



Public Power Mutual Aid

June 2024
Ver. 04

**A Guide to Response &
Recovery for the Nation's
Public Power Utilities**

Playbook

**AMERICAN
PUBLIC
POWER™
ASSOCIATION**

Powering Strong Communities

The American Public Power Association is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power approximately 2,000 towns and cities nationwide. We represent public power before the federal government to protect the interests of the more than 54 million customers that public power utilities serve across the United States and its territories. We advocate and advise on electricity policy, grid technology and operations, and workforce development in support of safe, modern, and resilient utilities.

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Powering Strong Communities

Mutual Aid Playbook

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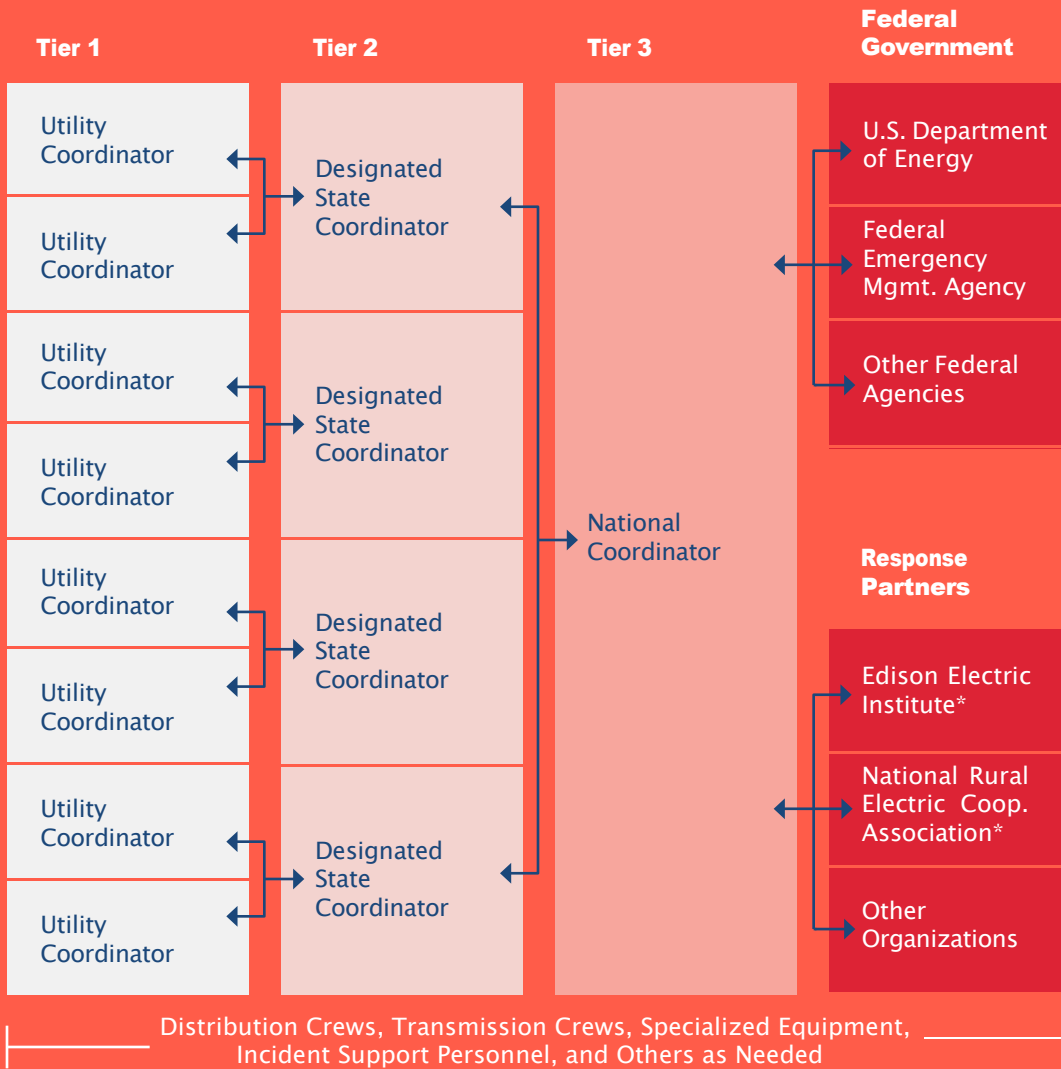
Acknowledgments

The Mutual Aid Playbook builds on decades of members helping members in times of need. This version expands on lessons learned using the national mutual aid agreement signed by more than 2,000 organizations. Countless events have been managed using this playbook, and the American Public Power Association would like to acknowledge all members who have participated in those efforts and those who have contributed feedback following activations and exercises. This document was developed by the Mutual Aid Committee (MAC) Executive Council, including Neil James, Mike Willetts, David Hefner, and Fredrick Rumery, the MAC Playbook Update Subcommittee, including Jason Miller, Scott McKenzie, Mark Mustain, Jared Masker, and Nick Lawler, and APPA staff including Pat Hart, Giacomo Wray, and Nina Stallworth.



Section 01

Mutual Aid Network Coordination Overview



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The Public Power Mutual Aid Network connects utilities, state/regional associations, joint action agencies, APPA, and federal/response partners to support the safe and efficient restoration of power through effective resource coordination and information sharing.

*EEI and NRECA are electric industry associations representing investor-owned and rural electric cooperative utilities, respectively.

For decades, public power utilities have been working together to restore power, knowing others would return the favor when the time came.

Before the formalization of the Public Power Mutual Aid Network, when a utility faced a weather disaster, line workers from neighboring utilities would come to their aid. As restoration events have become more complex, the community of responding utilities and the skill sets of their workers have continued to grow to meet the needs of the communities served by public power.

