SGA Mutual Aid Series

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ADVANCE

Mutual Aid Fundamentals

A Member's Guide to Understanding Natural Gas Mutual Aid



PREPARED BY:

SGA Natural Gas Association

Helping natural gas operators prepare, respond, and recover together.
Preparedness. Partnership. Resilience.

www.sganaturalgas.org

Developed with input from operating members, mutual aid leaders, emergency response professionals, and industry subject matter experts.

2026

SGA NATURAL GAS ASSOCIATION

A Message from the CEO

Welcome to the SGA Natural Gas Association and to the natural gas industry's Mutual Aid network.

Every day, natural gas professionals work to deliver one of life's most essential services safely, reliably, and without interruption. Most days, that work happens quietly. But when disasters strike, infrastructure is damaged, or communities face extraordinary challenges, our industry demonstrates something even more remarkable: its willingness to come together in service of one another.

Mutual aid is more than an emergency response process; it reflects who we are.

Competitors become partners. Companies share people, equipment, expertise, and experience. Relationships built over years of collaboration become the foundation for restoring service, protecting communities, and supporting one another when it matters most.

At SGA Natural Gas Association, we believe those relationships should be built long before an emergency occurs. Our role is to connect the people, ideas, and best practices that strengthen our industry every day so that when extraordinary events happen, we are ready to respond together with confidence. This guide was developed to help utilities better understand the principles, processes, and partnerships that make mutual aid successful. Whether your organization is participating for the first time or refining an established program, our goal is to provide practical guidance that supports preparedness, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Mutual aid is one example of what makes our industry strong; we succeed because we share knowledge, learn from one another, and recognize that the strength of our individual organizations depends on the strength of our industry as a whole.

Thank you for your commitment to serving your communities and for your continued leadership in advancing safety, operational excellence, and resilience across the natural gas industry. Together, we will continue to **Share. Grow. Advance.**

Suzanne Ogle, APR, IRC, CAE
President & CEO
SGA Natural Gas Association

About SGA:

SGA Natural Gas Association connects the people, ideas, and information that advance the natural gas industry through learning, collaboration, leadership development, and operational excellence.



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> Read Sections 2–5 first to understand the framework. Turn to Sections 6 & 7 when you are ready to open the Excel workbooks. Keep Sections 8–10 close during planning, drills, and live events.

SECTION 01

WELCOME & HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Welcome to SGA Natural Gas Association — and welcome to the natural gas industry's Mutual Aid network.

If you are new to SGA, new to your company's emergency response role, or simply new to the concept of mutual aid, this guide is written for you. It explains, in plain language, how natural gas utilities help one another after major events, what role SGA plays as your regional association, and exactly how to use the documents and Excel workbooks that drive the Request for Assistance (RFA) process.

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

- New mutual aid coordinators and emergency managers at SGA member companies.
- Operations, emergency management, and corporate communications staff who may participate in an event but are not the primary signatory.
- Leaders and staff who have never requested or provided mutual aid before and want a quick orientation.
- Anyone preparing for a tabletop exercise or storm-season briefing on the natural gas mutual aid program.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Read Sections 2–5 first to understand the framework, the parties involved, and how requests flow.
- Read Sections 6 & 7 when you are ready to actually open the RFA Workbook and Master Compile Workbook — these sections walk through every tab.
- Use Sections 8–10 as a reference during planning, drills, and live events.

WHEN TO MOVE ON TO THE FULL BEST PRACTICES MANUAL

If you are responsible for designing or running your company's emergency response program — or you own mutual aid coordination on behalf of your company — plan to read this guide first and then move on to the full SGA Mutual Aid Best Practices Manual (2026 Edition) for deeper operational detail, integrated resilience guidance, and federal coordination practices.

A NOTE ON SCOPE

This document focuses on general natural gas mutual aid — the National Agreement, the RFA process, and the Excel workbooks SGA members use. Specialized topics such as peak shaving, gas storage, and gas control coordination are addressed in the full Best Practices Manual and in separate SGA materials, and are intentionally not covered in depth here.

SECTION 02

MUTUAL AID 101 — WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT MATTERS

WHAT IS NATURAL GAS MUTUAL AID?

Mutual aid is a voluntary, peer-to-peer system through which natural gas utilities provide emergency assistance to one another — most often after weather events, equipment failures, or other incidents that disrupt service and exceed a single utility's ability to respond on its own.

