

NIMS –Study Guide

Lesson One: What Is the National Incident Management System (NIMS)?

What is NIMS?

NIMS is a comprehensive, national approach to incident management that is applicable at all jurisdictional levels and across functional disciplines. The intent of NIMS is to:

- Be applicable across a full spectrum of potential incidents and hazard scenarios, regardless of size or complexity.
- Improve coordination and cooperation between public and private entities in a variety of domestic incident management activities.

NIMS COMPLIANCE

HSPD-5 requires Federal departments and agencies to make the adoption of NIMS by State and local organizations a condition for Federal preparedness assistance (grants, contracts, and other activities) by FY 2005. Jurisdictions can comply in the short term by adopting the Incident Command System. Other aspects of NIMS require additional development and refinement to enable compliance at a future date.

WHY DO WE NEED

Lessons learned from previous large-scale disasters point to a need for a National Incident Management System. Emergencies occur every day somewhere in the United States. These emergencies are large and small and range from fires to hazardous materials incidents to natural and technological disasters. Each incident requires a response. Whether from different departments within the same jurisdiction, from mutual aid partners, or from State and Federal agencies, responders need to be able to work together, communicate with each other and depend on each other.

Until now, there have been no standards for domestic incident response that reach across all levels of government and all response agencies. The events of September 11 have underscored the need for and importance of national standards for incident operations, incident communications, personnel qualifications, resource management, and information management and supporting technology. To provide standards for domestic incident response, President Bush signed HSPD-5. HSPD-5 authorized the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop the National Incident Management System, or NIMS. NIMS provides for interoperability and compatibility among all responders.

NIMS CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

NIMS provides a framework for interoperability and compatibility by balancing flexibility and standardization.

- It provides a flexible framework that facilitates government and private entities at all levels working together to manage domestic incidents. This flexibility applies to all phases of incident management, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity.
 - It also provides a set of standardized organizational structures, as well as requirements for processes, procedures, and systems designed to improve interoperability.
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NIMS STANDARD STRUCTURES

NIMS standard incident management structures are based on three key organizational systems:

- The Incident Command System (ICS) defines the operating characteristics, management components, and structure of incident management organizations throughout the life cycle of an incident.
- Multi-agency Coordination Systems define the operating characteristics, management components, and organizational structure of supporting entities.
- Public Information Systems include the processes, procedures, and systems for communicating timely and accurate information to the public during emergency situations.

It is likely that NIMS is using the term Multi-agency Coordination System differently than may have been introduced to you in the past. Multi-agency Coordination Systems (MACS) will be covered in more detail in a later unit. From this point, try to think of MACS in broader terms than you may have in the past.

PREPAREDNESS

Incident management begins with a host of preparedness activities. These activities are conducted on a “steady-state” basis, well in advance of any potential incident. Preparedness involves a combination of:

- Planning, training, and exercises.
 - Personnel qualification and certification standards.
 - Equipment acquisition and certification standards.
 - Publication management processes and activities.
 - Mutual aid agreements and Emergency Management Assistance Compacts (EMACs).
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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

When fully implemented, NIMS will define standardized mechanisms and establish requirements for describing, inventorying, mobilizing, dispatching, tracking, and recovering resources over the life cycle of an incident.

COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

NIMS identifies the requirements for a standardized framework for communications, information management, and information-sharing support at all levels of incident management. Incident management organizations must ensure that effective, interoperable communications processes, procedures, and systems exist across all agencies and jurisdictions. Information

management systems help ensure that information flows efficiently through a commonly accepted architecture. Effective information management enhances incident management and response by helping to ensure that decision making is better informed.

SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGIES

Technology and technological systems provide supporting capabilities essential to implementing and refining NIMS. Provide the following examples:

- Voice and data communication systems
- Information management systems, such as recordkeeping and resource tracking
- Data display systems

Supporting technologies also include specialized technologies that facilitate ongoing operations and incident management activities in situations that call for unique technology-based capabilities.

MORE INFO

You can find out more about NIMS principles, concepts, and components in the National Incident Management System document, which can be found at:

www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/NIMS-90-web.pdf.

You should check the DHS website regularly for updated information about NIMS as it continues to be developed.

Lesson 2.1: Command and Management Under NIMS- PART 1

INCIDENT COMMAND AND MANAGEMENT

NIMS employs two levels of incident management structures, depending on the nature of the incident.

