



APTA SS-SEM-RP-011-09 Rev. 2

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**Security Emergency Management
Working Group**

Regional Emergency Planning and Participation in Mutual Aid

Abstract: This document establishes a recommended practice for transportation agencies to participate in regional emergency planning and enter into mutual aid agreements to guide the use of transit agency resources in the event of an emergency or critical incident.

Keywords: emergency assistance, mutual aid, regional emergency planning, restoring service

Summary: Mutual aid should be a component of regional planning. Transit agencies should participate in local and regional mutual aid planning to accurately capture transit agency resources (e.g., additional services or replacement of disrupted services) that may be provided in the event of an emergency or special event. Mutual aid planning will strengthen preparedness to provide critical public transportation services in the event of a service disruption caused by human or natural acts, equipment malfunctions, accidents, terrorism, or any other occurrence for which emergency assistance is deemed to be necessary or advisable.



Foreword

The American Public Transportation Association is a standards development organization in North America. The process of developing standards is managed by the APTA Standards Program's Standards Development Oversight Council (SDOC). These activities are carried out through several standards policy and planning committees that have been established to address specific transportation modes, safety and security requirements, interoperability, and other topics.

APTA used a consensus-based process to develop this document and its continued maintenance, which is detailed in the [manual for the APTA Standards Program](#). This document was drafted in accordance with the approval criteria and editorial policy as described. Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

This document was prepared by the Security Emergency Management Working Group as directed by the Security Standards Policy & Planning Committee.

This document represents a common viewpoint of those parties concerned with its provisions, namely transit operating/planning agencies, manufacturers, consultants, engineers and general interest groups. APTA standards are mandatory to the extent incorporated by an applicable statute or regulation. In some cases, federal and/or state regulations govern portions of a transit system's operations. In cases where there is a conflict or contradiction between an applicable law or regulation and this document, consult with a legal adviser to determine which document takes precedence.

This document supersedes APTA SS-SEM-RP-011-09, Rev. 1, which has been revised. Below is a summary of changes from the previous document version:

- Section 1:
 - Makes various clarifications
 - Adds information on agency mutual aid processes and considerations
- Section 2:
 - Reorganizes and makes various clarifications
- Sections 3:
 - Reorganizes and makes various clarifications
 - Adds sections giving addition information on vehicles, equipment, personnel and vehicles.
- Sections 4:
 - Makes various clarifications
- Makes updates to references, definitions and abbreviations. Issues addressed in separate APTA standards were removed.



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Participants

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Introduction

This introduction is not part of APTA SS-SEM-RP-011-09, “Regional Emergency Planning and Participation in Mutual Aid.”

APTA recommends the use of this document by:

- individuals or organizations that operate public transit systems;
- individuals or organizations that contract with others for the operation of public transit systems; and
- individuals or organizations that influence how public transit systems are operated (including but not limited to consultants, designers and contractors).

Scope and purpose

This Recommended Practice serves as a framework to aid transportation agencies in the establishment and implementation of effective mutual aid systems among transit providers, municipalities or regions where resources may be required in response to emergency situations.

Regional Emergency Planning and Participation in Mutual Aid

1. Transit agencies' role in regional emergency planning

Transit agencies play an important role in regional and local planning and response during emergencies, critical incidents and special events. Lessons learned indicate that government and nongovernment organizations often include transit agencies in regional or organization-specific emergency plans without getting transit agencies' direct input during the planning process, creating unreasonable expectations among transit stakeholders. To resolve this area for improvement, transit agencies should engage in regional planning activities to ensure that emergency management agencies and partners clearly understand and accurately capture transit agency resources, processes, capabilities and limitations.

2. Mutual aid

Mutual aid is an agreement to lend assistance across jurisdictional boundaries, including between states, during times of emergency or disaster. Mutual aid may be ad hoc (i.e., requested only when an emergency occurs) or it may be a formal standing agreement between jurisdictions or organizations. Assistance generally includes equipment, supplies and personnel. Before releasing resources to support mutual aid, transit agencies may seek to first determine that their own needs can be met.

Sample mutual aid activities and resources that transit agencies may be able to provide include the following:

- Assisting emergency responders with evacuations (e.g., incident management teams).
- Transporting emergency responders into areas experiencing emergencies (e.g., rescue trains).
- Providing short-term shelter for individuals via vehicles or facilities.
- Offering transit facilities for response, staging or command activities.
- Providing transit equipment and resources, such as generators, fuel, etc.
- Providing vehicles, such as buses, paratransit and nonrevenue vehicles.
- Supplying bus bridge support to other transportation agencies.
- Furnishing vehicle maintenance support services.
- Supplying fare waivers or subsidies.
- Participating in partner emergency operations centers.

