



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

User Registration and Permissions

What if I had an account on the previous MARS website (released July 2020)?

Unfortunately, we were not able to migrate users from the previous MARS website because the current application is on a new platform. Users who had an account on the old website will need to sign up as a new user and request access to MARS on the new platform.

What email account should be used when signing up for MARS?

Although any email address can be used, we recommend using your work email that is related to the agency for which you are requesting access. The system will send notifications regarding reimbursement documentation to the email that is provided during sign up.

What is the difference between the primary and secondary user permissions?

The primary permission level is intended for the Fire Chief or administrative staff that manage the rates, agreements, invoices, and other supporting documentation for reimbursements. Primary users will have full edit access to all tabs within their agency profile.

The secondary permission level is intended for responding personnel that are only responsible for completing and submitting F-42s and/or expense claims and supporting documentation. Secondary users will have view only access to the agency information screen on the agency profile tab but will not be able to see any rate, agreement, or agency personnel information. They will have full edit access to the F-42 entries tab and the expense claim tab.

Can an agency create a general account to be utilized by multiple personnel instead of individuals creating their own accounts?

A general account can be used however there are fields within the F-42 that auto populate based upon the account the user is logged in under and using a general account will limit a secondary users' ability to view or print a copy of their own F-42.

How many users are allowed and who decides the appropriate permission level?

There is no limit on the number of users an agency can have in each permission level, and it is at the discretion of the local agency to decide which permission level is appropriate for each user based upon their responsibilities related to CFAA reimbursement documentation.

Who can approve MARS requests and manage permission levels?

All primary users can approve accounts and change permission levels from the agency personnel screen on the agency profile tab. Cal OES can also approve accounts however it is preferred that the agency manage their own users as they are familiar with who should have access.

Is the local agency responsible for adding all secondary users?

Yes. We prefer that the primary users for each agency approve accounts and change permission levels from the agency personnel screen on the agency profile tab since they are more familiar with who should have access to their agency.

At an incident the Cal OES AREPs will be able to approve requests for responding personnel who do not have an account set up yet. Additionally, Cal OES reimbursement staff can approve requests in the event the local fire agency is not able to do so, however, they will contact the primary users for an agency to confirm the requesting individual should have access to their agency.

What do I do if I selected the incorrect account, or my primary user is not able to see my request?

The platform that hosts MARS also hosts other applications for different sections of Cal OES. Accounts from various sections were migrated into the platform causing duplicate or similar accounts. It is possible that some users have selected the incorrect account belonging to another application as opposed to MARS, causing them to see different information. If the requested agency looks different or there are blanks, the user likely requested access to an account that is not for MARS. To request access to the correct account, the user can go to the MARS landing page and on the top right corner select request new agency access button. There will be a pop up asking for the account name and the user should type the three letter MACS ID or agency name to submit another request.

Rate Submissions

Why are the portal-to-portal or overtime checkboxes disabled?

Checkboxes on the Salary Survey and Attachment A screens are tied to any agreements on file. If you wish to request overtime or portal-to-portal for additional positions, navigate to the agreements (MOU/MOA/GBR) screen to manage compensation methods and submit new documentation for review and approval.

Emergency Activity Record (OES F-42s)

How do I change the agency designator in box 1?

The agency designator field will automatically be populated with the MACS ID of the agency profile the user is logged in under. Users can use the search agency field to the right to look for a different agency and change the MACS ID.

How do I add an incident in box 3?

The incident order number is linked to the search incident field to the right. Within this search, users can look for incidents using the incident name or incident order number.

Why am I getting a prefix error in boxes 2, 3, 6, 7, or 11?

The system requires specific formatting for consistency of F-42 entries. When strike team/task force is selected in box 2, the strike team/task force number must consist of three letters, a dash, four numbers, a dash, and one or two letters (*Example: OES-1800-TF*). In boxes 4, 6 and 7, the incident request number must consist of one letter, a dash, and one or more numbers (*Example: E-1*). In box 11, the unit number must consist of one or two letters (depending on the resource type), a dash, and one or more numbers (*Example: E-123*)

What do I enter in the FEMA code and special equipment tables in box 11?

