

# Washington Building Safety Mutual Aid



COMMUNITIES HELPING COMMUNITIES IN  
EMERGENCIES

# What is Building Safety Mutual Aid?

Building safety mutual aid enables building safety agencies throughout Washington State to share resources during building safety emergencies.

# Background

In 2005 Washington Association of Building Officials (WABO) members deployed under the federal Emergency Management Assistance Compact to assist with damage assessment and building department reconstitution following Hurricane Katrina.

That successful response illustrated the challenges and opportunities inherent in resource sharing across jurisdictional boundaries and the value of mutual aid compacts in disaster response and recovery.

# Background

In contrast, during the 2007 Lewis Co. floods building departments around the State were unable to respond to requests for assistance from affected communities in a timely manner...

Because no mechanism was in place for intrastate resource sharing between Washington's building safety agencies.

# Background

In 2011 WABO introduced ESHB 1406, establishing the Washington Building Safety Mutual Aid System providing a mechanism for intrastate sharing of building safety resources in the event of a building safety emergency.

The legislation passed through both houses unanimously and was signed into law on April 29, 2011.

# What is a Building Safety Emergency

Recognizing that building safety agencies are often minimally staffed, and the unplanned, extended absence of even one staff member may negatively affect the agency's ability to provide essential services, therefore the legislation defines a building safety emergency as:

“a situation that temporarily renders a building safety department incapable of providing building safety services and includes, but is not limited to, declared states of emergency, declared disasters, and other situations that temporarily impair the jurisdiction's ability to provide building safety operations”.

# What BSMA Does/Doesn't Do

## Does

- Provide a responsive and straightforward mutual aid system for sharing building safety resources
- Maximize the use of all available Member agency resources
- Provide immunity and tort protection
- Work in harmony with the National Response Framework
- Is a primary resource provider when EMAC and federal support are not warranted

## Doesn't

- Require agencies to provide support
- Assume direction and control of the affected agency's emergency operations
- Endorse self-deployment
- Replace existing mutual aid agreements
- Prohibit future mutual aid agreements
- Stockpile/prioritize/allocate resources
- Move resources from Washington to another state (BSMA is in-state *only*)
- Rely upon federal or state funds to reimburse BSMA costs incurred by Assisting Jurisdictions

# Benefits of BSMA

- \* Creates a statewide standard that all jurisdictions are a party to unless they “opt out”
  - Tribes can “opt-in”
- \* Creates a governance structure
- \* Does not create a duty to respond
- \* Does not impact existing agreements (such as Fire Mobilization)
- \* Supplemental agreements are allowed
- \* Addresses issues of:
  - License portability
  - Reimbursement
  - Workers’ Compensation
  - Immunity

# Benefits of BSMA

- \* Customized to fit Washington's unique circumstances
- \* Is revenue neutral
- \* Multi-disciplinary – includes building, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical inspectors, plans examiners, permit technicians and building officials.
- \* Most importantly, legally empowers local jurisdictions to help each other

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# Governance

- \* A BSMA steering committee has been established within the WABO Emergency Management Committee to oversee implementation and maintenance of the agreement. The WABO Emergency Management Committee chair or designee serves as the chair of the steering committee.
- \* Committee represents building safety agencies and disciplines and political subdivisions.
- \* Meets at least annually
- \* Develops and maintains a “Building Safety Mutual Aid Tool Box” containing:
  - Explanatory information and final bill verbiage
  - Checklists and forms for requesting and providing assistance
  - Templates for building safety proclamations
  - Recordkeeping guidance
  - Reimbursement guidance
- \* Monitors the building safety mutual aid system, drafting necessary guidelines, policies, and procedures to address deficiencies in the system.

# For More Information

For more information on the Washington Building Safety Mutual Aid System contact your local building official or the Washington Association of Building Officials at:

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