

## EMAC Tips for State Health Agencies

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The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) was a key mechanism used by states to deploy public health personnel and resources to the Gulf Coast region following Hurricane Katrina. Listed below are some post-Katrina lessons learned and tips for states using EMAC to request personnel or respond to other states in need. This is a living document that will be amended as new lessons are learned throughout the hurricane response. Please send your suggestions to [preparedness@astho.org](mailto:preparedness@astho.org).

### For Both Requesting and Responding States:

- **Develop a relationship with your state EMAC Coordinator.** All EMAC requests and/or offers of assistance must be sent through the state emergency management office.
- **Learn more about EMAC.** General information on EMAC can be found at [www.emacweb.org](http://www.emacweb.org). More specific information on legal protections for health and medical volunteers can be found at <http://www.publichealthlaw.net/Research/Katrina.htm>. You may wish to consult your agency's legal counsel to help you better understand EMAC and how it may be affected by laws specific to your state.

### For Requesting States:

- **Make state public health and emergency management staff aware that EMAC should be used to place requests for health and medical assets.** States have the resources ready, and EMAC can facilitate their deployment in a fast and effective manner. However, Katrina revealed that without coordination and proper requests, EMAC can easily be overlooked and neglected.
- **Do not hesitate to request what is needed.** There is no standard list of what may be available in the states, so do not assume that your request cannot be fulfilled.
- **Be specific about requests.** Rather than requesting "personnel" and "supplies," specify what types of each are needed and in what quantities. Responding states will want to know if they should look for public health nurses, epidemiologists, physicians, etc. Use an estimate if necessary.
- **Use personal contacts to your advantage.** If you know of a resource that exists in another state, you can save time by communicating in advance with the owner of that resource. Once you know that it is available, your state emergency management agency must make a formal request to the state with the resource. Please give your state emergency management agency the contact information and the resource request description (what, how many, price, etc.) to facilitate the request.

- **Look to your closest neighbors.** Assets may come to you from all over the country, but your closest neighbor states may be able to provide special assistance with logistics.
- **If possible, put out an early advisory through your Emergency Management Agency and EMAC.** This can be done in the early stages of a response to inform other states that your state may use EMAC in the near future to make requests for medical and health personnel if mutual aid is needed. This will give state authorities the opportunity to plan appropriately to meet any potential requests.

For Responding States:

- **Develop information for deployed personnel on what items to take, what to expect during the deployment, what health and safety risks might exist, what legal protections they will have, etc.** Have this information ready before teams are assembled for deployment.
- **Explore what legal mechanisms might be available in the state to deploy private sector volunteers by making them temporary state employees.** EMAC applies to state assets (i.e. employees) only. It is an agreement across state governments. Private citizens cannot be automatically mobilized under EMAC. However, many states have already passed legislation which will recognize civilian/private volunteer medical and health professionals as state employees for the purposes of EMAC.
- **Review all paperwork related to the official EMAC request.** These requests are legally binding, and have important implications for reimbursement, acceptance of licensure, liability coverage, and worker's compensation. Ensure that the Request for Assistance (REQ-A) and all other paperwork specifies the exact number and type of personnel that you expect to deploy, and that the cost is reasonable.
- **Work with other states to strengthen your state's system or to aid in the development of theirs.** Katrina's response has shown that many state health agencies have already coordinated volunteer management efforts with other state and local agencies, hospitals, and other health providers. Many states have resources already identified, credentialed, and ready. Use your neighboring states as resources to enhance your own systems.
- **Consider yourself successful if you make your resources available.** Sometimes your state may not be the first to respond to an EMAC broadcast, or you might be asked to stand down due to a changing situation. Don't let these situations discourage you, but consider yourself successful for being available to help.