

# **Wisconsin-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team Information for Employers of Team Members**

## Introduction to NDMS and DMAT's:

The National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) is a federally-coordinated system that provides medical capabilities in the event of a large-scale emergency that overwhelms normal local medical resources. NDMS is administered through the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

A major portion of the NDMS is a network of medical teams that can rapidly deploy throughout the country in the event of an emergency. A Disaster Medical Assistance Team, or DMAT, consists of medical personnel, logistical and administrative personnel, and equipment required to provide medical care in austere environments.

As members of the Wisconsin Disaster Medical Assistance Team (WI-1 DMAT), personnel become intermittent federal employees under NDMS-HHS. While activated under official NDMS orders, team members are considered federal employees, and are protected by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. When not activated, members are private citizens. It is anticipated that the DMAT will consist of a number and skill mix of personnel in order to maintain an "on-call" schedule that would rotate personnel for field deployment. This will help to minimize the disruption to individual and employer's lives.

## WI-1 DMAT Statement of Mission and Values:

The mission of the Wisconsin-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team is to deliver quality medical care to victims of natural and man-made disasters, mass casualty incidents, and special occurrences. WI-1 DMAT is dedicated to assisting medical providers throughout the state of Wisconsin, United States of America, and the world, at the behest of the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the state of Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team is committed to an integrated, multi-disciplinary, and evidence-based approach in providing medical services. WI-1 DMAT will best adapt these medical principles to the austere environment in order to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

The Wisconsin-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team values the input and interest of entities from government, private, and academic organizations in accomplishing its mission. WI-1 DMAT will work to improve the overall health and preparedness of the local, state, national, and international community.

## Partnership With Employers:

WI-1 DMAT welcomes the support of various public and private employers throughout the state of Wisconsin. Such support would be a statement of the institution's belief in the mission of the DMAT, and a pledge to uphold the employer's responsibilities to individual team members.

Employers of DMAT members are required to adhere to the provisions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, also referred to as USERRA. USERRA law is intended to ensure that members of an authorized federal uniformed service (which includes NDMS team members) are not disadvantaged or discriminated against in their civilian careers because of their service. (For more information on USERRA law, refer to <http://www.esgr.org/Site/USERRA/tabid/75/Default.aspx> )

By law, employers who employ DMAT team members are expected to

- Release the employee to report for duty when activated
  - o employees are required to inform their employers prior to deployment
  - o employees are required to present proof of official orders to their employer
  - o average deployment length is 10-14 days
  - o average advance-notice time for NDMS is 24-48 hours (though can be as short as 4-8 hours)
  - o average individual deploys less than once a year (will vary depending on number of critical incidents), plus one 4-day weekend a year for official NDMS training
- Allow the employee to return to work after a deployment
  - o employee must retain same benefits, privileges, and rank as before
  - o employee treated like any other employee (federal service cannot be held against employee)
- Maintain the employee's usual medical insurance coverage

The federal government is responsible for providing (i.e. employers are not expected to provide)

- Wages during deployment
  - o individuals receive federal hourly wage while activated
  - o employers are not required to pay hourly wages while their employees are under federal service
  - o *salaried* employees may not be required to make up missed time in order to collect salary
- Professional liability coverage during deployment
  - o individuals are agents of the federal government while under official orders
  - o federal tort law applies while activated (except in gross negligence or criminal acts)
- Long-term disability coverage during deployment
  - o individuals covered by federal disability plan while activated
  - o disability provided at federal wage level

Though USERRA does not require it, employers have often demonstrated their support of a DMAT's mission by aiding employees who are members of a DMAT.

Some actions that employers have taken to support DMAT members include

- Recognition of DMAT activities for fulfillment of work-related requirements
- Flexibility in work scheduling and/or use of vacation/paid leave time
- Extension of usual employee disability coverage to include DMAT deployments
- Granting of stipends to employees to ameliorate difference between private and federal wage
- Use of facilities for team meetings or training
- Protected work time for official team business
- Providing specialized training or certification courses (such as CPR, ACLS, etc.)