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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 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 have 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 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.”) In addition to the APWA, national organizations representing other local first responders in the areas of police, fire and emergency medical services are actively involved in efforts to improve the ability of their membership to respond to disasters through mutual aid agreements. The American Public Works Association (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 departments 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 maintain service and recover 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.

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. Across our country municipalities are geographically vulnerable to a variety of natural and technological disasters, recognizing this vulnerability, the agreements intended purposes are as follows:

1. Reduce vulnerability of people and property damage, injury and loss of life.
2. Prepare for prompt and efficient rescue, care and treatment of threatened or affected persons.
3. To rapidly remove debris and re-establish critical lifelines, damaged public infrastructure and services
4. To rapidly restore/establish safe, sanitary and secure housing for displaced people.
5. Provide for cooperation and coordination of activities relating to emergency and disaster migration, preparedness, response and recovery.

The APWA recognizes the need to coordinate closely with emergency managers at the state 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.

The National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) has invited APWA to serve on an advisory committee as they look for ways of enhancing the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC; a national state-to-state mutual aid agreement which most states have adopted) in order to improve the ability to provide public works and other first responder resources across state lines in response to disasters and emergencies

In addition, the Department of Homeland Security has invited the 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