- The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standard, on-scene, all-hazard incident management system. ICS allows users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the needs of single or multiple incidents.
- Multi-agency Coordination Systems are a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications integrated into a common framework for coordinating and supporting incident management.

ICS will be described in this lesson. Unified Command, Area Command, and Multi-agency Coordination Systems will be addressed in Lesson 2.2.

- NIMS requires that responses to all domestic incidents utilize a common management structure. The Incident Command System—or ICS—is a standard, on-scene, all hazard incident management concept. ICS is a proven system that is used widely for incident management by firefighters, rescuers, emergency medical teams, and hazardous

materials teams. ICS represents organizational “best practices” and has become the standard for incident response across the country.

- ICS is interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible to meet the needs of incidents of any kind, size, or level of complexity. Using ICS, personnel from a variety of agencies can meld rapidly into a common management structure.
 - ICS has been tested for more than 30 years and used for planned events, fires, hazardous materials spills, and multi-casualty incidents; multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and winter storms; search and rescue missions; biological outbreaks and disease containment; and acts of terrorism.
 - ICS helps all responders communicate and get what they need when they need it. ICS also provides a safe, efficient, and cost-effective response and recovery strategy.
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ICS FEATURES

ICS has several features that make it well suited to managing incidents. These features are as follows:

- Common terminology.
- Organizational resources.
- Manageable span of control.
- Organizational facilities.
- Use of position titles.
- Reliance on an Incident Action Plan.
- Integrated communications.
- Accountability.

We will discuss each of these features.

COMMON TERMINOLOGY

- Common Terminology - The ability to communicate within ICS is absolutely critical. Using standard or common terminology is essential to ensuring efficient, clear communications. ICS requires the use of common terminology, including standard titles for facilities and positions within the organization.

Common terminology also includes the use of “clear text”—that is, communication without the use of agency specific codes or jargon. In other words, use plain English.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

Organizational resources, including all personnel, facilities, and major equipment and supply items used to support incident management activities; they are assigned common designations. Resources are “typed” with respect to capability to help avoid confusion and enhance interoperability.

SPAN OF CONTROL

Maintaining adequate span of control throughout the ICS organization is critical. Effective span of control may vary from three to seven, and a ratio of one supervisor to five reporting elements is recommended. If the number of reporting elements falls outside of this range, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There may be exceptions, usually in lower risk assignments or where resources work in close proximity to each other.

INCIDENT FACILITIES

Common terminology is also used to define incident facilities, help clarify the activities that take place at a specific facility, and identify what members of the organization can be found there. An example of common terminology is use of the phrase “Incident Commander.” You would find the Incident Commander at the Incident Command Post. The following examples are incident facilities:

- The Incident Command Post.
- One or more staging areas.
- A base.
- One or more camps (when needed).
- A helibase.
- One or more helispots.

Incident facilities will be established depending on the type and complexity of the incident. Only facilities that are needed will be activated in a given incident. Some incidents may require facilities not included on the standard list.

INCIDENT COMMAND

ICS positions have distinct titles.

- Only the Incident Commander is called Commander— and there is only one Incident Commander per incident.
 - Only the heads of Sections are called Chiefs. Learning and using standard terminology helps reduce confusion between the day-to-day position occupied by an individual and his or her position at the incident.
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INCIDENT ACTION PLANS

Incident Action Plans (IAPs) provide a coherent means to communicate the overall incident objectives in the context of both operational and support activities. IAPs are developed for operational periods that are usually 12 hours long.

IAPs depend on management by objectives to accomplish response tactics. These objectives are communicated throughout the organization and throughout the organization and are used to:

- Develop and issue assignments, plans, procedures, and protocols.
- Direct efforts to attain the objectives in support of defined strategic objectives.

Results are always documented and fed back into planning for the next operational period.

INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS

The following are all examples of integrated communications.

- The “hardware” systems that transfer information
- Planning for the use of all available communications frequencies and resources
- The procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally

Communications needs for large incidents may exceed available radio frequencies. Some incidents may be conducted entirely without radio support. In such situations, other communications resources (e.g., cell phones or secure phone lines) may be the only communications methods used to coordinate communications and to transfer large amounts of data effectively.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Effective accountability at all jurisdictional levels and within individual functional areas during an incident is essential. To that end, ICS requires:

- An orderly chain of command—the line of authority within the ranks of the incident organization.
 - Check-in for all responders, regardless of agency affiliation.
 - Each individual involved in incident operations to be assigned only one supervisor (also called “unity of command”).
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MORE INFO

You can find out more information about the incident command system by going to the following websites:

- *Introduction to ICS for Federal Disaster Workers (IS 100)* (FEMA). This course is available through FEMA’s Virtual Campus at: www.training.fema.gov.
 - *ICS Field Operations Guide* (U.S. Coast Guard) www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/nmc/response/fog.pdf.
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Lesson 2.2: Command and Management Under NIMS – Part 2

UNIFIED AND COMMAND

In some situations, NIMS recommends variations in incident management. The two most common variations involve the use of Unified Command and Area Command. We will describe and discuss Unified Command and Area Command in this lesson.

