 'first responder' refers to those individuals who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, including emergency response providers ... as well as ..., public works, and other skilled support personnel (such as equipment operators) that provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations.") Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7 (HSPD-7) has identified the Emergency Services Sector (ESS) as one of the Nation's 18 critical infrastructure and key resources. The disciplines of the ESS are public works, law enforcement, fire, emergency management and emergency medical services. They are responsible for protecting and ensuring the continuity and resilience of the critical infrastructure and key resources of the United States. These critical infrastructures are essential to the Nation's security, safety, public health, economic vitality and way of life.

In addition to APWA, national organizations representing other local first responders are actively involved in efforts to improve the ability of their membership to respond to disasters through mutual aid agreements. APWA recognizes and acknowledges that in certain situations, such as, but not limited to, emergencies, natural disasters and unforeseen catastrophes, Public Works agencies, both private and public, may have to assist one another. The purpose of this statement is to express APWA's support for the establishment of mutual aid agreements at the state and sub-state level as a way to

improve the ability of public works agencies to perform their first responder duties in response to disasters and emergencies.

APWA recognizes and encourages the formation and continuance of Statewide Mutual Aid Agreements which provide for public works mutual aid support across the full spectrum of public works functions. When faced with a disaster or emergency, public works agencies will have the responsibility to respond and recover while maintaining services for the public/communities in the most expedient way. APWA recognizes this can best be accomplished by preparation, coordination and cooperation with other Public Works agencies both public and private.

A comprehensive statewide mutual aid agreement for public works would facilitate and provide for the sharing of public works resources across jurisdictional lines in situations in which incidents require assistance from one or more public works entities. Mutual Aid Agreements allow agencies to provide personnel, equipment and/or materials with an established process during the response and recovery phases of an emergency.

APWA further recognizes that it is in the best interest of its members to enter into a Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement through preparation, coordination and cooperation with other public works agencies. A Mutual Aid Agreement develops operational procedures so that when all local resources are exhausted neighboring communities can work together for response and recovery as needed in an effective and safe manner in times of crisis. Across our country municipalities are geographically vulnerable to a variety of natural and technological disasters, recognizing this vulnerability; the agreements intended purposes should address these two key elements:

Response – defined as those actions and activities that take place immediately prior to or following the onset of a disaster or emergency. Response is the “operational” phase of emergency management, the point where public works carries out its primary and support missions toward the protection of life and property.

Recovery – defined as the long-term activities conducted beyond the initial crisis period and emergency response phase of disaster operations that focus on restoring all systems in the jurisdiction to pre-disaster condition or repairing in such a way as to lessen or avoid damage.

APWA recognizes the need to coordinate closely with emergency managers at the state, tribal and local level to ensure that public works mutual aid processes are predicated upon and established in accordance with the principles of incident management as set forth in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and other relevant national and state emergency management procedures.

#### Background and Rationale:

As a result of efforts by other emergency response and first responder organizations, mutual aid agreements are being developed which will impact how Public Works (as a

first responder as recognized by Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)), will be able to participate in mutual aid processes. It is important that the public works perspective be included in the evolution of the mutual aid process and the establishment of interstate and intrastate mutual aid agreements.

APWA is continuing to work with the National Emergency Management Association, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact advisory committee, the NIMS Integration Center, FEMA, and other agencies/organizations to promote the public works prospective and importance in the mutual aid process.

In addition, the Department of Homeland Security has invited APWA to participate in efforts to identify the need for and develop national level resource typing and credentialing for public works equipment and personnel.

The two most essential elements of a mutual aid process that will enable public works to participate in mutual aid systems are:

1. State level mutual aid agreements which allow state emergency management officials to mobilize and utilize public works capabilities throughout a state, and on an interstate basis, to respond to disasters and emergencies in an orderly way, and;
2. Resource typing and credentialing, working closely with processes that are becoming more formalized through National Incident Management Systems (NIMS).

Sponsor

Emergency Management Committee