NATURAL GAS MUTUAL AID

BEST PRACTICES MANUAL



Spire - Storm Restoration following EF-3 tornado, St. Louis, MO

2026 EDITION

SUPERSEDES THE 2024 GUIDE

A reference for member companies on the principles, partners, processes, and operational practices that power natural gas mutual aid — written for the operator, the planner, the controller, the communicator, and the executive who together carry an event.

SGA NATURAL GAS ASSOCIATION

SHARE.
GROW.
ADVANCE.

FOREWORD

PEOPLE, MOLECULES, AND MESSAGES

Severe weather over the past several winters has made one thing clear: focusing only on crews is no longer enough to describe how the natural gas industry helps itself when the stakes are high. Crews still arrive. Storage still draws down. Producers still flow (or fail to flow) their scheduled quantities. Federal partners ask harder questions every year. State regulators are also beginning to use the language of "mutual aid" when they talk to operators and associations about both crews and supply-side support.

The 2024 edition of this guide focused tightly and well on personnel-centered mutual aid: who calls whom, who signs what, how crews are credentialed, housed, fed, paid, and tracked. That work remains the spine of this manual.

This 2026 edition keeps the original five tenets — internal procedures, external stakeholders, communication technology, workforce, and system resilience — and adds new content reflecting where the industry has matured. A foundational Mutual Aid 101 in Part I grounds new readers in the framework before they reach operational practice. A new Part III on integrated resilience aligns crew deployment with supply and gas control decisions — what the industry has come to call planning for "people, molecules, and messages" together. A new Part IV documents SGA's emerging role as an industry intelligence hub for federal partners.

This is a working manual for the operator, the planner, the controller, the communicator, and the executive who together carry an event. It is also one of the tools SGA, and our partner associations will use to explain how the industry performed in future post-event reviews.

— SGA Leadership

A TWO-BOOK SERIES

Book One — Mutual Aid Fundamentals (2026) is the member's orientation guide: what mutual aid is, who participates, and how a request flows. Book Two — this manual is the operational reference: the converged best practices, integrated resilience, and federal coordination. Read Book One first if mutual aid is new to you; keep Book Two on the shelf beside the ERP.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

WHAT THE 2026 EDITION INTEGRATES

This manual updates the Mutual Aid Best Practices document published by SGA in March 2024. The 2024 edition was the product of a March 2024 Roundtable that organized member input around five tenets. The 2026 edition retains that frame and integrates:

- The 2026 National Mutual Assistance Agreement (effective January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2030), co-sponsored by AGA, APGA, NGA, SGA, MEA, and WEI.
- Lessons learned from the cumulative pattern of severe winter and weather events affecting the natural gas industry over recent years, including Winter Storm Fern.
- Member input gathered through SGA Mutual Aid Roundtables and standing-committee work, including breakouts on outage management, peak shaving, gas control, and federal coordination.
- Operational practice formalized in the SGA Mutual Aid Program documentation, including SGA's coordination role, the AlertMedia notification platform, and the daily Situation Update call structure.
- Material from the AGA Mutual Assistance program at aga.org/mutual-assistance, including the National Mutual Assistance Database and the updated RFA workbook. Note: you will need an AGA account to access the restricted portion of the AGA website. If you do not have one, you can create an account at aga.org/sso/register. For any issues gaining access, please contact SGA.

Co-sponsoring associations: AGA, APGA, NGA, SGA, MEA, WEI.

SOURCE OF TRUTH FOR THE AGREEMENT AND DATABASE

The authoritative public-facing home of the National Mutual Assistance Agreement, the Mutual Assistance Database, and the RFA form is the AGA Mutual Assistance page at aga.org/mutual-assistance. Member companies should treat that page — not any local copy — as the source of truth for the current agreement text and the current database.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

FOUR PARTS, PLUS APPENDICES

PART	CHAPTERS	SCOPE
Part I — Foundations	1–5	What mutual aid is, the National Agreement, roles, the activation flow, the RFA process and Excel workbooks.
Part II — Operational Best Practices	6–10	Internal procedures, external stakeholders, technology, workforce, system resilience.
Part III — Integrated Resilience	11–13	Peak shaving and storage; pipeline gas control; integrated resilience aligning people, molecules, and messages.
Part IV — Industry Coordination	14	SGA's role as industry intelligence hub for federal partners (DOE, PHMSA, FERC).
Appendices	A–D	FAQ; First-Call Checklist; Glossary; Resource & Document Catalog.

READING PATHS

New to mutual aid?

Read Part I cover to cover, then Part II as needed for your role.

Crew deployment focus?

Parts I and II are sufficient.

Storage, supply, or gas control focus?

Parts I, III, and IV.

Integrated emergency response program owner?

All four parts.

READING THE CATEGORY TAGS

Best-practice items in this manual are tagged so a reader can scan a chapter for items relevant to their role:

CORE **Personnel-centered mutual aid** (the original 2024 scope)

mutual aid coordinator, emergency manager, operations supervisor.

S/PS **Storage and Peak Shaving**

supply planner, storage operations, peak-shaving plant lead.

GC/IC **Gas Control and Interconnectivity**

control-room supervisor, transmission/pipeline operations.

CROSS **Cross-Stream**

Items that span two or more streams — integrated response program owner, executive sponsor.

AT A GLANCE

KEY PRACTICES BY STREAM

This summary highlights the headline practices in each stream so busy operators can react quickly to the most important content before reading the full chapters. It is intentionally not comprehensive — the full body of practices, with context and exceptions, is in Parts II–IV.

CORE PERSONNEL MUTUAL AID

- Define internal mutual aid governance and RFA ownership in the ERP.
- Build a one-page First-Call checklist.
- Treat AlertMedia contact-list maintenance as a quarterly recurring task.
- Run mock RFAs as part of every annual tabletop exercise.
- Complete a structured AAR within 30 days of stand-down.

S/PS STORAGE & PEAK SHAVING

- Use the SGA Peak Shaving Committee as the standing forum for member-to-member learning.
- Set storage inventory targets by plant, not just system-wide.
- Keep storage and peak-shaving assets ready to limit the size and frequency of mutual aid events.
- Define explicit pre-event triggers for LNG, propane-air, and storage activation.
- Document who has authority to start (and stop) vaporization at each escalation tier.

GC/IC GAS CONTROL & INTERCONNECTIVITY

- Establish formal channels for gas-electric coordination with named contacts.
- Tie status reporting into AlertMedia and Situation Update calls.
- Pre-arrange accommodations for essential control-room staff 24–48 hours out.
- Standardize the data elements transmission control rooms share with downstream LDCs.
- Integrate LNG send-out into the daily peak-day operations checklist.

CROSS INTEGRATED RESILIENCE

- Build a leadership decision matrix combining demand, storage, producer performance, and regulatory thresholds.
- Pre-rehearse the three joint decision points (DP-1, DP-2, DP-3) in tabletops.
- Align mutual aid and peak-shaving decisions in a single response posture.
- Coordinate proactive data sharing so SGA can speak with credibility on behalf of the industry.

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PART I

FOUNDATIONS OF NATURAL GAS MUTUAL AID

Part I introduces what mutual aid is, who participates, how the National Agreement works, who plays which role, how an event flows from first signs through stand-down, and how to use the Excel-based Request for Assistance (RFA) workbook. A reader new to SGA or new to natural gas mutual aid should read Part I cover to cover before moving on.



Pipeline operations

WHY MUTUAL AID MATTERS

1.1 · PURPOSE OF THE MUTUAL AID NETWORK

The natural gas mutual aid network exists to enable the rapid, short-term deployment of emergency services from one utility to another so that critical operations can be restored when an event has exceeded the affected utility's internal capacity. The model is voluntary, non-binding, and not-for-profit: a Responding Company is reimbursed for direct costs incurred, but no party is paid to provide the service.

The national network and the National Mutual Assistance Agreement that supports it are **aligned with the Response and Recovery mission areas** of the National Preparedness Goal developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

UTILITIES HELPING UTILITIES

The natural gas sector is committed to a "Utilities Helping Utilities" philosophy. A peer-to-peer approach to incident response is the most effective and efficient way to bring a damaged system back to normal operations as quickly as possible. The key ingredient for putting a utility back in operation is quickly inserting skilled, certified, technical utility crews into the field to address the emergency. A signed mutual aid agreement does not obligate a utility to provide or receive aid — it provides a tool for use should events dictate a need.

1.2 · WHY UTILITIES NEED EACH OTHER

Four conditions drive the need for a pre-established mutual aid framework:

SPECIALIZED RESOURCES

Relights, leak surveys, service restorations, control-room support, LNG/CNG operations — work that requires specialized resources not every utility can scale on demand.

CRITICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

Government response agencies rely on natural gas service for hospitals, jails, shelters, dialysis centers, and continuity of operations.

REGIONAL IMPACT

Major events tend to be regional, which means the most geographically convenient responders are themselves often impaired.

WORKFORCE STRAIN

Disasters affect utility employees and their families, reducing the workforce available to respond at the very moment workload spikes.

PRE-EVENT TIMING

Agreements drafted under the pressure of an active event are slow, contested, and unreliable. They must be pre-established when no one is in crisis.

1.3 · SEVERE WEATHER AS A PATTERN, NOT EPISODES

Earlier editions of this guide pointed to one or two "big" storms as the reason to invest in mutual aid. That is no longer how we should think about it. The run of recent severe winters is now part of normal planning, not a string of one-off incidents.

The May 2026 post-event analysis of Winter Storm Fern, prepared for the Natural Gas Council, reinforces the point. It found that Fern was defined by its duration rather than its peak severity: sustained below-normal temperatures across more than ten consecutive days drove demand to near-record levels and required record storage withdrawals. It also found no known losses of firm service to natural gas customers as a result of the storm's production impacts. For planners, the lesson is that the long-duration event, not only the single coldest day, is the design case that mutual aid and supply planning must anticipate.

Practical implications for member companies:

- Treat extreme-weather response as a recurring operating mode, not an exception.
- Build the cost of pre-positioning, training, and exercises into the annual budget cycle.
- Maintain readiness across both shoulder seasons, not just the deep-winter or active-storm months.

1.4 · THE GAS-ELECTRIC INTERDEPENDENCY REALITY

Across multiple recent extreme events, gas systems in much of the country largely maintained firm service while electric load shed occurred elsewhere. Three specific operational realities have surfaced repeatedly and must be planned for:

- **Electric re-energization drives a gas demand surge.** Large-scale power restoration causes sudden, near-simultaneous re-ignition of furnaces and heating systems across thousands of premises, creating a load step that gas systems must anticipate.
- **Underground electric burnouts can damage adjacent plastic gas mains.** The combination of snow melt, ice melt, and road salt can cause underground electric system burnouts that damage adjacent plastic gas mains, producing leak-call surges in the days after a storm.
- **Gas infrastructure itself depends on electric power.** Many compressors, processing facilities, control systems, and components of LNG and peak-shaving plants, including equipment cooling, run on grid electricity. An electric outage or load-shed that reaches these assets can reduce gas production and delivery, which is why protecting critical gas facilities from electric load-shedding is now a recognized practice in several regions.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Where the gas LDC's territory overlaps with an electric utility, establish formal communication channels to receive advance warning before large-scale electric re-energization. Build that warning into the load forecast for the affected hour and have control-room staffing ready.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Plan for the case where gas and electric mutual aid are activated at the same time. When a single event stresses both systems, the two industries' mutual assistance networks draw on many of the same people and resources, and neither system can be assumed available as the backstop for the other. Build that contingency into sustained-operations planning rather than assuming outside help will be plentiful.