HOW DOES UNIFIED COMMAND WORK?

Under a Unified Command, agencies work together through the designated members of the Unified Command to:

- Analyze intelligence information.

- Establish a common set of objectives and strategies for a single Incident Action Plan.
 - Unified Command does not change any of the other features of ICS. It merely allows all agencies with responsibility for the incident to participate in the decision making process.
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AREA COMMAND

This is an Area Command organization chart showing the coordination relationship between the State EOC with other State EOCs and the direct relationship between the State EOC and each Area Command.

An Area Command is an organization established to:

- Oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being managed by an ICS organization.
- Oversee the management of large incidents that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Area Commands are particularly relevant to public health emergencies because these incidents are typically:

- Nonsite specific.
- Not immediately identifiable.
- Geographically dispersed and evolve over time.

These types of incidents call for a coordinated response, with large-scale coordination typically found at a higher jurisdictional level.

WHAT DOES AN AREA COMMAND DO?

Area Command has the responsibility of:

- Setting overall strategy and priorities.
- Allocating critical resources according to the priorities.
- Ensuring that incidents are properly managed.
- Ensuring that objectives are met.
- Ensuring that strategies are followed.

An Area Command may become a Unified Area Command when incidents are multi-jurisdictional or involve multiple agencies.

HOW IS AN AREA COMMAND ORGANIZED?

An Area Command is organized similarly to an ICS structure but, because operations are conducted on-scene, there is no Operations Section in an Area Command. Other Sections and functions are represented in an Area Command structure.

MULTIAGENCY COORDINATION SYSTEMS

On large or wide-scale emergencies that require higher level resource management or information management, a Multi-agency Coordination System may be required.

Multi-agency Coordination Systems are a combination of resources that are integrated into a common framework for coordinating and supporting domestic incident management activities. Resources may include: facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications.

The primary functions of Multiagency Coordination Systems are to:

- Support incident management policies and priorities.
- Facilitate logistics support and resource tracking.
- Make resource allocation decisions based on incident management priorities.
- Coordinate incident-related information.
- Coordinate interagency and intergovernmental issues regarding incident management policies, priorities, and strategies.
- Direct tactical and operational responsibility for the conduct of incident management activities rests with the Incident Command.

EOC

Multiagency Coordination Systems include Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) and, in certain multijurisdictional or complex incidents, Multiagency Coordination Entities.

You should know the following:

- EOCs are the locations from which the coordination of information and resources to support incident activities takes place. EOCs are typically established by the emergency management agency at the local and State levels.
- Multiagency Coordination Entities typically consist of principals from organizations with direct incident management responsibilities or with significant incident management support or resource responsibilities. These entities may be used to facilitate incident management and policy coordination.

The EOC organization and staffing is flexible, but should include:

- Coordination.
- Communications.
- Resource dispatching and tracking.
- Information collection, analysis, and dissemination.

EOCs may also support multiagency coordination and joint information activities. EOCs may be staffed by personnel representing multiple jurisdictions and functional disciplines. The size, staffing, and equipment at an EOC will depend on the size of the jurisdiction, the resources available, and the anticipated incident needs.

MORE INFO

You can find out more information about Unified Command, Area Command, and Multiagency Coordination Systems, visit these websites:

- *Incident Command System/Unified Command (ICS/UC) Technical Assistance Document* (National Response Team). This document is available at: <http://nrt.org/production/nrt/home.nsf/resources>. Select Publications 1 to access the document.
- *Incident Command System National Training Curriculum: Unit 13: Unified Command* (National Wildfire Coordinating Group). This module is available at: www.nwccg.gov/pms/forms/ICS_cours/i400/mod13.pdf
- *Incident Command System National Training Curriculum: Unit 16: Multiagency Coordination* (National Wildfire Coordinating Group). This document is available at: www.nwccg.gov/pms/forms/ICS_cours/i401/i401.pdf

Lesson 3.1: Public Information – PART 1

PUBLIC INFORMATION FOR DOMESTIC INCIDENTS

Under ICS, the PIO is a member of the command staff. The PIO advises the Incident Command on all public information matters, including media and public inquiries, emergency public information and warnings, rumor monitoring and control, media monitoring, and other functions required to coordinate, clear with proper authorities, and disseminate accurate and timely information related to the incident.

