



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #553

### **Urban Search and Rescue Teams (Wisconsin Task Force 1) (Military Affairs)**

[LFB 2023-25 Budget Summary: Page 416, #6]

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#### **CURRENT LAW**

Under current law, the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) contracts with local agencies to establish an urban search and rescue (USR) task force, a multi-disciplined organization which conducts search, rescue, and recovery in the technical rescue disciplines, including structural collapse, rope rescue, vehicle extrication, machinery extrication, confined space, trench, excavation, and water operations. For deployments, DMA is required to reimburse local agencies that provided services within 60 days after receiving a complete application for reimbursement if the agency applies within 45 days after the conclusion of the deployment of the urban search and rescue task force. Local agencies are authorized to seek reimbursement from DMA for any duty disability premium costs related to an employee's service on an urban search and rescue task force.

#### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. From 2005-2019, the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) contracted with local agencies to establish regional structural collapse teams that responded to structural collapse incidents. Team members had to meet the structural collapse team member requirements under the National Fire Protection Association standards.
2. For the most recent contract period, from January, 2017, to December, 2018, teams were composed of 11 fire departments (located in Antigo, Appleton, Beloit, Chippewa Falls, Green Bay, Janesville, La Crosse, Menominee, Neenah-Menasha, Oshkosh, and Superior). The 120 members of the teams were classified as state limited-term employees (LTEs). The state's contract with each municipality included provisions related to training, reimbursement, civil immunity, and eligible costs.
3. The contracts expired in December, 2018, and were extended until June, 2019.

According to DMA, municipalities sought changes to the contracts, including modifications to provide a faster reimbursement process. As a result, the municipalities did not sign new contracts and negotiations were suspended.

4. Training and equipment costs were funded through federal homeland security grants provided to DMA. For deployments, DMA was authorized to reimburse teams only to the extent that DMA collected reimbursement from a responsible party (the entity responsible for causing the incident). Table 1 shows federal grants awarded to the team for training and equipment by year. It should be noted that, because of the lapse in contracts, no grants were awarded in 2019-20.

**TABLE 1**

**Statewide Structural Collapse Team Funding, FFY 2014-15 to 2019-20**

<u>Federal Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Federal Award</u>
2014-15	\$690,900
2015-16	631,100
2016-17	508,900
2017-18*	574,600
2018-19*	543,200
2019-20	0

\* Funding was allocated but not awarded due to the lapse in contracts.

5. Teams were deployed four times since the structural collapse emergency response process was codified in 2009-10, as shown in Table 2. Deployment costs were dependent on the number of personnel deployed, the length of the deployment, the equipment utilized, and the distance traveled to the incident.

**TABLE 2**

**Structural Collapse Team Deployments, 2009-10 to 2019-20**

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Name of Event</u>	<u>Reimbursable Cost</u>
2017	Didion Milling Plant explosion and structural collapse	\$105,600
2018	Hurricane Irma request for Florida*	100,600
2019	Water rescue for flooding in Crawford County	87,100
2019	Water rescue for flooding events**	0

\* Coordinated and funded under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

\*\* The team was mobilized and staged but not deployed. Floods in Dane, Juneau, La Crosse, Marquette, Monroe, Richland, Sauk, and Vernon Counties were classified by FEMA under the same disaster declaration as the Crawford County flooding event. Reimbursable costs for the two events were reported cumulatively and totaled \$87,100.

6. On May 25, 2021, Senate Bill 374, which related to a USR task force, was introduced. On September 28, 2021, SB 374 passed the Senate 30-1 and the Assembly 97-0. The bill was signed by the Governor on December 6, 2021, as 2021 Act 104. The act changed the designation of a regional collapse support team to an urban search and rescue task force and expanded the scope of emergencies with which these teams assist. Under the act, an urban search and rescue task force designated by DMA must assist in an emergency response "involving search, rescue, and recovery in the technical rescue disciplines to include structural collapse, rope rescue, vehicle extrication, machinery extrication, confined space, trench excavation, and water operations in an urban search rescue environment." The act requires DMA to reimburse local agencies that provided services within 60 days after receiving a complete application for reimbursement if the agency applies within 45 days after the conclusion of the deployment of the urban search and rescue task force. The act allows a local agency to seek reimbursement from DMA for any duty disability premium costs related to an employee's service on an urban search and rescue task force.

7. Under federal law, a USR task force is a multi-disciplined organization which conducts search, rescue, and recovery in the technical rescue disciplines, including structural collapse, rope rescue, vehicle extrication, machinery extrication, confined space, trench, excavation, and water operations. A Type 1 USR task force is capable of 24-hour operations split into 12-hour operation periods, while a Type 3 USR task force is capable of 12-hour operations. The Department has already negotiated contracts for Wisconsin's urban search and rescue team, "Wisconsin Task Force 1," with applicable fire departments. The Department indicates that 21 jurisdictions have signed contracts for the task force, including: Antigo; Appleton; Beaver Dam; Beloit; Fitchburg; Fond du Lac; Grand Chute; Green Bay; Janesville; La Crosse; Marinette; Menominee; Merrill; Neenah-Menasha; Oshkosh; Sheboygan; South Shore; Superior; Wausau; and Waukesha. During the period when collapse structure support team contracts were not in place, there were no incidents that rose to the level of deploying a USR task force. Furthermore, Wisconsin Task Force 1 has not been deployed since its formation as of March, 2023.

