



FEMA

# On Call

Disaster Reserve Workforce News



DRWD's Readiness Branch Chief, Paul Geiger, explains Credentialing to Cadre Managers.

## Credentialing Basics

This issue of "On Call" focuses on one topic — it's a mini-guide to FEMA's Credentialing Plan and explains why it is being implemented and what it means for the Agency as a whole, Joint Field Operations and Reservists' roles and careers.

A key aspect of the Disaster Reserve Workforce Division's (DRWD) mission is setting up a Credentialing Program that ensures the Disaster Workforce meets national standards of performance and is capable of completing tasks in a timely and consistent manner during disaster operations.

Historically, attempts to implement a standard credentialing program were isolated to specific Cadres or Regions and were not uniform throughout the agency. The end result has been media criticism, Congressional concerns, remedial actions recommended by the Government Accountability Office and the Department of Homeland Security and

concerns from communities and individual disaster victims.

On a macro level, there are two main reasons why FEMA needs credentialing. First and foremost, it is the law. In addition, standardized credentialing aligns Agency practices with the National Incident Management System.

On a micro level, credentialing is the process that affirms whether an employee meets the professional performance standards required by his/her disaster position.

Once a Cadre-specific credentialing plan is completed, a Reservist will be responsible for creating a personal credentialing portfolio. It will include taskbook assessments and performance appraisals from each deployment, training transcripts from the Emergency Management Institute and Automated Deployment Database, licenses and certifications. This information

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## Credentialing -- A Federal Coordinating Officer's Perspective

*Doug Mayne, Region X FCO*

"On Call" asked me to write about how I believe a standardized Credentialing Program will benefit Joint Field Office (JFO) Operations. Let me highlight the issue by posing a couple of questions:

- 1) How many of you have deployed to a disaster as a Branch Chief, only to find out that your Section Chief knows less than you do? and
- 2) When the Disaster Field Training Officer asks which classes you need, do you know?

A strong Credentialing Program will benefit JFO operations by deploying the appropriately experienced personnel and allowing a more accurate education needs assessment.

The Credentialing Program will ensure that there is a minimum level of training and experience for each position and each skill

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**Produced by the Disaster Reserve Workforce Division**

*Blair Gately, Editor*

## Credentialing Basics

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will be entered into the migration software tool to determine an employee's credentialing type: Trainee, Basically Qualified, Fully Qualified or Expert.

Credentialing and migration will be done in a phased approach, with a targeted completion date of 2011. Cadre specific credentialing plans will be completed throughout 2009 and 2010, followed by the cadre workforce migration.

Reservists will be notified of their cadre's credentialing efforts, including migration, as each plan is completed.

Details, resources and contacts are available throughout this issue of "On Call."



### Personal E-Mail List Hits 4000 Mark; Sign Up Now

More than 4000 Reservists have signed up for DRWD's Personal E-mail Distribution List – so they can receive information when they are not deployed.

They receive news flashes, newsletters, agency surveys, policy, program and cadre updates.

If you want to be added to the list, send your personal e-mail address with full name, region and cadre to [FEMA-DRWD-Program@dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-DRWD-Program@dhs.gov)

Please put "E-mail Participation" in the subject line.

## Letter from Philip A. Nowak, Acting DRWD Director

This edition of "On Call" is devoted to the Agency-wide Credentialing Program. While many from all over FEMA have worked hard to bring the program to this stage of maturity, it is still a new subject to many. Understanding why we are pursuing Credentialing in the first place will highlight the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead.



In his all-employee memorandum of October 29, 2009, Administrator Fugate gave us the "why": "Together we are working to implement a transparent Credentialing Program which meets the needs of the Joint Field Offices and which provides Agency-wide performance standards for the more than 230 disaster position titles."

To achieve this goal, DRWD is working closely with program managers, EMI and others to create the pre-disaster training required by new Cadre-Specific Credentialing Plans. At the same time, we are working with the Human Capital Division, the Office of Equal Rights and others to strengthen Agency recruitment, training and support of a diverse workforce based in part on credentialing plans.

Credentialing will challenge you to integrate what you already know from past experience with new knowledge, new skills and new standards. Credentialing may require you to participate in training when it is scheduled. You may need to juggle personal and non-FEMA professional commitments more than you ever have before in order to remain a ready Reservist.

The opportunity of Credentialing is that it provides you a clear road map towards expanding your knowledge of emergency management. If you want to maintain your current position, then you will have that chance, but the choice will be yours. If you want to stretch yourself professionally, opportunities to do so will increase. Your choices, your training and your experience will be captured in a way that makes decisions to train you or deploy you more predictable, more consistent – more *transparent*.

If you have any questions about Credentialing, the Disaster Reserve Workforce Liaisons in your Region (listed below) will be a great resource for you, as will the Credentialing Hot Line (Mon – Fri, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm EST, 877-789-3362) or e-mail address [FEMA-DRWD-Credentialing@dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-DRWD-Credentialing@dhs.gov).

Region I	Michael Brown	<a href="mailto:MichaelA.Brown@dhs.gov">MichaelA.Brown@dhs.gov</a>
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Region X	Michael Kundu	<a href="mailto:Amitava.M.Kundu@dhs.gov">Amitava.M.Kundu@dhs.gov</a>

## Program Management Branch



Layne Smith,  
Branch Chief

### **PM's Role in Credentialing**

As you can see from this issue of "On Call," the Agency-Wide Credentialing Program is a large part of DRWD. Every Program Management Section: Policy; Resourcing and Planning (R&P); and Systems is intimately involved in contributing to the success of this program.

As the Policy Section "baselines" practices and develops new directives for Reservist administration, it will also be responsible for providing contractor support to formalize the Credentialing Program in a directive and manual for routing and Administrator signature. This will ensure Agency implementation and standardization.

Funding is a critical piece of the Credentialing Program and the R&P Section is largely responsible for acquiring, resourcing and accounting for the several millions of dollars required to successfully operate the program. Travel, salary and benefits, and virtually all credentialing development and implementation costs, are included in the DRWD budget. From a Systems Section perspective, the current effort to define requirements and develop the "next generation ADD" is inextricably linked to the Credentialing Program. Design of the next system will incorporate as many credentialing enhancing features as possible. Program Management is committed to our partnership role in the Credentialing Program. This program provides a great opportunity to focus energy and resources on something that dramatically improves FEMA's capability to meet its mission.

## **Reservists Invited to Take BEST Survey; Measures Employee Engagement**

It is time again for the Q12 Survey and FEMA wants to hear from you. FEMA has worked to expand opportunities for all of the Reservists so they can take the employee engagement survey with ease and easy access.

For the 2010 BEST survey, planned for December, Reservists can complete the short 15-minute survey by one of two ways: via the phone or by the internet.

To participate in this round II survey, the first being the benchmark, Reservists will need to get the web site address or the call in phone number and their cadre's unique code from their Cadre Manager.

FEMA leadership is striving to build a better workplace and everyone's voice counts! When the survey is ready to go live, your Cadre Manager and the Disaster Reserve Workforce staff will be ready to assist you.

The BEST survey measures engagement. The BEST Workforce Initiative hinges on this concept of "engagement," or how connected to their job employees feel and how invested they are in the success of their teams and their organization. All aspects of the BEST Initiative aim to increase this engagement in ways that research has proven are effective, such as knowing what

is expected at work, feeling that individual opinions count, and having opportunities to learn and grow. With these points in mind, please show your engagement, and provide updated employee data as soon as you are asked.

### **Administrator Stresses Importance of Credentialing**

In a memo to all FEMA employees, dated October 29, Administrator Fugate voiced his support for the Credentialing Program.

An excerpt of the memo follows:

Credentialing, training, and standardizing the FEMA workforce are critical to the success of our mission. In order for us to ensure our nation receives quality support in times of crisis, we continue to move forward actively with an Agency-wide Credentialing Program.

Under the leadership of DRWD, this initiative will ensure we comply with laws requiring us to type and credential our disaster workforce, starting with Reservists and culminating with employees in the full-time workforce. By the time you read this, 7 out of 23 disaster cadres will have a Cadre-Specific Credentialing Plan approved by their program's senior executive, and more than 1,400 employees will be in the process of migrating to these new standards.

I am encouraged with the progress we have made to date and am supportive of the path we are paving.

DRWD is currently experiencing intermittent connection problems with the password-protected external portal site: <https://portal.fema.gov>. We will continue to address web portal accessibility with the Agency. If you are unable to access the site, please be patient and try again.

## Readiness Branch



Paul Geiger,  
Branch Chief

### Credentialing - First Steps

The vision for Credentialing is to provide focused training requirements, clear standards for position advancement and an objective deployment process.

Reservists will begin the process after each cadre-specific credentialing plan is completed. The DRWD Credentialing Team will contact each Reservist, by e-mail or postal mail, to initiate the process of migrating into the new standard.

As a starting point, you have an opportunity to validate the training and experience data that will be used to determine your initial credentialing proficiency level.

As a Reservist going through the migration process, you will be asked to do the following:

1) Review the contents of the Migration Report 1 (MR1) that will be sent to you. This data, in part, comes from your Automated Deployment Database (ADD) record, including deployment history, job title assignments and completed training courses. Additional data comes from the Training Information Access System (TIAS), relative to your training history. Important information may be missing, so you should review the report carefully to ensure that it accurately and completely reflects your employment history.

2) Provide documentation/certificates to support your completion of training and experience requirements not reflected in the MR 1. Information on your training courses can be obtained from the Emergency Management Institute and

your ADD record. You may also need proof of deployments (Performance Appraisals or other documentation).

3) Complete a Summary of Qualifications Experience (SQE) for each position for which you would like to be credentialed. The SQE allows you to detail specifically how you achieved the experience requirements defined in the Cadre-Specific Plan. All of the disaster positions in the cadre's credentialing plan will be identified. You may choose to address any of these positions in your SQE, if you can provide supporting documentation, such as training, experience or deployments. Only six of all position titles identified will be credentialed, so be sure to list them in order of your personal preference.

The DRWD Credentialing Team is here to assist you in the migration process. Please contact us if you need help – or talk to your Cadre Manager or DRW Liaison.

**You will receive, by e-mail or regular mail, an information packet and Credentialing Migration Report (MR1) containing info about you and your work history.**

You review the Migration Report for accuracy.



You assemble training documents and info to fill in gaps and contact your Cadre Manager regarding job title discrepancies.



You gather your performance appraisals



You complete the Summary of Qualifications Experience included in the info packet



You send all the info to DRWD by the deadline outlined in your packet.



DRWD sends you a report (MR2), with your portfolio and assigned levels. You may appeal.



DRWD forwards the recommendations to the Program Head for approval.



DRWD compiles your portfolio. Cadre Managers and Subject Matter Experts make recommendations for all proficiency levels (Trainee, Basically Qualified, Fully Qualified and Expert). Candidates for the top two levels are reviewed by the Credentialing Review Board.

## Deployment Branch



Tracy Haynes,  
Branch Chief

### TalentLink/Credentialing

TalentLink became operational August 2009 and will be used to announce all Reservist recruitment actions in the near future. This system is an automated software tool that will be used to post job announcements online and process all recruitment actions for Reservists and other FEMA personnel.

Equally important, DRWD has been working daily with the Human Capital Division to ensure the system is configured for the Reservist cadres and all future recruitment actions. During these meetings, HCD has informed senior FEMA leadership that TalentLink will streamline on-boarding hiring actions and reduce the processing time to hire new employees.

As we continue to migrate the Disaster Reserve Workforce to the approved Cadre Specific Credentialing Plans (CSP) and augment the professional performance standard, TalentLink will be a pivotal recruitment tool for new hires by generating a selection pool that meets the criteria of a “trainee” in accordance with the CSP. The Skill, Knowledge and Ability questions will have a direct correlation to the Position Task Books and the CSP.

Linking future recruitment actions to credentialing requirements will enable FEMA to recruit a reservist workforce that is prepared to support emergency management planning, response, recovery and mitigation and field office support requirements.

## A Cadre Manager ‘Talks’ Credentialing

*Scott Zaffram, Region X Training Manager / DFTO Cadre Manager*

The Disaster Reservist Workforce Division (DRWD) credentialing initiative is well underway... full steam ahead!

But how has it affected me as a Regional Cadre Manager (RCM)? Simply put, we are entering uncharted territory for our agency, and working hard to get it right.