The PIO establishes and operates within the parameters established for the Joint Information System—or JIS. The JIS provides an organized, integrated, and coordinated mechanism for providing information to the public during an emergency. The JIS includes plans, protocols, and structures used to provide information to the public. It encompasses all public information related to the incident. Key elements of a JIS include interagency coordination and integration, developing and delivering coordinated messages, and support for decision makers. The PIO, using the JIS, ensures that decision makers—and the public—are fully informed throughout a domestic incident response.

COORDINATION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

During emergencies, the public may receive information from a variety of sources. Part of the PIO's job is ensuring that the information that the public receives is accurate, coordinated, timely, and easy to understand. One way to ensure the coordination of public information is by establishing a Joint Information Center (JIC). Using the JIC as a central location, information can be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions and agencies, and among all government partners, the private sector, and nongovernmental agencies.

The JIC

A JIC is the physical location where public information staff involved in incident management activities can collocate to perform critical emergency information, crisis communications, and

public affairs functions. JICs provide the organizational structure for coordinating and disseminating critical information.

JICs

This is a graphic showing the coordination of information flow among multiple JICs. Information between the State and local JICs is two-way. Local JICs have two-way communication between the JICs and their respective agencies. The Public Information Officer for the Incident Command, Unified Command, or Area Command coordinates a two-way information flow with the Public Information Officer for each respective agency.

JICs may be established at various levels of government. All JICs must communicate and coordinate with each other on an ongoing basis using established JIS protocols. When multiple JICs are established, information must be coordinated among them to ensure that a consistent message is disseminated to the public.

JIC CHARACTERISTICS

JICs have several characteristics in common:

- The JIC includes representatives of all players in managing the response. This may include jurisdictions, agencies, private entities, and nongovernmental organizations.
- Each JIC must have procedures and protocols for communicating and coordinating effectively with other JICs, and with the appropriate components of the ICS organization.

A single JIC location is preferable, but the JIS should be flexible enough to accommodate multiple JICs when the circumstances of the incident require.

JICS

A typical JIC organization consists of the Press Secretaries from involved jurisdictions and a Liaison (if needed) as staff functions reporting to the Public Information Officer, and research, media, and logistics teams handling their specific functional areas. Additional functions may be added as necessary to meet the public information needs of the incident.

MORE INFORMATION

FEMA offers a course for field delivery at the State or local level. Contact your State Training Officer for more information about when this course may be offered in your area.

- Basic Public Information Officers Course (G 290)
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WHAT IS PREPAREDNESS?

Preparedness is critical to emergency management. Preparedness involves all of the actions required to establish and sustain the level of capability necessary to execute a wide range of incident management operations.

Preparedness is implemented through a continual cycle of planning, training and equipping, exercising and evaluating, and taking action to correct and mitigate.

A major objective of preparedness is to ensure mission integration and interoperability in response to emergent crises across functional and jurisdictional lines. Preparedness also includes efforts to coordinate between public and private organizations.

Preparedness is the responsibility of individual jurisdictions, which coordinate their activities among all preparedness stakeholders. Each level of government is responsible for its preparedness activities.

NIMS provides tools to help ensure and enhance preparedness. These tools include:

- Preparedness organizations and programs that provide or establish processes for planning, training, and exercising.
 - Personnel qualification and certification.
 - Equipment certification.
 - Mutual aid.
 - Publication management.
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PREPAREDNESS ORGANIZATIONS

Preparedness organizations represent a wide variety of committees, planning groups, and other organizations. These organizations meet regularly to coordinate and focus preparedness activities. The needs of the jurisdiction will dictate how frequently the organizations must meet and how they are structured.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PREPAREDNESS ORGANIZATIONS

Preparedness organizations at all levels should follow NIMS standards and undertake the following tasks:

- Establishing and coordinating emergency plans and protocols
 - Integrating and coordinating the activities and jurisdictions within their purview
 - Establishing guidelines and protocols to promote interoperability among jurisdictions and agencies
 - Adopting guidelines and protocols for resource management
 - Establishing priorities for resources and other response requirements
 - Establishing and maintaining multiagency coordination mechanisms
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PREPAREDNESS PLANNING

