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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 843 Session of  
2023

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INTRODUCED BY D. MILLER, MIHALEK, BENHAM, SANCHEZ, KINSEY,  
PISCIOTTANO, GUENST, KULIK, MATZIE, MARKOSEK, VENKAT,  
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STRUZZI, MARSHALL AND MERCURI, APRIL 28, 2023

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY  
PREPAREDNESS, APRIL 28, 2023

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AN ACT

1 Amending Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania  
2 Consolidated Statutes, in emergency management services,  
3 providing for counterterrorism planning, preparedness and  
4 response; in Emergency Management Assistance Compact,  
5 providing for construction; and making repeals.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. Title 35 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated  
9 Statutes is amended by adding a chapter to read:

10 CHAPTER 72

11 COUNTERTERRORISM PLANNING, PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

12 Subchapter

13 A. Preliminary Provisions

14 B. Counterterrorism Planning, Preparedness and Response

15 SUBCHAPTER A

16 PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

17 Sec.

18 7201. Scope of chapter.

1 7202. Definitions.

2 § 7201. Scope of chapter.

3 This chapter relates to counterterrorism planning,  
4 preparedness and response.

5 § 7202. Definitions.

6 The following words and phrases when used in this chapter  
7 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
8 context clearly indicates otherwise:

9 "Disaster medical assistance team." A complement of  
10 individuals organized in accordance with standards developed by  
11 the agency and applicable Federal agencies to provide medical  
12 service at the scene of disasters and mass casualty incidents.

13 "Disaster mortuary response team." A complement of  
14 individuals organized in accordance with standards developed by  
15 the agency and applicable Federal agencies to provide mortuary  
16 service at the scene of disasters and mass casualty incidents.

17 "FEMA." The Federal Emergency Management Agency.

18 "Letter of agreement." A written agreement between a  
19 regional counterterrorism task force and a public, semipublic,  
20 private or nonprofit corporation, business, association,  
21 partnership, authority, individual or other entity that provides  
22 for:

23 (1) Personnel, equipment, supplies, training facilities  
24 or other resources either directly to or in support of the  
25 task force's specialized regional counterterrorism response  
26 team.

27 (2) Workers' compensation and death benefits.

28 (3) Use of county 911 communications centers, county  
29 emergency management agencies or the State emergency  
30 operations center.

1           (4) Member participation in training exercises, drills  
2           and actual activation and deployment.

3           "Municipal" or "municipality." A city, borough, incorporated  
4           town, township or home rule municipality of this Commonwealth.

5           "Mutual aid." A county's, municipality's or volunteer  
6           service organization's affirmative act of sending its personnel,  
7           equipment or resources to the scene of an actual or potential  
8           disaster, whether inside or outside the boundaries of this  
9           Commonwealth, in response to an official dispatch request from a  
10           county 911 communications center, county emergency management  
11           agency or the State emergency operations center.

12           "Mutual aid agreement." A written agreement between a  
13           regional counterterrorism task force and a county, municipality  
14           or volunteer service organization that provides for:

15           (1) The county, municipality or volunteer service  
16           organization to provide personnel, equipment or other  
17           resources in response to an actual or potential disaster.

18           (2) Workers' compensation and death benefits.

19           (3) Use of county 911 communications centers, county  
20           emergency management agencies or the State emergency  
21           operations center.

22           (4) Member participation in training exercises, drills  
23           and actual activation and deployment.

24           "NIMS." The National Incident Management System.

25           "Regional counterterrorism task force." A complement of  
26           Federal, State, county and municipal emergency management,  
27           health, law enforcement, public safety and other officials and  
28           representatives from volunteer service organizations, private  
29           business and industry, hospitals and medical care facilities and  
30           other entities within a multicounty area as determined by the

1 agency that is responsible for conducting counterterrorism  
2 planning, training preparedness and response activities.

