



State of Vermont Urban Search and Rescue(USAR) VT-TF1

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State of Vermont Urban Search and Rescue(USAR) VT-TF1

90 Member team, firefighters, EMT's, Doctors, Engineers, K9 handlers. 1 Full time employee

Department of Public Safety, Division Of Fire Safety

Activated by Vermont Emergency Management

Disciplines: Swiftwater Rescue, Rope Rescue, Confined Space, Structural Collapse

Our hearts are broken

#Respect



State of Vermont Urban Search and Rescue(USAR) VT-TF1

Only statewide asset available to local municipalities when resources are overwhelmed

Oversees the preparation, planning and statewide coordinated response, of local, state, regional, and federal assets when needed in VT

Deploys as needed to natural disasters in other states

Oversees relationship with 11 local teams and their response and readiness including state owned equipment(boats, motors, trailers, rafts, and peripheral equipment



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Formally established in 2024 through Act 143

1 time funding of \$250K was provided to the team during last years session

Currently housed in former VTrans facility in Colchester. Facility houses the entirety of the state's assets except for boats and trailers assigned to local teams.

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First line of state protection and response to major disasters in the state.

Rescued over 267 Vermonters during the flood events over the last two years

Equipment is old and outdated without annual funding allocations this will remain the trend

Training and equipment are expensive and specialized, many items have been procured through surplus





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Local communities and fire departments rely on this team. Most fire departments in the state are not equipped or trained to affect the complex level of response this team is capable

Coordinates the entire states rescue effort by supplementing local resources. Works with National Weather Service and VEM to ensure readiness 24/7

Request and coordinates out of state resources to Vermont when required.

Outside of disaster events, the team performs structural stabilization for fires scenes for the division of fire safety and VSP. These are many times fatal fires or ones resulting in significant injury.

Responded to 22 incidents in 2024. 21 one of those were in Vermont. 1 was their deployment to Hurricane Helene were the represented the state in Florida and South Carolina with their tremendous work.

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Assist to Local Agencies – 3 (technical support, communications, engineering support, UAV)

Assist to State Agencies – 8 (technical support, communications, sheltering, UAV, shoring, other)

Exercises – 1

Flood Standby – 3

Other Standby – 1 (solar eclipse)

Flood Response 3

Building Collapse 2

Out-of-State Deployment - 1



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Building has no fire protection
No classrooms or training areas
No breakroom

All equipment must be placed with precision to not cause damage.
Some assets left outside due to storage
Shared with Haz-Mat team and storage of truck 1

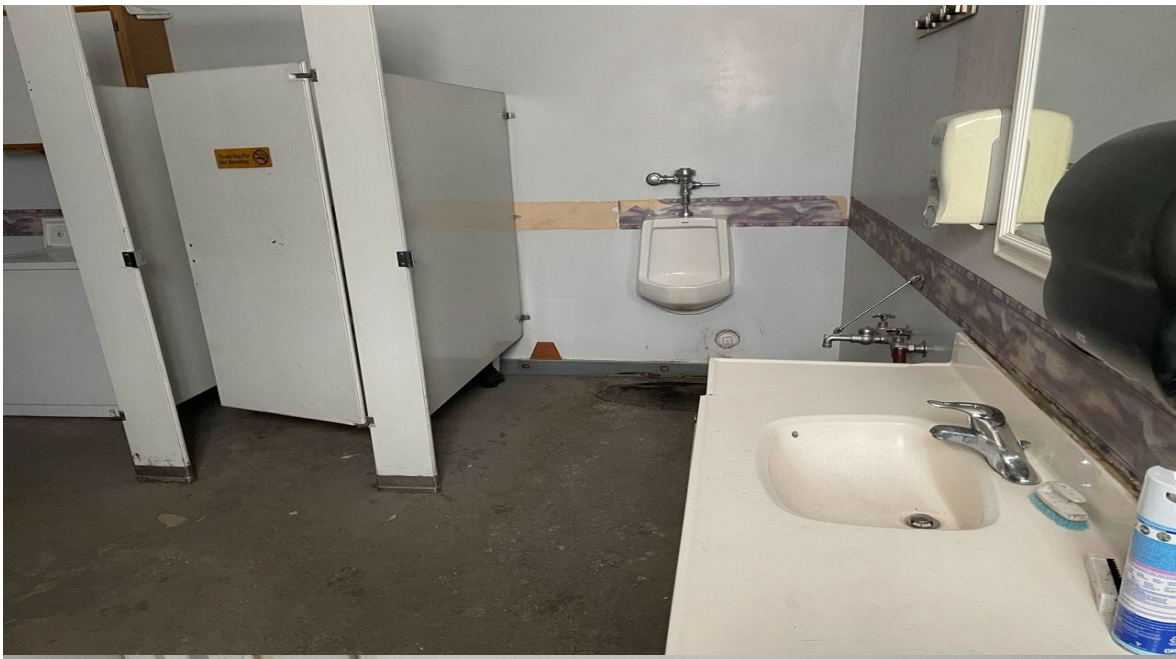
Bathrooms are inadequate
VTrans would like this space back.
No Parking
No area for sleeping, not allowed due to no protection of the facility