The Mutual Aid Playbook (MAP) provides a process for coordinating activities, information, and resources across a three-tiered national network without infringing on mutual aid agreements between utilities. The MAP is intentionally flexible and scalable to enable the successful coordination of mutual aid mobilizations for restoration events resulting from all hazards, including natural and man-made disasters and security or cybersecurity events that result in utility customer outages.

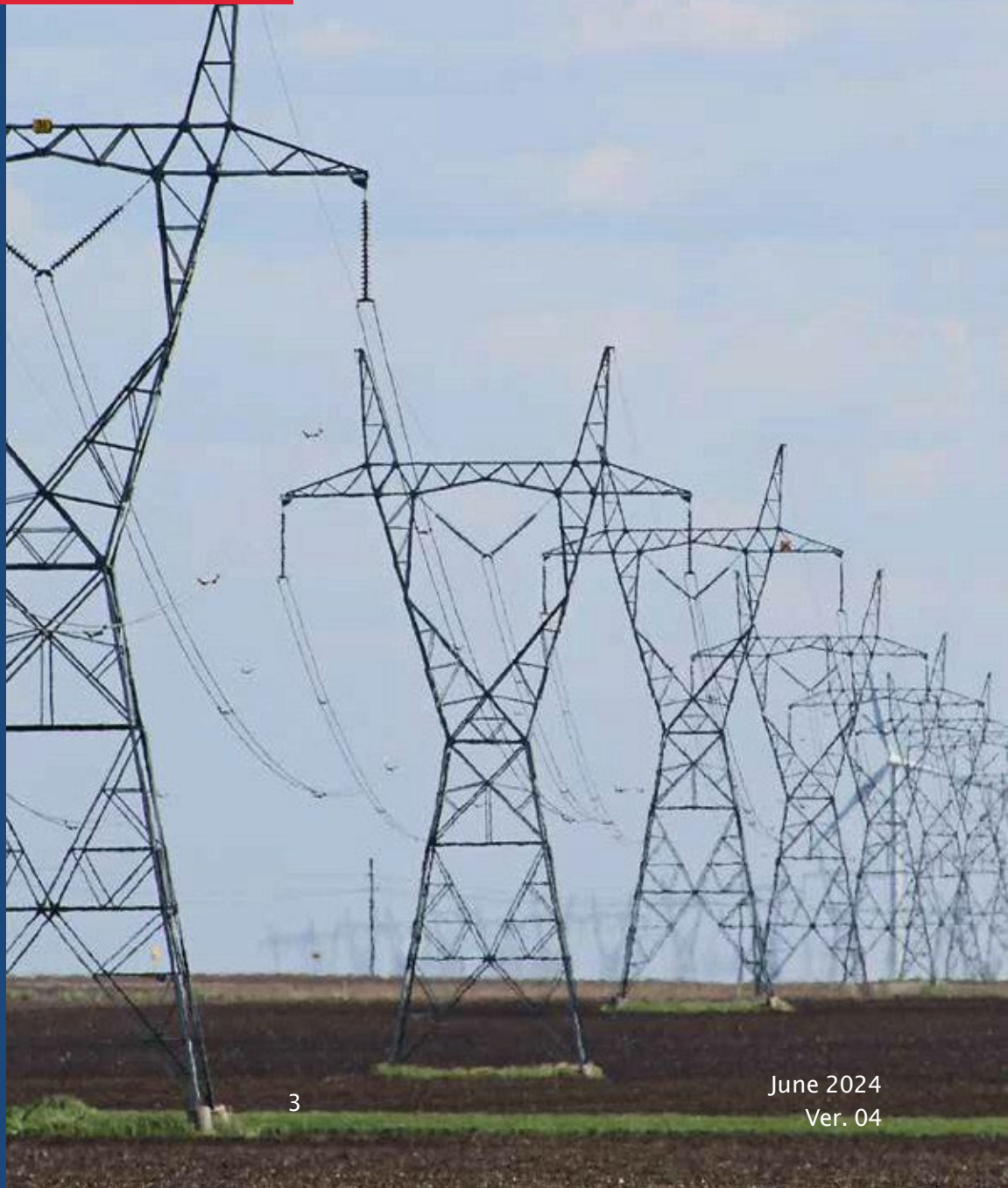
As the public power mutual aid community evolves and advances, state-level coordination continues to be an important function. Designated State Coordinators (DSCs)—individuals at utilities, joint action agencies, and state or regional associations—play a key role in ensuring effective coordination among the responding groups. They work in real time to make connections between requesting and responding utilities in their state, State Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), DSCs in other states, and APPA (during national events).

This process and playbook are managed by the Public Power Mutual Aid Committee (MAC) with support from APPA staff. The MAC meets on a regular basis to test, evaluate, and improve the mutual aid network through the maintenance of a policy manual that governs the MAP, mutual aid role requirements and expectations, and related projects.



Section 02

Roles & Responsibilities



Roles & Responsibilities

A key purpose of the MAP is to clarify individual roles and responsibilities within the nationwide mutual aid network in order to streamline information sharing and the movement of resources to where they are most needed.

There are many active participants in the national mutual aid process, from local crews and specialized resources to federal agencies and industry response partners. This playbook addresses the responsibilities of and communications among three tiers:

- Utility Coordinators (Tier 1)
- Designated State Coordinators (Tier 2)
- National Coordinators (Tier 3)

Utility Coordinator (Tier 1)

The Utility Coordinator is an individual chosen by a utility to serve as the primary point of contact for the organization's mutual aid process. The Utility Coordinator represents a utility that has signed the APPA National Mutual Aid Agreement (see [Attachment A](#)) and other mutual aid agreements applicable for their state or region.

