

Newcomers and Elmers Net: Incident Command System AK3Q 1-26-14; material collected from FEMA and other Government Sites

NIMS

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) identifies concepts and principles that answer how to manage emergencies from preparedness to recovery regardless of their cause, size, location or complexity. NIMS provides a consistent, nationwide approach and vocabulary for multiple agencies or jurisdictions to work together to build, sustain and deliver the core capabilities needed to achieve a secure and resilient nation.

Consistent implementation of NIMS provides a solid foundation across jurisdictions and disciplines to ensure effective and integrated preparedness, planning and response. NIMS empowers the components of the National Preparedness System, a requirement of Presidential Policy Directive (PPD)-8, to guide activities within the public and private sector and describes the planning, organizing, equipping, training and exercising needed to build and sustain the core capabilities in support of the *National Preparedness Goal*.

The *National Preparedness Goal* is a secure and resilient nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk. To achieve the Goal, existing preparedness networks and activities, such as NIMS, will be used to improve training and exercise programs, promote innovation and ensure that the administrative, finance and logistics systems are in place to support these capabilities.

Q. How does NIMS relate to local incident command?

A: A basic premise of NIMS is that all incidents begin and end locally. NIMS does not take command away from state and local authorities. NIMS simply provides the framework to enhance the ability of responders, including the private sector and NGOs, to work together more effectively. The federal government supports state and local authorities when their resources are overwhelmed or anticipated to be overwhelmed. Federal departments and agencies respect the sovereignty and responsibilities of local, tribal and state governments while rendering assistance. The intention of the federal government in these situations is not to command the response but, rather, to support the affected local, tribal, and/or state governments.

Q. What is the role of Elected and Appointed Officials during an incident?

A: Elected and appointed officials are responsible for ensuring the public safety and welfare of the people of that jurisdiction. Specifically, these officials provide strategic guidance and resources during preparedness, response and recovery efforts. Elected or appointed officials must have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for successful emergency management and response. At times, these roles may require providing direction and guidance to constituents during an incident but their day-to-day activities do not focus on emergency management and response. Their awareness of NIMS is critical to ensuring cooperative response efforts and minimizing the incident impacts.

ICS

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management approach that:

- Allows for the integration of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications operating within a common organizational structure.
- Enables a coordinated response among various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private.
- Establishes common processes for planning and managing resources.

ICS is flexible and can be used for incidents of any type, scope and complexity. ICS allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demands of single or multiple incidents.

ICS is used by all levels of government—federal, state, tribal and local—as well as by many nongovernmental organizations and the private sector. ICS is also applicable across disciplines. It is typically structured to facilitate activities in five major functional areas: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance/Administration. All of the functional areas may or may not be used based on the incident needs. Intelligence/Investigations is an optional sixth functional area that is activated on a case-by-case basis.

As a system, ICS is extremely useful; not only does it provide an organizational structure for incident management but it also guides the process for planning, building and adapting that structure. Using ICS for every incident or planned event helps hone and maintain skills needed for the large-scale incidents.



INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM: COMMAND STAFF & GENERAL STAFF

Q. Why is ICS needed?

A: When an incident requires response from multiple local emergency management and response agencies, effective cross-jurisdictional coordination using common processes and systems is critical. The Incident Command System (ICS) provides a flexible, yet standardized core mechanism for coordinated and collaborative incident management, whether for incidents where additional resources are required or are provided from different organizations within a single jurisdiction or outside the jurisdiction or for complex incidents with national implications.

Q. What is ICS Designed To Do?

A: The ICS is a widely applicable management system designed to enable effective, efficient incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications operating within a common organizational structure. ICS is a fundamental form of management established in a standard format, with the purpose of enabling incident managers to identify the key concerns associated with the incident—often under urgent conditions—without sacrificing attention to any component of the command system. It represents organizational "best practices" and, as an element of the Command and Management Component of NIMS, has become the standard for emergency management across the country. Designers of the system recognized early that ICS must be interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible to meet the following management challenges:

- Meet the needs of incidents of any kind or size.
- Allow personnel from a variety of agencies to meld rapidly into a common management structure.
- Provide logistical and administrative support to operational staff.
- Be cost effective by avoiding duplication of efforts.

ICS consists of procedures for controlling personnel, facilities, equipment and communications. It is a system designed to be used or applied from the time an incident occurs until the requirement for management and operations no longer exists.

Q: I gather we must use plain language when using NIMS ICS. Is that correct?

A: Yes. When engaged in a multi-agency/multi-jurisdictional incident using ICS, plain language is required. The value of using 10-codes for simplicity and speed is lost when members of the response team are unaware of their meanings, as may occur in a multi-agency/multi-jurisdiction response event. As 10-codes used in one jurisdiction or agency are not the same as those used in another, it is important that responders and incident managers use common terminology to prevent misunderstanding in an emergency situation. While plain language is not required for internal operations, it is encouraged over 10-codes to promote familiarity within operational procedures used in emergencies.

Preparedness

Preparedness is essential for effective incident and emergency management and involves engaging in a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action to achieve and maintain readiness to respond to emergencies. As such, the NIMS Preparedness Component serves as a baseline concept that links all the NIMS Components. Preparedness spans jurisdictions, governments, agencies and organizations. Though individuals certainly play a critical role in preparedness and are expected to prepare themselves and their families for all types of potential incidents, they are not directly included in NIMS preparedness. NIMS primarily discusses the preparedness role for governments, organizations geared specifically toward preparedness, elected and appointed officials, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

A Common Operating Picture (COP) offers a standard overview of an incident, thereby providing incident information that enables the Incident Commander/Unified Command and any supporting agencies and organizations to make effective, consistent and timely decisions. Compiling data from multiple sources and disseminating the collaborative information COP ensures that all responding entities have the same understanding and awareness of incident status and information when conducting operations.

Interoperability allows emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations to communicate within and across agencies and jurisdictions via voice, data or video-on-demand, in real-time, when needed and when authorized - this includes equipment and the ability to communicate. If entities have physical communications systems that are able to directly communicate, those systems are considered to be interoperable. This can be a function of the actual system or the frequency on which the system operates.