1.5 · WHY A BEST-PRACTICE MANUAL

Best practices are not a substitute for member company judgment. The point of a shared manual is to give member companies a vocabulary, a baseline, and a checklist so that the conversations between them — during planning, during exercises, and during events — can start from the same place.

Throughout this manual, items called out as “Best Practice” represent the converged view of member-company experience. They are recommendations, not mandates. The framework around them — the National Agreement, the RFA, SGA's coordination role — is the structure inside which those practices operate.

HOW TO READ A BEST PRACTICE CALLOUT

Every recommendation in this manual carries a colored tag showing which operational stream it belongs to, so you can scan a chapter for what applies to your role:

CORE S/PS GC/IC CROSS-STREAM

See "Reading the category tags" in the front matter for the full definition of each stream and its typical role.

THE NATIONAL MUTUAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

2.1 · ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

The National Mutual Assistance Agreement was developed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, when the gas industry recognized the need for a national framework that would allow companies to receive or provide emergency assistance when normal-course operations were disrupted by acts of the elements, equipment malfunctions, accidents, or any other event where emergency assistance was deemed necessary or advisable.

Today, the Agreement is jointly developed and maintained by six industry associations who together support the national framework:

ACRONYM	ASSOCIATION	ROLE
AGA	American Gas Association	National Association — federal-agency interface; maintains the National Mutual Assistance Database
APGA	American Public Gas Association	National Association — public-gas interface
NGA	Northeast Gas Association	Regional Trade Association
SGA	**SGA Natural Gas Association**	Regional Trade Association — your regional coordinator if you are an SGA member
MEA	Midwest Energy Association	Regional Trade Association
WEI	Western Energy Institute	Regional Trade Association

2.2 · KEY FEATURES OF THE 2026 AGREEMENT

The 2026 National Mutual Assistance Agreement, effective January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2030, supersedes prior agreements. It is a five-year, streamlined framework that pre-establishes indemnity, record-keeping, communication, confidentiality, and invoicing on a not-for-profit, cost-reimbursement basis.

2.2.1 · VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Member companies whose authorized representatives sign the Agreement become "Signatories." Signatories acknowledge that no other Signatory is under any obligation to furnish Emergency Assistance. Experience, however, shows that natural gas distribution companies are willing to furnish emergency assistance when their own resources allow.

2.2.2 · NO FEE, STANDARDIZED TERMS

The Agreement is a no-fee, jointly supported framework that pre-establishes the legal and operational ground rules — record-keeping, communication, confidentiality, invoicing, and safety — so that companies can focus on response when an event occurs.

2.2.3 · FIVE-YEAR MASTER DOCUMENT WITH PERIODICALLY UPDATED GUIDELINES

Changes to the Agreement itself are binding only when re-signed by Signatories' authorized representatives. The associated Mutual Assistance Procedures and Guidelines (Exhibit A) — also effective January 1, 2026 — may be updated from time to time by the Associations, with written notice to Signatories.

2.2.4 · WITHDRAWAL

A Signatory may withdraw from the Agreement at any time by providing written notice (email is acceptable) to AGA and to its Regional Trade Association. A Requesting Company that is currently receiving assistance, however, may not withdraw while that assistance is in progress.

> **BEST PRACTICE · CORE** Every signatory company should designate a person responsible for keeping the company's record current in the AGA National Mutual Assistance Database. A stale database entry is the single most common reason a Responding Company misses a fast-developing event. SGA will send reminders to ensure accurate contact information.

NETWORK SCALE

~3M	~27.6 Tcf	~77.7M
miles of pipeline	delivered annually	customers served

The National Mutual Assistance Agreement is scalable — the same framework supports a single-county relight effort and a multi-state event response.

2.3 · THE ASSOCIATION COORDINATION LAYER

The mutual aid program operates with a national agreement at the top and regional associations at the operating layer:

- AGA maintains the National Mutual Assistance Database, master national contact list, and the agreement's central administration.
- SGA serves as the operating coordinator for mutual aid among the member companies whose service-territory footprint falls primarily within SGA's geographic area of responsibility. SGA facilitates Joint Mobilization Conference Calls, distributes the RFA, and provides training and best-practice resources for those companies.
- APGA, NGA, MEA, and WEI operate parallel coordination structures for the companies assigned to their respective regions. A master list maintained across the associations determines which Regional Trade Association is responsible for each company, based on where the company's footprint most squarely aligns. Where a company holds membership in more than one association, only one association is designated as the mutual aid coordinator for that company.
- During an event, AGA and APGA serve as the primary federal-agency interface; the Regional Trade Associations serve as the primary state-agency interface.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE The Regional Trade Association designates which companies fall under its mutual aid coordination responsibility and makes that designation known to the other Regional Trade Associations and to the company itself. This prevents overlap and ensures every signatory has a single, clear coordination path. If a company's footprint shifts or a new company joins, the associations update the master list accordingly, which is maintained by AGA.

2.4 · PROGRAM SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The mutual aid program is scoped to personnel assistance: crews deployed for relights, service restorations, leak surveys, gas-control support, and similar operational tasks. That scope will not change. This 2026 edition addresses storage, peak shaving, gas control, and supply-side topics alongside traditional mutual aid because those operational streams are critical during the same events that trigger crew deployments.

The Agreement is also explicit about what it is not for:

- It is not for use during labor disputes.
- It is not a sourcing mechanism for parts or capital equipment in the normal course (though the associations may help facilitate communication for such needs).
- It does not authorize either party to act outside its own internal policies for safety, conduct, or legal compliance.

> **BEST PRACTICE · S/PS** The National Mutual Assistance Agreement is, and will remain, scoped to personnel assistance. Storage, supply, and equipment considerations are addressed in this manual because they are critical during the same events that trigger mutual aid, but they fall outside the Agreement itself. Member companies pursuing supply-side or equipment-sharing arrangements should document those separately from the Agreement framework.

2.5 · CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

The program's continuous-improvement infrastructure is what keeps the framework relevant between agreement renewals. Its main components are:

- AGA hosts the Emergency Preparedness and Response Roundtable and related best practice events that bring together all Regional Trade Associations and member companies, creating an industry-wide forum to share lessons learned, present company practices, and keep the national mutual aid framework aligned.
- SGA hosts complementary mutual aid events focused on its membership and its role as the first line of mutual aid coordination for SGA-designated companies, such as the 2026 SGA Spring Gas Conference Roundtable on AlertMedia's first deployment during Winter Storm Fern and the new storage, peak shaving, and gas control topics reflected in this edition of the manual.
- Other Regional Trade Associations host similar events tailored to their footprints and tools, which keeps region-specific practices visible and ensures that each association's program reflects its operating environment.
- Standing-committee engagement on mutual aid, peak shaving, gas control, communications, and workforce, which keeps emerging issues and lessons learned flowing into agreement updates, training, and guidance.
- Post-event after-action reviews, standardized terminology and resource matrices, and jointly run mock drills surface gaps before the next real event.

> **BEST PRACTICE · S/PS** The SGA Peak Shaving Committee serves as the standing forum for member-to-member learning on LNG, propane-air, and underground storage. NGA members may participate under their NGA membership without needing to join SGA separately.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Mutual aid involves multiple parties working together. Knowing each party's role — and your role within your own company — is the single biggest factor in a smooth response.

3.1 · THE REQUESTING COMPANY

The Requesting Company is the Signatory experiencing an event who needs help. The Requesting Company:

- Designates an individual to serve as spokesperson during any Joint Mobilization Conference Call.
- Provides an estimate of predicted impact and damages, including expected timing if the event has not yet occurred.
- Defines the resources needed by type — personnel, equipment, materials — and any specific job-site requirements regarding qualifications and special equipment.
- Specifies, in the Request for Mutual Aid, what tasks are covered tasks per 49 CFR Part 192 Subpart N, and confirms that responder personnel's knowledge, skills, and abilities meet its needs.
- Provides safety orientation to responding personnel before work begins, and handles food, lodging, and incidentals at the work site (unless otherwise agreed).
- Reimburses the Responding Company for all costs and expenses, without added profit.

3.2 · THE RESPONDING COMPANY

The Responding Company is the Signatory providing assistance. The Responding Company:

- Confirms its territory is free from significant threat before committing and dispatching resources — and never releases resources without a written, confirmed commitment from a Requesting Company.
- Provides an estimate of resources available, the dispatch timing, and (upon request) staging-area options.
- Designates a single point of contact to interact with the Requesting Company during the Emergency Assistance Period.
- Sends appropriate supervision and support — field supervision, safety, vehicle mechanics, logistics — to keep its personnel safe and productive.
- Submits an invoice with reasonable documentation of all costs (wages, travel, lodging, replacement materials, etc.) at cost, with no added profit.

3.3 · THE LEAD ASSOCIATION

For most SGA-member events, SGA is the Lead Association. The Lead Association:

- Serves as the initial point of contact between the Parties, helping coordinate communications and information requests.
- Provides the Requesting Company with a list of Participating Companies and authorized representatives.
- Moderates the Joint Mobilization Conference Call(s) and produces summary notes.
- Coordinates with AGA when the request exceeds regional response capacity and nationwide assistance is required.
- Does not coordinate the dispatch of committed resources — that is handled directly between the Requesting Company and each Responding Company.

3.4 · YOUR INTERNAL MUTUAL AID COORDINATOR

Each member company should designate a Mutual Aid primary point person, with authority to:

- Sign the Mutual Aid Agreement on behalf of the company.
- Initiate a Request for Assistance (or commit responding resources).
- Disseminate information about National Mutual Aid membership to the appropriate employees.
- Designate a backup point person in case the primary is unavailable.

A COMMON GAP TO CLOSE

Industry reviews consistently find that companies are unsure which internal department has authority to submit an RFA — and the person with authority to sign the legal agreement is often a different, more senior individual than the primary operational contact. Documenting the RFA process and owner inside your company's emergency-response plan, and communicating that to your regional association, is one of the highest-leverage things a new member can do.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Document both roles separately in the company's emergency-response plan: who can initiate an RFA, and who is authorized to sign the legal instrument. They are often different people.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Recently divested utilities — those that have lost the internal support of a parent company's broader workforce — should proactively establish primary and secondary mutual aid partners. Pre-event relationships often make the difference between a controlled response and a last-minute scramble.

HOW THE MUTUAL AID NETWORK FLOWS

At a high level, every mutual aid event follows the same three-step pattern, regardless of size:

STEP 1

REQUESTING UTILITY

The affected utility recognizes its needs exceed its internal and contractor capacity, drafts an RFA, and contacts its Regional Association. The utility also coordinates with its State agencies as needed.

STEP 2

REGIONAL ASSOCIATION

The Regional Association (SGA for SGA members) helps facilitate communication, distributes the RFA to member companies, and convenes a Joint Mobilization Conference Call as needed. AGA supports if national-scale assistance is required and provides updates or requests to Federal partners.

STEP 3

ASSISTING UTILITIES

Responding utilities submit their offers using the Response RFA tab. The Requesting utility tallies offers, allocates resources, and dispatches via direct, written commitments. Federal partners (DOE, PHMSA) receive situational data from AGA (via the Regional Trade Associations) as needed.

4.1 · PRE-EVENT COORDINATION

The program begins days earlier, when SGA and partner associations identify a developing weather pattern. SGA initiates early contact through regular channels and AlertMedia pulse checks, issues alerts to the Mutual Aid Contact List, and notifies partner associations to prevent duplicate outreach.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Give SGA a "heads up" before submitting a formal RFA. A verbal early warning enables resource matching to begin upstream and significantly compresses time from event onset to crew arrival.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Companies should respond to AlertMedia status pulses even when their answer is “no impact / no help needed.” Silence in response to a poll forces the association to assume the worst, which slows resource matching for those who do need help.