The FEMA code and special equipment tables only need to be completed if the resource listed on the F-42 includes a piece of equipment that is not an engine or water tender, which are already outlined in the CFAA. The FEMA code list will pull anything on the [FEMA Schedule of Equipment Rates](#) list and special equipment will pull any rates that have been submitted by the specific responding agency as part of their annual rate submissions.

The portal-to-portal box in box 12 is greyed out, how do I check portal-to-portal? The system is asking for actual hours, but my personnel are portal-to-portal, how do I proceed?

The portal-to-portal checkbox is tied to the agreements your agency has on file which correlates to the classification title on the Salary Survey. When entering a position, agencies need to make sure the title they are entering matches the title from the salary survey. For example, if you are entering a Captain the title is "Co. Officer/Capt./Lt." in the system. As soon as you select the correct title, the system will recognize if there is an approved agreement on file and the portal-to-portal box will be checked allowing you to bypass actual hours in box 13. If there is not an agreement on file, actual hours are required for submission. If you believe there is a mistake in your agreement information, please contact Cal OES.

How do I complete the documentation for an approved personnel rotation?

An approved personnel rotation will no longer require a separate F-42 form. Rotations can be recorded in box 12 of the F-42 by selecting the add approved personnel rotation button. A pop up will appear asking the user to enter the timeframe of the rotation and the support vehicle utilized. When a personnel rotation is added, a new field for crew number will appear in the personnel table to identify which crew each individual was part of. The crew number will help with auto filling dates and times however, users should verify the time committed is correct for all personnel entered. Approval (ICS General Message 213 or Rotation Job Aid) signed by MOB Center Manager or Incident Commander shall be uploaded as an attachment in box 17 of the F-42.

Why is box 18 missing from the F-42?

Users will need to complete boxes 1 through 17 before they are able to move onto box 18. The Save & Next button in box 17 will verify that all required fields are completed or direct users to complete any missing information. Once all errors are cleared, box 18 will open and users will be able to obtain approval from the Cal OES AREP if assigned and authorized incident personnel.

How do I view my F-42 after submission?

Upon submission there is an optional field where users can enter their email address to receive an emailed PDF copy of their F-42. This field will auto-populate with the email of the user that created the F-42. After submission, entries will move to the F-42 review tab, primary users can view all submitted F-42s and secondary users can only view F-42s that have their name listed in box 12.

Will edits be allowed on a submitted F-42 if an error is found?

After submission F-42 entries will only be editable by Cal OES. If an error is found, personnel can contact Cal OES reimbursement staff or the Cal OES AREP that assisted them on the incident.

Why is an F-42 no longer appearing on my F-42 review tab?

Once an F-42 has been approved and added to an invoice the entry will disappear from the review tab. Users will need to navigate to the invoice tab to find the F-42 within the invoice that was generated.

How will MARS change the workflow on an incident?

The MARS application will replace the current paper forms that are completed and submitted at an incident. Users will complete an F-42 and save it as a draft. If an AREP is present, the AREP can pick up that draft from their own device to review, sign and save. Finally, the responding personnel or assigned AREP will take a device over to the finance section and obtain a final signature before submitting. Expense claims can be submitted at the incident or after arriving back at the home unit.

Who will be able to see and edit a draft F-42?

Users will be able to see a list of all draft F-42s currently saved for their agency. One user can start an F-42, save it as a draft and a different user can pick up that same F-42 from the drafts and continue editing or submit.

Can I complete my F-42 after returning to my home unit?

