The National Incident Management System (NIMS) can help enter into effective mutual aid agreements that enhance your operation and ensure that you can sustain operations.

**Mutual aid**

Most jurisdictions or organizations do not have resource levels to handle extreme events on their own. A mutual aid agreement is a tool that you can use to enhance your resources during a high-demand incident. The NIMS guideline for mutual aid helps with mutual aid planning and shows how to create legal agreements with others that include common practices and processes.
What a mutual aid agreement does

Mutual aid agreements establish the terms under which one party provides resources — personnel, teams, facilities, equipment and supplies — to another party. They can support all mission areas; they can be established before, during or after incidents; and they can be between all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector.

Mutual aid planning

Your community risk assessment will identify potential shortfalls and capability gaps that a mutual aid agreement can help to address. Before your organization decides to enter into a mutual aid agreement, be sure to:

- Identify and type resources.
- Inventory your resources.
- Qualify, certify and credential personnel.
- Plan for resources.

What to include in an agreement

As you draft your mutual aid agreement, ensure that it includes:

- Liability.
- Compensation.
- Reimbursement.
- Credentialing and qualifications.
- Licensure and certification.
- Mobilization.
- Operational support.

For more information about mutual aid and the National Mutual Aid System, visit www.fema.gov.

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