4.2 · THE ACTIVATION FLOW

When an event exceeds internal capacity, the activation flow is:

#	ACTION	OWNER
1	Incident exceeds internal capacity. Operator assesses.	Affected utility
2	Decision to request mutual aid.	Affected utility
3	Notify SGA Mutual Aid contacts (call, text, email, AlertMedia).	Affected utility
4	Complete and submit the RFA workbook (Exhibit B of the Agreement).	Affected utility
5	Activate program: notify members, coordinate inbound offers.	SGA
6	Coordinate resource matching. Requesting Company selects resources and dispatches directly.	SGA + Utility

BEST PRACTICE · CORE In urgent situations, SGA staff can assist with RFA completion by phone. In those cases, the call comes first; the form follows. Don't let form drafting delay the heads-up call.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE The RFA workbook should be tested as part of an annual mock drill. A member company that has never opened the workbook before will not be efficient under storm pressure.

4.3 · ACTIVE-EVENT COORDINATION

Once an event is active, SGA serves as the central point of contact for resource tracking and deployment status:

- Daily Situation Update calls are hosted by SGA at minimum once daily for the duration of the event.
- AlertMedia serves as the primary mass-notification platform for status pulse-checks across the SGA member base.
- The Lead Association moderator produces summary notes after each Joint Mobilization Conference Call, subject to the Agreement's confidentiality provisions.
- Resources are generally allocated based on severity of need: degree of system loss and customer-out time, who will be impacted first, travel time, and other practical factors.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Member-company status reporting through AlertMedia and Daily Situation Update calls is what makes SGA's role as a trusted gas-side intelligence source credible to federal partners. Accurate, timely member input is the single biggest contributor to industry credibility in federal forums.

4.4 · JOINT MOBILIZATION CONFERENCE CALL

For events that may need many responding companies, a Joint Mobilization Conference Call is the primary mechanism for fast coordination.

4.4.1 · HOW A CALL GETS STARTED

- A Requesting Company submits a request to the Lead Association to initiate the call.
- Alternatively, an Association staff member may initiate the call for an impacted Signatory.
- Participation does not obligate any company to become a Responding Company.

4.4.3 · CONFIDENTIALITY

- Calls are restricted to Signatory employees, their Affiliates, and the Associations — unless otherwise agreed by the Requesting Company.
- Calls are not recorded. Conversations may contain confidential and proprietary information; the Agreement's confidentiality provisions apply (with limited exceptions for general deployment information).

4.4.2 · ON THE CALL

The roles below are defined in full in Chapter 3. This shows how they play out on the call:

- The Lead Association moderator calls roll and produces summary notes.
- The Requesting Company's spokesperson presents impact, damages, and resource needs by type — including OQ requirements, staging areas, transportation issues, fuel availability, DOT exemptions, and other safety concerns.
- Other Signatories share their projected resource availability, if any.
- Resources are allocated based on severity-of-need criteria above.

4.5 · STAND-DOWN AND POST-EVENT

When an event de-escalates, SGA notifies Responding Companies that resources are released, confirms demobilization is mutually understood, and cost documentation proceeds under the National Agreement framework. The Responding Company:

- Returns all maps and other proprietary information to the Requesting Company, except for copies retained for archival and legal purposes.
- Returns all loaned equipment to the Requesting Company.
- Submits an invoice with reasonable documentation of all costs.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Within 30 days of stand-down, complete a structured after-action review (AAR). Use a standardized AAR template aligned with industry practice and share operational sections with SGA so lessons can flow back into the next edition of best practices and the next round of training.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Rotate AAR participation across operations, emergency management, communications, finance, and HR. The most common AAR weakness is treating the review as an operations-only exercise, which misses pay, lodging, communications, and stakeholder lessons that often matter most for the next event.

CHAPTER 5 · PART I

THE RFA PROCESS & EXCEL WORKBOOKS

The Request for Assistance (RFA) is the formal, written mechanism that activates mutual aid resources from partner utilities. As of January 1, 2026, the RFA is delivered via two Excel workbooks that replaced the older fillable PDF form.

5.1 · WHY THE CHANGE TO AN EXCEL-BASED FORM?

EASIER TO FILL OUT

The previous fillable PDF was hard to use and did not perform any calculations.

BUILT-IN TABS

Built-in tabs: the spreadsheet separates Guidance, Request, Response, Roster, and a Relight estimating tool — so users can navigate quickly.

BUILT-IN CALCULATIONS

Built-in calculations: values entered on the Request tab transfer to the Response tab, and the Relight Worksheet estimates manpower for shutdown/relight events.

OQ MAPPING

The form pairs each covered task with its B31Q reference and the NGA task equivalent, so a Requesting Company and a Responding Company can compare qualifications directly even when they use different task lists.

IN-CELL GUIDANCE

Notes are embedded in cells where users typically need help, reducing back-and-forth questions.

5.2 · THE TWO WORKBOOKS

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WORKBOOK

Used by both the Requesting Company (Request tab) and the Responding Company (Response tab).

RFA Form Guidance · Request RFA Form · Response RFA Form · MA Roster List · Relight Worksheet Tool — Manpower

MASTER COMPILE WORKBOOK

Used by the Requesting Company to tally responses from many Responding Companies.

Guidance · Requester Totals · Responder Totals OQ–Field · Responder Totals Other · Master Summary–Compare

5.3 · TWO FLOW PATTERNS

5.3.1 · WHEN ONLY ONE OR A FEW OPERATORS ARE NEEDED

The Requesting Company completes the "Request Form" tab of the workbook and sends the RFA Workbook directly to the Responding Company (or operators). The Responding Company completes the "Response Form" tab and returns the workbook. The Requesting Company tallies what is being offered and works directly with each Responding Company to finalize logistics — **no Master Compile Workbook required.**

5.3.2 · WHEN MANY OPERATORS WILL BE NEEDED

The Requesting Company sends the RFA Workbook to the lead trade association — if an SGA member, SGA is likely the lead trade association. Multiple Responding Operators return completed workbooks to the lead trade association, who will then convene a conference call with all participants. The Requesting Company tallies all responses into the **Master Compile Workbook**, identifies which resources to use, and works out logistics with all responders together.

5.4 · THE RFA WORKBOOK — SHEET BY SHEET

5.4.1 · RFA FORM GUIDANCE

Read this tab first. It explains the overall RFA process and the purpose of each subsequent tab. The Version History on this tab tracks workbook revisions tied to changes in the Agreement and to user feedback. Note that this RFA workbook is a guidance document and can be adjusted by the trade association to better address the needs of the event.

5.4.2 · REQUEST RFA FORM (BLUE TAB)

Filled out by the Requesting Company. Key sections include:

- Header — Today's Date, Requesting Organization, New / Revised checkboxes.
- Period Emergency Assistance Needed — start/end.
- Systems Affected — pressure tiers, materials, sizes.
- Other Personnel / Equipment + Span of Control.
- Primary/Secondary Contact — name, phones, e-mail.
- Brief description, incl. customers affected.
- Field OQ / Personnel disciplines + Number Requested.
- Logistics — staging, transport, lodging, food, fuel.

5.4.3 · RESPONSE RFA FORM (GREEN TAB)

Filled out by the Responding Company. Values from the Request tab transfer into grey fields. Entry points: responding company and contacts; total people provided, union affiliation, estimated pay rate; OQ checkboxes; a Training Verification box affirming personnel have received technical training in the Covered Tasks, Non-Covered tasks (relights), and Work Functions identified; Number Offered per discipline; and additional information.

5.4.4 · MA ROSTER LIST (YELLOW TAB)

Used by the Responding Company to list specific personnel/equipment/services being committed once the offer is confirmed. The Roster format makes it easy for the Requesting Company to copy-and-paste names from many Responding Companies into a single, standardized master list.

Dark-green headers = required minimum fields · Light-green headers = optional but helpful · Use drop-downs where present so data can be sorted or queried later.

5.4.5 · RELIGHT WORKSHEET TOOL — MANPOWER

Optional, useful for service-interruption / relight situations. Enter meters that can be turned OFF and ON per technician per hour, and total meters affected; the tool calculates technicians required, including a built-in 1.5× factor for shift coverage applied after 16 hours. A reference table at the bottom maps levels (1–5) of customer area complexity to per-hour technician productivity for both shutdown and relight, residential and commercial.

5.5 · THE MASTER COMPILE WORKBOOK — SHEET BY SHEET

Used only by the Requesting Company when many Responding Companies are involved.

GUIDANCE	Explains the Compile process and the purpose of each tab. Read this first.
REQUESTER TOTALS	The Requesting Company enters the total of what was originally requested, by discipline and by other personnel/equipment categories.
RESPONDER TOTALS OQ-FIELD	The Requesting Company enters the totals of OQ-field personnel offered by each Responding Company.
RESPONDER TOTALS OTHER	Totals for Other Personnel / Equipment offered by each Responding Company.
MASTER SUMMARY-COMPARE	Auto-populates from the three preceding tabs. This is the page used during the Joint Mobilization Conference Call to compare what was requested against what is on offer — and to drive resource-allocation decisions in real time.

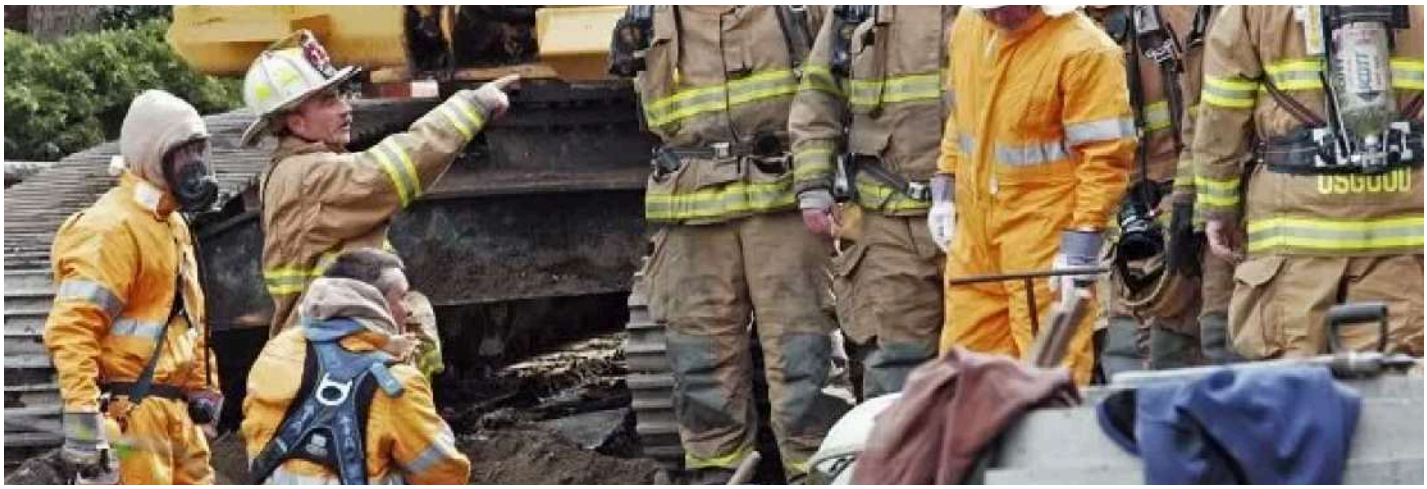
BEFORE YOU SUBMIT AN RFA — QUICK CHECKLIST

1. Internal and contractor support is exhausted.
2. OQ tasks and peripheral needs determined.
3. Personnel estimate made (or via Relight Tool).
4. Authorized representative available to confirm.
5. SGA has been given a “heads up” if the event is large or developing.