Preparedness plans describe how personnel, equipment, and other governmental and nongovernmental resources will be used to support incident management requirements. These plans represent the operational core of preparedness and provide mechanisms for:

- Setting priorities.
 - Integrating multiple entities and functions.
 - Establishing collaborative relationships.
 - Ensuring that communications and other systems support the complete spectrum of incident management activities.
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TYPES OF PLANS

Jurisdictions must develop several types of plans, including:

- **Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs)**, which describe how the jurisdiction will respond to emergencies.
 - **Procedures**, which may include overviews, standard operating procedures, field Operations guides, job aids, or other critical information needed for a response.
 - **Preparedness Plans**, which describe how training needs will be identified and met, how resources will be obtained through mutual aid agreements, and the equipment required for the hazards faced by the jurisdiction.
 - **Corrective Action and Mitigation Plans**, which include activities required to implement procedures based on lessons learned from actual incidents or training and exercises.
 - **Recovery Plans**, which describe the actions to be taken to facilitate long-term recovery.
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TRAINING AND EXERCISES

To assist jurisdictions in meeting these training and exercise needs, the NIMS Integration Center will:

- Facilitate the development and dissemination of national standards, guidelines, and protocols for incident management training.
 - Facilitate the use of modeling and simulation in training and exercise programs.
 - Define general training requirements and approved training courses for all NIMS users, including instructor qualifications and course completion documentation.
 - Review and approve, with the assistance of key stakeholders, discipline-specific training requirements and courses.
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PERSONAL QUALIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION

Under NIMS, preparedness is based on national standards for qualification and certification of emergency response personnel. Managed by the NIMS Integration Center, standards will help ensure that the participating agencies' and organizations' field personnel possess the minimum knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to perform activities safely and effectively.

Standards will include:

- Training.
- Experience.
- Credentialing.
- Currency.
- Physical and medical fitness.

Personnel who are certified to support interstate incidents will be required to meet national qualification and certification standards.

EQUIPMENT CERTIFICATIONS

Incident managers and emergency responders rely on various types of equipment to perform mission-essential tasks. A critical component of operational preparedness is that equipment performs to certain standards, including the capability to be interoperable with equipment used by other jurisdictions. To facilitate national equipment certification, the NIMS Integration Center will:

- Facilitate the development and or publication of national equipment standards, guidelines, and protocols.
 - Review and approve lists of emergency responder equipment that meet national requirements.
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MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE COMPACTS

Mutual aid agreements and Emergency Management Assistance Compacts (EMACs) provide the means for one jurisdiction to provide resources or other support to another jurisdiction during an incident. To facilitate the timely delivery of assistance during incidents, jurisdictions (including States) are encouraged to enter into agreements with:

- Other jurisdictions.
 - Private-sector and nongovernmental organizations.
 - Private organizations, such as the American Red Cross.
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PUBLICATION MANAGEMENT

The NIMS Integration Center will manage publications dealing with domestic incident management and response. Publication management will include:

- The development of naming and numbering conventions.
- Review and certification of publications.
- Methods for publications control.
- Identification of sources and suppliers for publications and related services.
- Management of publication distribution.

The NIMS Integration Center will manage a wide range of publications—from qualification information and training courses to computer programs and best practices.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can find out more information about preparedness visit these websites:

- *Guide for All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning (SLG 101)* (FEMA). This document can be found at:
www.fema.gov/rrr/allhzpln.shtm.
- *Principles of Emergency Management (IS 230)* (FEMA). This course can be found at:
<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS230.asp>.
- *Emergency Planning (IS 235)* (FEMA). This course is available at:
<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is235.asp>.
- *Exercise Design (IS 139)* (FEMA). This course is available at:
<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is139.asp>.

FEMA also offers several courses for State and local delivery. Contact your State Training Officer for information about when these courses might be offered in your area.

- Exercise Design (G 120)
 - Exercise Evaluation (G 130)
 - Exercise Program Manager/Management (G 137)
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Lesson 4.1: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT – PART 1

WHAT IS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT?

