

## **Employer Frequently Asked Questions About the Wisconsin-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team (WI-1 DMAT)**

### **How many times a year can we expect our employee to be called to duty?**

The average individual deploys less than once a year, plus 4-5 days of official federal training a year. The exact number of times will depend on the number of disasters/major events, but the National Disaster Medical System avoids deploying the same team more than once a year whenever possible.

### **How long can we expect our employee to be gone?**

The maximum deployment is 14 days. Average missions are somewhere between 10 to 14 days in length.

### **How much advanced notice will we get that our employee will be leaving on a deployment?**

On average, teams receive 1 to 3 days warning for a deployment. However, in extreme circumstances, there may be only 4 to 8 hours notice.

### **Are we required to pay our employee while he or she is on a DMAT deployment?**

No. Employers are not required to pay an employee during a deployment. DMAT members receive federal wages while activated. However, many employers do pay wages or a stipend to augment federal wages as a way of demonstrating support of their employee and the DMAT's service to the country.

### **Who covers legal liability for the employee while on deployment?**

The federal government provides both professional liability and long-term disability coverage for DMAT members while they are on deployment. Some employers show support of their employee by extending the employee's usual long-term disability coverage during DMAT service (since federal coverage is usually at a lower rate than most employment disability plans).

### **We are concerned that having our employees participate in the DMAT will cause excessive disruption to our operations.**

#### **- What if a large number of employees want to join the DMAT?**

Recruitment to the WI-1 DMAT includes a comprehensive application review and interview process. Not every person who applies to the WI-1 DMAT will be accepted. In addition, many people find that they are not able or willing to meet the requirements of DMAT service. It is WI-1's experience that the majority of people who express interest do not end up joining the team.

#### **- Is our employee at risk of being called to duty any time a major event occurs in the country?**

#### **- What if we employ multiple team members – can all of our employees be called to duty at once?**

The WI-1 DMAT exists as part of the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS), which has nearly 60 teams throughout the country. Teams are rotated in an on-call schedule by month, with 8 to 12 teams at risk each month. Each team is on call 3 to 4 months out of the year. Therefore, even if there

is a major event, WI-1 DMAT may not be activated. Within the WI-1 DMAT, there is also a rotating on-call schedule for team members. Even when WI-1 DMAT is activated, only a fraction of the whole team is deployed.

WI-1 DMAT's policy is to avoid, whenever possible, placing multiple people employed in the same department in an organization at risk at the same time. It is also WI-1 policy that any team member who has been deployed during the year is moved to the bottom of the priority list, in order to reduce the chance of that person deploying again in the same year.

In summary, any individual team member is at risk for deployment during a small fraction of the year. The on-call scheduling systems allow employees and employers to better predict the times a deployment is possible. These procedures make it extremely unlikely that numerous people from the same department will be deployed at the same time. They also make it extremely unlikely that a person will be pulled away from his or her family and job more than once a year. WI-1 DMAT works with team members and their employers to reduce the burden on the home and workplace as much as possible.

### **Can we refuse to let our employee join the DMAT?**

No. Employers are forbidden by law to prevent a person from enlisting in uniformed service or discriminate against an employee due to their service.

### **Can we refuse to let our employee go on an official deployment?**

No. DMAT members are considered members of a federal uniformed service when officially activated by the federal government. Employers are required by law to allow employees who are DMAT members to fulfill official federal deployment orders.

### **Our employee says that DMAT service is covered by USERRA law. What does this mean?**

USERRA is the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994. USERRA law is intended to ensure that members of an authorized federal uniformed service (which includes DMAT members) are not disadvantaged or discriminated against in their civilian careers because of their service.

USERRA law states that employees must be treated as if the deployment did not occur. Employers must release the employee for federal duty, and allow him or her to return to work afterwards. The employee must retain same benefits, privileges, seniority, and rank as before. The employer is also required to maintain the employee's health insurance benefits for any deployment less than 30 days (which includes all DMAT deployments). The employee is required to provide the employer with proof of their official activation.

### **Can we require our employee to make up missed time from work due to a DMAT deployment?**

No. Employees cannot be required to make up missed time.

### **Can we require our employee to use his or her vacation time for a DMAT deployment?**

No. Employers are forbidden from requiring their employee use accrued vacation/leave time. Some employees will voluntarily use their vacation/leave time in order to maintain their usual wage/salary (as opposed to a federal wage, which is almost always significantly lower).