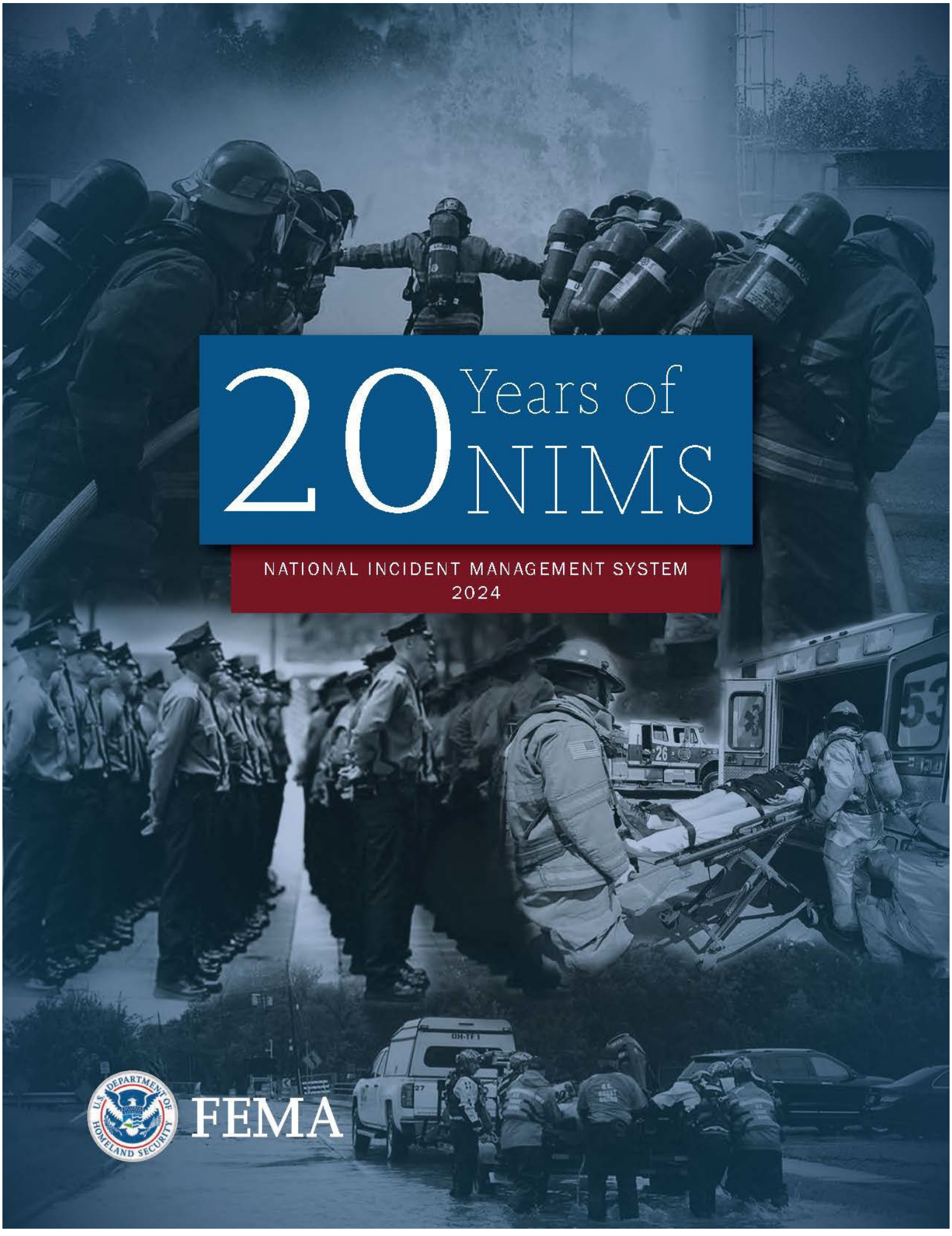

20 Years of NIMS

NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
2024

FEMA

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Table of Contents

Letter from the Administrator

This year, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The NIMS has served as the nation's standard for managing emergency response to the full range of threats and hazards our communities face. As a key element of the National Preparedness System, NIMS helps communities build and sustain capabilities by guiding them to prioritize and allocate limited resources to address the highest probability or highest consequence events. Another foundational objective of the system aims to enhance unity of effort among everyone who may be involved in incident response. This has never been more critical than today, as disasters continue to increase in severity and frequency across the United States.

As we reflect on the lessons learned through incident response, we must also look to our future. Such as adapting our responses to disasters like the 1970 wildfire season in Southern California that consisted of over 700 individual fires and raged for 13 days to address the current environment where such disasters are now commonplace and widespread. More than 20 years after the tragic terrorist attacks on September 11th that drove the creation of NIMS, the threat of human-induced disasters also has only become more complex. Nation-state actors are engaging in behavior that directly threatens U.S. national security while a larger set of states—including some allies—are facing intrastate conflict or domestic turmoil. These pressures and dynamics have the potential to spill over borders and across regions to destabilize areas and threaten the livelihoods, safety, and stability of billions of people. As these hazards and threats evolve, the NIMS model continues to offer communities a flexible system for unified response to incidents of any type, level, or scope.

This report reflects on the history of NIMS and describes how, over time, communities shaped NIMS into the comprehensive guidance it is today. In releasing this commemorative report, we extend our gratitude to the dedicated professionals, organizations, and communities who help advance NIMS. Our nationwide incident management capabilities are based on years of determined effort from the NIMS community, governmental and non-governmental, to enable NIMS to meet the many challenges of today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Deanne Criswell
Administrator

Introduction

This 20 Years of National Incident Management System (NIMS) report provides an overview of how NIMS came to be—from early iterations of standardized emergency operations systems to the eventual development of NIMS in 2004—and its present state in 2024. This report also highlights how, over this 20-year period, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and NIMS users adopted, trained on, implemented, and improved NIMS.