3 "Specialized regional counterterrorism response team." As  
4 follows:

5 (1) A complement of individuals established by a  
6 regional counterterrorism task force and organized in  
7 accordance with standards developed by the agency and  
8 applicable Federal agencies to respond to emergencies  
9 involving an actual or potential disaster.

10 (2) The term includes a disaster medical assistance team  
11 and disaster mortuary response team.

12 "Specialized Statewide response team." As follows:

13 (1) A complement of individuals organized by the  
14 Commonwealth to provide specialized personnel, equipment and  
15 other support capabilities in response to an actual or  
16 potential disaster in this Commonwealth.

17 (2) The term includes a disaster medical assistance team  
18 and disaster mortuary response team.

19 "Urban search and rescue task force." A multidisciplined  
20 complement of individuals organized by the agency in accordance  
21 with standards developed by the agency and FEMA to provide  
22 emergency response and search and rescue capabilities and  
23 resources at the scene of a disaster consistent with NIMS  
24 guidelines.

25 "Volunteer service organization." A volunteer fire company,  
26 volunteer ambulance or medical company, volunteer rescue squad  
27 or any other volunteer entity organized and chartered or  
28 incorporated in this Commonwealth or chartered by the Congress  
29 of the United States for the primary purpose of providing  
30 emergency services as defined in section 7102 (relating to

1 definitions).

2 SUBCHAPTER B

3 COUNTERTERRORISM PLANNING, PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

4 Sec.

5 7211. Counterterrorism planning, preparedness and response  
6 program.

7 7212. Regional counterterrorism task forces.

8 7213. Regional counterterrorism response and preparedness.

9 7214. Urban search and rescue task forces.

10 7215. Specialized Statewide response teams.

11 7216. Grant program.

12 7217. Miscellaneous provisions.

13 7218. Commonwealth indemnification.

14 § 7211. Counterterrorism planning, preparedness and response  
15 program.

16 (a) Coordination and consultation.--The agency shall  
17 coordinate and consult with other State agencies, departments  
18 and offices, including the Office of Homeland Security of the  
19 Commonwealth, to establish, develop and maintain a  
20 counterterrorism planning, preparedness and response program to  
21 promote and protect the health, safety and welfare of emergency  
22 responders, public officials and the general public from actual  
23 or potential disasters in this Commonwealth.

24 (b) Agency responsibilities.--The agency shall:

25 (1) Define the necessary components and composition of  
26 regional counterterrorism task forces and specialized  
27 regional counterterrorism response teams and the respective  
28 regional counterterrorism zones for each, but shall not be  
29 responsible for appointing individual members to the regional  
30 counterterrorism task forces or the specialized regional

1 counterterrorism response teams.

2 (2) Provide training and technical assistance for  
3 counterterrorism planning, preparedness and response.

4 (3) Establish guidelines and policies to coordinate  
5 emergency response activities with Federal, State, county and  
6 municipal emergency management, health, law enforcement,  
7 public safety and other officials and representatives from  
8 volunteer service organizations, private business and  
9 industry, hospitals and medical care facilities and other  
10 entities responsible for the health, safety and welfare of  
11 the residents of this Commonwealth. The agency shall consult  
12 with representatives of the regional counterterrorism task  
13 forces to develop such policies and guidelines necessary to  
14 carry out this chapter.

15 (4) Require the regional counterterrorism task forces to  
16 prepare counterterrorism emergency response plans or  
17 protocols, readiness evaluation reports or other documents  
18 deemed necessary by the agency.

19 (5) Provide grants and other funding assistance as  
20 required by this chapter.

21 (6) Conduct terrorist incident exercises.

22 (7) Provide technical assistance to regional  
23 counterterrorism task forces in developing and entering into  
24 mutual aid agreements and letters of agreement.

25 (8) Establish a certification program for specialized  
26 regional counterterrorism response teams that may include  
27 standards for the administration, composition, training and  
28 equipping of the teams.

29 § 7212. Regional counterterrorism task forces.