The purpose is simple: to provide rapid, short-term deployment of emergency services — personnel, equipment, materials, and other support — to restore the critical operations of an affected natural gas utility. 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. Important: 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.

CASE STUDY

WINTER STORM FERN — JANUARY 2026

Winter Storm Fern brought a roughly two-week Arctic outbreak across much of North America in late January 2026, with core impacts from about January 23 to February 1. What made Fern demanding was its duration rather than a single record-cold day: more than ten consecutive days of below-normal temperatures drove near-record energy demand across the central and eastern United States, including many SGA member service territories.

Across the affected region, member companies sustained service for millions of firm customers by leaning on three things working together: pre-event staffing and supply moves; coordinated peak-shaving (LNG, propane-air, and storage) that limited customer exposure to peak-period market purchases; and association-led coordination through SGA — including daily Situation Update calls, AlertMedia status pulses, and a unified industry voice into DOE Emergency Support Function calls. The May 2026 post-event analysis prepared for the Natural Gas Council found no known losses of firm service to natural gas customers as a result of Fern's production impacts.

Fern is the kind of multi-day, multi-state event that the mutual aid framework was built for. The lesson SGA members repeatedly cite from Fern: agreements, contact lists, and RFA familiarity that exist before the event are worth more than any single tactic during the event.

WHY MUTUAL AID MATTERS

SPECIALIZED RESOURCES

Gas utilities require highly specialized equipment and trained crews. Few outside organizations can substitute for another utility's workforce.

CRITICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

Government response agencies, electric generators, hospitals, and other critical infrastructure depend on natural gas service.

REGIONAL IMPACT

Large weather events typically affect entire regions, making response from neighboring utilities impractical and creating a need for help from farther away.

WORKFORCE STRAIN

Disasters affect utility employees and their families too — increasing the need for outside relief crews to keep restoration moving safely. And when one event stresses both the gas and electric systems at once, the two industries' mutual aid networks pull on many of the same people, so outside help can be thinner than expected.

PRE-EVENT AGREEMENTS: WHY TIMING MATTERS

Mutual aid agreements must be established before an event. Trying to negotiate indemnity, billing, and risk allocation in the middle of a storm is what the National Agreement was designed to prevent. By signing the standard agreement in advance, member companies can focus on response — not paperwork — when the next event hits.

SECTION 03

THE NATIONAL MUTUAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

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
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 — coordinates mutual aid for companies assigned to SGA based on service-territory footprint
MEA	Midwest Energy Association	Regional Trade Association
WEI	Western Energy Institute	Regional Trade Association

KEY FEATURES OF THE AGREEMENT

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.

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, and invoicing and safety — so that companies can focus on response when an event occurs.

A 5-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) — effective January 1, 2026 — may be updated from time to time by the Associations, with written notice to Signatories.

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.

NETWORK SCALE

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

The National Mutual Aid Agreement is scalable — the same framework supports a single-county relight effort and a multi-state hurricane response. Figures are approximate and should be refreshed periodically from current PHMSA and EIA public data before each major republication.

SGA'S COORDINATION ROLE

Each Regional Trade Association is responsible for mutual aid coordination for a defined set of member companies. Which association coordinates for which company is determined by where the company's service-territory footprint most squarely aligns with the association's geographic area. Where a company holds membership in more than one association, a master list maintained across all associations determines the single association responsible for that company's mutual aid coordination. This prevents overlap and ensures every signatory has a clear coordination path.

For companies assigned to SGA, SGA's mutual aid responsibilities include:

- Maintaining mutual aid contact rosters for SGA-coordinated companies and coordinating updates with AGA's National Mutual Assistance Database.
- Facilitating Joint Mobilization Conference Calls when an SGA-coordinated Requesting Company needs assistance.
- Hosting and maintaining the RFA Form package, training materials, and best-practice resources.
- Interfacing with state agencies, while AGA and APGA interface with federal agencies during an Emergency Assistance Period.

SECTION 04

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.

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.

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.

THE LEAD ASSOCIATION

For companies assigned to SGA on the mutual aid master list, SGA serves as the Lead Association during an event. 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.
- If the request exceeds the regional association's response capacity, AGA supports the Lead Association in coordinating nationwide assistance.

YOUR INTERNAL MUTUAL AID COORDINATOR

Each SGA-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.

SECTION 05

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.

