



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION



CALIFORNIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

November 1, 2010

Dear Chief:

The purpose of this letter is to refresh and replace documents issued by our predecessors dated July 18, 2003, clarifying the State of California's Fire and Rescue mutual aid practices and procedures related to the use of state resources. These guidelines are in accordance with the [California Disaster and Civil Defense Master Mutual Aid Agreement](#), (Master Mutual Aid Agreement), which establishes the authority for them.

"Mutual Aid" is utilized when an emergency incident is likely to exceed, or has exceeded, the ability of a responsible entity to control it. The basic assumptions are that a local government entity has taken all actions within its capacity to mitigate a potential or on-going emergency, and has reasonably exhausted local resources before requesting outside assistance through the California Fire Service and Rescue Emergency Mutual Aid System.

Fire service entities have a responsibility to prepare for and respond to emergency incidents by providing trained personnel and appropriate equipment, communications and operating plans. As necessary, they may also enter into agreements for acquiring additional services and resources. Fire service chief officers must be knowledgeable of these responsibilities and agreements, as well as the elements of mutual aid. Cal EMA provides information and training to fire agencies.

In that Cal EMA and CAL FIRE represent the State of California, we have jointly developed the incorporated guidelines below and encourage you to become familiar with them. Additional documents regarding mutual aid and associated agreements are available from either your Fire and Rescue Operational Area Coordinator or the Cal EMA Fire and Rescue Division in Sacramento.

The [California Fire Service and Rescue Emergency Mutual Aid Plan](#) (Mutual Aid Plan) provides for assistance without reimbursement prior to declaration of a local emergency, as defined in the [California Emergency Services Act](#). A local government entity may request this assistance once it determines its ability to control an incident is unlikely. State resources, regardless of type or kind, may be used to provide this assistance.

State resources may also be made available from the time of initial attack to the time a local government entity determines it is unlikely to be able to control an incident through a variety of agreements, such as a CAL FIRE Wildland Fire Protection Agreement, a mutual threat zone agreement, etc.

Absent such agreements, the following guidelines apply regarding the use of state resources for mutual aid:

- Requests for resources, for response to an emergency that is beyond the ability of a local government entity to control, will normally be filled by the closest available resources and initiated through proper mutual aid channels.
- Local government agencies receiving mutual aid are responsible for providing logistical support to mutual aid personnel and equipment.
- Mutual aid shall not be used as a mechanism to shift the costs of mitigating an emergency to another entity.
 - The requesting entity should make maximum use of its own equipment, facilities and services during the period of the emergency.
 - The period of emergency constitutes the time during which mutual aid resources are necessary to prevent imminent threat to life and property.
 - Once the emergency condition is mitigated, mutual aid resources should be released.

Federal fire suppression resources, their contractors and sub-contractors are not part of the Mutual Aid System. Assistance provided by these resources will be on an assistance-by-hire arrangement, unless obtained through pre-existing agreements.

These guidelines do not preclude the responsibility for entities to develop cost-sharing agreements when emergency incidents involve more than a single jurisdiction. Although inclusion in unified incident command does not obligate all parties to participate in cost-sharing, unified Incident Commanders of a multi-jurisdictional incident are responsible for ensuring the responsibility for incident-related costs are appropriately determined.

We are committed to a cooperative effort to mitigate the effects of emergency incidents and disasters in California by supporting the spirit of the Master Mutual Aid Agreement and maintaining the most efficient mutual aid system in the world.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Agency


DEL WALTERS
Director

California Emergency Management


MATTHEW BETTENHAUSEN
Secretary