At a high level, Utility Coordinators are responsible for:

- Completing Utility Coordinator onboarding



Mutual aid agreement and additional resources are available at:

www.PublicPower.org/MutualAid

- Becoming familiar with the *Public Power Mutual Aid Playbook* and related resources
- Confirming their state's Designated State Coordinator (DSC) has their current contact information
- Understanding procedures for communicating with their DSC
- Responding to information requests from their DSC

APPA recommends that each utility participating in mutual aid should also consider:

- Maintaining and implementing an Emergency Operations Plan or Restoration Management Plan as a standard operating procedure
 - » This plan should be accessible to all utility personnel, and all information should be kept up to date
 - » APPA has available resources to help utilities develop these plans, including the *All-Hazards Guidebook* and the *Restoration Best Practices Guidebook*

- Establishing relationships to ensure effective coordination with local and county emergency management partners
- Holding annual preparedness drills to ensure readiness

Note: These items may be the responsibility of the Utility Coordinator or an individual the Utility Coordinator interfaces with regularly within the utility.

A Utility Coordinator Job Aid can be found in Attachment D.

Continuity Considerations

Each utility is responsible for determining the best way for their organization to ensure continuous/redundant coverage of the Utility Coordinator role. If utilizing a primary and backup Utility Coordinator approach, both coordinators should be familiar with the process for communicating with their DSC and responding to information requests from their DSC in real time.

Designated State Coordinator (Tier 2)

DSCs play a critical role in facilitating effective communication among key responding groups. They work in real time to make direct connections between requesting and responding utilities in their state, coordinate with DSCs in other states during regional events, interface with State EOCs, and provide information to APPA during local, regional, and national events.

At a high level, DSCs are responsible for:

- Aggregating state-specific information such as resource needs and system conditions into the Mutual Aid Resource Allocation Tool.
- Communicating with the National Coordinator to provide consistent, accurate reporting to federal entities.
- Encouraging utilities in their state to become familiar with the *Public Power Mutual Aid Playbook*, updating mutual aid and emergency/restoration plans, holding regular preparedness drills, and assisting other public power utilities in times of need.
- Offering mutual aid training and conducting other recruitment efforts with utilities in their state, when possible.
- Requesting mutual aid activation/escalation when resource requests exceed resources available within the state.
- Helping to establish statewide contingents to pool the resources of multiple utilities and enable them to meet the expectations necessary to deploy and work as a group.
- Maintaining a contact list and ensuring that all DSCs in the state have access to the information.
- Educating Utility Coordinators on the best ways to communicate during an emergency and briefing them on current processes and templates for use during mutual aid events.

- Establishing procedures for communicating with Utility Coordinators at each mutual aid level.
- Establishing relationships and strong communication channels with state and regional partners.

A Designated State Coordinator Job Aid can be found in Attachment E.

Continuity Considerations

Ensuring continuous/redundant coverage of the DSC role is managed on a state-by-state basis, either as a shared responsibility by multiple individuals or through a primary/backup model. The requirements for who may serve as a DSC, and other role expectations are set by the MAC.

National Coordinator (Tier 3)

The National Coordinator serves as the central point of contact for DSCs and the federal government. The National Coordinator is an APPA staff member or, in the event APPA staff is unreachable due to an incident in the Washington D.C. area, the Mutual Aid Committee Executive Council's Chair and Vice Chair will fill the role and responsibility as designated backup National Coordinators.

At a high level, National Coordinators are responsible for:

- Working with APPA members, the MAC, federal agencies, and response partners to enhance communication during preparation for and recovery from emergencies.
- Initiating and scheduling National Mutual Aid Calls when needed (typically supporting Level 3 or Level 4 events) and overseeing

real-time use of the Mutual Aid Resource Allocation Tool.

- Navigating administrative, policy, or strategy-related obstacles to procure assistance during and after a major storm/event.
- Improving preparedness, coordination, and understanding between federal entities, other industry organizations, and public power utilities.
- Educating and encouraging all APPA members to familiarize themselves with the *Public Power Mutual Aid Playbook*, updating mutual aid agreements and disaster plans annually, and remaining ready to assist public power utilities in times of need.
- Engage with the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC), which provides coordination between the federal government and the electric power industry to streamline efforts surrounding preparation for and response to national-level disasters or threats to critical infrastructure.

A National Coordinator Job Aid can be found in Attachment F.

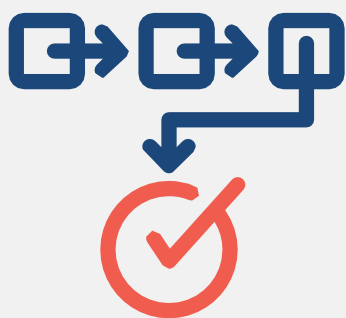
Continuity Considerations

Disasters or other business disruptions potentially affecting APPA staff's ability to fill the role of National Coordinator, including the relocation of staff to alternate facilities or to remote work, are managed by APPA's Business Continuity and Internal Activation Management Plans in order to minimize the impact on national coordination efforts. APPA maintains a regular on-call schedule and escalation process to ensure APPA staff availability to fill this key role.



Additionally, the National Coordinator will ensure that the MAC Executive Council Chair and Vice-Chair are trained, and granted appropriate access to attend industry meetings on APPA's behalf during a national event as needed.

In the event the National Coordinator is unavailable, the MAC Executive Council Chair and Vice-Chair as the designated backup National Coordinator will:



- Initiate the National Mutual Aid Call using the call agenda located in *Attachment C: Coordination Meetings and Agendas*
 - » Notify DSCs that the designated backup National Coordinator is temporarily assuming the National Coordinator role and provide updated contact information.
 - » Ensure accurate notes are taken during the calls and distributed to DSCs.
- Continue efforts to re-establish communications with the National Coordinator.

