



FEMA Resource Typing and Credentialing Guidance from the National Incident Management System Public Works Working Group

By Rochelle Ferguson

In a moment, disaster can strike, tearing families apart and destroying communities. In the midst of catastrophe, will emergency response personnel know where to go to access resources critical to response, mitigation, and recovery? All communities are vulnerable to disaster, and it's only a matter of when, not if, an incident will occur. FEMA, the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, encourages communities to focus on *preparation* to ensure readiness for any disaster or emergency.

BACKGROUND OF THE NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NIMS)

As part of its response to Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5, FEMA continues to establish, implement, and improve a comprehensive approach to managing domestic incidents through the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The NIMS is a framework for guiding departments and entities in working together to prevent, respond to, and recover from all types of incidents.

To improve coordination efforts, FEMA's National Integration Center (NIC) oversees 12 discipline-specific working groups whose primary purpose is to provide recommendations on personnel qualifications and resources most commonly requested and deployed during disasters through mutual aid agreements and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).



The primary initiatives of these working groups are to:

- Type resources (teams and equipment) for ordering and tracking assets (resource management)
- Define skills, experience, and training in qualification charts for positions most frequently requested (credentialing)
- Produce job aids/suggested checklists for identified job titles (qualification charts)
- Develop guidance aids to supplement resource typing tables and qualification charts
- Engage speakers to provide outreach information at national conferences and trade-specific events

The working groups submit draft guidance documents to a pre-selected group of peer reviewers. Reviewers comment on and make recommendations before documents are submitted to FEMA for technical editing in preparation for posting to the *Federal Register* for public review. All states and local jurisdictions are encouraged to view FEMA's published guidance available on FEMA's Resource Center website at <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/ResourceMngmnt.shtm>.

OVERVIEW OF THE NIMS WORKING GROUPS AND THE PUBLIC WORKS WORKING GROUP

Working Group members consist of practitioners from discipline-specific backgrounds with an all-hazards viewpoint, such as the Emergency Medical Services Working Group (EMSWG), the Fire and Hazmat Working Group (FHWG), and the Public Works Working Group (PWWG). The NIMS PWWG is made up of a variety of public works professionals with large-scale incident experience from federal, state, local, and tribal governments and partners in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors.

For the past six years, the PWWG has offered recommendations to FEMA for defining resources and personnel qualifications in support of public works mutual aid response. This working group draws on the personal experience of members and a review group member/stakeholder network to offer thoughtful advice on guidance and tools FEMA should consider supporting. The PWWG has focused efforts on defining the minimum resource, team, and personnel qualifications necessary to support mutual aid during times of disasters.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CREDENTIALING (JOB TITLES AND JOB AIDS) Credentialing supports early identification in response to interstate mutual aid requests. The goal of credentialing is to get the right person to the right place at the right time. Credentialing helps

receiving jurisdictions determine if the person is who he or she claims to be, has the skill and competency to perform the work, and has been deployed in response to the request for help.

Credentialing is for:

- Requested personnel (not self-deployed)
- Voluntary personnel (those who choose to deploy and don't need to stay behind to handle daily operations)
- Credentialing consists of:
 - Identity
 - Qualification/affiliation
 - Authorization for deployment

JOB TITLES

The PWWG has defined recommended education, training, and experience for over 20 titles, including Civil/Field Engineer, Debris Removal Manager, Debris Site Manager, and Engineering Branch Manager.

JOB AIDS

The working group has also created job aids to accompany job titles. Job aids include responsibilities, references, general guidance, and suggested checklists for all positions.

RESOURCES AND TEAMS

- The PWWG types resource definitions to address staffing and equipping standards for general public works functions during a natural disaster, critical incident, or terrorist act. New resources have been added to the original 120 Typed Resource Definitions for Public Works, and over 40 public works teams have been developed to include personnel and typed equipment.

The Resource Typing Tables list sets of equipment or teams with defined capabilities that might be shared by requesters and suppliers of resources. Resource typing can also:

- Help a community understand their capacity and capability to send equipment and personnel and identify


gaps, e.g., personnel and equipment that needs to be budgeted for and/or borrowed.

- Allow state and local jurisdictions to rely on the same minimum definition and use the same terminology when typing equipment. This ensures appropriate resources are dispatched to fill requirements at the incident, critical to a successful response and recovery operation.
- Simplify and speed the process of ordering and sending public works mutual aid from state to state by requesting assistance for pre-typed resources.

The NIMS Resource Typing has also been fully integrated into the EMAC Operations System, and states have the option to request and track resources by NIMS type. EMAC has defined Mission Ready Packages, specific response and recovery resource capabilities organized and developed prior to an emergency or disaster. For more information, visit EMAC's website at <http://www.emacweb.org>.

SUMMARY

It is critical that the public works community participate in plans and exercises to adequately address public works issues, including best practices, safety, coordination of efforts, and reimbursement. The PWWG has been working on behalf of the profession to develop tools to assist in emergency response and the restoration of lifelines for communities.

If you have questions or input for FEMA on these or any other public works emergency preparedness issue, please contact Diane Linderman, subject matter expert, Cabezon Group, at dlinderman@vbb.com. 

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