ALERTMEDIA — THE TOOL THAT CONNECTS THE NETWORK

SGA uses AlertMedia, a cloud-based mass-notification platform, as the operational backbone of its mutual aid communication. If you are new to SGA or to mutual aid, here is what you need to know:

WHAT IT DOES

AlertMedia sends time-sensitive alerts to SGA member contacts across multiple channels simultaneously — text message, email, voice call, and mobile push notification. It also supports two-way communication, so when SGA sends a status pulse during a weather event, your company can reply directly to confirm status or report impact.

HOW SGA USES IT

SGA uses AlertMedia for pre-event pulse checks, active-event status updates, RFA distribution notifications, resource-availability polling, and stand-down notices. The aggregated response data is what enables SGA to report accurately on member-company conditions to federal partners during DOE calls.

WHAT YOUR COMPANY NEEDS TO DO

Ensure that mobile phone numbers for your mutual aid contacts are loaded into AlertMedia and kept current. Respond to test pulses and real pulses promptly. Treat AlertMedia contact-list maintenance as a recurring quarterly task. If your company has not yet onboarded, contact SGA member services for support.

FIRST OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENT: WINTER STORM FERN

SGA's first real-world use of AlertMedia came during Winter Storm Fern. The 2026 SGA Spring Gas Conference Mutual Aid Roundtable included a demonstration and debrief of that deployment. Lessons from that session are being incorporated into SGA's operating procedures and into the companion Best Practices Manual.

WHEN SHOULD A UTILITY ACTIVATE MUTUAL AID?

There is no single universal trigger, but the Agreement and best-practice guidance point to these signals:

- Internal and contractor support has been (or will soon be) exhausted — and outside operators are needed to restore service in the timeframe required.
- The event will leave a meaningful number of customers without service for a duration that exceeds your acceptable restoration window.
- Specialized resources (e.g., relight crews, leak survey, dewatering, locating, welding, supervision) are needed at volumes you cannot field internally.
- Any emergency where the Signatory deems emergency assistance to be necessary or advisable — the Agreement gives the Requesting Company the discretion to decide.

> **"HEADS UP" BEFORE THE FORMAL REQUEST**
>
> Members are strongly encouraged to give a proactive "heads up" to SGA (or AGA) when they anticipate that they may need aid — even before formally activating an RFA. Early communication shortens response time, supports advocacy with federal partners (DOE/PHMSA), and gives the network a head-start in identifying available resources.

THE JOINT MOBILIZATION CONFERENCE CALL

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

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.

ON THE CALL

- The Lead Association moderator calls roll and produces summary notes (subject to the Agreement's confidentiality provisions).
- 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 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.

AFTER THE CALL

Final dispatch of committed resources is coordinated directly between the Requesting Company and each Responding Company. The Lead Association does not, and should not, accept the authority to coordinate dispatch.

SECTION 06

THE RFA PROCESS FOR SGA MEMBERS

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.

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

The spreadsheet separates Guidance, Request, Response, Roster, and the Relight estimating tool — so users can navigate quickly.

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 new form provides Operator Qualification mapping to all gas organizations and operators, making compatibility checks much faster.

IN-CELL GUIDANCE

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

THE TWO WORKBOOKS

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WORKBOOK

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

SHEETS INCLUDED

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.

SHEETS INCLUDED

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

TWO FLOW PATTERNS: "FEW RESPONDERS" VS. "MANY RESPONDERS"

WHEN ONLY ONE OR A FEW OPERATORS ARE NEEDED

The Requesting Company completes the Request tab and sends the RFA Workbook directly to the Responding Company (or operators). The Responding Company completes the Response 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.**

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. The lead trade association will facilitate distribution to member companies. 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 from each Responding Operator, and works out logistical needs with all responders together.

BEFORE YOU SUBMIT AN RFA — QUICK CHECKLIST

1. The operator has exhausted all internal and contractor support.
2. The OQ tasks and peripheral needs required to complete the restoration have been determined.
3. An estimate of personnel needed has been made — using internal processes, or (for shutdown/relight) the Relight Worksheet Tool inside the RFA Workbook.
4. The Requesting Company's authorized representative is available to confirm the request.
5. SGA has been given a "heads up" if the event is large or developing.

