



Urban Search & Rescue

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Urban Search and Rescue Response System (US&R) consists of 28 advanced search and rescue task forces strategically located around the country.

Managed by local emergency management agencies and/or fire departments, the teams are prepared to respond to catastrophic events involving the collapse of heavy steel and concrete. In New York City, the US&R team is known as NY-TF 1. The task force is managed by OEM and includes approximately 210 members from the City's Police and Fire Departments.

The push to form an advanced search and rescue team for major structural collapses came in the late 1980s after a series of severe earthquakes in California, Mexico, and other locations throughout the world. While the majority of fire departments are capable of performing rescues in light- to medium-sized construction collapses, US&R members have the tools, equipment, skills, and techniques required for the most dangerous conditions. FEMA requires each task force to be ready within six hours' notice for dispatch to any area of the country. Once activated, the teams must be able to sustain themselves for 72 hours without the assistance of local jurisdictions.

While US&R was originally envisioned as a response system for natural disasters, other events have caused the task forces to broaden their reach. Most notably, US&R activated in response to the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.