

NIMS *Alert*

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FEMA AND IAFC LAUNCH INTRASTATE MUTUAL AID PROJECT

WASHINGTON – The Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) have launched an initiative to develop a National Fire Service Intrastate Mutual Aid System that will tie local fire districts and departments into statewide mutual aid networks and support implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

“An intrastate mutual aid network will help the fire service be better prepared to respond to large-scale or concurrent events,” Acting FEMA Director David Paulison said. “It also will help us address the interoperability of various resources before an actual event.” Mutual aid is a priority of the National Strategy for Homeland Security and has been supported by FEMA and the IAFC for years. FEMA and its NIMS Integration Center see this initiative with the fire service as a crucial element in the integration of NIMS into state emergency preparedness planning.

“No one jurisdiction or local fire district will ever have all the resources they need for the range of possible emergencies to which they may have to respond,” IAFC Executive Director Garry L. Briese said. “But effective mutual aid agreements can help fill the resource gaps that a jurisdiction may have. The initiative also will help bring the skills, unique knowledge and tactical resources of the local fire service to the table to support NIMS and state-to-state mutual aid efforts such as the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.”

The IAFC has asked the State Fire Chiefs Associations to spearhead the effort in the 10 pilot states, which include Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas in the Gulf region and Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico and Wyoming in the Rockies area.

Phase I of the initiative involves fielding a cadre of eight to 10 technical experts to support the 10 pilot states. These technical specialists have active fire service backgrounds with experience and success in mutual aid. Their job is to guide the state’s initial planning process, maintain contact with the state system organizers and encourage the integration of NIMS and mutual aid concepts such as resource typing, inventorying into state plans.

The pilot states will work with fire service and emergency management stakeholders in their states in a collaborative effort to produce a formal, written plan that will be exercised when the state moves into Phase II. Based on the experience of the 10 states, the IAFC will recommend possible next steps to further enhance NIMS principles in the fire service.

Following the pilot program in 10 states lessons learned, processes and methodologies will be used to develop models and tools that can be used by the fire service in all states and other emergency disciplines. The IAFC plans to continue the process, assisting additional states across the country in a region-by-region approach. The expected result is a ‘comprehensive, formalized, exercised intrastate mutual aid plan for each state that meet accepted criteria, including minimum requirements and elements established by NIMS for mutual aid agreements.

For more information on the Intrastate Mutual Aid System project, contact Hyatt Simpson, IMAS Program Manager, at hsimpson@iafc.org .