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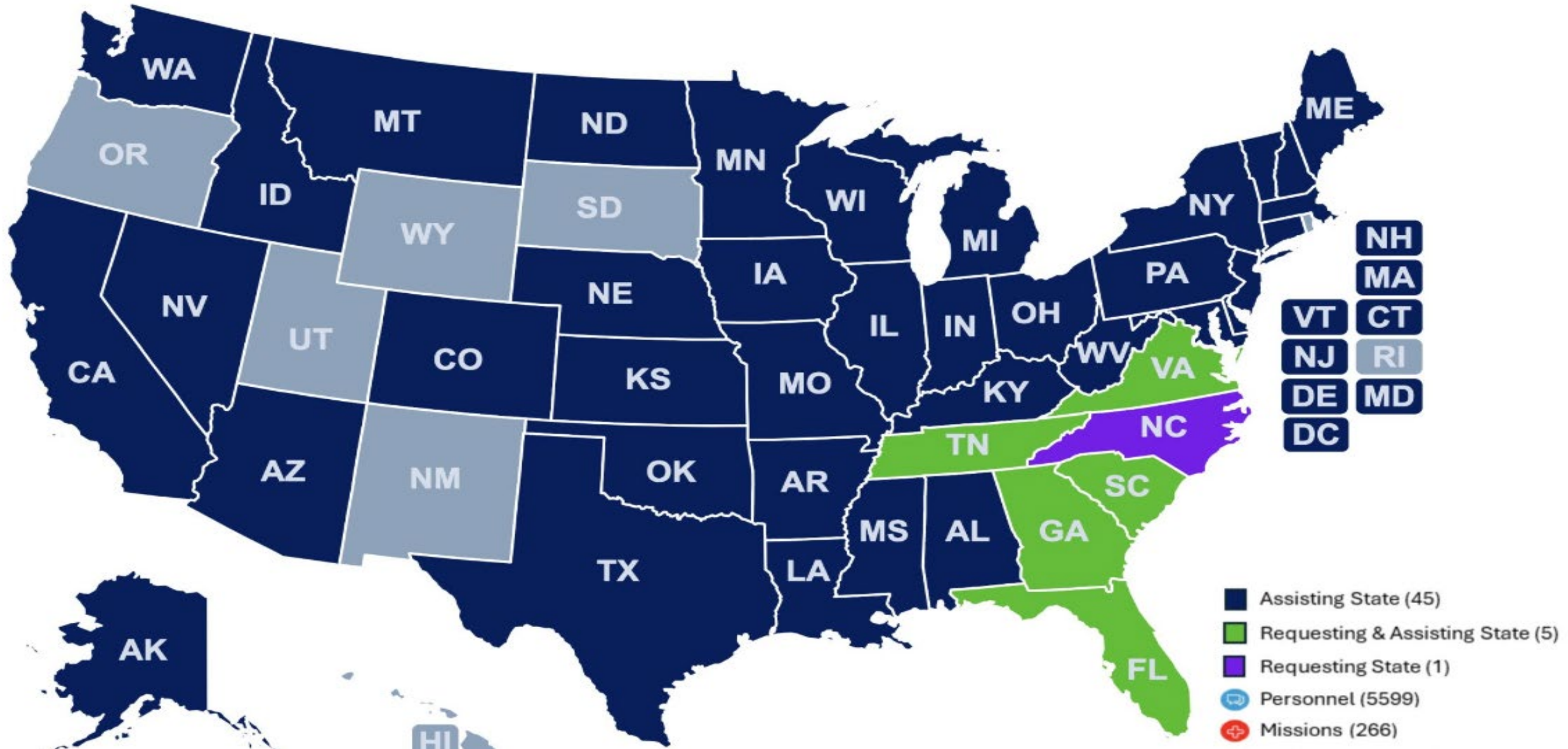








What does it take when disaster strikes? Hurricane Helene response map



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Although we call these team members part-time employees and in fact that is correct, the members are people who work full-time jobs and take time away from their families and loved ones at a moments notice sometimes for weeks at a time.

Funding has never been established for this team. It has utilized funds from Haz-Mat Tier 2, at a loss to the Haz-Mat team. This pressure is now being realized by DFS.

Most of the funds that have kept the lights on are from the Homeland Security Grant Program including the pay for the full-time employee. This employee annually has to write a grant to hopefully fund their position.

Any funds provided to state programs such as this also reduce the amount available to local municipalities in the state. These programs are the foundation for many terrorism and all hazard preparedness.

The HSGP funding has been questionable at best from the federal government to us. It has continued to be reduced over the last two years, we would expect nothing less in the coming year.



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Last year the request for \$750k annual funding made it through most of the process but Appropriations removed it last minute and replaced with 1 time funding.

The request and requirement for this team is \$950,000. The up in this budget from last years request represents the cost to lease space for this team. There was a capital bill request and approval for planning and design for a new facility but that has since been dropped. Leasing space is the best alternative at this point.

There continues to be a misunderstanding that this is a federally funded program not requiring the state to provide adequate funding to ensure we can provide these vital services to Vermonters in their time of need.

Public Safety, we continue to hear this echoed from all side, but only from a crime and drug prevention viewpoint. Although we know how important these items are the work this team performs can not be understated and the loss of life that could result if this team is not mission ready would catastrophic.

Flood response has been a hot topic in this building the last few years. It is hard to understand the lack of funding and time that has been spent also ensuring we have the resources to respond when needed. This need will not decrease over time, these storms continue to become more powerful and more often.

What are the consequences of continuing to not fund this program?

