

Kinds of Mutual Aid

- I. Basic Mutual Aid constitutes the vast majority of activity in the state and is occurring all the time. The aid occurs between adjacent jurisdictions as well as agencies from across the state and is of short duration and without fiscal commitment.
- II. In the middle, there are incidents that are escalated or extended, exceed local resource or expertise, and do not rise to the level of state or national disaster declarations (yet):
 - Man hunts
 - Mass shootings
 - Prolonged Search and Rescue events
 - Dignitary protection (i.e. Presidential Visits)
 - Stand-offs with Law Enforcement
 - Rainbow Gathering or similar events
 - Line of Duty Deaths
 - Displacement of government operations
 - Specialized technical assistance or support
 - Civil Disruptions
 - Large community or private events
- III. At the other end of the spectrum are the state or national level disasters, usually natural: Earthquakes, floods, fires.



Gaps

Montana enjoys very good mutual aid statutes last modified in the 1980s. MCA 44-11-101, 201, & 202 are mostly sufficient and have served agencies well.

Law Enforcement mutual aid needs are typically emergent, the operational tempo is fast, and the consequences are high. Not all the statutes accommodate the difference between emergent and urgent need.

MCA 44-11-304 could work on the requirement of written agreements and authorizing entity. A section could be added to include assistance from non-Law Enforcement resources for both interstate and intrastate requests like MCA 10-3-1102

MCA 10-3-703 could be applicable to all law enforcement not just tactical teams and include interstate requests.

We should encourage agencies that need help to ask and ensure agencies willing to help can do so without the complication of onerous agreements. Formal written agreements serve a purpose but should not stand in the way of taking care of our communities.

No jurisdiction can be ready all the time for everything.

How many incidents are there?

In 2024 Sheriffs formally moved resources 20 times

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Deputy Injury | Broadwater 1-19 |
| Double Homicide | Hill Co 3-28 |
| Threat Assessment | Roosevelt 4-16 |
| Pride Events | Park Co 4-18 |
| Barricaded Subject | Gallatin 4-26 |
| OIS | Phillips 4-29 |
| OIS | Hill Co 5-14 |
| Drowning | Roosevelt 5-30 |
| LODD | Yellowstone 6-3 |
| RIDE | Musselshell 7-1 |
| Horse Gulch Fire | L&C 7-10 |
| Headwaters Jam | Jeff Co 7-26 |
| FPOTUS | Gallatin 8-9 |
| Sharrott Fire | Ravalli 8-23 |
| Short Draw Fire | Pwdr River Co 9-11 |
| Barricaded SWAT | Gallatin 9-24-24 |
| DPHHS Transport | Powell/L&C 11-15 |
| Landfill Search | Cascade 12-3 |
| Barricaded Subject | Phillips 12-4 |
| Officer Memorial | Gallatin 12-27 |



The Sheriff's Mutual Aid Program was created and implemented by Montana Sheriffs. As locally elected officials and public safety officers they have different perspectives, statutory authorities and responsibilities than municipalities, state or federal agencies.

Montana Sheriff's Mutual Aid was developed in 2020 to leverage the resources and expertise of the 56 Sheriffs and roughly 800 Deputy Sheriffs in MT. Criminals and Mother Nature don't care if you are a large or small agency, rural or urban, busy or serene — the amount of work is determined by the event, not by what you have for local resources.

In Law Enforcement we survive by calming things down. We have a lot of practice doing that. There are times when ramping things up is the right strategy, but typically de-escalation and lessening impact is the aim. Relying on mutual aid when an incident exceeds an agency's capacity and expertise is better for the community, better for agency staff, and has a greater chance of a safe and successful outcome. Sheriffs support each other when asked.

Sheriff's Mutual Aid is historically provided free of charge for the first 72 hrs. Reimbursement of specialized expendables such as chemical munitions are encouraged but not required. Reimbursements are based on conversations and agreements between the host agency and sending agency. If a funding source is made available, it is assumed that reimbursement will be provided.

A planned, promoted, and supported event in the community is typically not a mutual-aid incident. These events should provide reimbursement for any help requested and received.



MSPOA, Gallatin County, and a State Homeland Security Grant fund the Sheriffs Mutual Aid Program.

Sheriffs Mutual Aid Program Manager:

Jason Jarrett
Jason.jarrett@gallatin.mt.gov
406-580-1838



History

Montana has a long history of neighbors helping neighbors. This is especially true in the arena of public safety, where it is referred to as **Mutual Aid**. We have learned that if we can catch and control an incident in the early stages, we avoid larger and much more expensive results. Like fire, Law Enforcement and other first response disciplines know that having resources in place, with a plan, supervision, and logistics, can avoid many of the bad experiences visited on other parts of the country.

Getting ahead of an incident involves the movement of resources and expertise. In Montana we rely mostly on **Mutual Aid** to move those resources and expertise. In 2020 the Sheriffs started the Sheriffs Mutual Aid Program to improve our ability to prepare for and mobilize Sheriffs' resources across the state.

"There is no such thing as 'It can't happen here.'"
Doug Williams, Chouteau County Sheriff, Ret.