Once communication with the National Coordinator is re-established, the designated backup National Coordinator will transmit all National Mutual Aid Call notes, debrief the National Coordinator, and/or provide a situation report on the status of the mutual aid event. APPA will notify DSCs that it has resumed filling the National Coordinator role and provide updated contact information.

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Section 03

Mutual Aid Activation & Coordination



Mutual Aid Activation & Coordination

The Public Power Mutual Aid Process follows the All-Hazards Approach to emergency planning and aligns with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) best practices, including local command and control of incidents. Mutual aid coordination is therefore managed as locally as possible with clear escalation processes that enable consistent, scalable coordination regardless of incident type.

Activation by Incident Level

The following pages provide an overview of each of the four incident levels within the Public Power Mutual Aid Network. These incident levels provide a framework for communication and activation. In some instances, APPA may proactively determine that the Public Power Mutual Aid Network should operate at a level higher than that of the associated impact description, often to mirror a federal response posture or at the request of an APPA member.

- **Level 0:** No outages
- **Level 1:** Isolated event
- **Level 2:** Local/state event
- **Level 3:** Regional event
- **Level 4:** National event

The nature of an emergency will influence the preparedness timeline, as some types of events do not provide advance warning. Natural events that build in intensity over time, such as severe winter storms or hurricanes, enable DSCs to anticipate the potential damage and the magnitude of response resources required. Other events, such as tornadoes, earthquakes, cyber events, and flash floods, have sudden impacts and do not give time for proactive coordination. Consequently, Utility Coordinators and DSCs may be required to conduct an initial rapid assessment after the event occurs to determine the level of response that is warranted.



APPA has resources available, including the *ICS Guide for Electric Utilities, All-Hazards Guidebook* and the *Restoration Best Practices Guidebook*, to help member utilities develop emergency plans.

Incident Level

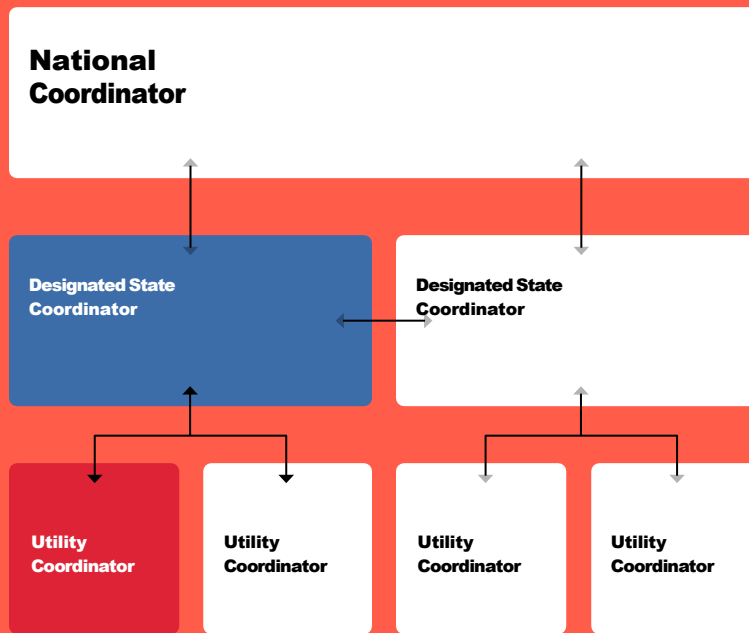


Key:

- Impacted
- Activated
- Monitoring

Isolated event

Mutual Aid Network



ISOLATED IMPACT:

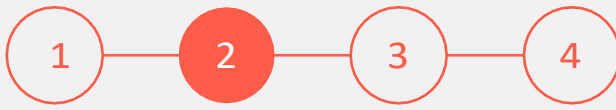
- Coordinator for Impacted Utility: *Activated*
- Designated State Coordinators: *Monitoring*
- National Coordinator: *Not Activated*

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Level 1 (Isolated Event): Utility Coordinators evaluate the event and determine whether restoration can be successfully managed by the organization’s restoration plans and internal and/or contract resources. Mutual aid is not activated. DSCs may monitor the event/state. The National Coordinator is not monitoring or activated.

Example Scenario: Localized event with restoration handled with in-house/local resources.

Incident Level

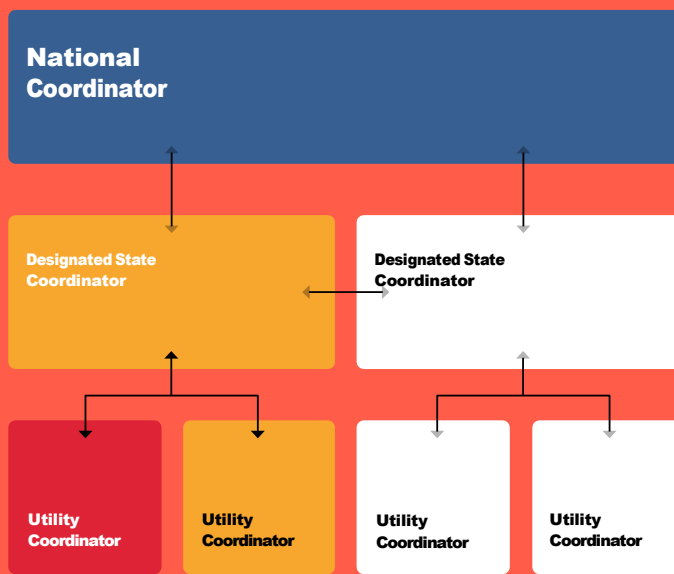


Key:

- Impacted
- Activated
- Monitoring

Local/state event

Mutual Aid Network



WITHIN IMPACTED STATE:

- Utility Coordinators: *Activated*
- Designated State Coordinators: *Activated*

OUTSIDE IMPACTED STATE:

- Utility Coordinators: *Not Activated*
- Designated State Coordinators: *Not Activated*
- National Coordinator: *Monitoring*

Level 2 (Local/State Event): Utility Coordinators evaluate the impacts (or forecast the potential impacts) on their systems and the associated resources needed. If resource needs extend beyond the impacted utilities internal, contract resources, or neighboring utilities, then the Utility Coordinators will notify their DSC. During the notification, the Utility Coordinator may request assistance from the DSC to coordinate with non-impacted utilities that may be able to offer resources. If coordination assistance is requested, the DSC will be activated to a coordinating capacity and will begin working with non-impacted utilities to serve the demand caused by the event. If coordination assistance is not required, notification should be made to the DSC at a minimum to begin identifying available resources if needed later in the response. Notification to the DSC is a preparatory step of awareness in the case that the event is escalated to a Level 3. The National Coordinator and the DSCs outside of the impacted state are not activated for Level 2 events. However, the National Coordinator will monitor and coordinate with the Department of Energy (DOE), which may be activated to support FEMA as the lead for Emergency Support Function (ESF) 12. If so, the National Coordinator will relay unclassified intelligence / situational awareness related to the incident that it received to the MAC EC, impacted DSC, and impacted utility.

For a Level 2 event, the Utility Coordinator and DSCs that activated mutual aid will deactivate mutual aid at the end of the response. A Level 2 event can be escalated to a Level 3 or Level 4 event depending on severity of outages, government involvement, media attention, and whether resource requests exceed resources available within the state, requiring coordination with other states.

Utility Coordinators and DSCs within a particular state may activate daily Mutual Aid Calls for resources within the state. *Attachment D: Utility Coordinator Job Aid* and *Attachment E: Designated State Coordinator Job Aid* provide best practices for the type and specificity of information that should be communicated in these calls.

Example Scenario: An event with significant damage affecting multiple utilities within a state.

Incident Level

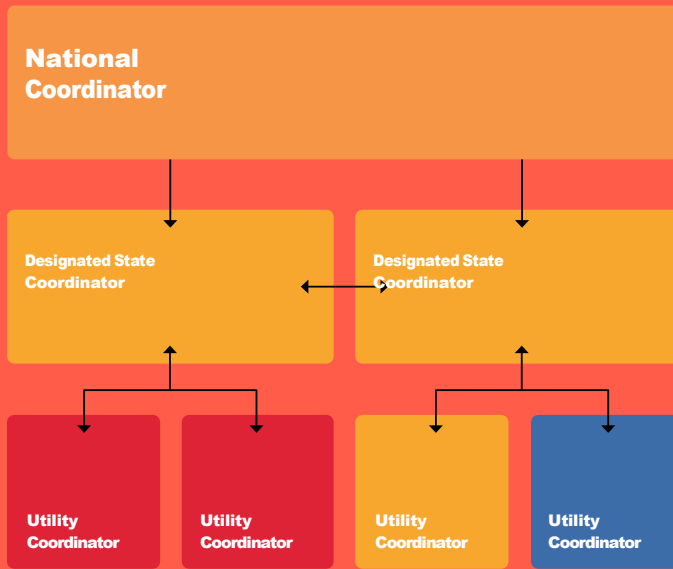


Key:

- Impacted
- Activated
- Monitoring

Regional event

Mutual Aid Network



WITHIN IMPACTED STATE:

- Utility Coordinators: *Activated*
- Designated State Coordinators: *Activated*

OUTSIDE IMPACTED STATE:

- Utility Coordinators: *Activated or Monitoring*
- Designated State Coordinators: *Activated*
- National Coordinator: *Activated*

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Level 3 (Regional Event): DSCs work together to balance resource requests from impacted Utility Coordinators with resource offers from nearby Utility Coordinators. For events that can be managed regionally, not all Utility Coordinators from outside the impacted area will be activated. If their DSC is activated to help a neighboring DSC, however, they may monitor the event. The National Coordinator will be activated to assist in coordination if needed and will coordinate with DOE and energy trade associations through the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC). The MAC EC and/or leadership from impacted utilities may be asked to participate in executive-level ESCC calls to discuss response activities. The National Coordinator will be responsible for contacting the impacted utilities and facilitating those calls. The National Coordinator will also relay unclassified intelligence / situational awareness related to the incident that it receives from DOE and/or the ESCC.

If unmet needs remain despite coordination with neighboring states, the DSC should submit a request to the National Coordinator to activate National Mutual Aid Calls. Level 3 events that do not require activation of National Mutual Aid Calls will be deactivated by the DSC. Level 3 events requiring activation of the

Coordinator will be deactivated by the National Coordinator with the input of the impacted DSCs.

Example Scenario: An event with significant damage affecting multiple utilities within a region or multiple states.

Incident Level

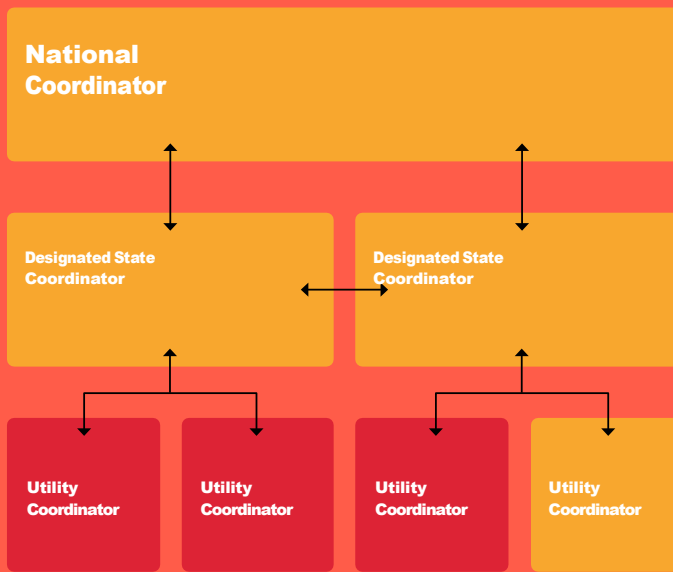


Key:

- Impacted
- Activated
- Monitoring

National event

Mutual Aid Network



NATIONAL IMPACT:

- Utility Coordinators: *Activated*
- Designated State Coordinators: *Activated*
- National Coordinator: *Activated*

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Level 4 (National Event): Upon either receipt of a request from a DSC or determination by APPA staff, the National Coordinator initiates and facilitates National Mutual Aid Calls. These calls typically occur daily until no longer needed and are generally attended by all DSCs. The National Coordinator also sets up and manages the Mutual Aid Resource Allocation Tool to facilitate real-time information sharing regarding available and needed types and quantities of resources.

For a Level 4 event, the National Coordinator activate mutual aid and daily calls with the input of the impacted DSCs, and will deactivate when national or regional coordination is no longer needed. Notification will be made by email to DSCs.

In the event APPA staff is unreachable due to an incident in the Washington D.C. area, the roles and responsibilities of the National Coordinator will be transferred to the Mutual Aid Committee Executive Council’s Chair and Vice Chair. At this point, all DSC and Utility Coordinators should activate their satellite phones as the main communication channel with APPA.

Once regular communications platforms have been reestablished, APPA will notify the Mutual Aid Committee. *Attachment B* provides a list of DSC and National Coordinator contact information.

Example Scenario: A national event affecting multiple regions of the country.

Mutual Aid Network

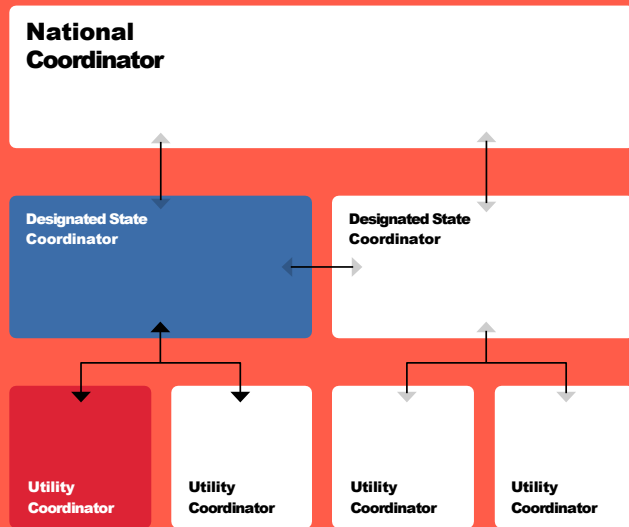
Key:

Impacted Activated Monitoring

Incident Level



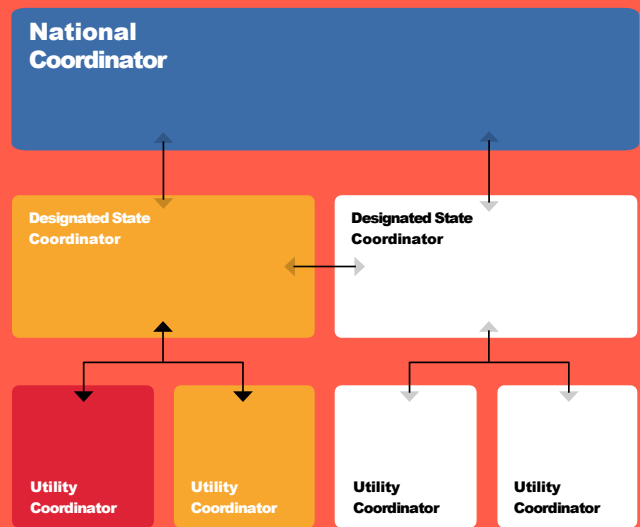
Isolated event



Incident Level



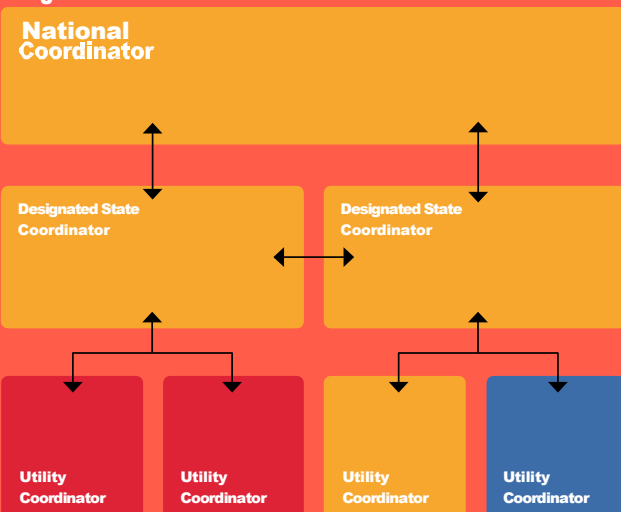
Local/state event



Incident Level



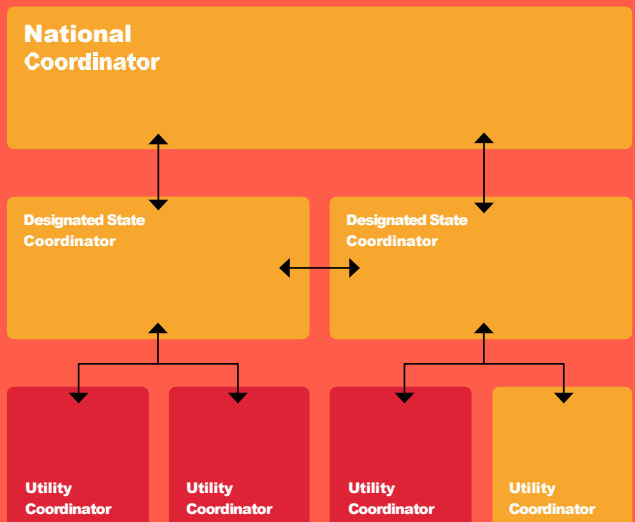
Regional event



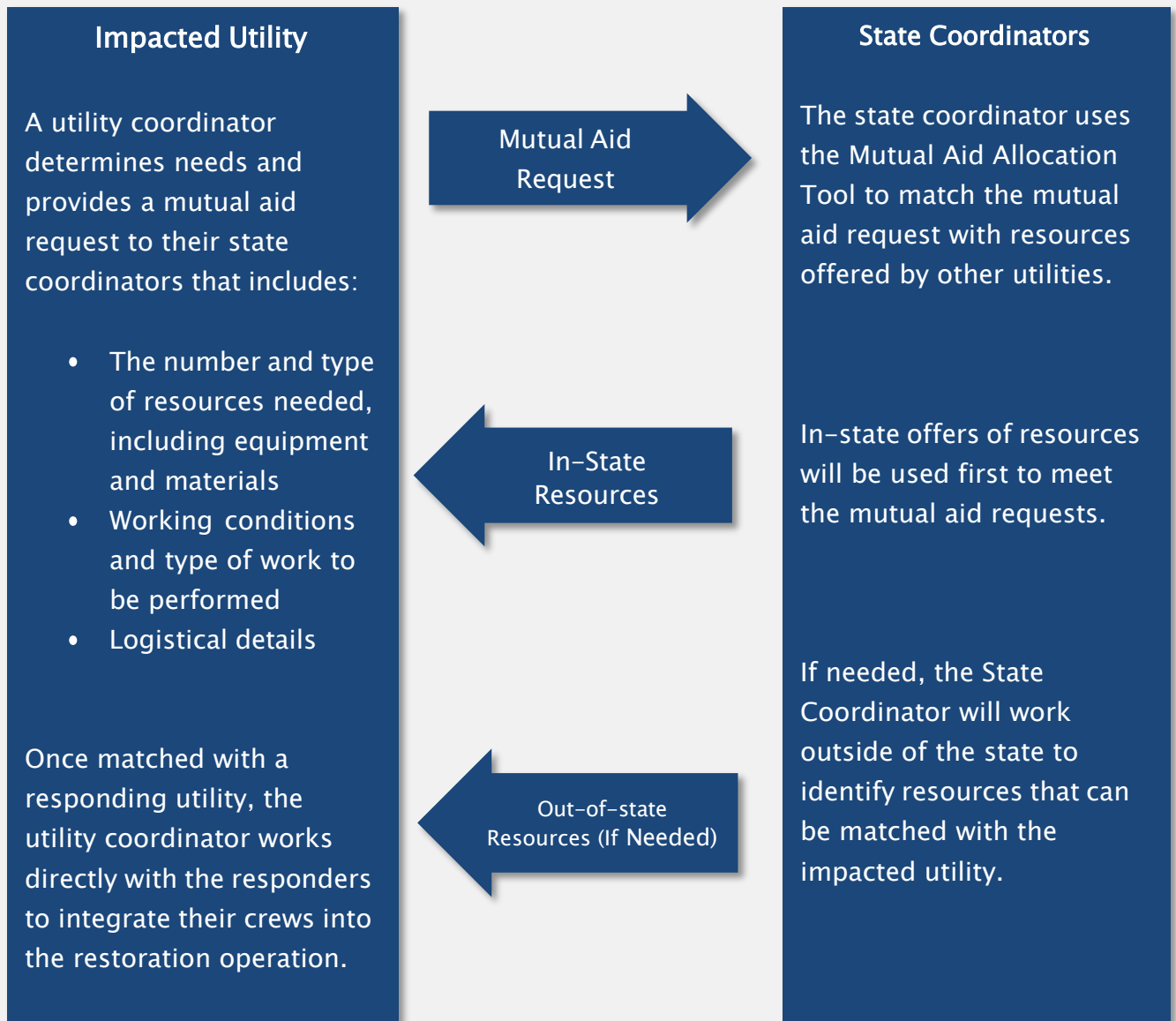
Incident Level



National event



Requesting Mutual Aid



Utility Coordinators

Leading up to an event, if advance warning is possible, the Utility Coordinator should reach out to their DSC to provide situational awareness, including forecasted impact information. As soon as practical following an impact, a mutual aid resource request should be made to the DSC that provides as much detail as possible regarding the type of resources, equipment, and materials needed; working conditions; logistical details; and type of work to be performed.

When submitting an initial or subsequent mutual aid resource request to the DSC, the Utility Coordinator should provide information regarding their response efforts, such as the number of customers without power, the number and type of resources requested (e.g., distribution crews, transmission crews, specialized resources), and the deployment status of previously requested resources. The DSC may assist the Utility Coordinator in identifying and compiling the information required for effective mutual aid resource requests as needed. For more detailed examples of information to gather and provide, see [Attachment D: Utility Coordinator Job Aid](#).

Once the DSC is made aware of a Utility Coordinator who is available to respond to the impacted utility's request, the DSC will provide the appropriate contact information so additional details can be provided and deployment arrangements can be made between the utilities.

