



PUBLIC WORKS

FIRST RESPONDER

Why recognize public works professionals as **FIRST RESPONDERS**?

While police, fire, and EMS are often the three most recognized first responders, public works is also often silently there—providing vital support to emergency response partners, helping protect essential services, and restoring those services following an emergency situation. Consider the following:

- In 2003, President George W. Bush issued [Presidential Policy Directive 8 \(PPD-8\)](#) officially recognizing public works as first responders.
- In 2010, Mississippi, under House Bill (HB) 664, recognized public works professionals as first responders.
- In 2019, the US Senate passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 15 ([S.Con.Res.15](#)), “Expressing support for the designation of October 28, 2019, as Honoring the Nation’s First Responders Day.” Public works is specifically included.
- In 2022 New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu signed into law SB325, formally recognizing public works employees as first responders.
- In 2022, New Hampshire passed HB 536, “An Act relative to death benefits for public works employees killed in the line of duty, and relative to workers’ compensation offsets for certain retirement system benefits.”
- Public works is often considered “the silent arm of public safety” ... usually without fanfare. Public works professionals are often the first on scene and the last to leave the scenes of disasters—no matter the peril.
- The National Incident Management System (NIMS) lists public works alongside police, fire, and public health in its documentation: [National Incident Management System, 3rd Edition \(fema.gov\)](#).

What can I do?

- Establish a public works awareness committee.
- Arrange networking sessions with fellow public works professionals to share your ideas, experiences, and your public works awareness success stories.
- Put together a short presentation/video to share with your elected officials at the local, county, state, and federal levels highlighting the vital role public works professionals have as first responders.
- Reach out to APWA’s Government Affairs staff and refer to the APWA website for the latest information.
- When discussing public works as first responders, remember to use the APWA theme, “Ready and Resilient.”
- Remind your organizations and those you serve, whether it is clearing debris after a major storm, clearing the roads during winter weather conditions, setting up protective barriers, or any other critical essential function, that **public works is always there** to ensure government operations return to normal as quickly as possible. “Public works is the silent arm of public safety!”

Please don’t hesitate to reach out to APWA Government Affairs Manager, Marty Williams by phone (202) 218-6732 or email mwilliams@apwa.net, or APWA’s Marketing Department by phone at (816) 595-5257 or email jshilhanek@apwa.net, should you have any questions or need assistance raising awareness of public works as first responders.