Every day, government and non-governmental organizations come together to respond to incidents. Whether these organizations are nearby or are supporting each other from across the country, their success depends on, among other things, a common, interoperable approach.

Before NIMS, the emergency response community had long recognized the need for standardized incident management guidance, particularly when responding to major incidents that required collaboration among multiple organizations and jurisdictions. Key incidents such as Southern California's 1970 wildfire season, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (9/11), and Hurricane Katrina in 2005, served as pivotal points for the nation to both recognize and reaffirm the need for a shared multijurisdictional, multiagency incident management system. Established in the aftermath of 9/11, and through the development of NIMS in 2004, NIMS defines that approach.

NIMS provides stakeholders with shared language, systems, and processes to successfully deliver the capabilities described in the National Preparedness System.[1] It defines operational systems that guide how personnel work together during incidents, including the Incident Command System (ICS), Emergency Operations Center (EOC) structures, and Multiagency Coordination Groups (MAC Groups). NIMS is applicable to all stakeholders with incident management and support responsibilities. The NIMS community includes emergency responders and other emergency management personnel, federal partners, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and elected and appointed officials responsible for making decisions about incidents.[2]

Since 2004, NIMS evolved through numerous iterations of guidance, resources, and tools. The continued community dedication and investment enable NIMS to serve as the cornerstone of emergency response in the United States (U.S.).

Background (1970 – 2001)

In September 1970, Southern California experienced 773 wildfires within 13 days.[3] The wildfires burned 570,000 acres, destroyed 742 structures, and resulted in 16 lives lost. These concurrent wildfires tested California's response capabilities as 20,000 firefighters from 500 different agencies mobilized to combat the wildfires.[4]

At the time, California, and the entire nation, lacked interagency standards for managing incidents and sharing resources. Emergency responders struggled to share information with other partner response agencies in California, and the terminology for sharing equipment and tactics differed among partners.[4]

Based on the after-action review, the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Research and Development arm, with its partner agencies, identified the need for a new approach to managing coordinated multiagency, multijurisdictional response to wildland fires. Congress allocated $900,000 for USFS to create a system that would "make a quantum jump in the capabilities of Southern California fire protection agencies to effectively coordinate interagency action and to allocate resources in dynamic multiple fire situations…"[3]

USFS leaders partnered with the California Division of Forestry, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, the Los Angeles City Fire Department, the Los Angeles County Fire Department, Santa Barbara County, and the Ventura County Fire Department to join the USFS Research and Application Program. This group was later christened FIRESCOPE (**FI**refighting **RE**sources of **S**outhern **C**alifornia **O**rganized for **P**otential **E**mergencies).

Starting in 1972, FIRESCOPE members worked with researchers to build a system that would streamline coordination of multiagency, multijurisdictional resources during emergencies, develop standard terminology, and improve overall communications.[3] FIRESCOPE created two related, yet independent, systems for managing wildfires—the ICS and the Multiagency Coordination System (MACS). **Figure 1** provides an overview of these system features.

Incident Command System (ICS)		Multiagency Coordination System (MACS)
To better manage on-the-ground response functions during incidents, FIRESCOPE designed ICS, initially known as Field Command Operations Systems. This system outlined a standardized approach to incident management. ICS specified an organizational structure, standard procedure, and communication standards that helped coordinate efforts across the board including the focus areas of Command, Planning, Logistics, Finance, and Operations.		FIRESCOPE designed MACS to promote better coordination among responding agencies. The two most used elements of MACS are EOCs and MAC Groups. Emergency response personnel use EOCs to coordinate information and resources to support incident management. MAC Groups are the policy-setting entities that enable cooperative multiagency decisions during incident response, and help to identify, acquire, and allocate resources to field commanders. Using MACS allowed multiple levels of government and disciplines to work together through defined standard operating procedures and protocols.[5]

Figure 1. FIRESCOPE Systems for Wildland Fire Management

By 1976, FIRESCOPE members recognized the potential for broader ICS application, and started to shift ICS from a fire-focused system to an all-risk, all-hazards system.[3]

While organizations within Southern California continued to adopt ICS, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)—a leader in supporting interoperable wildland fire operations standards—worked to apply FIRESCOPE ICS to wildfires on a national level. The NWCG included FIRESCOPE ICS and MACS concepts in its National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). The NWCG also encouraged and supported the implementation of a consistent ICS training curriculum and a performance-based system to qualify and certify personnel for ICS positions, such as Incident Commander, Liaison Officers, Section Chiefs, and more.

Using NIIMS to Respond to All Types of Emergencies

NIIMS—the predecessor to today's NIMS—originated in the 1970s. By 1981, it was widely accepted by state and federal wildland fire protection agencies, with the caveat that it needed further development and detail. Intended to improve the ability of fire protection agencies to respond to any type of emergency, NIIMS incorporated FIRESCOPE ICS, along with other interactive subsystems, to form a comprehensive emergency management system.

Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, the management concepts of NIIMS were increasingly used to respond to all types of emergencies. As NWCG developed and

implemented training and qualification standards for ICS positions, federal wildland fire Incident Management Teams (IMT) were increasingly mission-assigned by FEMA to provide management, organization, and process support for non-wildfire Stafford Act disasters and emergencies.

Federal and state wildland fire protection agencies accepted NIIMS as a comprehensive system to support incident management operations. Over time, other agencies began applying NIIMS to their emergency responses. In 1984, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (SBCSD) conducted a project to make ICS applicable to the diverse emergencies law enforcement confronts. In 1986, the SBCSD persuaded the California Police Standards and Training Commission to sponsor training in the law enforcement version of ICS.

NIMS in Action: Early ICS Adoption, New Jersey State Police

On Veteran's Day in 1989, a multijurisdictional emergency unfolded in New Egypt, New Jersey, when a 22-month-old child wandered away from his home, prompting a massive search and rescue operation. The New Jersey State Police (NJSP) and the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, alongside approximately 40 fire departments and Emergency Medical Services squads, were mobilized to find the lost child in a heavily wooded area. As the situation escalated, the coordination of over 400 searchers, including 100 soldiers and airmen from Fort Dix and McGuire Air Force Base, underscored the urgent need for an organized command structure.