30 (a) Establishment.--The agency, in coordination with State,

1 county and municipal emergency management, health, law  
2 enforcement, public safety and other officials and  
3 representatives from volunteer service organizations, private  
4 business and industry, hospitals and medical care facilities and  
5 other entities responsible for the health, safety and welfare of  
6 the residents of this Commonwealth, shall establish regional  
7 counterterrorism task forces throughout this Commonwealth.

8 (b) Response plans.--A regional counterterrorism task force  
9 shall prepare a counterterrorism preparedness and response plan  
10 in accordance with guidelines developed by the agency. The  
11 agency shall review and approve each plan in a timely manner,  
12 but no later than 90 days after its submission to the agency.  
13 The task force shall review and update the plan on an annual  
14 basis.

15 (c) Meetings.--Regional counterterrorism task force meetings  
16 that are called to discuss sensitive or classified law  
17 enforcement, terrorist threat assessment or other confidential  
18 public and private facility safety information shall not be  
19 deemed a public record subject to disclosure under 65 Pa.C.S.  
20 Ch. 7 (relating to open meetings).

21 § 7213. Regional counterterrorism response and preparedness.

22 (a) Specialized regional counterterrorism response teams.--A  
23 regional counterterrorism task force shall establish specialized  
24 regional counterterrorism response teams.

25 (b) Regional counterterrorism response zones.--The agency  
26 shall establish primary and secondary regional response zones  
27 within this Commonwealth for specialized regional  
28 counterterrorism response teams. The regional response zones may  
29 consist of multiple counties or portions of several adjoining  
30 counties as determined by the agency.

1 (c) Activation and deployment.--A specialized regional  
2 counterterrorism response team may be activated and deployed  
3 inside or outside this Commonwealth by the Governor, the  
4 Governor's designee or an official designated by the appropriate  
5 regional counterterrorism task force.

6 § 7214. Urban search and rescue task forces.

7 (a) Establishment.--The agency shall establish urban search  
8 and rescue task forces, including:

9 (1) At least one urban search and rescue task force  
10 organized by the Commonwealth within a regional  
11 counterterrorism task force covering a county of the first  
12 class that meets or exceeds the minimum requirements of a  
13 Type 1 urban search and rescue task force as designated by  
14 FEMA in the NIMS guidelines.

15 (2) At least one urban search and rescue task force  
16 organized by the Commonwealth within a regional  
17 counterterrorism task force covering a county of the second  
18 class, which shall be called Pennsylvania Task Force 2 (PA-  
19 TF2) and, no later than January 1, 2026, shall meet or exceed  
20 the minimum requirements of a Type 3 urban search and rescue  
21 task force as designated by FEMA in the NIMS guidelines, as  
22 certified by the agency.

23 (b) Support.--The task forces shall also provide  
24 professional, logistical, material and other forms of support to  
25 regional counterterrorism task forces and specialized regional  
26 counterterrorism response teams.

27 (c) Organization.--An urban search and rescue task force  
28 shall be organized in accordance with guidelines developed by  
29 the agency in coordination with FEMA and members of the task  
30 force.



1 (d) Responsibilities.--An urban search and rescue task force  
2 shall respond to actual or potential disasters in this  
3 Commonwealth and shall also perform search and rescue functions  
4 as delineated in The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and  
5 Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 93-288, 42 U.S.C. § 5121 et  
6 seq.), the Federal Response Plan or its successor, Emergency  
7 Management Assistance Compact missions under Chapter 76  
8 (relating to Emergency Management Assistance Compact), as  
9 requested, and the counterterrorism preparedness and response  
10 plans created in accordance with this chapter.

11 (e) Activation and deployment.--

12 (1) An urban search and rescue task force or any of its  
13 components, subgroups or regional elements may only be  
14 activated and deployed to the scene of a disaster by either:

15 (i) the Governor or the Governor's designee; or

16 (ii) the President of the United States or a FEMA-  
17 designated official.