SECTION 07

INSIDE THE EXCEL WORKBOOKS — A TAB-BY-TAB WALKTHROUGH

Both workbooks share the same general convention:

- **Yellow cells** = fields the user fills in.
- **Checkboxes** = can be selected throughout the forms.
- **Grey cells** = auto-populate from the Request tab into the Response tab.
- **Password protection** = the Request and Response tabs are locked to protect formatting; data fields remain editable.

RFA WORKBOOK — SHEET BY SHEET

RFA FORM GUIDANCE

Read this tab first. It explains the overall RFA process and the purpose of each subsequent tab. It is also where the Version History is documented (the current major revision dates from September 2025 in support of the January 1, 2026 Agreement update).

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 — Starting Date, Estimated Ending.
- Systems Affected — pressure tier checkboxes, pipe materials, typical main sizes.
- Other Personnel / Equipment — Type of Work columns and Preferred Span of Control.
- Additional Information — anything else relevant to the request.
- Primary and Secondary Contact — Name, Company Phone, Cell Phone, E-Mail.
- Brief Description of Emergency, including approximate number of customers affected.
- Field OQ / Personnel Disciplines — checkboxes for crews, dewatering, leak survey, welding, relights, meter sets, locating, and Other, with Number Requested for each.
- Logistic Section — staging areas, transportation, lodging, food, fuel.

RESPONSE RFA FORM (GREEN TAB)

Filled out by the Responding Company. The process mirrors the Request tab — values from the Request tab transfer into grey fields on the Response tab. Key entry points include:

- Responding Company Name and Primary/Secondary contacts.
- Total number of people being provided, labor union affiliation, estimated pay rate.
- OQ checkboxes (the responder confirms which OQs their personnel hold) — comparable directly with the Request tab.
- Training Verification — the Responding Company checks a box affirming that the personnel it is providing have received technical training in the Covered Tasks, Non-Covered tasks (relights), and Work Functions identified in the RFA.
- Number Offered for each discipline. Comments where helpful.
- Additional Information — anything that helps the Requesting Company allocate.

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 column headers = required minimum fields.
- Light green column headers = optional but helpful when known and readily available.
- Some columns have drop-down selections — please use them so the data can be sorted or queried later. If a drop-down value does not apply, the user can type in a new value.

RELIGHT WORKSHEET TOOL — MANPOWER

Optional, but useful when the event is a service-interruption / relight situation. The tool helps estimate manpower for shutdown and relight processes:

- Enter the estimated number of meters that can be turned OFF by one technician in one hour.
- Enter the total number of meters affected.
- Enter the estimated number of meters that can be turned ON by one technician in one hour.
- The worksheet calculates technicians required, including a built-in 1.5× factor for crew shift coverage that is 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.

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. Multiple offers can be summed here so leadership sees one consolidated picture.
RESPONDER TOTALS OTHER	The Requesting Company enters 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.

SECTION 08

BEST PRACTICES & KEY CONSIDERATIONS

These are practical, drawn from the 2024 Mutual Aid Best Practices guide and from member after-action reviews. They apply equally to Requesting and Responding Companies.

GOVERNANCE & OWNERSHIP

- Define the Mutual Aid process inside your company's emergency-response plan — who owns it, who can sign, who can submit, who can commit resources.
- Designate a primary Mutual Aid point person and a backup. Update SGA when those names change.
- Make sure the operational contact and the legal signatory both understand their roles — they are often different individuals.
- Confirm and update your information in the National Mutual Assistance Database every six months — Regional Trade Associations prompt for this beginning January 2026 and every six months thereafter.

INFORMATION SHARING

- Use shared platforms and templates so the information returned during an event is uniform across companies.
- Define roles and responsibilities of the response team for clarity and consistency.
- Distribute detailed updates between scheduled calls — don't make people wait until the next call to learn what changed.
- Report system status to your association even when normal — that data helps advocate for industry resiliency to the Department of Energy.

RESOURCES & EXECUTION

- Run mock drills that include a "request aid" component — many internal teams have never actually drafted an RFA outside a real event.
- Filter all requests through a resource unit so the team understands the need and what tools and equipment responders should bring.
- Hold a joint coordination call (led by the Emergency Management team) for situational awareness before formally calling for mutual aid.
- Create or use the OQ crosswalk so you can quickly evaluate responder compatibility — OQ variability is the single most-cited roadblock in the industry.