The operation revealed significant challenges in command, control, and communication among the various agencies involved. Despite the exemplary leadership of the New Egypt Fire Company chief, the presence of numerous high-ranking officials and a multitude of responders created confusion and delays. These challenges and the lessons learned from this operation catalyzed the NJSP to reevaluate and strengthen their incident management process.

The NJSP responded by initiating a comprehensive review of the incident, which ultimately led to the adoption of ICS within their emergency management framework. This strategic shift was aimed at enhancing accountability, communication, and coordination among responding agencies. The integration of ICS training across the division marked a significant advancement in the NJSP's approach to incident management.

FIRESCOPE ICS and NIIMS both proved effective throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Many organizations, including federal agencies and state and local jurisdictions, adopted these best practices and modified them for their purposes. In the early 1980s, FEMA started offering ICS training. A FEMA component, the U.S. Fire Administration, added ICS to its National Fire Academy curriculum in 1983. FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) also supported ICS implementation and offered courses that focused on ICS for disciplines such as law enforcement and public works. In 1989, FEMA started to develop the National Urban Search & Rescue (US&R)

Response System and incorporated ICS into the structure and processes of the US&R Task Forces and Incident Support Teams.[3]

ICS use within the fire service was boosted in 1992 when the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) revised NFPA 1500—Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program—to encourage all fire departments to establish procedures for ICS implementation.

In the early 1990s, ICS implementation began in the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) as a grassroots effort with origins stemming from the Marine Safety Office in San Francisco. ICS use grew within USCG throughout the 1990s and touched every corner of the organization.

NIMS in Action: Early ICS Adoption, USCG

USCG early adoption of ICS in the 1990s proved advantageous for the eventual service-wide implementation of NIMS. With experience in implementing NIIMS and FIRESCOPE ICS concepts in all-hazards response, and as a partner agency within the newly formed Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the USCG worked closely with DHS and FEMA on the development and implementation of NIMS.[3] Building upon NWCG ICS training standards, the USCG developed some of the first all-hazards ICS training courses. In addition to innovative training, several new tools were developed through the USCG ICS program such as the USCG Incident Management Handbook, which is used extensively today.

During the 2005 hurricane season, one of the few bright spots was the USCG's ability to manage its response and bring order out of chaos. The early investment in ICS training and initial NIMS implementation efforts were critical in this regard.

Similarly, in response to 8.1 million gallons of oil spilling from numerous oil infrastructure sources, the USCG Incident Commander for the oil pollution and hazardous materials response (Emergency Support Function #10) noted that without ICS—specifically the ICS organization, process, and common terminology—the response would not have been successful. This case study remains a key component of the FEMA ICS-400 course.

In 2010, the USCG coordinated the largest ever application of ICS during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.[6] Managed by a unified command with federal, state, and private sector partners, the response was organized under the advanced ICS concept of Area Command, with four geographic and two functional Incident Command Posts commanding nearly 50,000 responders across six states and the Gulf of Mexico. Accountability was maintained for all responders with chain of command connections to the Unified Area Command in Louisiana.

The USCG works closely with their port partners—both government and non-governmental. This includes oil and gas industry partners. Throughout this sector, partners have implemented NIMS and built highly effective incident management programs modeled on the USCG approach, fostering standardization, interoperability, and unity of effort among government and private sector partners. In some cases, private sector oil and gas companies have incorporated advanced NIMS concepts such as performance-based qualification programs,

have developed new tools and resources such as job aids and unique training courses, and have implemented NIMS concepts internationally, further promulgating NIMS best practices.

History of NIMS (2001 – Present)

9/11 and Its Aftermath

Prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, most jurisdictions had their own emergency response processes and protocols, which they developed over years of experience. The processes and protocols varied by community, but mutual aid with neighboring communities was well established and effective despite some operational inconsistencies. Efforts by FIRESCOPE, NWCG, FEMA, and other ICS advocates were only marginally successful in getting communities outside of the fire service to adopt ICS for all-hazards response during the 1980s and 1990s. Many state and local jurisdictions were reluctant to undertake the restructuring, retraining, and revising of plans and protocols that would be required to implement ICS, especially when ICS was perceived as focused mainly on fires.

The 9/11 attacks in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania resulted in complex response requirements that ultimately changed the country's national approach to incident management.

Following the first aircraft striking the North Tower of the World Trade Center, more than 1,000 first responders from New York City and New Jersey mobilized to respond to what became the largest and most complicated rescue operation in New York City's history. The magnitude of the response effort doubled when—an hour later—a second aircraft struck the South Tower.[7] The collapse of the World Trade Center complex compromised essential incident management functions. In the following hours, weeks, and months, thousands of responders from many different organizations worked around the clock to stabilize New York City.

As the incident unfolded in New York City, another complex, multiagency response was underway in the National Capital Region where a third aircraft struck the Pentagon.[8] A fourth plane, with the U.S. Capital as the hijacker's intended target, crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside after passengers and crewmembers fought to regain control of the aircraft.

The 9/11 Commission Report noted that despite the different situations and complexity factors faced that day, the problems with command, control, and communications would likely occur in subsequent emergencies.[9] For the emergency response community, the impact from 9/11 signaled the need to update incident management assumptions, systems, constructs, processes, procedures and protocols as well as to prepare for new types of threats and new levels of damage, destruction, and human injury.