PART II

OPERATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Part II is the operational core of this manual — the converged best practices on internal procedures, external stakeholders, communication technology, workforce, and the foundations of system resilience. The five tenets here trace directly back to the 2024 Roundtable structure, with content updated for the 2026 Agreement and recent member-company experience. Items are tagged so a reader can scan for what applies to their role.



Emergency response

INTERNAL PROCEDURES, RISK ASSESSMENT & PLANNING

6.1 · MUTUAL AID GOVERNANCE WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Industry reviews of mutual aid governance consistently identify four recurring problems: lack of clarity about who "owns" mutual aid internally, duplication of effort across departments, the wrong signatories on agreements, and absence of company-wide awareness that the company is even a Signatory.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Define the mutual aid process explicitly in the company's Emergency Response Plan (ERP). Designate a primary mutual aid point person with authority to sign the National Agreement, initiate RFAs, and disseminate program information. Designate a backup for redundancy.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Document both roles separately in the ERP: who can initiate an RFA, and who is authorized to sign the legal instrument. They are often different individuals, and that's fine — as long as both are documented and reachable.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Recently divested utilities — those that have lost the internal support of a parent company's broader workforce — should proactively establish primary and secondary mutual aid partners. Pre-event relationships often make the difference between a controlled response and a last-minute scramble.

6.2 · THE REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE (RFA) PROCESS

Chapter 5 walks through the RFA workbook in detail. The internal-procedures view here focuses on the steps inside your company that surround the RFA submission.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Conduct mock RFA completion as part of every annual tabletop exercise. Walk through the internal approval chain end-to-end — including legal review, financial approval, and signatory sign-off — not just the form fields.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Develop a one-page "First Call" checklist for the affected utility's mutual aid lead answering: Who do I call first? What information do I need ready? What happens next? See Appendix B for a starting template.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Build the RFA into the company's standard incident-management workflow. The first time a team uses the workbook should not be during a real event.

6.3 · ACTIVATION TRIGGERS AND DECISION THRESHOLDS

Define explicit, data-driven activation triggers for mutual aid in the ERP. There is no single industry-wide numeric trigger, but candidate metrics include:

- Number of meters impacted (current and projected).
- Storage inventory percentage and trajectory.
- Producer underperformance against nominations on critical-day forecasts.
- Projected restoration duration against acceptable customer-out windows.
- Forecasted minimum temperature and consecutive below-threshold cold days.
- Specialized-resource volumes (relight crews, leak survey, dewatering) needed beyond internal capacity.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Define at minimum three distinct triggers with distinct thresholds — they should fire at different decision points, not all at once:

TRIGGER	DECISION	STREAM
A	Activate mutual aid crew request (RFA)	CORE
B	Activate peak-shaving assets (LNG, propane-air, CNG)	S/PS
C	Notify federal regulators (DOE, PHMSA)	GC/IC

BEST PRACTICE · CROSS-STREAM Build a leadership-decision matrix that maps event-state combinations (e.g., "forecast below threshold + storage at X% + producers underperforming") to default actions. The matrix is not a substitute for judgment, but it shortens the conversation that has to happen at 2 a.m.

6.4 · INTERNAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND PLAYBOOK DESIGN

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Conduct an annual review and formal integration of Business Continuity and Emergency Management plans to confirm alignment. The two are often written by different teams and drift apart between revisions.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Assign a long-term emergency plan owner. Most ERPs are written for events lasting 72 hours or less, but recent extreme events have demonstrated some events extend into multiple weeks. The plan should explicitly address sustained-response requirements: shift relief, pay practices, supply replenishment, and crew rotation.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Run a tabletop exercise at least annually that exercises a multi-day, multi-impact scenario — not just a single-day, single-discipline event. Most teams perform well in 24-hour scenarios; the gaps appear in days four through ten.

6.5 · POST-STORM AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS

The thaw period creates two distinct risks that should be addressed in the ERP:

- **Surge of odor calls.** A meaningful share of post-event odor calls are sewer gas, not natural gas. Triage protocols should distinguish them quickly to avoid burning out leak-survey crews on non-events.
- **Water intrusion into the gas system.** Frozen/thawed soil and road salt can drive water and contaminants into the gas system. Pre-stage dewatering capacity and inspection routes accordingly.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Where the gas LDC's territory overlaps with an electric utility, establish formal communication channels to receive advance warning before large-scale electric re-energization. Anticipated gas demand surges from re-ignition of premises should be planned for, not absorbed reactively. See also 1.4, The Gas-Electric Interdependency Reality.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Maintain a “sustained operations” playbook covering shift relief, mental-health resources, family liaison, and supply restock for events lasting beyond 72 hours. The playbook is the difference between a controlled long event and a chaotic one.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS & COMMUNICATION

7.1 · STAKEHOLDERS 101 — WHO NEEDS TO HEAR FROM YOU

Stakeholder communication during an event is not a single conversation — it is a portfolio of audiences, each with different needs:

REGULATORS	State PUCs, municipal utility commissions. Outage status updates, restoration timelines, and compliance posture.
EOCS	Local, county, and state Emergency Operations Centers. Situational awareness and resource coordination.
ELECTRIC UTILITIES	Critical interdependency partners. Gas-electric coordination, dual-fuel plant status, re-energization sequencing.
LOCAL OFFICIALS	Mayors, county executives, emergency managers. Public-safety messaging and customer communication.
FEDERAL AGENCIES	Federal partners via DOE Unity-of-Effort calls. Daily situation reports and mutual aid status. Reached through AGA and the Regional Trade Associations, not contacted directly by the impacted company.

For each audience, keep a current contact checklist with names, phone numbers, and email addresses, so the right people can be reached quickly during an event.

7.2 · BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE EVENTS

BEST PRACTICE · CORE When local emergency groups activate, have company representatives attend. Standing presence at non-event meetings is what makes event coordination feel like a continuation, not an introduction.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE During large outages, host a Community Call with municipals, departments, and external affairs. Use the same format and the same lead voices each time so the format is familiar to the audience.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Engage with agencies and regulators outside of events. Invite state agencies, regulators, and the local community to observe exercises. If it is a large-scale incident, send a state agency representative to act as a liaison and report on critical essential customers, outages, and similar.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Where joint electric-gas Public Safety Specialist or first-responder portal programs exist, take full advantage of them. Police and fire agencies provided with a portal to access GIS layers and redacted versions of the company emergency response plan are far better partners during an active event.

7.3 · HIGH-RISK AND SPECIAL-NEEDS FACILITIES

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Maintain a current list of high-risk and special-needs facilities (hospitals, schools, dialysis centers, data centers, large industrials, jails, shelters). Pre-event coordination with the Key Account team should produce a single, agreed list with named contacts.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Add Key Account Representatives — especially those covering hospitals, data centers, and large industrials — to tabletop exercises. They are best positioned to identify accounts needing special protocols.

7.4 · CONSISTENT OUTAGE REPORTING

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Establish a system-of-record definition of "customer" and "impacted customers" so outage counts are reported accurately and consistently, both internally and to external partners.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Develop a communication template distinguishing "services affected" from "estimated individuals impacted," and map each to the categories that DOE, PHMSA, and state PUCs ask for. Share the template with regulators proactively in blue-sky periods so it is familiar before it is used in anger.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Adopt a single outage portal as the common operating picture, accessible (in appropriate form) to local counties for de-energizing decisions and to regulators for status reporting. A single source of truth is worth more than three perfectly accurate but inconsistent reports.

7.5 · COMMUNICATION DURING THE EVENT

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Streamline approval during incidents — Incident Commander has final approval, with two-person check-off and legal review on a defined SLA. The standard slow-track communication review process should not apply during an active event.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Conduct proactive outreach to large interruptible customers at least 72 hours before potential curtailment. Continue communication during blue-sky days so the relationship is current when it matters.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Include a gas-safety reminder in pre-event communications: clear snow and ice from meters and vents, watch for carbon monoxide risk from blocked appliances, and report odor-of-gas concerns immediately.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Avoid publicly visible field markings indicating a customer was not home for relight. Markings of "NO ANSWER" or similar on a door or meter create both a personal-safety risk and a perception risk for the company.

7.6 · GAS-ELECTRIC COORDINATION

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Establish formal communication channels with electric utility counterparts — with named contacts, not just shared inboxes. The relationship should survive turnover on either side.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Conduct joint gas-electric exercises annually, including joint curtailment and load management protocols. The most common gap on both sides is unfamiliarity with the other utility's operating realities; exercises close that gap faster than briefings.

BEST PRACTICE · CROSS-STREAM Share a written gas-electric coordination protocol with state regulators ahead of winter and storm seasons. Regulators that understand the protocol in advance are easier partners during an event.

TECHNOLOGY FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

8.1 · MASS NOTIFICATION: ALERTMEDIA

AlertMedia is the operational backbone of SGA's mutual aid communication. It distributes notifications via text, email, voice, and web portal; supports two-way pulse checks; aggregates member status for reporting; and serves as a repository for resources.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Every member company's mobile phone numbers for mutual aid contacts should be loaded and kept current in AlertMedia. This is the single most actionable item in the manual.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Member companies should regularly test AlertMedia notifications, including responding to test pulses. A pulse with no response is, operationally, the same as a pulse with no contact.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Treat AlertMedia contact-list maintenance as a recurring quarterly task — not an annual one. Mobile numbers, role assignments, and on-call rotations change far faster than annual review cycles.



Control room

ALERTMEDIA 101

For companies new to AlertMedia or those that missed the demonstration at the 2026 SGA Spring Gas Conference Mutual Aid Roundtable, this brief overview describes what the platform does and how SGA uses it. AlertMedia is currently deployed by SGA; other Regional Trade Associations may use different mass-notification platforms for their member bases, which is one reason the SGA-hosted roundtable and regional-level events are important for sharing lessons specific to each region's operating environment.

WHAT ALERTMEDIA IS

A cloud-based mass-notification and risk-intelligence platform. It allows SGA to send time-sensitive alerts to any-sized audience in seconds across multiple channels simultaneously: text message (SMS), email, voice call, mobile push notification, and desktop alert. Administrators can send notifications from a web console or from the AlertMedia mobile app.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Two-way communication: when SGA sends a status pulse check during a developing weather event, member-company contacts can reply directly to confirm status, report impact, or indicate they have no impact. These responses aggregate automatically, giving SGA a real-time picture of member-company conditions that feeds directly into daily Situation Update calls and federal briefings.

HOW SGA USES IT FOR MUTUAL AID

How SGA uses it for mutual aid: pre-event pulse checks ("Are you anticipating impact?"), active-event status updates, RFA distribution notifications, resource-availability polling, and stand-down notices. The platform's aggregated response data is what enables SGA to speak with accuracy about member-company conditions to federal partners during DOE Unity of Effort calls.

WHAT MEMBER COMPANIES NEED TO DO

Load and maintain mobile numbers for all mutual aid contacts. Respond to test and real pulses promptly. Designate a backup contact. Treat AlertMedia onboarding and maintenance as a recurring quarterly task, not a one-time setup.

WINTER STORM FERN WAS THE FIRST REAL DEPLOYMENT

The 2026 SGA Spring Gas Conference Mutual Aid Roundtable included a demonstration and debrief of SGA's first operational use of AlertMedia during Winter Storm Fern. Member feedback from that session is being incorporated into SGA's AlertMedia operating procedures and into this manual. If your company has not yet loaded contacts into AlertMedia, contact SGA member services for onboarding support.

8.2 · ACHIEVING A SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Use a real-time platform (BI dashboard, shared workspace, or mutual aid coordinator console) for resource assignment and tracking during events. A real-time view accessible to the mutual aid coordinator enables rapid re-assignment when conditions change.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Define one source of truth for each operational variable (outage count, restoration ETA, crew location, storage inventory, etc.). Ambiguity about which dashboard is canonical is more disruptive than imperfect data on a single dashboard.

