

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary  
Assistant Secretary for Health  
Office of Public Health & Science  
Washington D.C. 20201

November 18, 2001

Dear Employer:

This employee serves on the [team name], a [Disaster Medical Assistance Team (or DMORT, VMAT, etc.)] in the National Disaster Medical System. When voluntarily activated in a national disaster or public health crisis, he or she becomes an emergency employee of the United States Public Health Service. As a member of this team he or she is an integral part of our Nation's readiness to respond to a public health crisis. As we witnessed on September 11, that crisis may take the form of a deliberate attack and can occur without warning.

It is crucial to our Nation's health that these disaster medical teams and their members are able to respond within as little as 12 hours from the time of team activation to response. To this end, we are asking you for your support in releasing this employee to the service of the USPHS should his/her team be activated. While you, as an employer, are under no obligation to release this employee upon team activation, doing so is your opportunity to come to the assistance of your country in a time of great need.

Your employee does not need to take time off until his/her team receives an ACTIVATION order AND your employee is selected as a responder for the mission. At that time it becomes critical that every effort be made to release him or her from duty. We ask your support in making this employee available to serve our nation. Normally a team is deployed for a period of 10-14 days but in the current crisis it is impossible to state that this will always be the case.

If you have any questions about the National Disaster Medical System your employee can put you in touch with one of the team leaders or you can visit the website at [www.ndms.dhhs.gov](http://www.ndms.dhhs.gov).

Thank you in advance for your support.

Robert F. Knouss, M.D.  
Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness