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May 31, 2022

EMAC Reimbursements - Thinking Ahead

What happens when your state does not have the needed capacity of resources to handle a disaster or emergency on its own? That's where the **Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)** comes in.



EMAC is an all hazards - all disciplines mutual aid compact that serves as the cornerstone of the nation's mutual aid system. Utilizing EMAC to provide resources does come with costs, and the reimbursement process can take some time to close out after these events. However, some states have begun the practice of **state advance reimbursement practices** that allows for a more efficient and expedited reimbursement process.

There are two ways that states have decided to implement these advance reimbursement processes thus far: through legislation and through policy and procedure. Utah, through **U.C.A. 53-2a-603**, codified this process in legislation by establishing a State Disaster Recovery Restricted Account. This seemingly simple legislation provides for EMAC responding state personnel to received advanced funding for deployment from the Restricted Account within the state General Fund. Utah allows for the advance of up to 75 percent of EMAC-eligible expenditures and still requires proper documentation of expenses while deployed.

Not only does Utah's assistance help out neighboring states in need, but they are also providing personnel the opportunity to learn and experience these incident responses in real time. **Kris Hamlet**, Director of the Division of Emergency Management in Utah, explains, **"The State of Utah's Advanced Funding Program allows all communities to be able to quickly deploy through EMAC without being hindered by the worry of financial burden impacting their budgets. This increases interest and leads to greater participation in EMAC. The program especially helps our smaller agencies and more rural communities to be able to gain valuable experience and provide support and goodwill to our neighboring states through EMAC deployments."**

Washington is another state that has safeguarded this best practice in statute, with **RCW 38.52.105** creating a **Disaster Recovery Account** – similar to that of Utah. This account also receives appropriations from the state legislature and is dedicated to supporting state agency or local government disaster response and recovery efforts. This effort allows the Washington Emergency Management Division to burden all of the costs and handle the reimbursement process with the requesting state down the road. This process of maintaining a balance of funding dedicated to EMAC deployment allows for the responding personnel to focus on the mission at hand without wondering if the funding support and resources needed are available.

Similar to these two state, **Colorado, Nevada, New Jersey and South Dakota** have established something in the same nature through policy and procedures – allowing for advance reimbursement in responding instances. New Jersey provides direct payments to responding personnel and supplements that cost by submitting documentation to the requesting state after the event.

South Dakota has established a process that adds responding personnel to the state's payroll and allows them to be paid while responding without having to wait on back-payment through the EMAC reimbursement process. On the importance of a program like this, Director of the South Dakota Office of Emergency Management, **Tina Titze**, said, **"It is important that responders who are willing to quickly respond through EMAC are not forced to wait on a payment for the response. They have families to support, as well as, other obligations and responsibilities too. We want to ensure the deployment is as easy as possible on them so we can quickly send resources in support of other states."**

Colorado has a limited Resource Mobilization Fund (RMF), which has been used to reimburse local agencies for deployments under EMAC. When the RMF is unavailable, the state's governor can issue an executive order allowing access to the Disaster Emergency Fund to make reimbursements. In either case, when the requesting state reimburses Colorado, the money is returned to the original fund for future use.

Nevada provides full reimbursement through a state disaster assistance account to encourage participation. **"Essentially, we become the bank to ensure our local governments are made whole to encourage their participation in time of need. Responders always want to help, but often times policy makers are concerned about reimbursement, so this effort ensures we can assist while meeting local government expectations,"** commented **Dave Fogerson**, Chief of the Nevada Division of Emergency Management.

Given the increased scale and scope of disasters in recent years, state capabilities to provide timely and appropriate reimbursement to resource providers within assisting states will be vital to ensuring resource providers remain able to surge and respond when disaster strikes. Everyone agrees on the necessity of EMAC and how critical its response and recovery structure is to each state. With these best practices for financing EMAC missions, response personnel and resources can be sent out without any ambiguity on the reimbursement process.

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.

— **Abraham Lincoln**

If you would like more information or have a state practice you'd like to highlight as part of this ongoing series, please contact [Jamie Logan](mailto:jamie@nemaweb.org)

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