



Massachusetts Municipal Association

## MMA BEST PRACTICES SERIES

*Recommendations for Effective Local Government Administration and Management from MMA Policy Committees*

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### **MMA Policy Committee on Transportation, Public Works and Public Utilities**

#### **Best Practice Recommendation: Emergency Management and Preparedness for Public Works**

**BEST PRACTICE:** Develop a strategy for your community's public works department to coordinate with other agencies and stakeholders on emergency management and disaster preparedness during emergencies, disasters and severe weather events.

It takes a wide range of municipal departments, regional, state, and federal agencies, and other community stakeholders to be prepared for emergencies and disasters that may occur in your community. It is important for each municipal department to be clear on their role and how to best coordinate with others involved in the process. Due to climate change, municipalities are experiencing severe weather events with increased frequency. Knowing how to work with others and how to coordinate mutual aid in advance will help municipalities in the event of an emergency.

Communities are advised to take steps to identify the role of the public works department in their emergency management and disaster preparedness plan and prepare their public works department to assist in the event of a disaster or emergency.

Here are some recommended actions:

- Hold meetings to ensure that each municipal department's role in emergency management and preparedness is clearly defined. Identify objectives, responsibilities and key points of contact. Meetings should be held at least annually, or more frequently based on the community's needs.
- Have a specific emergency management and emergency preparedness plan for the municipal public works department that lays out how the department is expected to respond in the event of an emergency. Clarify how the public works department's plan fits into the municipality's overall plan and how it will help the municipality to meet its goals and objectives.
- Review the statewide mutual aid agreement and public works mutual aid agreement to be aware of when and what kind of emergency response assistance your community is able to request from other participating communities. Encourage a dialogue with neighboring communities to share aid and equipment in the event of an emergency.

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- Coordinate with regional partners on emergency preparedness. This could include making and maintaining key contacts, working on best practices with a regional agency, conducting drills and trainings, and discussing mutual aid.
- Identify contacts at the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and make sure that you know what each agency's role is, what assistance you can expect them to provide, and what the timeline will look like.
- Make sure your community's utility providers have a municipal liaison for emergencies. Discuss their emergency management plan for your community and learn what information and maps will be provided to your community and how best to receive updates on service outages during an emergency.
- Work with groups that promote regional, interdisciplinary collaboration and best-practice sharing relative to public safety efforts, such as the Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council.

### **Resources:**

- MEMA Resources for Public Officials: [www.mass.gov/topics/mema-resources-for-public-officials](http://www.mass.gov/topics/mema-resources-for-public-officials)
- Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Guidance on Mutual Aid: [www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/resources/response/mutual-aid](http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/resources/response/mutual-aid)
- American Public Works Association Guidance on Public Works and Statewide Mutual Aid Agreements: [www2.apwa.net/Documents/Advocacy/\(EM\)%20PW%20&%20Statewide%20Mutual%20Aid%20Agreements%20\(Switched%20to%20guidance%202014\).pdf](http://www2.apwa.net/Documents/Advocacy/(EM)%20PW%20&%20Statewide%20Mutual%20Aid%20Agreements%20(Switched%20to%20guidance%202014).pdf)
- FEMA Emergency Management for Public Works Toolkit: [emilms.fema.gov/is554/lesson1/Toolkit.pdf](http://emilms.fema.gov/is554/lesson1/Toolkit.pdf)
- M.G.L. Ch. 164, Sec. 85B – Emergency response plans; submission for review and approval; contents; penalties for failure to file; denial of recovery of service restoration costs for failure to implement emergency response plan: [malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXXII/Chapter164/Section85B](http://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXXII/Chapter164/Section85B)
- FEMA National Response Framework: [www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1466014682982-9bcf8245ba4c60c120aa915abe74e15d/National\\_Response\\_Framework3rd.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1466014682982-9bcf8245ba4c60c120aa915abe74e15d/National_Response_Framework3rd.pdf)
- Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council (NERAC): [www.nerac.us](http://www.nerac.us)