Designated State Coordinators

If resource needs cannot be met within the state, DSCs submit mutual aid resource requests to DSCs in the surrounding states. Similar to Utility Coordinators, DSCs should be as specific as possible in their requests to ensure the right types of resources are secured. When the National Coordinator role is activated, the same type of information should be provided via National Mutual Aid Calls and/or the Mutual Aid Resource Allocation Tool. For more detailed examples of information to include in mutual aid resource requests, see [Attachment E: Designated State Coordinator Job Aid](#).

National Coordinators

In order to maintain flexibility, there are two additional triggers for national mutual aid activation (including the National Mutual Aid Calls) beyond the normal escalation process described above. The National Coordinator may declare a Level 3 or Level 4 event at their discretion based on the following:

- **APPA Staff Determination:**
In the event that the federal government, specifically the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), is monitoring an upcoming storm or incident and has activated daily Emergency Support Function (ESF) #12 conference calls with APPA, the Edison Electric Institute (EEI), and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), APPA may proactively begin National Mutual Aid Calls.

- **Utility CEO / General Manager Request:** If a utility CEO/ general manager has significant concerns about the need for mutual aid (and/or they do not have a designated Utility Coordinator per the mutual aid process), the CEO / general manager may contact APPA staff directly to make the request for National Mutual Aid Calls to begin.

If the Public Power Mutual Aid Network is fully activated and there are still outstanding needs, the National Coordinator is responsible for coordinating unmet resource requests with the broader electric sector. This is typically done via the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC). APPA is an active participant in the ESCC, representing the needs of public power and coordinating across the electric industry. At no point will APPA allocate resources on behalf of a utility, but during certain levels of activation there may be a need to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of resources based on Government priorities for restoring critical infrastructure. APPA will facilitate these conversations during the daily National Mutual Aid calls.

Real-Time Coordination

Real-time coordination of mutual aid events depends on the incident level and impacted or activated roles. Respecting the local mutual aid agreements that exist (and are generally activated prior to national coordination being needed), this section primarily focuses on Level 3 and Level 4 incidents. Once the need for mutual aid is determined by the

Utility Coordinator(s) and communicated to the DSC to declare a Level 3 or Level 4 event (or the National Coordinator determines there is a need to proactively initiate), the National Coordinator schedules a National Mutual Aid Call.

The National Mutual Aid Call is typically held daily. An agenda can be found in [Attachment C: Coordination Meetings and Agendas](#), along with an overview of industry and government calls the National Coordinator attends.

All DSCs should attend each National Mutual Aid Call and be prepared to provide either an update on the unmet needs in their state or an overview of resources that have been offered by their respective Utility Coordinators.

See [Attachment D: Utility Coordinator Job Aid](#) and [Attachment E: Designated State Coordinator Job Aid](#) for the types of information to prepare and provide.

The National Coordinator may also set up an instance within the Mutual Aid Resource Allocation Tool for the specific event and notify the DSCs to enter their available resources or match resource offers with current needs.

As restoration efforts continue, the determination may be made to de-escalate from a Level 4 to a Level 3 event. The National Coordinator will continue to facilitate daily calls with a subset of DSCs (typically only those requesting and responding) until the event is transitioned back to state-level coordination (Level 2). At this time, the National Coordinator will begin the demobilization process.

Demobilization & Debriefing

As restoration efforts are completed, resources may be released by a host utility to either return home or support another nearby / en route utility. Utility Coordinators should notify the DSC of their approximate release date and potential availability to support another impacted utility so the DSC can make the mutual aid network aware of the available resources.

As the event de-escalates and there are either no unmet resource needs or the remaining needs can be met by neighboring states or other Utility Coordinators within the state, the event level may be downgraded. If already activated, the National Coordinator may continue to facilitate National Mutual Aid Calls with only requesting and responding DSCs for continuity even as the event progresses from Level 4 to 3 or 2. This is typically on an as-requested basis to support the last 5%-10% of restoration.

At the end of storm season during the Bi-Annual Fall Mutual Aid Committee Meeting, the National Coordinator will conduct any necessary hotwashes and after-action report development. A hotwash/debrief that includes engaged members should be conducted for all Level 4 events. Conducting a debrief with DSCs for Level 3 events is at the discretion of the National Coordinator. No debrief is typically required for Level 2 or Level 1 events.



Section 04

Governance & Continuity

Governance & Continuity

Mutual Aid Committee

The MAC is responsible for the governance of the Public Power Mutual Aid Process and therefore the development, maintenance, testing, and oversight of the MAP and related policies or materials. The MAC is responsible for oversight of the items outlined below, which are further defined in the MAC Policy Manual.

Mutual Aid Commendation Program

APPA has created and manages the Mutual Aid Commendation Program to recognize utilities that have answered the call for assistance and aided other utilities in restoring power to their customers. Nominations may be submitted to APPA through the following link: www.publicpower.org/submission-mutual-aid-commendation.

Coordinator Selection

DSCs are selected from signatories to the National Mutual Aid Agreement and may be individuals from utilities, state associations, or joint action agencies.

DSC selection criteria, requirements, expectations, term length, and number of terms of service are set by the MAC

as specified in the MAC Policy Manual. The number of DSCs per state, and their representation by individuals at utilities, joint action agencies, and state associations is at the discretion of each state, in alignment with MAC policies.

Continuity

Interruptions in personnel availability, technology, and business processes while facing a major restoration effort can cause critical issues for mutual aid. Whether caused by the disaster that resulted in the mutual aid event or by an unrelated issue, maintaining continuity of operations is crucial to the flow of information required for a successful response. Continuity considerations for each role/tier of the mutual aid network (including the National Coordinator) are included in the Roles & Responsibilities section. They may evolve at the direction of the MAC as specified in the MAC Policy Manual.



Attachments can be found in the Mutual Aid Playbook at:
www.publicpower.org/resource/mutual-aid-playbook



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