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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-854](#), a report to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is a collaborative arrangement among member states that provides a legal framework for requesting resources. Working alongside federal players, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Guard Bureau, EMAC members deployed an unprecedented level of assistance in response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Although EMAC played a critical role in our nation's response to these hurricanes, the magnitude of these events revealed limitations.

GAO was asked to (1) examine how the use of EMAC has changed since its inception; (2) assess how well existing policies, procedures, and practices facilitate collaboration; and (3) evaluate the adequacy of the EMAC network's administrative capacity to achieve its mission. GAO examined documents and interviewed officials from 45 federal, state, and local agencies and offices.

What GAO Recommends

GAO makes recommendations to the Secretaries of DHS and DOD to further enhance the administrative capacity required to support the EMAC network and to develop guidance and to formalize certain procedures to alleviate burdens experienced by EMAC members during catastrophic disasters. DHS concurred with all of our recommendations. DOD did not concur with one recommendation.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-854.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Stanley Czerwinski at (202) 512-6806 or Sharon Pickup at (202) 512-9619.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE COMPACT

Enhancing EMAC's Collaborative and Administrative Capacity Should Improve National Disaster Response

What GAO Found

Since its inception in 1995, the EMAC network has grown significantly in size, volume, and the type of resources it provides. EMAC's membership has increased from a handful of states in 1995 to 52 states and territories today, and EMAC members have used the compact to obtain support for several types of disasters including hurricanes, floods, and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The volume and variety of resources states have requested under EMAC have also grown significantly. For example, after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, New York requested 26 support staff under EMAC to assist in emergency management operations; whereas, in response to the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes, approximately 66,000 personnel—about 46,500 National Guard and 19,500 civilian responders—were deployed under EMAC from a wide variety of specialties, most of whom went to areas directly impacted by the storms.

EMAC, along with its accompanying policies, procedures, and practices, enables its members to overcome differences to achieve a common mission—streamlining and expediting the delivery of resources among members during disasters. While these policies, procedures, and practices have worked well for smaller-scale deployments, they have not kept pace with the changing use of EMAC, sometimes resulting in confusion and deployment delays. The EMAC network has taken steps to address several of these challenges, but additional improvements can be made in a number of areas including clarifying roles and responsibilities of EMAC members and improving existing systems that track resources deployed under EMAC. In addition, a lack of sufficiently detailed federal standards and policies has led to some reimbursement delays and additional administrative burdens.

While the EMAC network has developed a basic administrative capacity, opportunities exist for it to further build on and sustain these efforts. The EMAC network has adopted several good management practices, such as using after-action reports to learn from experiences and developing a 5-year strategic plan. However, the EMAC network can enhance its administrative capacity by improving how it plans, measures, and reports on its performance. FEMA provided \$2 million to help build this capacity in 2003, but the agreement has recently expired. FEMA and EMAC leadership are in the process of finalizing a new 3-year cooperative agreement. Such an agreement would enhance the EMAC network's ability to support its collaborative efforts.



Source: FEMA.