8.3 · MOBILE AND FIELD TECHNOLOGY

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Any company relying on a proprietary app for field workflow should develop a rapid-onboarding protocol for incoming mutual aid crews, a simplified "guest-mode" interface, and a paper or thin-client backup. Onboarding crews into a complex internal app under storm conditions is one of the slowest steps in a deployment.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Pre-load digital maps, redacted ERP excerpts, and contact lists onto crew tablets before deployment. Bandwidth at the work site cannot be assumed.

8.4 · SCADA INTEGRATION

BEST PRACTICE · GC/IC Where SCADA visibility exists, integrate it directly into the daily peak-day operations checklist alongside storage withdrawal rate, LNG send-out, and linepack status. SCADA data should drive decisions, not just inform them.

BEST PRACTICE · GC/IC Establish data-sharing arrangements between transmission control rooms and downstream LDCs for the duration of declared events. Real-time visibility into upstream pressures and constraints accelerates downstream decisions.

BEST PRACTICE · GC/IC Treat an unexplained loss of SCADA visibility, or a sudden operational anomaly with no obvious cause, as possibly cyber in origin and not automatically a routine equipment or communications fault. Know the reporting paths in advance, including the Downstream Natural Gas Information Sharing and Analysis Center (DNG-ISAC), CISA, and the relevant state fusion center, and pre-identify who in the organization is authorized to engage them. Because a cyber-driven disruption can become a mutual aid trigger in its own right, this awareness belongs in the control room, not only in the security function.

8.5 · TECHNOLOGY REDUNDANCY

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Maintain paper-only plans for all critical processes, practice them at least annually, and maintain a redundancy matrix mapping each critical IT dependency to its backup. “The system is down” is not an acceptable status during a major event.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Pre-stage paper RFA and Roster forms in addition to the Excel workbook. If the storm has knocked out internet at one of the parties, the response cannot wait for connectivity to be restored.

BEST PRACTICE · CROSS-STREAM Test the failover paths annually — not just the primary tools. A redundancy matrix that has not been exercised is a list, not a plan.

BEST PRACTICE · GC/IC Right-size manual-operations staffing assumptions. Years of automation have reduced control-room and field headcount at many operators, so a full manual takeover during a prolonged SCADA or telemetry outage may require more people than are realistically available. Exercise the manual fallback with the staff the company would actually have on shift, not the headcount the written procedure assumes.

WORKFORCE, RESOURCE ALLOCATION & SAFETY

9.1 · OPERATOR QUALIFICATION (OQ) AND RECIPROCITY

OQ variability remains the single most cited barrier to gas mutual aid. The current process requires the sending company to provide OQ data for verification before deployment, and state-specific rules can prevent employees from performing covered tasks in another jurisdiction without a waiver.

CORE Develop pre-templated waiver request documents for OQ waivers, hours-of-service waivers, and entry-into-disaster-zones waivers, and, for operators with dual-fuel or extended-runtime exposure, environmental and air-emissions waivers and Federal Power Act Section 202(c) filings. Waiver requests drafted in advance and pre-reviewed by counsel can be submitted in minutes rather than days. Where the process allows, tie these filings to defined Energy Emergency Alert levels so they activate on a pre-set trigger rather than being drafted one at a time during a live event.

CORE Assign a working group to research and map state-specific OQ waiver requirements as a state-by-state matrix. Maintain it as a shared, living resource through SGA standing-committee channels.

CORE Use the OQ mapping built into the 2026 RFA workbook actively — both Requesting and Responding companies should pre-populate their OQ mapping in the workbook before storm season so the comparison is fast under pressure.

9.2 · CREW LOGISTICS

CORE Pre-book hotel rooms and arrange food supplies for control-room staff and deployed crews 24–48 hours before a forecasted peak event. Hotel availability after a regional event is unreliable; pre-booking is cheap insurance.

CORE When deploying frontline employees, send sufficient leaders to provide oversight for tracking work hours, rest periods, and crew welfare. The Responding Company's supervision capacity should be specified in the RFA, not assumed.

CORE Brief deploying crews on the contract terms — pay, work hours, start times — before they leave home. Miscommunications about pay and start time are a frequent cause of disputes that surface mid-deployment.

9.3 · RESOURCE TYPING

CORE SGA, in coordination with AGA and other Regional Trade Associations, should establish a working group to standardize resource typing definitions for common mutual aid tasks (relight crew, leak survey, service-line repair, gas-control augmentation, etc.). Typing reduces ambiguity in the RFA and accelerates allocation.

CORE Adopt a common naming convention internally that maps to the SGA resource types. Internal nomenclature variation is a hidden tax on every cross-company conversation.



Tailgate

9.4 · FINANCIAL TRACKING

CORE Establish a clear financial tracking system in advance and designate a financial coordinator. Define cost categories, time-reporting method, documentation format, and reimbursement package structure before they are needed.

CORE Create dedicated cost codes or work orders for mutual aid events. Backing into cost separation from a generic operations bucket weeks after the event is the most error-prone path to a clean invoice.

CORE Plan how to track time and expenditures BEFORE deploying. Compiling this after an event is chaotic, error-prone, and a frequent source of post-event tension between Parties.

9.5 · EMERGENCY PAY PRACTICES

The lessons from prior major events are unambiguous: establish emergency pay practices before an event, name them in the ERP, and make them generous enough that deployed employees feel valued. Pay disputes mid-event are a major source of operational friction and morale damage.

CORE Create a formal "business continuity pay" program covering deployments, sequestering of staff locally, and the multiple-state-line scenario. Document it in the ERP and the employee handbook so it is consistent and explainable.

CORE Brief employees on emergency pay practices ahead of storm season — not after deployment. Surprises about pay during deployment damage trust on the spot and for years afterward.

9.6 · EMPLOYEE SELECTION

CORE Document the selection protocol in the ERP. A hybrid model works well: start with opt-in volunteers; if the skill mix is wrong, management mandates participation for specific experienced individuals.

CORE Where union workforces are involved, work with union representatives in advance to align selection protocols with collective bargaining language. Conflicts surfaced during deployment slow the response and damage labor relations.

CORE Maintain an internal roster of mutual aid–trained, OQ-current personnel, refreshed quarterly. The roster is your starting list when the next event arrives.

9.7 · WORKER SAFETY AND MENTAL HEALTH

CORE Conduct daily tailgate safety briefings and crew welfare checks. Track all deployed workers by GPS or equivalent. Lost crew accountability under storm conditions is one of the highest-consequence failures in mutual aid.

CORE Use Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) teams for peer-to-peer mental health support. A generic Employee Assistance Program (EAP) hotline is not sufficient for major-event recovery. Identify CISM teams in advance — internal, local agency, or contracted — and integrate activation protocols into the ERP.

CORE Provide post-deployment debriefs and access to mental-health support for at least 30 days after stand-down. Symptoms of stress and trauma frequently surface after the event ends, not during.

9.8 · CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR SECONDARY EMERGENCIES

CORE Develop a contingency plan for a fatality or severe injury during a major response — covering partial shutdown of the response, family notification, CISM activation, regulator and law-enforcement notification, and resource backstop while the immediate response is paused.

CORE Pre-identify a fatality/severe-injury communications protocol that aligns operations, HR, legal, and external affairs. Decisions made under shock are the wrong decisions.

9.9 · WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CORE Designate a recurring pre-winter month for internal preparedness campaigns — lunch-and-learns, webinars, refresher reminders. Many newer employees have never experienced a major gas event; the institutional memory has to be deliberately re-created each year.

CORE Build mutual aid familiarity into new-hire onboarding for operations and emergency-management roles. The first time an employee hears about mutual aid should not be on a Joint Mobilization Conference Call.

9.10 · ICS / NIMS TRAINING

CORE Maintain ICS and NIMS training currency for all mutual aid–eligible personnel. Add ICS and NIMS training to the SGA training subscription portfolio and offer it on-demand. Tabletop exercises are the most important practical part of ICS training.

CROSS Adopt a common ICS framework across mutual aid partners so that a Responding Company's supervision integrates cleanly with the Requesting Company's incident-management structure. Mismatched ICS implementations cause friction in the first 24 hours of every multi-company response.

9.11 · CONTRACTOR INTEGRATION

CORE Write mutual aid participation requirements into contractor agreements. Tiered agreements with regional resource-sharing clauses, and an expanded pre-qualified partner pool, mitigate the risk of contractor unavailability when many utilities activate simultaneously.

CORE Treat contractor crews under mutual aid scope with the same OQ verification, safety orientation, and accountability standards as employee crews. The Agreement does not distinguish between them in safety-rule application.

SYSTEM RESILIENCE: FOUNDATIONS

The 2024 edition treated system resilience as the fifth tenet, focused on infrastructure protection, hardening, and asset-base integrity. That content remains valid as a foundation. The most carefully governed mutual aid program cannot compensate for a system that does not have the molecules, storage, controls, or throughput to serve customers. Resilience and mutual aid are two faces of the same response.

10.1 · RESILIENCE AS PRE-EVENT INVESTMENT

Resilience is what you have already built when the event arrives. The standard categories of pre-event investment are:

INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

Pipeline integrity, regulator-station hardening, communication-tower redundancy.

ASSET DIVERSIFICATION

Multiple supply paths, multiple storage assets, distributed peak-shaving capacity.

OPERATIONAL HARDENING

Control-room redundancy, SCADA failover, paper-only fallbacks.

WORKFORCE DEPTH

Cross-training, mutual aid relationships, ICS-fluent supervision.

BEST PRACTICE · CORE Treat resilience investment as a recurring capital category in the annual planning cycle, not an event-driven catch-up. Reactive hardening is dramatically more expensive than designed-in resilience.

10.2 · THE THREE PILLARS OF INTEGRATED RESILIENCE

The most important update to the 2024 framing is the recognition that resilience cannot be planned in three silos. People, molecules, and messages must be aligned. Part III develops each pillar in detail:

PILLAR	INCLUDES	REFERENCE
People	Mutual aid crews, gas-control staff, EM personnel, contractors	CORE — Ch. 6, 9
Molecules	Storage inventory, LNG/propane-air, linepack, producer performance	S/PS Ch. 11; GC/IC Ch. 12
Messages	Stakeholder communication, outage reporting, federal data, escalation	CORE Ch. 7, 8; Ch. 14

10.3 · BRIDGE TO PART III

Readers focused on personnel-centered mutual aid can stop here and use Parts I and II as a complete reference. Readers responsible for storage and supply, gas control, or any integrated emergency-response program should continue into Part III, which expands each of the three pillars in turn and concludes with the integrated framework that ties them together.

PART III

INTEGRATED RESILIENCE

Part III addresses the three operational streams that, taken together, determine whether the system holds during a major event: peak shaving and storage (the molecules side), pipeline gas control (the controls side), and the integrated planning framework that aligns them with crew deployment and stakeholder communication. These chapters are not substitutes for crew-deployment best practice — they sit alongside it.



PEAK SHAVING & STORAGE

11.1 · TYPES OF PEAK SHAVING AND STORAGE ASSETS

ASSET TYPE	CAPACITY	SEND-OUT	REFILL	STRATEGIC ROLE
Peak-Shaving LNG	Plant-scale	High	Very slow	High-deliverability, near-end-market
Propane-Air	Smaller scale	Lower	Faster	Backstop when LNG is unavailable
Underground Storage	Massive	Very high	Seasonal	Last line of defense
Mobile CNG/LNG	Small per asset	Variable	Variable	Hospital backup, virtual pipeline

BEST PRACTICE · S/PS Choose the asset to match the use case: LNG is preferred for high deliverability and frequency; CNG is preferred for lower pressure/flow and infrequent use; propane-air is the backstop when LNG is unavailable. Treating all three as interchangeable misses the operational differences that matter on a peak day.