18 (2) During an activation and deployment by the Governor,  
19 the administrative and operational costs of the task force,  
20 its individual members and their employers, State agencies  
21 and other parties shall be paid under the Governor's  
22 declaration of disaster emergency, including paying or  
23 reimbursing any parties for workers' compensation and death  
24 benefits in the event of injury or death of an urban search  
25 and rescue task force member.

26 (f) Workers' compensation and death benefits.--A member of  
27 an urban search and rescue task force shall be eligible to  
28 receive workers' compensation and death benefits in the event of  
29 injury or death that occurs during the period of activation or  
30 deployment.

1 (g) Funding, grants and donations.--In addition to money  
2 that is provided to a task force under section 7216 (relating to  
3 grant program) or the authority of section 1508 of the act of  
4 April 9, 1929 (P.L.343, No.176), known as The Fiscal Code, the  
5 urban search and rescue task force may be eligible to receive  
6 grants, donations of equipment and supplies and other funds from  
7 any source. As an agent of the Commonwealth, an urban search and  
8 rescue task force or regional counterterrorism task force is  
9 entitled to tax-exempt status from the Federal Government.

10 § 7215. Specialized Statewide response teams.

11 (a) Establishment.--The Commonwealth may establish one or  
12 more specialized Statewide response teams. These specialized  
13 statewide response teams shall also provide professional,  
14 logistical, material and other forms of support to the regional  
15 counterterrorism task forces and specialized regional  
16 counterterrorism response teams organized in this Commonwealth.  
17 The Commonwealth may enter into an agreement with a One Call  
18 System as defined in the act of December 10, 1974 (P.L.852,  
19 No.287), referred to as the Underground Utility Line Protection  
20 Law, for the provision of specialized communications services.

21 (b) Organization and responsibilities.--Specialized  
22 Statewide response teams shall be organized in accordance with  
23 guidelines developed by the Commonwealth in consultation with  
24 applicable Federal or State agencies.

25 (c) Activation.--Specialized Statewide response teams may  
26 only be activated and deployed to the scene of a disaster by the  
27 Governor, the Governor's designee or an official designated by  
28 the appropriate regional counterterrorism task force.

29 § 7216. Grant program.

30 (a) Authorization.--The agency may make grants to regional

1 counterterrorism task forces, specialized regional  
2 counterterrorism response teams, specialized Statewide response  
3 teams and urban search and rescue task forces to assist them in  
4 carrying out this chapter, including entering into letters of  
5 agreement or mutual aid agreements or providing mutual aid.

6 (b) Grants and funding.--Regional counterterrorism task  
7 forces, specialized regional counterterrorism response teams,  
8 specialized Statewide response teams and urban search and rescue  
9 task forces may receive grants and funding from the Federal  
10 Government and the Commonwealth through application to the  
11 agency or other entity providing grants or funding for the  
12 purposes of this chapter.

13 (c) Limitation.--Grants shall only be made by the agency to  
14 the extent that funding is available.

15 § 7217. Miscellaneous provisions.

16 (a) Immunity from liability.--The provisions of 42 Pa.C.S. §  
17 8331 (relating to medical good Samaritan civil immunity), 8332  
18 (relating to emergency response provider and bystander good  
19 Samaritan civil immunity) or 8332.4 (relating to volunteer-in-  
20 public-service negligence standard) shall apply to a member of a  
21 specialized regional counterterrorism response team, an urban  
22 search and rescue task force or a specialized Statewide response  
23 team and an individual who provides logistical, material or  
24 other forms of emergency response support to a team or task  
25 force during activation or deployment of a team or task force to  
26 a potential or actual disaster or while engaged in a task force  
27 or team drill or training exercise.

28 (b) Effect on workers' compensation premiums.--Nothing in  
29 this chapter shall be construed to permit an insurer to raise  
30 workers' compensation premiums due to the participation or

1 membership of a county, municipality, volunteer service  
2 organization, individual or employer on a regional  
3 counterterrorism task force, specialized regional  
4 counterterrorism response team, specialized Statewide response  
5 team or urban search and rescue task force.