The term "weapons of mass destruction" and threats such as improvised nuclear devices, chemical and biological attacks, and choreographed large-scale explosions all became genuine and immediate possibilities. Community leaders across the country, who had previously been confident in the adequacy of local emergency response systems, quickly realized that responding to these new threats and hazards were beyond local capabilities and would require the cooperation and assistance of many other agencies and jurisdictions. The need for both vertical and horizontal

interoperability in incident response—with neighboring jurisdictions and various higher levels of government—became clear and urgent.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the U.S. Congress enacted the Homeland Security Act in 2002, and President George W. Bush issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5): Management of Domestic Incidents. In addition to creating DHS, the Homeland Security Act and HSPD-5 directed the development of a comprehensive system for managing incidents within the U.S.:

"This system will provide a consistent nationwide approach for Federal, State, and local governments to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. To provide for interoperability and compatibility among Federal, State, and local capabilities, the NIMS will include a core set of concepts, principles, terminology, and technologies covering the incident command system; multi-agency coordination systems; unified command; training; identification and management of resources (including systems for classifying types of resources); qualifications and certification; and the collection, tracking, and reporting of incident information and incident resources."[10]

NIMS in Action: New York City, Citywide Incident Management System (CIMS)

Following the extraordinary response and recovery efforts after 9/11, the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) learned that implementation of NIIMS concepts could improve their already well-respected ability to manage incidents within the five boroughs. Through their work with NWCG Type 1 IMTs, FDNY leaders saw the benefits of a formal, consistent, incident action planning process; resource management; and the integration of Command and Control, and the unity of effort of City and outside responding organizations.

Within weeks of the 9/11 attacks, New York City formed an executive steering committee to review the City's implementation of ICS. The committee included city, state, and federal response and emergency management agencies, along with subject-matter experts. New York City also conducted a 2002 study to evaluate FDNY's response to 9/11 and other large incidents. The report recommended, among other things, the development of IMTs.

FDNY leadership subsequently received training from the USFS,[11] and this collaboration led to the development of the FDNY IMT program that exists today. This program now includes trained and qualified Type 1 IMT personnel to manage city incidents and support other jurisdictions.

Concurrently with the FDNY developments, and following the release of HSPD-5, the New York City Office of Emergency Management (NYC OEM) began to explore how they could implement NIMS.

Working with stakeholder agencies and departments and the NYS OEM, NYC OEM modified NIMS guidance, customizing it for the City's unique circumstances. NYC OEM leaders ensured that NIMS implementation was consistent with the operational and philosophical intent of NIMS. The protocols were adopted by executive order in 2005. The City created the Citywide

Incident Management System (CIMS), which establishes roles and responsibilities and designates authority for city, state, and other government entities, and nonprofit and private-sector organizations performing and supporting emergency response.[12]

NIMS Development

After careful review of existing command and control and incident management systems—and extensive vetting and coordination—FEMA released NIMS in March 2004. NIMS represented "a core set of doctrine, concepts, principles, terminology, and organizational processes to enable effective, efficient, and collaborative incident management."[13]

Creating NIMS included extensive outreach and coordination with federal, state, local, and tribal officials; the emergency response community; non-governmental organizations; and the private sector. As a result, NIMS incorporated best practices from across the whole community. In his memo introducing NIMS, DHS Secretary Ridge noted that effective incident management for the new homeland security environment required further development and refinement of new concepts, processes, and protocols and that input and guidance from all partners would be vital to the continuing development of NIMS.

The initial NIMS guidance incorporated concepts from FIRESCOPE and NIIMS. It included six components: Command and Management, Preparedness, Resource Management, Communications and Information Management, Supporting Technologies, and Ongoing Management and Maintenance.

The National Response Plan/Framework

In addition to establishing DHS and NIMS, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 legislated that the Secretary of DHS consolidate existing federal government emergency response plans into a single, coordinated *National Response Plan* (NRP). The NRP was intended to incorporate NIMS concepts, principles, and terminology to provide the structure and mechanisms for national level policy and operational direction for federal support to state and local incident managers and for exercising direct federal authorities and responsibilities, as appropriate.

HSPD-5 directed the development of the NRP to integrate federal government domestic prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery plans into one all-discipline, all-hazards plan. Building upon the *Federal Response Plan* (first published in 1992), DHS/FEMA released the initial NRP in December 2003, the official *NRP* in 2004 and the superseding *National Response Framework* (NRF) in 2008.

NIMS Adoption

To support HSPD-5, DHS released Management Directive 9500: National Incident Management System Integration Center, which established the NIMS Integration Center. The NIMS Integration Center was created to provide strategic direction for NIMS and its components. The NIMS Integration Center incorporated a multijurisdictional, multidisciplinary perspective to ensure that all users and stakeholders were given the opportunity to contribute their knowledge and input on NIMS activities and programs.[14]

To encourage jurisdictions to adopt NIMS, beginning in 2005, all federal preparedness assistance through grants and contracts were contingent upon NIMS adoption, to the extent permitted by law.[10] The DHS Secretary's introductory memo for NIMS noted that compliance with certain aspects of

NIMS, such as adopting the basic tenets of ICS, was achievable in the short-term, while other aspects of NIMS would require further development and refinement.

To support the community's interest in adopting NIMS, FEMA conducted extensive outreach, meeting with individuals and organizations, as well as leading panel and workshop discussions, and attending industry conferences. FEMA developed NIMS implementation tools and templates and issued standards and guidelines to assist with assessing NIMS adoption.

FEMA offered NIMS-related training through EMI. Upon the release of NIMS, EMI quickly developed Independent Study (IS)-700: An Introduction to the National Incident Management System, enrolling one and a half million students by July 2006. Over time, and by integrating lessons learned, EMI developed an extensive NIMS curriculum.

NIMS in Action: Academic Settings

Large universities and educational institutions often function like small cities, with complex ecosystems of residential living, large-scale events, extensive facilities, and diverse populations. The degree of risk posed by the interconnection of these features underscores the need for universities to integrate NIMS principles into their public safety operations. Rene Fielding, the Director of Emergency Management at Boston University, provided insight into how a large, urban university applies NIMS to better protect its students, faculty, staff, and surrounding community.