Transit agencies are well-known for having a “help out when we can” approach during an emergency. However, transit agency mutual aid should be planned and documented in advance of an incident to ensure resourcing and legality. Agencies using Federal Transit Administration funds should check with their legal department to understand the applicability of the FTA Charter Service Regulations, 49 CFR Part 604, before signing any agreement.

3. Agency considerations

Whether a transit agency decides to respond to a request for assistance on an individual basis or with a standing written agreement, establishing and maintaining working relationships with regional partners is

essential. Each agency should determine the level of emergency support it can provide without additional leadership approval. This section details steps an agency should take prior to providing mutual aid resources.

3.1 Develop resource lists

Transit agencies should develop and maintain the following lists of agency resources.

3.1.1 Vehicles and equipment

- Vehicle type and availability, including vehicle accessibility, capacity and movement limitations (clearances for vehicles, width, height, turning radius, ramp/lift requirements, track, signal systems, roads, fuel type, etc.)
- Equipment type and availability (e.g., tools, aboveground lifts, forklift, scissors lift, portable lifts)
- Vehicle warehouse items and parts (e.g., tires, brakes) used to operate transit vehicles
- Communication (voice and data) equipment and availability
- Food and/or sheltering supplies and availability
- Emergency first aid supplies and availability
- Stock and/or bulk items

3.1.2 Personnel

- Personnel (management, administrative or support staff), including qualifications and training to operate each type of vehicle (e.g., paratransit) or serve in other positions as well as time and personnel limitations (e.g., geographic proximity, hours of service rules)

Regarding personnel, agencies should consider developing an emergency deployment plan with a contact list and personnel assigned to prearranged locations and tasks. Staffing plans should include contact and call lists for operators and maintenance personnel, as well as other essential personnel. Transit agencies should review labor contract agreements to ensure that mutual aid plans are compliant. Agency personnel should participate in position-specific initial and refresher training (e.g., National Incident Management System training), as needed to confirm readiness.

The Emergency Management Assistance Compact is an all-hazards and all-disciplines mutual aid compact serving the U.S. interstate mutual aid system. EMAC (www.emacweb.org) offers a variety of mutual aid resources, including mission-ready packages and training, that transit agencies may leverage.

3.2 Confirm communication and coordination mechanisms

Transit agencies should work with partners to confirm communication and coordination capabilities. As communication equipment and networks between mutual aid recipients and providers may be incompatible, transit agency representatives should maintain the ability to engage in direct contact with aid requestors or maintain interoperable systems. Transit agencies should conduct joint exercises and training with partners to evaluate mutual aid processes and plans.

Ideally, transit agencies should regularly test both primary and backup communication systems and equipment used to coordinate and process mutual aid. Additionally, transit agencies should establish primary and redundant communications and plans for emergencies. For more information, see APTA SS-SEM-RP-009-09, “Emergency Communications Strategies for Transit Agencies.”

4. Written agreements

Federal guidance encourages transit agencies to have written agreements in place prior to providing mutual aid. Written mutual aid agreements are a best practice that expedite the exchange of equipment and personnel.

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Transit agencies should participate in statewide EMACs and regional working groups, if available, to strengthen relationships and planning. Furthermore, transit agencies and partners should review and update written agreements regularly.

A written mutual aid agreement may establish and document the following:

- working relationships with partner organizations
- services for passengers with special needs
- personnel authorized to release transit agency assets or request materials, supplies or services from partner organizations
- extent and limitations of liability and workers' compensation
- conditions under which the agreement applies
- activation and deactivation time frames
- supervisory responsibilities for agency staff resource requests
- responsibilities for all resources requested (e.g., vehicles, staff)
- time commitments and response times
- reimbursement rates and required documentation
- reporting requirements

Related APTA standards

APTA SS-SEM-S-003-08, “Security and Emergency Management Aspects of Planned and Unplanned Special Event Service”

APTA SS-SEM-RP-009-09, “Emergency Communications Strategies for Transit Agencies”

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EMAC	Emergency Management Assistance Compact
FTA	Federal Transit Administration

Document history

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