6 § 7218. Commonwealth indemnification.

7 The Commonwealth shall indemnify a county or municipality for  
8 costs related to damaged county or municipal property that  
9 results from participation in a regional counterterrorism task  
10 force, specialized regional counterterrorism response team or  
11 specialized Statewide response team response only when all of  
12 the following conditions are met:

13 (1) The county or municipality is responding upon  
14 activation or deployment by the Governor.

15 (2) The damage to county or municipal property occurs  
16 outside of the primary regional counterterrorism response  
17 zone.

18 (3) The county's or municipality's insurance does not  
19 cover the property damage.

20 (4) The property damage was not caused by the willful  
21 misconduct of the county or municipality or any of its  
22 employees or agents.

23 Section 2. Title 35 is amended by adding a section to read:  
24 § 7605. Construction.

25 For purposes of Article VI of the compact, "officers or  
26 employees of a party state" shall be construed to include urban  
27 search and rescue task forces as defined in section 7202  
28 (relating to definitions) that are assets of the Federal  
29 Emergency Management Agency or Pennsylvania Emergency Management  
30 Agency and the components, subgroups and regional elements of

1 the task forces based in this Commonwealth.

2 Section 3. Repeals are as follows:

3 (1) The General Assembly finds that the repeals under  
4 paragraphs (2) and (3) are necessary to effectuate the  
5 addition of 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 72.

6 (2) The definitions, excluding the definitions of  
7 "department" and "local health department," in section 102 of  
8 the act of December 16, 2002 (P.L.1967, No.227), known as the  
9 Counterterrorism Planning, Preparedness and Response Act, are  
10 repealed.

11 (3) Chapter 2 of the Counterterrorism Planning,  
12 Preparedness and Response Act, is repealed.

13 Section 4. The addition of 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 72 is a  
14 continuation of Chapter 2 of the act of December 16, 2002  
15 (P.L.1967, No.227), known as the Counterterrorism Planning,  
16 Preparedness and Response Act. The following apply:

17 (1) Except as otherwise provided in 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 72,  
18 all activities initiated under Chapter 2 of the  
19 Counterterrorism Planning, Preparedness and Response Act,  
20 shall continue and remain in full force and effect and may be  
21 completed under 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 72. Orders, regulations, rules  
22 and decisions which were made under Chapter 2 of the  
23 Counterterrorism Planning, Preparedness and Response Act and  
24 which are in effect on the effective date of this section  
25 shall remain in full force and effect until revoked, vacated  
26 or modified under 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 72. Contracts, obligations  
27 and collective bargaining agreements entered into under  
28 Chapter 2 of the Counterterrorism Planning, Preparedness and  
29 Response Act are not affected nor impaired by the repeal of  
30 Chapter 2 of the Counterterrorism Planning, Preparedness and

1 Response Act.

2 (2) Except as specified in paragraph (3), any difference  
3 in language between 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 72 and Chapter 2 of the  
4 Counterterrorism Planning, Preparedness and Response Act is  
5 intended only to conform to the style of the Pennsylvania  
6 Consolidated Statutes and is not intended to change or affect  
7 the legislative intent, judicial construction or  
8 administration and implementation of Chapter 2 of the  
9 Counterterrorism Planning, Preparedness and Response Act.

10 (3) Paragraph (2) does not apply to the addition of the  
11 following provisions:

12 (i) The definitions of "NIMS" and "urban search and  
13 rescue task force" in 35 Pa.C.S. § 7202.

14 (ii) 35 Pa.C.S. § 7212(b).

15 (iii) 35 Pa.C.S. § 7214(a), (b), (d) and (g).

16 (iv) 35 Pa.C.S. § 7215(c).

17 Section 5. This act shall take effect in 60 days.