F-42s need to be completed and submitted prior to leaving the incident. In the event responding personnel are unable to complete an electronic form due to issues with system access or connectivity, a paper form can be completed. If a paper form is completed, the agency will be required to submit an electronic F-42 in MARS once arriving back at their home unit and attach a copy of the signed paper form.

What is the process if there is no Cal OES Agency Representative at the incident?

When a Cal OES Agency Representative is not present at an incident, local responders should complete an F-42 on any web enabled device and obtain a signature from authorized incident personnel who will submit on their behalf.

Who signs for an Cal OES Preposition in box 18?

Typically, the Cal OES Assistant Chief for your Region will be responsible for reviewing and signing. If they are not available, contact the Cal OES Reimbursement Staff.

Expense Claims

How do I link my expense claim with the correct F-42?

An F-42 needs to be submitted prior to entering the associated expense claim. In a new expense claim, enter the Incident Order Number in the "Select Incident" field and a table will populate with all the F-42s corresponding to the selected incident for your agency. Select the appropriate F-42 and the expense claim will be paired for invoicing.

How do I submit an expense claim for an F-42 that is already on an invoice or paid?

In the expense claim, enter the Incident Order Number in the "Select Incident" field. Then check the box labeled, "Select if expense claim is not associated with an F-42 listed in the table below." Once you have filled out the expense claim table and uploaded your supporting documents, sign and submit. Cal OES reimbursement staff will add the expense to an existing invoice or generate a separate invoice for the expenses only.

Who should sign the expense claim?

It is at the discretion of your agency to determine who is authorized to sign an expense claim.

Invoices

How will MARS change the workflow for reimbursement documentation?

The MARS application will replace the current paper invoices that are mailed for review and approval. Cal OES will generate an invoice in the system and send it electronically to the local agency for review. The local agency will navigate to the invoices tab and a pending invoice will have four action options. The first two options allow the user to view the invoice and the remaining options allow the user to send the invoice back for correction or sign as approval and send the invoice back for payment processing. Local agencies will no longer need to mail hard copy invoices.

How do I know what information has been changed on my F-42 or expense claim?

There is a new page within the invoice containing an audit log. These logs will show which fields have been changed, when the change was made, the original value of the field and the new value of the field.

What is the process for requesting a correction to an invoice?

When an invoice is in the local fire agency queue for review, there will be an option to reject the invoice and provide a comment to notify Cal OES of what needs to be corrected. Once corrected, the invoice will be returned to the local fire agency queue for review. If the invoice is not in the local fire agency queue, please contact CFAAreimbursement@caloes.ca.gov to request a correction.

Who signs as approval on an invoice?

The authorized representative that holds financial responsibility for the local agency should sign the invoice.

Are there notifications when an invoice is ready for review and approval?

Yes. Primary users can elect to receive notifications when invoices are sent to their queue. On the Agency Profile tab, on the Notifications screen, each primary user can check which notifications they would like to receive.

Other Questions

How do I update my CFIRS information?

The CFRIS information that was housed on the FIRESCOPE webpage will be migrated into a new application that is currently under development. This application will be linked to MARS and housed on the same platform however it is a separate application. At this time, we are asking agencies to hold off on updating their CFIRS data until the new application is available for use.

Does the system notify me when something is sent to my queue?

Primary users can manage notification settings on the notifications screen within the agency profile tab. Users can elect to receive emails when there are new user requests, F-42s, expense claims, or invoices that require action.

Do I submit all reimbursement documentation into MARS?

Yes. As of January 1, 2023, all documentation related to CFAA reimbursements will be entered and processed through MARS.

Does MARS have an environment for training purposes?

Yes. Please contact MARS at MARShelpdesk@caloes.ca.gov or the Fire and Rescue main line at (916) 845-8711 for access.

Is there training available?

Please refer to the [Cal OES webpage](#) for self-guided training material and information about upcoming training opportunities. Any questions about MARS can be directed to MARShelpdesk@caloes.ca.gov or the Fire and Rescue main line at (916) 845-8711.