11.2 · PRE-SEASON PREPARATION

Pre-season preparation is what makes peak-day execution unremarkable. The standard cycle:

- Late-summer / early-fall: load forecast and validation against the prior winter's actuals.
- Mid-fall: review operational-readiness data for storage and peak-shaving plants and the winterization plan.
- November–December: send-out tests at all peak-shaving plants under representative conditions, with final maintenance completed in the same window.
- Pre-commissioning send-out tests as a final readiness check; for LNG systems, complete cooldown.

S/PS Establish storage-inventory targets by plant, not just system-wide. The hardest-to-fill pools should be targeted for full inventory by season start; system-average targets can mask plant-level shortfalls that matter on peak days.

S/PS Document each plant's start-up duration, ramp-up profile, and shut-down sequence in a single quick-reference card kept current with operating practice — the artifact a control-room or EM lead can pull up in seconds.

11.3 · ACTIVATION TRIGGERS

S/PS Define explicit pre-event decision triggers for LNG vaporization start, including: forecast minimum temperature, storage inventory percentage below threshold, consecutive cold days, demand forecast against design capacity, producer underperformance signals, and equipment outages at peak-shaving facilities such as a gas compressor, LNG pump, or vaporizer failure. Triggers should fire ahead of the peak, not during it. Some operators run peak-shaving as normal baseload operation rather than a held contingency, so the activation sequence will vary by company.

S/PS Adopt dynamic, intra-day peak-shaving management — adjusting send-out volume during the day rather than committing to a fixed daily plan. Weather, demand, and producer performance frequently diverge from the morning forecast in ways that justify mid-day re-planning.

S/PS Document who has authority to start (and stop) vaporization at each tier of escalation. Ambiguity about start authority is one of the most common reasons peak-shaving assets activate later than they should.

11.4 · OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS

S/PS Identify the hardest constraints at each asset in advance and build a contingency for each: trucking logistics for resupply, electrical power at LNG facilities, on-site staffing, road conditions for tanker change-outs, and natural gas availability for self-consumption. An easily overlooked constraint is loss of communications, including go-dark scenarios at remote sites — train staff so a site can keep operating safely when it cannot reach the control center.

S/PS Cross-train control-room and storage-operations staff on each other's vocabulary and decision criteria. The handoffs between dispatch, storage operations, and peak-shaving plant leads happen under time pressure and benefit from shared language.

S/PS Coordinate emergency resupply routing with state emergency operations centers before the season, not during the event. Tanker change-outs and crew access during a multi-day storm depend on road clearing, which is managed through Emergency Support Function 1 (Transportation) and Emergency Support Function 12 (Energy). Pre-identify primary and alternate routes to each peak-shaving and storage asset, and establish the contact path to request road-clearing priority before crews or trucks are stranded.

11.5 · STORAGE METRICS

S/PS Identify and publish one or two standard storage metrics that SGA aggregates from member companies during major events. The aggregated metric (not individual-company positions) should be the basis for federal and state reporting.

S/PS Communicate storage cost-savings and reliability value directly to state regulators — both during events and in blue-sky periods. Regulators that understand storage's role in service reliability are easier partners when supply or demand becomes constrained.

S/PS Track storage deliverability against pipeline take-away capacity, not inventory alone. A storage field's contribution on a peak day depends on three things together: physical withdrawal capability, firm storage contracting, and enough pipeline capacity to move the gas to where it is needed. Recent winter experience showed that limited pipeline take-away can cap effective withdrawals below what a field could physically deliver.

11.6 · STORAGE AND PEAK SHAVING AS CRITICAL CONTEXT

Storage and peak-shaving readiness shapes how mutual aid events unfold, even though it is not mutual aid itself. When a company keeps its supply-side assets ready, peak demand is more likely to stay inside its own system, which lowers the chance it will need to request outside personnel. When those assets are strained, any personnel request that follows tends to be larger and more time-sensitive. The National Agreement is scoped to personnel assistance and the materials, supplies, and equipment crews use — it does not cover sharing gas supply or storage assets. The best practices in this chapter focus on keeping each company's own storage and peak-shaving assets ready, which is the most dependable way to limit the size and frequency of mutual aid events.

PIPELINE GAS CONTROL

12.1 · GAS CONTROL 101

The control room manages the moment-to-moment behavior of the system. Across pipelines and large LDCs, the standard control-room responsibilities include:

- 24/7 SCADA visibility of pressures, linepack, nominations and scheduled quantities, receipts, and deliveries.
- Real-time distribution decisions across all served territories.
- The “pack and draft” operating cycle — packing line during shoulder periods to support draft on peaks.
- Key controlled metrics including pressure at delivery points, linepack, throughput, and storage withdrawal rate.

12.2 · SUPPLY PLANNING AND FLOW PATTERNS

Modern peak-day flow patterns are bidirectional in many regions. Production growth has fundamentally altered the historical south-to-north flow in significant parts of the country, creating bidirectional flows with "null points" that shift based on demand and supply. Practical implications for interconnected LDCs:

- The supply path on a peak day may differ from the supply path in shoulder periods.
- Upstream constraints can affect downstream availability in directions the historical model would not predict.
- Working with the connected pipeline's gas-control function is more important than ever, because the operating mode is more dynamic.

12.3 · MANAGING PRODUCERS, SHIPPERS, AND LARGE CUSTOMERS

GC/IC Hold producers to nomination tolerances under critical-day conditions, with documented penalties for material underperformance. By mid-morning on critical days, underperforming producers should have nominations cut to match actual flow, with the affected gas available for re-allocation downstream.

GC/IC Understand the operational reality of large power-generation customers, many of whom hold no-notice service and can draw at rates far exceeding their daily nominations. Traditional flow control may not be physically possible for these customers. Monitor large-customer takes in real time, communicate proactively with power-plant operators about system conditions, and have pre-agreed curtailment protocols in place before peak season.

GC/IC Maintain a current inventory of which large customers have alternative or backup sources of supply (other pipeline interconnections, on-site generation, dual-fuel capability) versus customers and communities for whom you are the sole source. If a small town or municipality depends entirely on your system, protecting delivery to that point takes priority over a customer with backup options. This prioritization should be documented in the peak-day operations plan and communicated to gas-control staff before the season begins.

GC/IC Use Operational Flow Orders (OFOs) as a tool to protect system integrity under peak-day stress. A more refined option is a bracketed OFO, which prevents customers from being either long or short on the system. In either case, pre-event communication about when and how OFOs would be invoked reduces market disruption when the tool is actually used. An OFO is a contractual enforcement mechanism, not a service shut-off — it directs shippers to align takes with confirmed nominations; it does not by itself curtail firm service.

GC/IC Invest in relationships with the control rooms of interconnected pipelines and neighboring utilities. Deep, ongoing non-event communication is what makes real-time coordination work under pressure — the trust and shared vocabulary can only be built before the event, not during it.

12.4 · LNG INTEGRATION IN CONTROL-ROOM OPERATIONS

GC/IC Integrate LNG send-out rate into the daily peak-day operations checklist alongside storage withdrawal rate and linepack status. Treat LNG as a first-class control-room input — not a commodity managed by a separate team.

GC/IC Establish a standing communication protocol between the control room and peak-shaving plant operations during declared events: cadence, channel, and the specific data points exchanged. Ad-hoc coordination wastes minutes that matter.

12.5 · CONTROL-ROOM STAFFING

GC/IC Designate essential control-room staff in advance for peak-event operations, with a published rotation. Pre-arrange accommodations and meals 24–48 hours out from forecasted events; control-room staff who cannot get home should not be improvising lodging.

GC/IC Maintain control-room redundancy — backup control room or remote-operations capability — exercised at least annually. Loss of the primary control room during an active event is a low-probability but consequence-heavy scenario.

12.6 · COORDINATION WITH LDCS AND MUTUAL AID

GC/IC Establish a standard set of data elements that transmission control rooms share with downstream LDCs during peak events: linepack status, key constraint status, storage withdrawal rate, and producer performance summary. When conditions deteriorate, LDCs also need the apparent cause, expected duration, and likely operational trajectory, not just a report that pressures are dropping, so they can make timely curtailment decisions that protect firm service.

GC/IC Include pipeline gas-control representatives in cross-association tabletop exercises and roundtables. Many of the friction points between pipelines and LDCs disappear once the participants have met outside an active event.

INTEGRATED RESILIENCE: PEOPLE, MOLECULES, MESSAGES

13.1 · THE THREE PILLARS

The conclusion that resilience cannot be planned in three silos has become a core finding of recent SGA work. The pillars must be aligned:

PILLAR	INCLUDES	REFERENCE
People	Mutual aid crews, gas-control staff, EM personnel, contractors	CORE — Ch. 6, 9
Molecules	Storage inventory, LNG/propane-air, linepack, producer performance	S/PS Ch. 11; GC/IC Ch. 12
Messages	Stakeholder communication, outage reporting, federal data, escalation	CORE Ch. 7, 8; Ch. 14

13.2 · ALIGNING CREW REQUESTS WITH SUPPLY STATUS

CROSS Build a decision matrix in the ERP mapping supply status (storage %, LNG availability, linepack) against crew availability to produce an integrated response posture. The matrix is not a substitute for judgment — it is a starting point that prevents the team from re-discovering the relationship between supply and crews during every event.

CROSS Document who in the organization can authorize an integrated response posture change. Most companies have well-defined crew-request authority and well-defined supply-side authority — but no single person clearly empowered to align both.

13.3 · THE MESSAGES PILLAR IN PRACTICE

The messages pillar is distributed across Chapters 7, 8, and 14 — but it deserves focused treatment here because communication failures during an integrated event are among the most consequential. A company can have the right crews deployed and the right supply assets running, and still suffer major reputational and regulatory damage if its messaging is late, inconsistent, or misaligned with operational reality. Key communications tasks:

- **Regulatory:** outage status, timelines, compliance to PUCs, FERC, PHMSA — format/cadence pre-agreed in blue-sky periods.
- **Customer & public:** pre-event safety, outage notices, restoration estimates — drafted and pre-approved before the season.
- **Internal employees:** status to staff not directly involved, including HR on pay, safety, return-to-work.
- **Emergency operations:** updates to local/county/state EOCs; embedded reps get real-time access to the same data.
- **Media & elected officials:** proactive outreach coordinated with external affairs; reactive responses follow the same chain.
- **Industry & association:** Industry and association communication: accurate, timely status reporting through AlertMedia and SGA Daily Situation Update calls.

CROSS Designate a single communications lead for the event who has authority to approve messaging across all audiences — regulatory, customer, media, internal, and association. The most common messaging failure is not bad content; it is conflicting content from different parts of the organization, or content that arrives late because the approval chain was unclear.

CROSS Pre-draft communication templates for each escalation tier and each audience. A template library organized by scenario (service interruption, curtailment, peak-day activation, federal notification) saves hours during an event and reduces the risk of inconsistent messaging.

CROSS Include external affairs and communications professionals in tabletop exercises alongside operations, gas control, and emergency management. The messaging pillar is best tested when the communications team is receiving live scenario inputs and drafting real-time messages under exercise conditions — not reviewing them after the fact.

CORE Develop “reasonable assurance” messaging for regulators and the public: coordinated statements that accurately describe system conditions without triggering panic buying, premature curtailment, or unnecessary public alarm. These messages should be drafted in advance and reviewed with legal and external affairs during blue-sky periods.