Point out that resource management involves four primary tasks:

- Establishing systems for describing, inventorying, requesting, and tracking resources
- Activating those systems prior to, during, and after an incident
- Dispatching resources prior to, during, and after an incident
- Deactivating or recalling resources during or after an incident

The basic concepts and principles that guide resource management and allow these tasks to be conducted effectively are addressed by NIMS. These concepts and principles are described on the following pages.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

Resource management under NIMS is based on:

- Providing a uniform method of identifying, acquiring, allocating, and tracking resources.
 - Classifying kinds and types of resources required to support incident management.
 - Using a credentialing system tied to uniform training and certification standards.
 - Incorporating resources contributed by private sector and nongovernmental organizations.
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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

There are five key principles underlying effective resource management:

1. **Advance planning:** Preparedness organizations working together before an incident to develop plans for managing and using resources
 2. **Resource identification and ordering:** Using standard processes and methods to identify, order, mobilize, dispatch, and track resources
 3. **Resource categorization:** Categorizing by size, capacity, capability, skill, or other characteristics to make resource ordering and dispatch more efficient
 4. **Use of agreements:** Developing pre-incident agreements for providing or requesting resources
 5. **Effective management:** Using validated practices to perform key resource management tasks
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Lesson 4.2: Communications, Information Management, and Supporting Technology – PART 2

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The concepts and principles on which communications and information management are based include the following:

- **A common operating picture that is accessible across jurisdictions and agencies is necessary.** A common operating picture helps to ensure consistency at all levels, among all who respond to or manage incident response.
 - **Common communications and data standards are fundamental.** Effective communications, both within and outside of the incident response structure, are enhanced by adherence to standards.
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SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGIES

NIMS will leverage science and technology to improve capabilities at a lower cost. To accomplish this, NIMS will base its supporting technology standards on five key principles:

1. **Interoperability and compatibility:** Systems must be able to work together.
 2. **Technology support:** All organizations using NIMS will be able to enhance all aspects of incident management and emergency response.
 3. **Technology standards:** National standards will facilitate interoperability and compatibility of major systems.
 4. **Broad-based requirements:** NIMS provides a mechanism for aggregating and prioritizing new technologies, procedures, protocols, and standards.
 5. **Strategic planning and R&D:** The NIMS Integration Center will coordinate with DHS to create a national R&D agenda.
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COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

NIMS communications and information systems enable the essential functions needed to provide a common operating picture and interoperability for:

- Incident management communications.
- Information management.
- Interoperability standards.

The NIMS Integration Center will also develop a national database for incident reports.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about communications, information management, and supporting technology, visit the websites below.

- The Emergency Information Infrastructure Partnership (online newsletter) www.emforum.org.
 - National Communications System (Department of Homeland Security) www.ncs.org.
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Lesson 5: COURSE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION TO NIMS

Past emergencies have taught us much about the need for a coordinated response—especially standardization and interoperability. NIMS is a comprehensive national approach to incident management that is applicable at all jurisdictions and across all functional disciplines.

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- Be applicable across a full spectrum of potential incidents and hazard scenarios, regardless of size or complexity.
 - Improve coordination and cooperation between public and private entities in a variety of domestic incident management activities.
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NIMS CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

NIMS provides a framework for interoperability and compatibility by balancing flexibility and standardization.

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 - NIMS provides a set of **standardized** organizational structures as well as requirements for processes, procedures, and systems designed to improve interoperability.
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NIMS COMPONENTS

NIMS is comprised of several components that work together as a system to provide a national framework for preparing for, preventing, responding to, and recovering from domestic incidents. These components include:

- Command and management.
- Preparedness.
- Resource management.
- Communications and information management.
- Supporting technologies.
- Ongoing management and maintenance.

Although these systems are evolving, much is in place now.

COMMAND AND MANAGEMENT

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- Organizational resources.
- Manageable span of control.
- Organizational facilities.
- Use of position titles.
- Reliance on an Incident Action Plan.
- Integrated communications.
- Accountability.

Common Terminology

The ability to communicate within ICS is absolutely critical. Using standard or common terminology is essential to ensuring efficient, clear communications. ICS requires the use of common terminology, including standard titles for facilities and positions within the organization.

Common terminology also includes the use of “clear text”—that is, communication without the use of agency specific codes or jargon. **In other words, use plain English.**

Organizational Resources

Resources, including all personnel, facilities, and major equipment and supply items used to support incident management activities, are assigned common designations. Resources are “typed” with respect to capability to help avoid confusion and enhance interoperability.

Manageable Span of Control

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If the number of reporting elements falls outside of this range, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There may be exceptions, usually in lower risk assignments or where resources work in close proximity to each other.