8. Act 58, enacted on July 8, 2021, created a continuing GPR appropriation [s. 20.465(3)(dv)] under DMA for training, equipment, and administration for urban search and rescue teams and reserved \$500,000 GPR in 2021-22 in the Committee's supplemental appropriation. The continuing PR appropriation under s. 20.465(3)(hm) was created to support: (a) task force deployments; and (b) reimbursements to local agencies for increases in duty disability premium contributions for employees who receive such benefits because of an injury incurred as a task force member. All monies received as a reimbursement for expenses incurred for an urban search and rescue task force are deposited into the PR appropriation account. At a 13.10 meeting on May 31, 2022, the Joint Committee on Finance approved the one-time transfer of \$500,000 GPR from the Committee's supplemental appropriation to the Department's urban search and rescue task force appropriation to provide training and equipment for the urban search and rescue teams. Base funding in the continuing GPR appropriation under DMA for training, equipment, and administration for urban search and rescue teams is \$0 in the 2023-25 biennium.

9. According to DMA, Wisconsin Task Force 1 will initially be built out as a Type 3 USR Task Force. The minimum number of personnel for a Type 3 USR Task Force is 35. To ensure the availability of 35 personnel to deploy at any given time, a minimum of three qualified individuals

must be rostered into each position, for a total of 105 LTEs. The minimum number of personnel for a Type 1 USR Task Force is 70. To ensure the availability of 70 personnel to deploy at any given time, a minimum of three qualified individuals must be rostered into each position, for a total of 210 LTEs. The number of LTEs needed to accommodate a Type 1 USR task force must increase because of the increased scope of emergencies and the required duties of participating personnel.

10. The Department indicates that training will be provided to Wisconsin Task Force 1 with the goal of the group becoming a Type 1 urban search and rescue task force. Training will be for various specialties within the task force, including: search, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous materials, and logistics and planning. Task force members receive over 300 hours of general rescue and position-specific training to be qualified to function in their roles. Task force members also have annual training requirements, including three quarterly training sessions and participation in a 56-hour operational readiness exercise (ORE) every other year, which focuses on incident response and emergency operations plans and procedures. The OREs take place annually at the Regional Emergency All-Climate Training (REACT) Center, a training and exercise facility for emergency and disaster response at Camp Douglas. Equipment to be purchased could include any training supplies (such as lumber, rubble, and food) and any items that support the goal of moving to an accredited Type 1 urban search and rescue task force, which may include pneumatic powered tools, saws, shoring equipment, torches, medical equipment, and protective gear.

11. Assembly Bill 43/Senate Bill 70 would provide \$506,400 GPR per year for training and equipment for an urban search and rescue task force. Table 3 below shows the components of this amount. The \$506,400 annually would fund one training session and one ORE per year, while the federal Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) would support the two additional training sessions per year. Historically, the federal homeland security grant program (HSGP) has provided funding of approximately \$700,000 annually for equipment and training for Wisconsin Task Force 1, which was sufficient for a Type 3 USR task force. However, training and equipment costs are expected to increase proportionally to the number of participating members, which is expected to increase to 210 to support a Type 1 USR task force. The Department indicates that \$1.2 million annually would be required to fully fund training and equipment for a Type 1 USR task force. As a result, the HSGP will no longer cover the full costs of equipment and training for Wisconsin Task Force 1 and additional funding is needed to augment the HSGP grant amount. According to the Department, it is unlikely that an increase of HSGP funding will be provided.

**TABLE 3**

**Components of Wisconsin Task Force 1 Funding under AB 43/SB 70**

<u>Budget Line</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024-25</u>	<u>Biennial Total</u>	<u>Description</u>
LTE Salary and Fringe	\$52,700	\$52,700	\$105,400	Costs for LTE hours and fringe benefits, certification records, and equipment
Supplies and Services	354,200	354,200	708,400	Reimbursement to participating agencies for training at a rate of \$55 per hour
Supplies and Services	70,000	70,000	140,000	REACT center costs for instructional and exercise support
Supplies and Services	<u>29,500</u>	<u>29,500</u>	<u>59,000</u>	Replacement and maintenance of communications, IT, equipment, and supplies for task force operations
Total	\$506,400	\$506,400	\$1,012,800	

12. Given that a Type 1 urban search and rescue (USR) task force capable of 24-hour operations would strengthen the state's emergency response capabilities, the Committee could provide \$506,400 GPR annually to support training and equipment for the task force. [Alternative 1]

13. Alternatively, the Committee could take no action. [Alternative 2] The Department indicates that, if GPR funding is not provided for Wisconsin Task Force 1, the goal of creating a Type 1 task force would not be achievable as funding from the Homeland Security Grant Program would only support a Type 3 task force. Wisconsin Task Force 1 would operate as a Type 3 USR task force.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Provide \$506,400 GPR annually for task force training, administration, and equipment.

<b>ALT 1</b>	<b>Change to Base</b>
GPR	\$1,012,800

2. Take no action.

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