So like many, I’ve been quickly learning as we go forward.

It’s my job to funnel information, requests, and updates from the DRWD to my Reservists in the Disaster Field Training Operations (DFTO) cadre; to facilitate any emerging need (of either party), and to support my Reservists with anything they need to be successfully credentialed at the highest, most appropriate level. Moving forward, the process will become more formalized and efficient to ensure that communication between the DWRD, Reservists, and the Regional Cadre Manager is as seamless as possible.

To be completely honest, I’m fortunate that I only have four Reservists in my cadre: other cadre managers have upwards of 100! Think about how intense that could be! During this migration process, the size of my cadre has been very manageable, but different results could certainly apply, depending on your distinct cadre’s size.

Serving as the Regional Training Manager (RTM) for Region X, I also play a very important role for the other cadres being credentialed within my region. All RTM’s are a resource, for example, when you need to obtain training transcripts, if you need assistance trouble-shooting lost certificates, or if you require help locating upcoming courses for your credentialing plan.

Don’t be afraid to reach out to your Regional managers because we’re here to help, and we want to make sure you are successful in obtaining the right credentialing rating.

## Critical Credentialing Components



## Life in the Reservist Lane

Judy MacDonald, Region X Reservist

### On the Road to Credentialing

It was a long time ago  
I started working here  
Fourteen years to be exact  
How about a big cheer?

I've worked disasters, done  
training, special projects and  
much more  
I didn't track all of it  
I said 'what for?'

I didn't ask for evaluations  
I didn't think it mattered  
A whole bunch of 'Ss  
They're just meant to flatter.

Now there is Credentialing  
It's time to document my work  
Oh, how can I do that?  
This may drive me berserk!

In August it came  
My big MR1  
It's time to get busy  
And it may not be fun!

I looked through the forms  
And I did find some gaps  
I tried hard to fix them  
Hope there's no memory lapse!

I went through my files  
And got my ADD info  
Is this going to work?  
I sure do hope so!

It took me some time  
To assemble my packet  
I put everything in  
Plus my FEMA jacket!

About five full days  
is the time it took  
to get this all done  
And it looked like a book.

I sent it to HQ  
So now I just wait  
It's in "their" hands  
To determine my fate!

Above is my ode to Credentialing. I wasn't sure what to think when I heard that FEMA was going to initiate a Credentialing Program for Reservists. I did agree with the concept of having organizational standards and position specific requirements that apply nationwide. And I was concerned about having adequate documentation to support my training, skills and experience gained in the 14 years I've worked for FEMA.

*If you have a unique deployment experience you'd like to share, send an e-mail to FEMA-DRWD-Program@dhs.gov and we will consider it for an upcoming issue of "On Call." Please put "newsletter submission" in the subject line.*

### Useful Sites

External Affairs Initiatives, Activities and General Information for Reservists

<http://www.fema.gov/pao/daeinfo.shtm>

EMI's online Independent Study courses

<http://training.fema.gov/IS/>

Disaster Workforce task books and online assessment guides

<http://www.learningservices.us/fema/taskbooks/index.cfm>

DRWD latest news, FAQs and more. Enter your user name and password

<https://portal.fema.gov>

## FCO on Credentialing

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level type. By deploying the appropriate type for the disaster, we guarantee that we get a person with the experience and training needed. This will help the JFO function at the optimal level.

The Credentialing Program is also an extremely useful roadmap to lay out your training needs. When the DFTO sends out the survey for needed training, you will know exactly which courses you need to take in order to advance to the next level. Gone will be the days wondering if you need that "Managing FEMA Staff" course – your Credentialing Program will tell you. The DFTO will have a more accurate count of who needs which training courses (not just who wants to attend) and can bring the right courses to the JFO. You may receive other training notices prior to deployment.

Standardized Credentialing Programs are beneficial to the JFO. But I believe they are critical for employees because they reduce one of the many uncertainties in our business - they tell you what you need to know and do to advance in your job.

### 24th Cadre -- Long-Term Community Recovery

FEMA has a new Disaster Reserve Cadre -- the 24th.

The Long-Term Community Recovery Cadre works with federal, state, and local governments, non-profits and the Private Sector to enable disaster-impacted communities to identify opportunities for a more effective recovery.