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Use of Position Titles

ICS positions have distinct titles.

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Learning and using standard terminology helps reduce confusion between the day-to-day position occupied by an individual and his or her position at the incident.

Reliance on an Incident Action Plan

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- Direct efforts to attain the objectives in support of defined strategic objectives.

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Integrated Communications

Integrated communications include:

- The “hardware” systems that transfer information.
- Planning for the use of all available communications frequencies and resources.
- The procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally.

Accountability

Effective accountability at all jurisdictional levels and within individual functional areas during an incident is essential. To that end, ICS requires:

- An orderly chain of command—the line of authority within the ranks of the incident organization.
- Check-in for all responders, regardless of agency affiliation.
- Each individual involved in incident operations to be assigned only one supervisor.

UNIFIED COMMAND

In some situations, NIMS recommends variations in incident management. Unified Command is an application of ICS that is used when:

- There is more than one responding agency within a jurisdiction.
 - Incidents cross political jurisdictions.
 - Under a Unified Command, agencies work together through the designated members of the command to analyze intelligence information and establish a common set of objectives and strategies for a single Incident Action Plan.
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AREA COMMAND

An Area Command is established to:

- Oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being managed by an ICS organization.
- Oversee the management of large incidents that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Area Commands are particularly relevant to public health emergencies and other incidents that are nonsite specific, not immediately identifiable, or are geographically dispersed and evolve over time.

Area Command Responsibilities

Area Command has the responsibility for:

- Setting overall strategy and priorities.
- Allocating critical resources according to priorities.
- Ensuring that incidents are properly managed.
- Ensuring that objectives are met and strategies are followed.

An Area Command may become a Unified Area Command when incidents are multi-jurisdictional or involve multiple agencies.

MULTIAGENCY COORDINATION SYSTEMS

Multiagency Coordination Systems are a combination of resources that are integrated into a common framework for coordinating and supporting domestic incident management activities.

The primary functions of Multiagency Coordination Systems are to:

- Support incident management policies and priorities.
- Facilitate logistics support and resource tracking.
- Make resource allocation decisions based on incident management priorities.
- Coordinate incident-related information.
- Coordinate interagency and intergovernmental issues regarding incident management policies, priorities, and strategies.

Direct tactical and operational responsibility for the conduct of incident management activities rests with the Incident Command.

Multiagency Coordination System Elements

Multiagency Coordination Systems include Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) and, in certain multijurisdictional or complex incidents, Multiagency Coordination Entities.

Regardless of their form or structure, Multiagency Coordination Entities:

- Ensure that each involved agency is providing situation and resource status information.
 - Establish priorities between incidents and/or Area Commands.
 - Acquire and allocate resources required by incident management personnel.
 - Coordinate and identify future resource requirements.
 - Coordinate and resolve policy issues.
 - Provide strategic coordination.
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PUBLIC INFORMATION

During emergencies, the public may receive information from a variety of sources. The mechanism established by NIMS for ensuring that information the public receives is accurate, coordinated, timely, and easy to understand is through the use of a Public Information Officer (PIO). The PIO coordinates public information by establishing a Joint Information Center (JIC). Using the JIC as a central location, information can be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions and agencies and among all government partners, the private sector, and nongovernmental agencies.

PREPAREDNESS

Preparedness involves the actions required to establish and sustain prescribed levels of capability for a range of incident management operations. Preparedness is implemented through a continual cycle of:

- Planning.
- Training and equipping.
- Exercising.
- Evaluating and taking corrective or mitigating action.

NIMS focuses on guidelines, protocols, and standards necessary to facilitate preparedness.

TRAINING AND EXERCISES

Organizations and personnel at all governmental levels and the private sector must be trained to improve all hazard incident management capability. These organizations and personnel must also participate in realistic exercises to improve integration and interoperability.

Training and Exercising and the NIMS Integration Center

To assist jurisdictions in meeting training and exercising goals, the NIMS Integration Center will:

- Facilitate the development and dissemination of national standards, guidelines, and protocols for incident management training.
- Facilitate the use of modeling and simulation in training and exercise programs.

- Define general training requirements and approve training courses for all NIMS users, including instructor qualifications and course completion documentation.
 - Review and approve, with the assistance of key stakeholders, discipline-specific training requirements and courses.
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EQUIPMENT CERTIFICATION

A critical component of operational preparedness is that equipment performs to certain standards, including the capability to be interoperable with equipment used by other jurisdictions.

