



INTERIOR/WILDLAND FIRE

Qs&As for Department of the Interior Emergency Support Function #4, National COVID Vaccination Effort

Who: Department of the Interior (DOI) employees with Emergency Medical Service (EMS) qualifications. Regional Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACCs) are searching the [Interagency Resource Ordering Capability application \(IROC\)](#) for qualified AEMTs, AEMFs, EMTBs, EMTFs, EMTIs, EMTPs and EMTFs. See the DOI [Incident Positions Qualification Guide](#) and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's [Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications](#) for minimum qualification standards for national mobilization to all hazard and wildland fire incidents.

Additionally, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has cast a wide net in terms of vaccination providers, including MDs, DOs, PAs, RNs, EMTs, pharmacists, pharmacy techs, medical assistants, nurse assistants, veterinarians, etc. There is also a need for DOI personnel with command and general staff support qualifications.

What: DOI Employees with EMS qualifications and employees with command and general staff support qualifications should make themselves available in IROC to support the nationwide COVID response effort.

Where: This is a nationwide effort. Current focal areas include Oakland and Los Angeles, California; Phoenix, Arizona; Carson City, Nevada; Dover, Delaware; and Denton, Texas. These areas are expected to expand.

When: ASAP. FEMA's expectation is for a 30-day assignment; however, the DOI will follow the National Multiagency Coordinating Group's [established work-rest ratios and time off requirements](#). For example, personnel may work 30 days as long as they have two days off between days 14 and 21. There is critical, unprecedented demand for vaccinators, and qualified EMS resources should come forward with their availability, even if short of the desired 30-day commitment. Consideration will be given to 14- and 21-day assignments, if necessary.

Why: President Biden has tasked Federal departments and agencies, including DOI, to support FEMA and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to deliver 100 million doses in 100 days.

Under the National Response Framework, the USDA Forest Service is the lead agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) #4 and DOI is identified as a support agency. During any emergency or major disaster declared by the President, all requests from FEMA for firefighting or incident management resources from wildland fire agencies are made through ESF #4.

How: Personnel should make sure that their qualifications are entered in [the Incident Qualifications and Certification System \(IQCS\)](#) and make themselves available as a resource in IROC. Entry in both systems is the best way to ensure appropriate resources get ordered now and in the future.

Supervisors should make qualified personnel immediately available for assignments related to the COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign.

Timesheets & Pay: Personnel supporting this effort should follow agency direction. For all time coding questions, refer to your agency's policies and guidelines.

Training: Pre-mobilization training as well as on-site practical skills assessments may be required. In these circumstances, pre-mobilization training may be claimed on timesheets for employees with a resource order.

Prior to administering vaccinations, COVID vaccination-specific training and certification will be provided to mobilized resources by Federal, state and/or locally authorized medical directors or public health officials. The process will vary from location to location and state to state. Before mobilization, certification requirements are negotiated and finalized by ESF #4, FEMA, and the authorities requesting support.

If pre-mobilization training is not required by the site receiving support, ESF #4 requires the EMSs to review the on-line training at CDC.gov prior to mobilization so that they are prepared for what to expect. This should take no more than a couple of hours and may be claimed on timesheets. Information about any required training will be provided through resource order instructions.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): All necessary PPE will be provided on site.

Liability: The Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act (PREP Act) authorizes the Secretary of HHS to issue a Declaration to provide liability immunity to certain individuals and entities (Covered Persons) against any claim of loss caused by, arising out of, relating to, or resulting from the manufacture, distribution, administration, or use of medical countermeasures (Covered Countermeasures), except for claims involving "willful misconduct" as defined in the PREP Act. Under the PREP Act, a Declaration may be amended as circumstances warrant.

On March 17, 2020, the HHS Secretary made a Declaration for PREP Act Coverage for medical countermeasures against COVID-19. On February 10, 2021, the Acting HHS Secretary amended the Declaration to add additional categories of Covered Persons authorized to prescribe, dispense, and administer the COVID-19 vaccine, a Covered Countermeasure under the PREP Act.

That Amendment extends liability protection to:

- (h) Any Federal government employee, contractor, or volunteer who prescribes, administers, delivers, distributes or dispenses a Covered Countermeasure as any part of the duties or responsibilities of that employee, contractor, or volunteer, even if those authorized duties or responsibilities ordinarily would not extend to members of the public or otherwise would be more limited in scope than the activities such employees, contractors, or volunteers are authorized to carry out under this declaration.

As such, qualified DOI employees responding to this assignment have liability protection from losses resulting from the COVID-19 vaccination effort (except for instances of willful misconduct) under the liability immunity provisions of the PREP Act, as well as the Federal Torts Claim Act.

What to expect before mobilizing:

The following special instructions will be included in the Resource Order:

- Personnel are expected to be self-sufficient.
- Agency personnel are requested to wear uniforms if they have them.
- Administratively Determined (AD) employees should wear a plain polo shirt or something similar. Only logos for Federal or tribal cooperators or an affiliated state or local agency should be worn.
- Comfortable shoes and consideration of clothing for all possible weather conditions are recommended.
- PPE will be provided on-site.
- Specific information on training needs will be provided; it varies by site.
- POC information for the site, for the Regional ESF #4 Liaison, and for ESF #4 EMS Specialist should be provided.
- No EMS equipment is required.
- Bring a copy of current EMT certification or accreditation.
- CDC.gov vaccine information will be provided to resources not otherwise required to complete state or local-specific pre-mobilization training.