



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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May 31, 2022

TO: Members  
Joint Finance Committee

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Military Affairs: Section 13.10 Request to the Urban Search and Rescue Teams  
(Wisconsin Task Force 1) -- Agenda Item VIII

### REQUEST

The Department of Military Affairs (DMA) requests a one-time release of \$500,000 GPR in 2021-22 from the Joint Committee on Finance's GPR supplemental appropriation (s. 20.865(4)(a)) to the urban search and rescue (USR) task force continuing appropriation (s. 20.465(3)(dv)) to provide training and equipment for the urban search and rescue teams (Wisconsin Task Force 1).

### BACKGROUND

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.

For the most recent contract period, teams were comprised of 11 fire departments (located in Antigo, Appleton, Beloit, Chippewa Falls, Green Bay, Janesville, La Crosse, Menomonie, Neenah-Menasha, Oshkosh, and Superior). The approximately 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. 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.

Training and equipment costs have been 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). The Department indicates that federal funding has remained relatively stable. 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 or 2020-21.

**TABLE 1**

**Statewide Structural Collapse Team Funding, FFY 2014-15 to 2020-21**

<u>Federal Fiscal Year (FFY)</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
2020-21	0

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

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 (EMAC).

\*\*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.

On May 25, 2021, Senate Bill 374, which related to a USR task force, was introduced in the Senate. 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 changes the designation of a regional collapse support team to an urban search and rescue task force and expands 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 for reimbursement 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.

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 urban search and rescue task force is capable of 24-hour operations split into 12-hour operation periods. 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 10 fire departments have signed contracts for the task force (including the same fire departments from the structural collapse team, excluding Chippewa Falls). 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 Type 1 USR task force.

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 moneys received as a reimbursement for expenses incurred for an urban search and rescue task force are deposited into the PR appropriation account.

## **ANALYSIS**

To accommodate a Type 1 USR task force, the number of LTEs potentially needed will increase from 120 to 240 because of the increased scope of emergencies and the required duties of participating personnel. Costs for equipment and training will therefore increase. According to DMA, training will be provided 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: search, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous materials, logistics and planning, including technical specialists such as physicians, structural engineers, and canine search teams. Training would also include operational readiness exercises focused on incident response, and emergency operations plans and procedures. 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.

The Department indicated in its fiscal estimate for SB 374 that the structural collapse team

was exclusively funded by homeland security grant funds, spending about \$750,000 per year to cover costs. It is anticipated that funding of approximately \$734,500 for urban search and rescue will be provided to DMA through the homeland security grant program. The Department proposed this amount in the FFY22 homeland security application, which has yet to be submitted and approved.

Given the enactment of Act 104 and the signing of contracts with local agencies, the Committee could choose to release the \$500,000 GPR to the USR task force. If federal funding is awarded, anticipated funding for USR would be \$1,234,500 (\$734,500 FED and \$500,000 GPR). [Alternative 1]

If the request is not approved, the USR task force would have to rely on the homeland security federal funding (if approved) until further funding is released. The \$500,000 GPR would remain in the Joint Committee on Finance's GPR supplemental appropriation and DMA could request the release these funds under s. 13.10 prior to the June 30, 2023 (the end of the 2021-2023 biennium). [Alternative 2]

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the request to release \$500,000 GPR from the Joint Committee on Finance's GPR supplemental appropriation in 2021-22 [s. 20.865(4)(a)] to the urban search and rescue (USR) task force continuing appropriation [s. 20.465(3)(dv)] in 2021-22 to provide training and equipment for the urban search and rescue teams (Wisconsin Task Force 1).

2. Deny the request.

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