"As the Emergency Management Director for Boston University, my application of NIMS within the academic environment is paramount to ensuring the safety and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff. NIMS provides a standardized framework for effective incident response, coordination, and communication, which is crucial during emergencies on campus.

The Emergency Management Department oversees the implementation of NIMS-compliant emergency response plans tailored to the unique needs of Boston University. This involves conducting regular exercises and training sessions to familiarize campus departments and stakeholders with NIMS protocols and procedures. By instilling a culture of preparedness, we empower our community to respond effectively to various scenarios, from natural disasters to active assailant situations. Through regular collaboration and information sharing, we enhance our collective ability to mitigate, respond to, and recover from incidents swiftly and efficiently.

Additionally, we prioritize ongoing evaluation and improvement of our emergency management plans and incident responses, leveraging feedback, data analysis, and lessons learned to refine our approach continually. By staying proactive and adaptable, we strive to uphold the highest standards of safety and resilience within the academic environment at Boston University, guided by the principles of NIMS."

– Rene Fielding, Boston University Emergency Management Director

Hurricane Katrina

One year after NIMS was released, the U.S. experienced the most devastating natural disaster in its history—Hurricane Katrina.[15] While NIMS was not yet universally adopted, the widespread use of ICS helped emergency management officials to coordinate the efforts of multiple federal, state, and local entities, along with private sector and non-governmental partners.

Successes and challenges during the preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the importance of continued investment in NIMS to guide future incident management.

In a 2005 letter to Governors, DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff wrote:

"Hurricane Katrina was a stark reminder of how critical it is for our nation to approach incident management in a coordinated, consistent, and efficient manner. All levels of government must be able to come together to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from any emergency or disaster. Operations must be seamless and based on common incident management doctrine, because the challenges we face as a nation are far greater than the capabilities of any one jurisdiction."[16]

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act (PKEMRA) became law and emphasized the importance of collaboration and coordination in incident response. Among other things, PKEMRA formally established and authorized the National Integration Center (NIC), which existed in FEMA (previously the NIMS Integration Center), to enhance the nation's emergency management capabilities. The NIC was tasked with providing strategic direction and oversight for the continuous refinement and maintenance of NIMS through collaboration with federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial incident management stakeholders. The NIC was to provide guidance and tools to assist jurisdictions and organizations in addressing incident management challenges.

NIMS Updates and Evolution

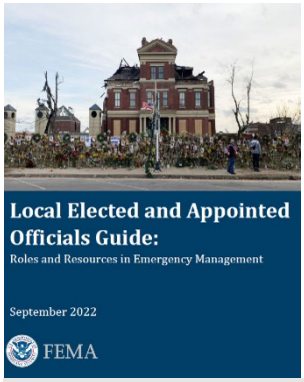
FEMA continued to build out NIMS, releasing the first update in 2008. FEMA incorporated a wide range of feedback into the update and highlighted the relationship between NIMS and the NRF. This revision clarified NIMS concepts and principles and refined processes and terminology. It reorganized the guidance to emphasize that NIMS is more than ICS and clarified the roles of private sector, non-governmental organizations, and elected and appointed officials.

Jurisdictions and organizations across the nation continued to adopt NIMS and to become proficient in implementing the guidance. FEMA created additional supporting NIMS guidance and tools with stakeholder input, including more NIMS-related training.

FEMA updated NIMS in 2017 to incorporate lessons learned and best practices from a wide variety of incidents addressed by responders from different disciplines, at all levels of government, and from the private sector and non-governmental organizations. The 2017 version also added a third guiding principle, Unity of Effort, to the two existing guiding principles, Standardization and Flexibility.

The 2017 version retained much of the material from the 2008 version, but also reflected the evolution of the national risk environment since 2008 and synchronized the guidance with changes to laws, policies, and best practices; reflected the advancement of national incident management capabilities; and added guidance on EOCs.

Role of Elected and Appointed Officials



Elected and appointed officials play a key role in managing incidents within their jurisdiction. They encompass a broad range of activities, such as ensuring that local agencies are well-prepared and adequately resourced to handle incidents, communicating accurate and timely information to the public, and coordinating with other levels of government as needed. Furthermore, elected and appointed officials that function as direct supervisors to jurisdictional emergency managers have the added responsibility of providing the tools needed to perform executive roles successfully. Understanding and applying NIMS concepts allows elected and appointed officials to meet the needs of their communities efficiently and effectively during disaster response and recovery. Numerous state and local resource guides highlight the value of NIMS and ICS for public officials, while FEMA provides additional resources to include: *The Local Elected and Appointed Officials Guide* and courses through EMI (IS-0908: Emergency Management for Senior Officials and G-402: NIMS Overview for Senior Officials).

Senior Officials Training in Minnesota

Minnesota's Department of Public Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management has adopted several NIMS best practices over the past 20 years. One beneficial practice is the Senior Officials Training. This training consists of four modules that cover Roles and Responsibilities (Module 1); State and Federal Disasters (Module 2); Communicating with the Public (Module 3); and Review and Seminar (Module 4). Modules 1 and 3 provide local senior officials with an overview of NIMS doctrine, including ICS, EOCs, and the Joint Information System.

NIMS Today

Current NIMS Guidance

The current NIMS guidance, updated in 2017, reflects progress made since 2008 based on lessons learned, best practices, and changes in national policy, including establishment of the National Preparedness System (**Figure 2**).

The National Preparedness System provides an organized process for the whole community to conduct preparedness activities and achieve the National Preparedness Goal.[17] Within the system, NIMS is key to Building and Sustaining Capabilities. This step involves prioritizing and allocating limited resources to address the highest probability or highest consequence threats.

Figure 2. National Preparedness System

NIMS is based on three guiding principles: Flexibility, Standardization, and Unity of Effort. These principles help to maintain NIMS's focus on fostering effective and efficient incident management.

Guiding Principles

- **Flexibility** allows NIMS to be scalable and applicable for incidents that vary in hazard, geography, demographic, and organizational authority.
- **Standardization** ensures that standard practices and common terminology allow incident personnel to work together to foster cohesion among all organizations involved.
- **Unity of Effort** describes coordination of activities among various organizations to achieve common objectives and enables organizations with specific jurisdictional responsibilities to support each other while maintaining their own authorities.

NIMS today includes a section entitled "Fundamentals and Concepts of NIMS." It describes three components that explain the diverse and essential functions of incident management: Resource Management, Command and Coordination, and Communications and Information Management. **Figure 3** describes each component.

Figure 3. Primary Components of NIMS Fundamentals and Concepts

National Incident Management System		
Resource Management	**Command and Coordination**	**Communications and Information Management**
NIMS resource management guidance enables many organizational elements to collaborate and coordinate to systematically manage resources—personnel, teams, facilities, equipment, and supplies. Most jurisdictions or organizations do not own and maintain all the resources necessary to address all potential threats and hazards. Therefore, effective resource management includes leveraging each jurisdiction's resources, engaging private sector resources, involving volunteer organizations, and encouraging further development of mutual aid agreements. NIMS provides the necessary tools to help manage resources before and during an incident.	Local authorities handle most incidents using communications systems, dispatch centers, and incident personnel within a single jurisdiction. Larger and more complex incidents, however, may begin with a single jurisdiction, but rapidly expand to multijurisdictional and/or multidisciplinary efforts necessitating outside resources and support. Standard incident command and coordination systems allow the efficient integration of these outside resources and enable assisting personnel from anywhere in the nation to participate in the incident management structure. The Command and Coordination component of NIMS describes the systems, principles, and structures that provide a standard, national framework for incident management.	Incident personnel rely on flexible communications and information systems to obtain and provide accurate, timely, and relevant information. Establishing and maintaining situational awareness and ensuring accessibility and voice and data interoperability are the principal goals of the Communications and Information Management component. Properly planned, established, and applied communications facilitate information dissemination among command and support elements and cooperating jurisdictions and organizations. NIMS provides the tools and resources necessary to share critical information and standardized communication during an incident.

The Resource Management component of NIMS includes guidance on the qualification, certification, and credentialing of ICS personnel. It explains the performance-based approach to personnel qualification which has long been a fundamental principle of ICS.

The Command and Coordination component includes four areas of responsibility: (1) tactical activities to apply resources on scene; (2) incident support, typically conducted at EOCs; (3) policy guidance and senior-level decision making; and (4) outreach and communication with the media and public.

In response to stakeholder requests and after conducting interviews with leaders of large and small EOCs across the nation, NIMS now includes comprehensive guidance on the roles, structures, and staffing of EOCs.

Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire Response

The Hermit's Peak and Calf Canyon Fires merged on April 27, 2022, and both fires were reported as the Hermit's Peak Fire or the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire. By May 2, 2022, the fire had grown, causing evacuations in multiple villages and communities in San Miguel County and Mora County.[18] At the request of New Mexico Governor Lujan Grisham, President Biden issued a major disaster declaration on May 4, 2022. The fire was 100 percent contained by August 21, 2022. These concurrent disasters demanded an improvised approach to NIMS concepts.

The New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management provided some detailed insights into how NIMS functioned in action to support the response effort:

"The State of New Mexico's leadership successfully implemented MACS to make policy decisions and inform the priorities of EOCs. Mutual aid, both intra-state and inter-state, was employed extensively with personnel from across the country deploying to support the incident both on the fire-line and in EOCs. Two Type 1 IMTs and one Type 3 IMT were assigned to the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire, which showed just how quickly ICS's organizations can be expanded in an incident complex—a situation where one incident commander or unified command is managing two or more incidents—and still function efficiently and effectively. There are over 89,000 government entities within the U.S., each with their own laws, policies, and authorities. Because it enables disparate organizations to function together effectively, NIMS is essential for our nation's security and stability. The 2022 New Mexico wildfires proved that NIMS is not just effective, but also mission critical."

National Qualification System

In 2017, following extensive coordination with incident management leaders and practitioners from across the nation, FEMA created the National Qualification System (NQS).[19] NQS supplements the Resource Management component of NIMS by establishing guidance and tools to assist stakeholders in developing processes for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing deployable emergency personnel. It describes the basic principles of standard

EOC Staff Skillsets

To assist jurisdictions in staffing and professionalizing EOCs, FEMA produced EOC skillsets to support standardized qualifications for EOC personnel. FEMA has created over 20 skillset documents. EOC leaders can use these skillset documents to create position task books (PTBs) that establish minimum performance requirements. Using the PTBs, EOC leaders can evaluate EOC personnel and ensure they are able to perform their incident responsibilities.

qualification, certification, and credentialing processes and introduces primary tools to help Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) establish their own processes.

NQS builds upon NIMS Resource Typing to promote interoperability by establishing a common language for defining job titles and by enabling jurisdictions and organizations to plan for, request, and have confidence in the capabilities of personnel deployed through mutual aid agreements and compacts. The NQS guidance does not replace established processes for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing personnel—instead, it helps AHJs build or refine NIMS qualification, certification, and credentialing processes to be effective and consistent nationwide.

As of 2024, NQS includes more than 100 unique positions with published PTBs. The performance-based qualification standards—including the competencies, behaviors, and tasks associated with each ICS position—have not only remained consistent over time, but the NQS standards are consistent with other ICS performance-based qualification systems including the NWCG Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide (PMS 310-1), USCG All-Hazards NIMS ICS Performance Qualification Standard, and the All-Hazards Incident Management Team Association (AHIMTA) Interstate Incident Management Qualifications System (IIMQS) Guide. The AHIMTA IIMQS, developed in parallel with NQS, has been adopted by over a dozen state and local jurisdictions and endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police for implementation in law enforcement agencies. The standard NIMS and NQS approach to performance-based qualification is a best practice and led to the establishment of similar programs among private sector stakeholders, including energy sector companies, such as Chevron and Southern California Edison, that implement NIMS performance-based qualification standards worldwide.