13.4 · JOINT DECISION POINTS

Three decision points must be documented as integrated, not sequential. The temptation in a real event is to handle them in series; the consequence of doing so is that downstream decisions are made with stale information from upstream:

POINT	TRIGGER	STREAMS
DP-1	When to activate peak-shaving assets AND simultaneously notify SGA for potential crew assistance.	S/PS + CORE
DP-2	When to escalate to DOE/PHMSA notification AND begin formal mutual aid RFA.	GC/IC + CORE
DP-3	When storage utilization exceeds threshold AND interruptible customers must be curtailed AND additional crew support is requested.	S/PS + CORE

BEST PRACTICE · CROSS-STREAM Pre-rehearse each of the three decision points in tabletop exercises. The most common gap revealed in DP-3 is that interruptible-customer outreach has not been scripted to align with the crew-allocation conversation, causing late or contradictory messaging to large customers.

13.5 · JOINT TRAINING AND EXERCISES

CROSS Develop joint mutual aid and peak-shaving tabletop exercises that include gas control, emergency management, supply planning, and external communications in the same room. Single-discipline exercises miss the integration friction that only shows up when all four are present.

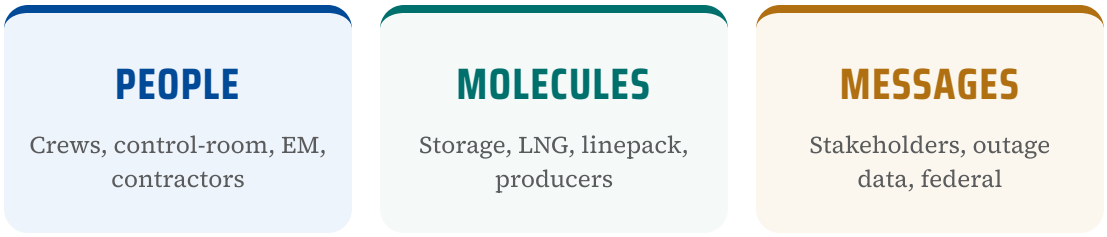
CROSS Include an integrated-resilience scenario — crew shortage AND storage constraint occurring simultaneously — in annual exercise design. Single-stream stresses are well-handled; combined stresses are where most teams have unclosed gaps.

CROSS Invite SGA staff and (where appropriate) federal-agency liaisons to observe member-company joint exercises. Observation is a relationship-builder; passive presence builds the credibility that matters during a real event.

13.6 · BRINGING THE THREE PILLARS TOGETHER

This manual already works as an integrated resilience reference. It covers crew deployment (people), storage and gas control (molecules), and stakeholder communication (messages) in one place, along with the activation triggers, roles, and federal coordination that tie them together. Taken as a whole, it is the most comprehensive resource on mutual aid and related operations that SGA has produced, and it is built to be used directly during planning and events.

Resilience improves fastest when operators learn from one another. Member companies are encouraged to share lessons learned from past events, including operational issues encountered during peak conditions, through SGA's Mutual Aid Roundtable and committee discussions, so other operators can prepare for the same situations before they happen.



PART IV

INDUSTRY COORDINATION

Part IV addresses the coordination layer above company-to-company mutual aid: how SGA and partner associations represent the natural gas industry to federal partners during major events, what those federal partners are looking for, and how member companies contribute to that representation through accurate, timely reporting.



SGA Roundtable - Austin, Texas

COORDINATING WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

14.1 · WHAT FEDERAL AGENCIES NEED

Ahead of and during major events, DOE convenes daily Unity-of-Effort calls. Depending on severity, PHMSA and FERC may host calls. The questions cluster into recurring topics:

DOE

- Outage counts by utility
- Gas supply and storage status
- Mutual aid deployment levels
- Critical infrastructure risk
- Expected restoration timelines
- Utility requests (e.g. waivers)

PHMSA

- Pipeline integrity performance
- OFO and curtailment data
- Notable incidents / near-misses
- Regulatory-compliance posture

FERC

- Pipeline deliverability
- Gas-electric coordination signals

14.2 · SGA'S ROLE DURING MAJOR EVENTS

Across the most recent winter and weather events, SGA has stepped into a new operating role for the gas industry:

- Participation in DOE Unity of Effort calls as a trusted natural gas industry representative; AGA provides a general overview of the state of the industry, and the regional associations relay specific regional updates or concerns.
- Aggregation of AlertMedia-driven member-company status data into daily federal briefings.
- Coordinated messaging with AGA so that the natural gas industry speaks with a unified voice to federal partners.
- Recognition by federal partners — at scale and increasingly across agencies — as a trusted gas-side intelligence source.

BEST PRACTICE · CROSS-STREAM Member companies should provide associations with a realistic picture of operational status — including challenges — so the association can build an accurate narrative for federal partners. Sanitized status reports leave the association unable to defend the industry's position credibly when challenges later become visible.

14.3 · STANDARD INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE PACKAGE

BEST PRACTICE · CORE SGA should institutionalize a standard reporting template for major events. The template should reduce duplication for member companies and allow a single submission to serve state PUCs, DOE, and SGA simultaneously.

The standard package should include, at minimum:

METRIC	PURPOSE	REPORTING LEVEL
Storage utilization %	Indicator of supply security	Regional and national
Peak-shaving assets in service	Number and capacity deployed	Regional
Mutual aid crews deployed	Number by region	Regional
Customers out of service	Standardized definition (Ch. 7.4)	Per utility, aggregated
Expected restoration timeline	Days	Per utility
State/federal support requests	To help alleviate delays in restoration	Per utility

14.4 · DATA SHARING AND AGGREGATION

CROSS SGA aggregates data at the regional level before reporting to federal partners. Individual company commercial positions are protected; meaningful situational intelligence still reaches DOE, along with PHMSA and FERC as appropriate. The aggregation discipline is what makes voluntary, candid reporting workable for member companies.

CROSS Define in advance which data points from a member company are reportable in identified form, which are reportable in aggregated form only, and which are not reportable. Member companies should treat this as a recurring review with their legal and external-affairs functions, not a per-event question.

14.5 · STRATEGIC VALUE OF PROACTIVE DATA SHARING

CROSS Good industry data shapes post-event regulatory narratives. Companies that have provided proactive, clear data are treated as trusted partners by regulators; companies that have not may have to defend themselves from inferences drawn in the data vacuum.

CORE Develop "reasonable assurance" messaging — coordinated messages that prevent panic buying or premature curtailment while giving regulators confidence that the system is being managed. Most effective when drafted in advance and reviewed with legal/external affairs in blue-sky periods.

14.6 · EDUCATING FEDERAL STAKEHOLDERS OUTSIDE EVENTS

A recurring observation from federal coordination calls is that some federal agency staff have limited fluency in basic gas-system concepts (e.g., the difference between a "customer out" and a "service shut off," what curtailment is, why gas-system restoration is not analogous to electric-system restoration). The remedy is education in blue-sky periods, not exposition during events.

CORE SGA is the primary contact for state and local entities, and AGA is the primary contact for federal entities. AGA and SGA work together, in non-event periods, to open both association channels and direct member-to-agency engagement to educate federal stakeholders on gas-system fundamentals. Webinars, agency tours of LNG facilities, and one-page primers all play a role.

CROSS Coordinate this education with AGA and (where appropriate) with electric-side counterparts. Cross-industry education is more credible than single-association advocacy.

14.7 · AN OPEN STRATEGY

The federal-coordination strategy itself remains, in part, an open item. Several elements are working well — SGA's seat at DOE Unity of Effort calls, AlertMedia-driven aggregated reporting, the unified SGA/AGA voice. Other elements are still being developed: the explicit reportable-data taxonomy, the cadence of blue-sky federal engagement, and the formal escalation path between member-company status reporting and federal briefings. Member companies that have views on any of these should engage through SGA standing committees as the strategy continues to mature.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

APPENDICES

The appendices that follow are practical references — built to be photocopied, posted, and used. They are derived from the manual body and may be consulted independently of the chapters. Appendix A answers common questions; Appendix B is a one-page first-call checklist; Appendix C is a glossary; Appendix D is a resource and document catalog.

APPENDIX A

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

They are written for a reader new to mutual aid as well as for an experienced coordinator looking for a quick refresher.

A.1 · ABOUT THE AGREEMENT

Q What exactly is mutual aid?

A A voluntary system through which natural gas utilities provide emergency assistance to one another after events that disrupt service and exceed any one utility's capacity to respond alone. The assistance centers on personnel, along with the materials, supplies, and equipment those crews use during the response. The framework is governed by the National Mutual Assistance Agreement and supported by AGA, APGA, NGA, SGA, MEA, and WEI.

Q Does signing the Agreement obligate my company to provide aid?

A **No.** Signing the Agreement does not obligate your company to send or receive aid — it gives you a ready framework to use when you choose to help. In practice, companies confirm their own systems are stable before committing resources, decide case-by-case what they can send, and use the Agreement to simplify the legal and billing conversation once they decide to respond.

Q Is there a fee to participate?

A **No.** The National Mutual Assistance Agreement is a voluntary, no-fee framework jointly supported by the participating associations.

Q Who in my company should sign the Agreement?

A Whoever your company has authorized to bind it to a multi-party emergency-response agreement — typically a senior officer such as a VP of Operations, VP of Gas Distribution, or General Counsel. The operational mutual aid point of contact is often a different (and more junior) person than the legal signatory. That is normal — just make sure both are documented and known to SGA.

Q How can my company withdraw from the Agreement if we ever need to?

A By providing written notice (email is acceptable) to AGA and to the Regional Trade Association. Withdrawal does not affect obligations that arose before the notice was given, and a Requesting Company may not withdraw while it is currently receiving assistance.

A.2 · ABOUT ACTIVATION

Q How do I know who at my company has authority to submit an RFA?

A If you don't know, find out before you need to know. Industry reviews repeatedly identify uncertainty about RFA authority as a top procedural gap. Designate a primary Mutual Aid point person (and backup) inside the company's emergency-response plan and communicate those names to SGA.

Q When should we activate mutual aid? Are there hard triggers?

A The Agreement gives the Requesting Company the discretion to decide when emergency assistance is necessary or advisable. In practice, common signals include: internal and contractor support is exhausted; restoration timeframes will exceed acceptable customer-out durations; specialized resources (relight crews, leak survey, dewatering) are needed at volumes you cannot field internally; or a forecast event is large enough that pre-positioning makes sense. A leading practice is to give SGA a “heads up” before formally activating an RFA — early notice shortens response time.

Q Who do I call first?

A For SGA-member events, your first call is to SGA — your Regional Association — which serves as the Lead Association for most regional events. SGA helps facilitate communications, distributes the RFA, and convenes a Joint Mobilization Conference Call when needed. AGA supports if the request exceeds regional response capacity.

Q Where do I get the RFA Workbook, Master Compile Workbook, and other documents?

A All National Mutual Aid documents are available from AGA’s Emergency Planning Resource Center, including the National Mutual Aid Agreement, the RFA Workbook, the Master Compile RFA Spreadsheet, the RFA Training PowerPoint, and the National Mutual Aid Database. Your SGA contact can also point you directly to the most recent versions and to SGA-specific resources.

A.3 · ABOUT OQ AND SAFETY

Q What is OQ, and why does it matter so much?

A **Operator Qualification** OQ stands for Operator Qualification — the program required by 49 CFR Part 192 Subpart N that ensures personnel performing covered tasks on a gas pipeline are qualified to do so. It matters in mutual aid because state regulatory commissions handle OQ differently — there is no fully standardized national OQ framework, and state-specific rules can prevent employees from performing covered tasks in another jurisdiction without a waiver. The 2026 RFA Workbook includes OQ mapping to make compatibility comparisons faster. The Requesting Company must specify what tasks are covered tasks per Subpart N and confirm responder knowledge, skills, and abilities meet its needs.

Q Whose safety rules apply when a responder is on site?

