

## **UTAH TASK FORCE 1 (UT-TF 1) Background & Proposed legislation:**

Headquartered in Salt Lake County, UT-TF1 is one of 28 national task forces staffed and equipped to conduct around the clock search and rescue operations following earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, aircraft accidents, hazardous materials spills and catastrophic structure collapses. UT-TF1 is complete with necessary tools, equipment, and required skills and techniques, and can be deployed by FEMA for the rescue of victims of structural collapse.

Unified Fire is the Sponsoring Agency. UT-TF1 has several other local fire agencies that contribute membership, 210 total members. UT-TF1 Participating Agencies include Park City Fire District, West Valley City Fire Dept, Salt Lake City Fire Dept, Draper Fire Dept, West Jordan Fire Dept and South Jordan Fire Dept. There are also a handful of private citizen members referred to as Affiliate members that include Board Certified emergency room physicians, structural engineers, canine handlers and a few others.

UT-TF1 and its members have been deployed around the United States to nearly 30 missions to include World Trade Center in 2001, many hurricanes that include Katrina, Rita, Harvey and many other large-scale national emergencies. UT-TF1 has deployed personnel to other US territories outside the continental US in response to earthquakes, volcano activity and hurricanes. UT-TF1 was deployed for the March 18, 2020 earthquake in Salt Lake County. UT-TF1 is self-sufficient for 72 hours, and can staff professionals in all 19 of their formal positions. In short, this task force exists to respond to large-scale disasters that inundate local or state response capabilities.

While we have this robust asset in our state, there is a gap in properly activating our task force locally. When a federal emergency is declared, and FEMA calls on UT-TF1, federal law clearly articulates duties, rights, immunities, compensation, etc. for the deployed task force members. But if the state of Utah calls upon the task force for an emergency situation that is not yet deemed a federal disaster, there is no clear classification of deployed personnel for an in-state event. This can be accomplished through an interlocal agreement, but our state statute needs to be modified to authorize these agreements. That is what this proposed legislation allows.

This bill (and an interlocal agreement) does not create new costs for the state or any other agency. The 2009 MOU between the UFA, State of Utah, and DHS/FEMA (attached) defines roles and responsibilities in broad strokes. As the document reads, the state of Utah is responsible to help maintain capability (handled through/by UFA) and to use UT-TF1 before requesting additional FEMA US&R system assets. This MOU does not provide detail for in-state deployment pay/coverages/processes. If authorized, an interlocal agreement would define all of this detail from activation, mobilization, operation and demobilization of UT-TF1. UT-TF1 has assisted with three requests for in-state deployment and it has been messy on the administrative side each time. UT-TF1 has been a state asset since its inception in 1990 but little attention has been given to this asset. Accessing UT-TF1 and employing their unique skills sets and subject matter experts has been frustrated and delayed. This legislation authorizing an interlocal agreement would clearly define the relationship with the state and create and define authorizations and processes.

This proposed legislation would allow an interlocal agreement between the State of Utah and Unified Fire Authority as the sponsoring agency of Utah Task Force 1 (UT-TF1). And whereas,

Utah Task Force 1 is a state asset as well federal, this would afford the state of Utah the following:

- A defined process to employ Utah Task Force 1 for in-state disaster response, natural or manmade. (earthquake, flood, structure collapse, terrorist event, etc)
- A clearly defined method to provide for pay and indemnification of UT-TF1 members while deployed in-state.
- The ability to establish terms and conditions that will be applicable if the state of Utah activates UT-TF1 for in-state response
- Create an agreement that complements the 2009 MOU between Unified Fire Authority, the State of Utah, and the Department of Homeland Security through FEMA as it pertains to UT-TF1 as a state resource.