NIMS in Action: Resource Typed Teams

During incidents of extraordinary scale and response, it is vital that agencies can procure the teams that have the skillsets and experience necessary to supplement their response. This includes acquiring specialty resource typed teams and All-Hazards Incident Management Teams (AHIMTs) that are trained in specialized tasks and can be dispatched and mobilized during complex emergency incidents. Through NIMS, agencies and jurisdictions can reach out to their network and acquire various teams that fit their response needs.

North Carolina Search and Rescue

The North Carolina Search and Rescue System was an early adopter of the NIMS resource typing standards to ensure that teams, single resources, strike teams, and task forces are trained, staffed, equipped, and capable of fulfilling a variety of mission requirements. North Carolina's Search and Rescue System is often requested and deployed intra- and interstate. When personnel from multiple agencies and jurisdictions train and deploy together, they can share equipment and staff because these resources meet the NIMS resource typing guidelines. Interoperability is vital. To be successful, organizations must have standardization across equipment, training, and expectations. Even more critical are the relationships that

enable responders to work together across jurisdictions and a focus on continuous improvement.

All-Hazards Incident Management Teams

AHIMTs play a key role in the management of—and response to—local, regional, and national emergencies, natural disasters, and public events. AHIMTs are generally multidisciplinary teams of personnel who are qualified to assume the differing response functions required depending on the type of incident.

The AHIMTA has supported AHIMTs since it was established in 2010. Working alongside the emergency management community, AHIMTA has helped develop and improve tools and opportunities for AHIMTs to foster effective and efficient disaster responses. Using NIMS and its NQS standards as the baseline, AHIMTA offers an AHIMT-specific certification program for incident management personnel; provides individual team mentorship and peer learning opportunities for AHIMTs; and fosters information sharing through its annual symposium and mid-year academy, which it conducts in partnership with FEMA's EMI.

Support for NIMS

Since the introduction of NIMS, FEMA helped communities with NIMS adoption and implementation. Today, FEMA provides guidance, implementation support, coordination, training, and web-based tools to help communities achieve their NIMS goals.

NIMS Doctrine and Guidance

In addition to the NIMS document, FEMA provides hands-on support in the form of guidelines and toolkits to assist jurisdictions and organizations with various elements and activities associated with NIMS. Readily available publications include:

- NIMS Guideline for the National Qualification System;
- NIMS Guideline for Resource Management Preparedness;
- NIMS Guideline for Mutual Aid;
- NIMS Incident Complexity Guide;
- NIMS Senior Leader Toolkit;
- NIMS Intelligence and Investigations Function Guidance;
- NIMS Information and Communications Technology Functional Guidance; and
- Specific qualifications guidance to include Job Titles/Position Qualification Sheets, PTB Templates, and EOC Skillset Templates.

NIMS in Action: Mutual Aid

Mutual aid involves sharing resources and services between jurisdictions or organizations. This assistance can include the daily dispatch of law enforcement, emergency medical services, and fire service resources between local communities, as well as the movement of resources within a state or across state lines, when larger-scale incidents occur. Through mutual aid agreements, jurisdictions can request essential assistance necessary to fill mission needs.[2]

Emergency Management Assistance Compact

The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is the first national disaster-relief compact since the Civil Defense and Disaster Compact of 1950 to be ratified by the U.S. Congress. Since ratification and signing into law in 1996 (Public Law 104-321), 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands have enacted legislation to become EMAC members.

EMAC offers assistance during Governor-declared states of emergency or disaster through a responsive, straightforward system that allows states to send personnel, equipment, and commodities to assist with response and recovery efforts in other states. Through EMAC, states can also transfer services and conduct virtual missions (such as GIS mapping). EMAC Program Director, Angela Copple, had this to say about the influence of NIMS on the EMAC system:

"In 2005, the resource requests through the EMAC system were often lacking in detail, encapsulating requests such as “Law Enforcement Personnel,” “Firefighters,” and “Ambulances” in a mere few words. We lost valuable time trying to get more information about what needed to be done so the resource coming to help matched the need.

Comparing that to how resources are requested today, you can see the significant influence of NIMS to standardize resource management by clearly identifying the type of resource that is needed, the equipment, the training requirements, and any necessary professional licenses or certifications.

The National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) has incorporated NIMS into the National Preparedness System by including resource typing and job position qualifications into Mission Ready Packages (MRP) that streamline the EMAC Request and Offer Process while facilitating a consistent language to standardize capabilities.

While difficult to precisely quantify, the standardized approach provided by NIMS has likely led to significant cost savings and increased efficiency in managing emergencies, by reducing duplication of efforts, enhancing coordination, and ensuring the right resource arrived to fulfill the need over the past 20 years.

We are all better prepared to request, offer, and respond thanks to the resource providers, states, district, and territories who have incorporated NIMS into their resource management to make EMAC faster and more efficient.”

Angela Copple

EMAC Program Director, 2005 – Present
National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)

Implementation Support

FEMA provides flexible, targeted support for jurisdictions requesting additional information or guidance to implement NIMS-related programs. The NIMS Implementation Support Team helps stakeholders meet new requirements, use NIMS-related tools, and is available to conduct site visits. The NIMS Implementation Support Team assists communities with questions around resource management; NQS; the National Resource Hub; EOC skillsets; and more.

The NIMS Implementation Support Team engages with each FEMA Region and provides tailored guidance based on feedback it receives from stakeholders. The team is equipped to organize prompt, subject-specific webinars. For direct inquiries, stakeholders can contact the NIMS Implementation Support Team through the NIMS inbox at FEMA-NIMS@fema.dhs.gov.