A The Responding Company’s safety rules apply unless the Requesting Company’s safety rules are more stringent — in which case the more stringent rules apply. The Requesting Company also provides responder personnel with a safety orientation specific to its territory and the affected area before work begins.

A.4 · ABOUT MONEY AND LOGISTICS

Q Who pays for what?

A Reimburses the Responding Company for all costs and expenses, without added profit. **at cost, with no added profit.** Reimbursable categories include personnel wages and salaries (including paid travel time), standard benefits and allowance additives, travel and living expenses (meals, lodging, reasonable incidentals), and replacement cost of materials and supplies expended or furnished. The Responding Company submits an invoice with reasonable documentation.

Q Who handles food, lodging, and security at the work site?

A Generally the Requesting Company handles all food, lodging, vehicle parking security, and incidental support during the on-site Emergency Assistance Period — except for food and lodging during travel to and from the final work site. The parties may agree otherwise in the RFA, in which case the Responding Company can handle these logistics subject to reimbursement.

Q Can resources be reassigned mid-event if multiple companies need help?

A **Yes.** During emergencies impacting more than one Signatory, Responding Company resources may be reassigned (1) en route to the original Requesting Company, (2) at an initial staging area before reaching it, or (3) at the final staging area. The Lead Association, AGA, or APGA may help facilitate. The Requesting Company that ultimately receives the reassigned resources is responsible for all Responding Company costs from the time of departure to the reassigned location.

A.5 · ABOUT SCOPE AND USE

Q Can my company use mutual aid during a labor dispute?

A **No.** The Agreement is designed for personnel and emergency-response assistance, and is explicitly not for use during labor disputes.

Q Can mutual aid be used to source parts or capital equipment?

A **No.** The Agreement is scoped to personnel assistance and the materials and supplies expended during the response. Sourcing of parts or capital equipment in the normal course is not its purpose, though associations may help facilitate communication for such needs.

Q Are Joint Mobilization Conference Calls recorded?

A **No.** Calls are not recorded. Conversations may contain confidential and proprietary information, and the confidentiality provisions of the Agreement apply (with limited exceptions for general deployment information).

Q What is a Roster, and who fills it out?

A The MA Roster List is filled out by the Responding Company once a commitment has been made. It lists the specific personnel/equipment/services being provided, in a standardized format that the Requesting Company can copy-and-paste from many responders into a single master list. Dark-green columns are required; light-green optional.

Q What if my company has never run a mutual aid drill?

A Start with a tabletop exercise that includes a “request aid” component. Many companies’ mock drills practice response operations but never practice initiating an RFA — which means the first time the team fills out the Request tab is during a real event. SGA encourages members to add this step to annual exercises.

APPENDIX B

FIRST-CALL CHECKLIST

Use this one-page checklist when you believe your company may need mutual aid. The first call is the heads-up call; the form follows.

B.1 · BEFORE YOU CALL

Have the following ready, even in approximate form:

- ☐ Today's date and current local time.
- ☐ Your company's authorized requester (if not you).
- ☐ Approximate number of customers affected (current and projected).
- ☐ The single largest gap you anticipate in resources (relight crews, leak survey, dewatering, etc.).
- ☐ Your name, title, and direct mobile/cell phone.
- ☐ A one-sentence description of the event (what, where, when).
- ☐ Approximate restoration window your company is targeting.
- ☐ Whether the event is current (in progress) or forecasted (anticipated).

B.2 · WHO TO CALL FIRST

- Call your SGA Mutual Aid contact directly. SGA will walk you through the next steps.
- If your authorized requester is someone else, copy them on the call or ensure they are reachable for the formal RFA submission.
- Unsure who at SGA to call? The member-services contact can connect you.

B.3 · WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- SGA will alert the regional mutual aid contact list and may send an AlertMedia pulse.
- You complete the RFA Workbook — Request tab.
- SGA distributes the workbook to potential Responding Companies.
- If many responses are expected, SGA convenes a Joint Mobilization Conference Call.
- You confirm acceptance of specific offers in writing (email is acceptable).
- Direct dispatch coordination happens between you and each Responding Company.

DON'T WAIT FOR A PERFECT PICTURE

The most common mistake new mutual aid coordinators make is delaying the first call to assemble "all" the information. The first call is allowed to be incomplete. Your job is to surface the situation early; SGA's job is to help you fill in the gaps as the event develops. If in doubt, call.

APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Where a term has a specific meaning under the National Agreement, that meaning prevails.

C.1 · PROGRAM & AGREEMENT TERMS

Agreement	The 2026 National Mutual Assistance Agreement (effective January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2030), the multi-association master agreement governing natural gas mutual aid.
Associations	AGA, APGA, NGA, SGA, MEA, and WEI — the six co-sponsoring associations of the Agreement.
Emergency Assistance	Materials, services, personnel, supplies, and/or equipment provided by one Signatory to another to aid in restoring natural gas service. The materials, supplies, and equipment are what responding crews bring, use, expend, or loan during the response, not gas supply or shared assets.
Emergency Assistance Period	The period during which a Responding Company is providing emergency assistance to a Requesting Company under the Agreement.
Exhibit A	The Mutual Assistance Procedures and Guidelines that accompany the Agreement; may be updated by the Associations from time to time with notice to Signatories.
Exhibit B	The Request for Mutual Aid template form (now an Excel workbook) referenced by the Agreement.
Joint Mobilization Conference Call	A call convened by the Lead Association during a multi-company event to coordinate resource availability and allocation.
Lead Association	The Association primarily responsible for supporting coordination during a particular Emergency Assistance Period — usually the affected Signatory's Regional Trade Association.
Member / Signatory	A company whose authorized representative has signed the Agreement.
Requesting Company	The Signatory experiencing an event and requesting Emergency Assistance.
Responding Company	The Signatory providing Emergency Assistance to a Requesting Company.
AGA / APGA	American Gas Association (investor-owned utilities) / American Public Gas Association (publicly owned distribution systems).
NGA / MEA / WEI	Northeast Gas Association / Midwest Energy Association / Western Energy Institute — regional associations serving their respective footprints.
SGA	SGA Natural Gas Association. Regional trade association serving natural gas operators; publisher of this manual.

C.2 · OPERATIONAL TERMS

AlertMedia	Mass-notification platform used by SGA to alert member companies, run pulse checks, and aggregate event-status data.
AAR	After-Action Review — structured post-event review documenting what happened, what worked, what did not, and improvement actions.
B31Q	ASME B31Q — the industry consensus standard for pipeline personnel qualification. Its covered-task numbering is what lets one company map its OQ program against another's in the RFA workbook.
CISM	Critical Incident Stress Management — a structured peer-to-peer mental health support model for personnel exposed to traumatic events.
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas — natural gas stored at high pressure, used as a lower-volume peak-shaving or temporary-supply source where LNG is not warranted.
Energy Emergency Alert	EEA — the escalating alert levels used to signal an energy supply emergency. Tying waiver filings to a defined EEA level lets them activate on a pre-set trigger rather than an ad-hoc decision.
ERP	Emergency Response Plan — the company-internal plan governing emergency operations, incident command, and (for purposes of this manual) mutual aid governance.
ICS / NIMS	Incident Command System / National Incident Management System — the federally adopted standards for organizing emergency response.
LDC	Local Distribution Company — the natural gas utility that delivers gas to end-use customers.
Linepack	The volume of gas held in a pipeline at a given pressure; an operational reserve that allows transient demand-supply mismatch to be absorbed.
OFO	Operational Flow Order — a directive issued by a pipeline to address an operational condition by requiring shippers to balance receipts and deliveries.
OQ	OQ stands for Operator Qualification — the program required by 49 CFR Part 192 Subpart N that ensures personnel performing covered tasks on a gas pipeline are qualified to do so.
Peak Shaving	Use of supplemental supply (LNG, propane-air, etc.) to meet demand on peak days when pipeline supply alone is insufficient.
RFA	Request for Assistance — the formal request mechanism under the Agreement, currently delivered via the Excel-based RFA Workbook.
SCADA	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition — real-time monitoring and control system used by gas-control rooms.

C.3 · STAKEHOLDER TERMS

CISA	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency — the federal agency for cyber incident reporting and critical-infrastructure cyber defense; one of the reporting paths for a suspected cyber-driven disruption.
DNG-ISAC	Downstream Natural Gas Information Sharing and Analysis Center — the sector body through which natural gas utilities share cyber and physical threat intelligence.
DOE	U.S. Department of Energy — convenes the energy-sector coordination calls known formally as Emergency Support Function 12 (ESF-12) calls and referred to throughout this manual as Unity of Effort calls.
EOC	Emergency Operations Center — local, county, or state center coordinating multi-agency response.
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission — federal agency with jurisdiction over interstate pipeline transportation.
FPA Section 202(c)	Federal Power Act Section 202(c) — the emergency authority under which DOE can order actions to meet an electric supply emergency. It reaches gas operators through dual-fuel and extended-runtime exposure.
PHMSA	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration — federal agency with jurisdiction over pipeline safety.
PUC	Public Utility Commission — state agency regulating utilities, including natural gas distribution.
Unity of Effort	The DOE-convened daily energy-sector coordination calls held ahead of and during major events — formally Emergency Support Function 12 (ESF-12) calls.

APPENDIX D

RESOURCE & DOCUMENT CATALOG

Core documents to keep on hand during planning, exercises, and events:

DOCUMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHERE TO FIND IT
National Mutual Assistance Agreement (2026–2030)	The signed multi-association agreement and Exhibit A Procedures & Guidelines (eff. Jan 1, 2026).	AGA Emergency Planning Resource Center (aga.org/mutual-assistance)
Request for Assistance Workbook (.xlsx)	The 5-tab Excel workbook used by Requesting and Responding Companies to draft and respond to an RFA.	AGA Emergency Planning Resource Center; SGA member resources
Master Compile Workbook (.xlsx)	The 5-tab Excel workbook used by the Requesting Company to consolidate many responses.	AGA Emergency Planning Resource Center; SGA member resources
RFA Training PowerPoint	Step-by-step slides walking through both workbooks tab by tab.	AGA Emergency Planning Resource Center
National Mutual Aid Database	Roster of Signatories, authorized representatives, and 24-hour contact numbers.	AGA website (Emergency Planning Resource Center)
2024 Mutual Aid Best Practices (predecessor)	The 2024 edition this manual updates; useful for context on the original five tenets.	SGA / NGA member resources
SGA Mutual Aid 101 Member Guide	The member's introductory guide covering the National Agreement, roles, and the RFA workbook.	SGA member resources
Standardized AAR Template	Template for capturing structured after-action review output across operations, EM, communications, finance, and HR.	SGA member resources

D.1 · WHERE TO GET HELP

SGA members can reach the SGA team for mutual aid support, training, and member-services questions:

- **Connect@SGA:** the SGA member hub at connect.sganaturalgas.org
- **Member services:** memberservices@sganaturalgas.org
- **AGA mutual assistance home:** aga.org/mutual-assistance — the authoritative source for the current Agreement, the National Mutual Assistance Database, and the

A HEADS-UP IS ALWAYS WELCOME

If you anticipate that an event in your service territory may require mutual aid, contact SGA early — even before you formally activate an RFA. Early communication shortens response time, protects industry credibility with federal partners, and gives the network a head start in identifying available resources.

SGA NATURAL GAS ASSOCIATION

SHARE. GROW. ADVANCE.

Advancing the natural gas industry through training, networking, and advocacy — linking people, ideas, and information since 1908.

SGA MUTUAL AID SERIES

BOOK ONE — MUTUAL AID FUNDAMENTALS

BOOK TWO — BEST PRACTICES MANUAL, 2026 EDITION

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