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PART I ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT
(Chapters 1 through 182)

TITLE VII CITIES, TOWNS AND DISTRICTS

CHAPTER 40 POWERS AND DUTIES OF CITIES AND TOWNS

Section 4J Public safety mutual aid agreement; procedure for joining agreement; requests to receive assistance; rights and responsibilities of requesting and sending parties

Section 4J. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

“Agency”, the Massachusetts emergency management agency.

“Agreement”, the statewide public safety mutual aid agreement established in subsection (b).

“Authorized representative”, in the case of a city or town, the mayor, city manager, town manager, town administrator, executive secretary, police chief or on-duty shift commander of the police department, fire chief or on-duty shift commander of the fire department, health director or chairperson of the board of health and the emergency management director and, in the case of a governmental unit that is not a city or town, the chief executive officer or his designee.

“Employee”, a person employed full-time or part-time by a governmental unit, a volunteer officially operating under a governmental unit, or a person contractually providing services to a governmental unit.

“Governmental unit”, a city, town, county, regional transit authority established under chapter 161B, water or sewer commission or district established under chapter 40N or by special law, fire district, regional health district established under chapter 111, a regional school district or a law enforcement council.

“Incident command system”, the standardized national incident management system that establishes an on-scene management system of procedures for controlling personnel, facilities, equipment and communications from different agencies at the scene of an emergency or other event for which mutual aid assistance is provided.

“Law enforcement council”, a nonprofit corporation comprised of municipal police chiefs and other law enforcement agencies established to provide: (i) mutual aid to its members pursuant to mutual aid agreements; (ii) mutual aid or requisitions for aid to non-members consistent with section 8G of this chapter or section 99 of chapter 41; and (iii) enhanced public safety by otherwise sharing resources and personnel.

“Mutual aid assistance”, the cross-jurisdictional provision of emergency services, materials or facilities from 1 party to another when existing resources are, or may be, inadequate.

“Party”, a governmental unit that has joined the agreement.

“Public safety incident”, an event, emergency or natural or man-made disaster, that threatens or causes harm to public health, safety or welfare and that exceeds, or reasonably may be expected to exceed, the response or recovery capabilities of a governmental unit including, but not limited to, a technological hazard, planned event, civil unrest, health-related event and an emergency, act of terrorism and training and exercise that tests and simulates the ability to manage, respond to or recover from any such event.

“Requesting party”, a party that requests aid or assistance from another party pursuant to the agreement.

“Sending party”, a party that renders aid or assistance to another party under the agreement.

(b) There shall be a statewide public safety mutual aid agreement to create a framework for the provision of mutual aid assistance among the parties to the agreement in the case of a public safety incident. The assistance to be provided under the agreement shall include, but not be limited to, fire service, law enforcement, emergency medical services, transportation, communications, public works, engineering, building inspection, planning and information assistance, resource support, public health, health and medical services, search and rescue assistance and any other resource, equipment or personnel that a party to the agreement may request or provide in anticipation of, or in response to, a public safety incident.

(c)(1) If a city or town wishes to join the agreement, the mayor in the case of a city, the city manager in the case of a Plan D or Plan E city, or the town manager, town administrator or chairman of the board of selectmen with the approval of the board of selectmen, may act on behalf of the city or town to join the agreement by notifying the director of the agency in writing. The municipality shall be a party to the agreement 30 days after receipt by the agency of the written notification.

A city or town that has joined the agreement may opt out of the agreement in the same manner as provided for joining the agreement and by notifying the agency in writing of its intention to opt out. The removal of the municipality from the agreement shall take effect 10 days after receipt by the agency of the written notification.

(2) If a governmental unit that is not a city or town wishes to join the agreement, the chief executive officer of the governmental unit may act on its behalf to join the agreement by notifying the director of the agency in writing. The governmental unit shall be a party to the agreement 30 days after receipt by the agency of the written notification.

If a governmental unit that is not a city or town has joined the agreement but wishes to opt out of the agreement, the chief executive officer of the governmental unit may act on its behalf to opt out of the agreement by notifying the agency in writing. The removal of the municipality from the agreement shall take effect 10 days after receipt by the agency of the written notification.