WORKFORCE & SAFETY

- Safety rules of the Responding Company apply unless the Requesting Company's are more stringent.
- Provide a safety orientation before responder personnel begin work — include practices unique to your service territory and the impacted area.
- Identify and address differing safety rules at the start, and note any specialized PPE, tools, materials, or equipment in the RFA.
- Consider crew well-being explicitly: lodging, meals, dietary variety, stress relief, and accountability during extended emergencies.

COMPENSATION & INVOICING

Reimbursable items (without added profit) include personnel wages and salaries for paid time in the service area and travel time to/from it, plus standard payable additives for benefits and allowances; employee travel and living expenses (meals, lodging, reasonable incidentals); and replacement cost of materials and supplies expended or furnished.

- Plan how to track time and expenditures BEFORE deploying — compiling this after an event is chaotic and error-prone.
- Brief deploying crews on the contract terms — pay, work hours, start times — to avoid disputes.
- Invoice with reasonable documentation; the Agreement contemplates standard, no-profit pass-through billing.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Joint Mobilization Conference 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 exceptions for general deployment information).

SECTION 09

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q What exactly is mutual aid?

A Mutual aid is a voluntary system through which natural gas utilities provide emergency assistance — personnel, equipment, materials, and other support — to one another after events that disrupt service and exceed any one utility's capacity to respond alone. 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 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. The best practice is to designate a primary Mutual Aid point person (and backup) inside your company's emergency response plan and communicate those names to SGA.

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

A No single industry-wide numeric trigger. 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 Form, the 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.

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

A **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 new 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.

Q Who pays for what?

A The Requesting Company reimburses the Responding Company for all costs and expenses incurred in providing emergency assistance — **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.

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 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 columns are optional but helpful when readily available.

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.

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 your Regional Trade Association. Withdrawal does not affect any obligations that arose before the notice was given, and a Requesting Company may not withdraw while it is currently receiving or providing assistance.

STILL HAVE A QUESTION?

If your question isn't answered here, reach the SGA team through Connect@SGA or email memberservices@sganaturalgas.org. See Section 10 for the full resource list.

SECTION 10

RESOURCES & WHERE TO GET HELP

CORE DOCUMENTS TO KEEP ON HAND

DOCUMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHERE TO FIND IT
National Mutual Assistance Agreement	The signed multi-association agreement and Exhibit A Procedures & Guidelines (effective Jan 1, 2026).	AGA Emergency Planning Resource Center
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	Industry-developed best practices on governance, information sharing, requesting aid, and workforce.	SGA / NGA member resources
2026 Mutual Aid Best Practices Manual	The full 2026 manual covering foundations, operational best practices, integrated resilience, and federal coordination.	SGA member resources

CHECKLIST: A NEW SGA MEMBER'S FIRST 30 DAYS

- [ ] Read this guide cover to cover.
- [ ] Identify your company's primary and backup Mutual Aid point persons. Confirm signing authority for the legal Agreement.
- [ ] Locate (or sign) the National Mutual Assistance Agreement on your company's behalf.
- [ ] Download the latest RFA Workbook and Master Compile Workbook from the AGA Emergency Planning Resource Center. Open the Guidance tab in each and walk through the form fields.
- [ ] Document the Mutual Aid process inside your company's emergency response plan: who owns it, who signs, who submits, who commits resources.
- [ ] Confirm your company's information in the National Mutual Assistance Database; the next prompt for confirmation will come from SGA every six months.
- [ ] Schedule a tabletop drill that includes drafting an RFA, not just responding to one.
- [ ] Introduce yourself to your SGA member-services contact and ask about upcoming Mutual Aid Roundtables and webinars.

HAVE A QUESTION WE DID NOT ANSWER HERE?

SGA members can reach the SGA team directly through **Connect@SGA** (the SGA member hub) or by emailing memberservices@sganaturalgas.org. If you anticipate that an event in your service territory may require mutual aid, contact SGA early — even before you formally activate an RFA. A heads-up is always welcome.

SGA
NATURAL GAS ASSOCIATION

SHARE. GROW. ADVANCE.

SGA Natural Gas Association supports the people, practices, and partnerships that keep natural gas systems resilient - before, during, and after every event.

Continue Building Your Mutual Aid Readiness

- Participate in SGA Mutual Aid webinars & roundtables
- Join the SGA Emergency Management Committee
- Attend Regional Readiness Forums
- Access additional preparedness resources
- Connect with peer utilities