To facilitate national equipment certification, NIMS will:

- Facilitate the development and or publication of national equipment standards, guidelines, and protocols.
 - Review and approve lists of emergency responder equipment that meet national requirements.
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PERSONNEL QUALIFICATIONS

Under NIMS, preparedness is based on national standards for qualification and certification of emergency response personnel. Standards will help ensure that the participating agencies' and organizations' field personnel possess the minimum knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to perform activities safely and effectively.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource management involves four primary tasks:

- Establishing systems for describing, inventorying, requesting, and tracking resources
- Activating those systems prior to, during, and after an incident
- Dispatching resources prior to, during, and after an incident
- Deactivating and recalling resources during or after an incident

NIMS Resource Management Concepts and Principles

NIMS Resource Management Concepts

Resource management under NIMS is based on:

- Providing a uniform method of identifying, acquiring, allocating, and tracking resources.
- Classifying kinds and types of resources required to support incident management.
- Using a credentialing system tied to uniform training and certification standards.
- Incorporating resources contributed by private sector and nongovernmental organizations.

NIMS Resource Management Principles

Five key principles underlie effective resource management:

1. **Advance planning:** Preparedness organizations working together before an incident to develop plans for managing and using resources
 2. **Resource identification and ordering:** Using standard processes and methods to identify, order, mobilize, dispatch, and track resources
 3. **Resource categorization:** Categorizing by size, capacity, capability, skill, or other characteristics to make resource ordering and dispatch more efficient
 4. **Use of agreements:** Developing pre-incident agreements for providing or requesting resources
 5. **Effective management:** Using validated practices to perform key resource management tasks
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MANAGING RESOURCES

NIMS includes standard procedures, methods, and functions that reflect functional considerations, geographic factors, and validated practices, including:

- Identifying and typing resources.
- Certifying and credentialing personnel.
- Inventorying resources.
- Identifying resource requirements.
- Ordering and acquiring resources.
- Tracking and reporting resources.
- Mobilizing resources.
- Recovering resources.
- Reimbursement.

Resource Management Standards, Procedures, and Methods

- **Identifying and “typing” resources:** Resource “typing” involves categorizing resources by capability based on measurable standards of capability and performance—for example, a 500-kilowatt generator. Resource typing defines more precisely the resource capabilities needed to meet specific requirements—and is designed to be as simple as possible to facilitate frequent use and accuracy in obtaining resources.
- **Certification and credentialing:** Certification and credentialing of personnel help ensure that all personnel possess a minimum level of training, experience, physical and mental fitness, or capability for the position they are tasked to fill. NIMS also ensures that training material is current.
- **Inventorying resources:** Resource managers use various resource inventory systems to assess the availability of assets provided by public, private, and volunteer

organizations. And resource managers identify, refine, and validate resource requirements throughout an incident using a process to identify what and how much is needed, where and when it is needed, and who will be receiving it. Because resource requirements and availability change as an incident evolves, all entities must coordinate closely beginning at the earliest possible point in the incident.

- **Resource ordering:** Requests for items that the Incident Commander cannot obtain locally must be submitted through the EOC or Multiagency Coordination Entity using standardized resource ordering procedures.
- **Resource tracking and mobilization:** Resource tracking and mobilization are directly linked. When resources arrive on the scene, they must check in to start on-scene inprocessing and validate the order requirements. Managers should plan for demobilization at the same time they begin the mobilization process. Early planning for demobilization facilitates accountability and makes transportation of resources as efficient as possible.
- **Resource recovery:** Resource recovery involves the final disposition of all resources. During recovery, resources are rehabilitated, replenished, disposed of, or retrograded.
- **Reimbursement:** Reimbursement provides a mechanism for funding critical needs that arise from incident-specific activities. Processes and procedures must be in place to ensure that resource providers are reimbursed in a timely manner. The NIMS Integration Center will coordinate the development and dissemination of each of these resource management standards, processes, procedures, and functions.

NIMS FOCUS ON SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGY

NIMS will leverage science and technology to improve capabilities at a lower cost. To accomplish this, NIMS will base its supporting technology standards on:

1. Interoperability and compatibility.
2. Technology support.
3. Technology standards.
4. Broad-based requirements.
5. Strategic planning and R&D.

MANAGING COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

NIMS communications and information systems enable the essential functions needed to provide a common operating picture and interoperability for:

- Incident management communications.
- Information management.
- Interoperability standards.

The NIMS Integration Center will also develop a national database for incident reports.