(d)(1) A request by a party to receive mutual aid assistance under the agreement shall be made, either orally or in writing, by an authorized representative of the requesting party and shall be communicated to an authorized representative of the sending party or to the agency; provided, however, that if the request is communicated orally, the requesting party shall reduce the request to writing and deliver it to the sending party or to the agency at the earliest possible date, but not later than 72 hours after making the oral request. A party to the agreement may request mutual aid assistance during, in anticipation of or as a result of a public safety incident.

(2) An oral or written request for mutual aid assistance under the agreement shall include the following information:

(i) a description of the public safety incident;

(ii) the nature, type and amount of personnel, equipment, materials, supplies or other resources being requested;

(iii) the manner in which the resources shall be used and deployed;

(iv) a reasonable estimate of the length of time for which the resources shall be needed;

(v) the location to which the resources shall be deployed; and

(vi) the requesting party's point of contact.

(3) A party that receives a request for mutual aid assistance shall provide and make available, to the extent reasonable and practicable under the circumstances, the resources requested; provided, however, that a sending party may withhold requested resources to the extent necessary to provide reasonable protection and coverage for its own jurisdiction.

(e) The requesting party shall be responsible for the overall operation, assignment and deployment of resources and personnel provided by a sending party consistent with the incident command system. The sending party shall retain direct supervision, command and control of personnel, equipment and resources provided by the sending party unless otherwise agreed to by the requesting party and the sending party. During the course of rendering mutual aid assistance under the agreement, the sending party shall be responsible for the operation of its equipment and for any damage thereto unless the sending party and the requesting party agree otherwise.

(f)(1) All expenses incurred by the sending party in rendering mutual aid assistance pursuant to the agreement shall be paid by the sending party; provided, however, that a requesting party and a sending party may enter into supplementary agreements for reimbursement of costs associated with providing mutual aid assistance incurred by a sending party.

(2) A sending party shall document its costs of providing mutual aid assistance under the agreement, including direct and indirect payroll and employee benefit costs, travel costs, repair costs and the costs of materials and supplies. A sending party shall also document the use of its equipment and the quantities of materials and supplies used while providing mutual aid assistance under the agreement.

(3) Except as otherwise agreed to by the parties, the requesting party shall seek reimbursement under any applicable federal and state disaster assistance programs for the costs of responding to the public safety incident. The requesting party and each sending party shall receive, based on the documented costs of providing mutual aid assistance, its pro rata share of the disaster assistance reimbursement provided to the requesting party.

(g) While providing mutual aid assistance under the agreement, employees of a sending party shall: (i) be afforded the same powers, duties, rights and privileges as they are afforded in the sending party's geographical jurisdiction or location; and (ii) receive the same salary, including overtime, that they would be entitled to receive if they were operating in their own governmental unit. In the absence of an agreement to the contrary, the sending party shall be responsible for all such salary expenses, including overtime.

(h)(1) While in transit to, returning from and providing mutual aid assistance under the agreement, employees of a sending party shall have the same rights of defense, immunity and indemnification that they otherwise would have under the law if they were acting within the scope of their employment under the direction of their employer. A sending party shall provide to, and maintain for, each of its employees who provide mutual aid assistance under the agreement the same indemnification, defense, right to immunity, employee benefits, death benefits, workers' compensation or similar protection and insurance coverage that would be provided to those employees if they were performing similar services in the sending party's jurisdiction.

(2) Each party to the agreement shall waive all claims and causes of action against each other party to the agreement that may arise out of their activities while rendering or receiving mutual aid assistance under the agreement, including travel outside of its jurisdiction.

(3) Each requesting party shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless each sending party from all claims by third parties for property damage or personal injury which may arise out of the activities of the sending party or its employees, including travel, while providing mutual aid assistance under the agreement.

(i) This section shall not affect, supersede or invalidate any other statutory or contractual mutual aid or assistance agreements involving parties to the agreement including, but not limited to, those established pursuant to section 4A or 8G. A party may enter into supplementary mutual aid agreements with other parties or jurisdictions.