NIMS Regional Coordinators

Each of the 10 FEMA Regions has at least one staff member who is designated as the NIMS Regional Coordinator. FEMA's NIMS Regional Coordinators serve as subject-matter experts on NIMS for state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments, as well as for the Regional Administrators and their staff. In this role, they promote and coordinate NIMS implementation within their respective regional offices and with their SLTT partners. NIMS Regional Coordinators work as a force multiplier for FEMA by maintaining close relationships with SLTTs to understand the challenges involved in implementing NIMS and NQS and offering expertise and solutions to overcome those challenges. Activities include conducting site visits, actively engaging jurisdictions on NIMS and NQS topics, and providing assistance per jurisdiction request.

NIMS in Action: NIMS Survey and Evaluation

The NIMS Annual Survey aids the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) in assessing NIMS programs across the 254 counties and over 1,200 municipalities within the state. Survey questions seek to determine which barriers participants face as they work towards FEMA's 14 NIMS Implementation Objectives. Participants in the 2023 survey included local emergency management and emergency service departments, state agencies, regional entities, K-12 school districts, and higher education entities.

Survey objectives include:

- Identify the challenges jurisdictions/entities face when strengthening preparedness capabilities to enhance awareness of TDEM's regional field staff, Training Division, and Preparedness Division.

- Aid TDEM in determining preparedness priorities for the state, which will factor into the statewide Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP).
- Assess the extent to which the state meets FEMA's NIMS Implementation Objectives on an aggregate basis for inclusion in the annual NIMS Program Review conducted by FEMA.

Geospatial capabilities, derived from using ArcGIS Survey123 as the survey platform, supports visualization of data for specific regions or jurisdictions. It eases identification of areas underrepresented in the survey, which TDEM can increase engagement with the following year. After analyzing results from the 2023 NIMS Annual Survey, the State NIMS Coordinator developed a list of recommended actions the state may take to enhance NIMS implementation. These recommendations were incorporated into TDEM's 2024 – 2026 IPP, which aids the state in synchronizing activities across all POETE—planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise—elements with preparedness priorities. This collaboration ensures strategic action will be taken to support the continual development of NIMS programs.

Training

The effectiveness of NIMS hinges on how well incident personnel at all levels can perform their roles and fulfill their responsibilities. Training is critical to building a common understanding and ensuring that responders apply NIMS concepts across SLTT jurisdictions and partners.

The NIMS Training Program defines a national baseline to guide and promote NIMS training. It provides recommendations to assist jurisdictions in developing training plans that are tailored to their specific needs.

NIMS Training by the Numbers

ICS Online Training (IS 100, 200, 700, 800)

- Average of 1.5 million completions per year since 2013
- Estimated 22 million online ICS training course completions since 2003

ICS Classroom Training (ICS 191, 300, 400)

- Produced 8,677 student completions

EOC Curriculum Graduates

- Produced 162,586 online EOC training and 2,424 classroom training completions since 2018

Train the Trainer Courses that produced SLTT instructors

- ICS Curriculum Train the Trainer: 5,249
- ICS Position Specific Curriculum Train the Trainer: 2,423

Today, FEMA's EMI offers a host of NIMS and ICS courses, to include 18 all-hazards position-specific courses. Additionally, various organizations, including the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium and Center of Domestic Preparedness, supplement this training need by offering ICS courses. Online courses are supplemented by performance-based classes where students participate in simulations of scenario-based operational periods, receiving performance feedback throughout.

NIMS in Action: ICS Training

On February 13, 2023, Michigan State University experienced an active violence incident in which three students were killed and five students were critically injured. In a letter of support to EMI, Michigan State University's Department of Police and Public Safety shared that because of the dynamic training that EMI delivered, the university was able to respond more effectively to this incident, stating:

"The depth and breadth of experiences that these instructors were able to share allowed us to engage in additional preplanning activities. The in-person nature of the IMT courses allowed us to build relationships with other emergency management professionals in the area, which proved to be a valuable resource and source of support for us throughout the incident. These classes have definitely increased our ability to respond and recover from a critical incident that likely would have gone very differently prior to our educational training."

NIMS in Action: Law Enforcement Training

In Harris County Texas, the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office, in collaboration with the county Sheriff's Office, developed a training course that covers incident command for both every day and critical incidents that involve a multiagency response. Released in 2019, the training course, called Blue NIMS, provides guidance on law enforcement application of NIMS ICS.

The Blue NIMS course takes the fundamental principles of NIMS ICS and breaks the information down into an everyday practical application environment that is directed at "boots-on-the-ground" law enforcement. In this course, Officers learn by taking the ICS fundamentals and linking them with current practices and best practices in law enforcement and unified response operations.[20]

Guidance and Web-based Tools

FEMA manages the National Resource Hub, hosted on the preptoolkit.fema.gov site—an online portal that provides the whole community with tools to aid the implementation of the National Preparedness System. The National Resource Hub includes a suite of guidance documents and web-based tools that support a consistent approach to resource management preparedness processes. FEMA's NIMS-related tools include the Resource Typing Library Tool (RTLT), Resource Inventory System (RIS), and OneResponder. These tools are described below:

RTLT: Provides an online library of all resource typing definitions, Job Titles/Position Qualification Sheets, and PTB templates that FEMA released as a part of NIMS. Resource typing definitions and Position Qualification Sheets serve as the common language for the mobilization of resources and personnel.

RIS: Provides a solution to identify and inventory resources and personnel, consistently with NIMS resource typing definitions and Job Titles/Position Qualification Sheets. Users can inventory all their resources including equipment, personnel, teams, facilities, and supplies for day-to-day use and those available for mutual aid in larger-scale incidents.

OneResponder—Personnel Qualifications Management System: Supports organizations in managing their personnel and individual responder qualifications and training history in implementing NQS. It allows organizations to establish position requirements by issuing PTBs and provides functions to customize and track training and performance requirements to achieve capability targets.

NIMS in Action: NIMS Implementation in Tribal Communities

Recognizing the unique sets of hazard risks different tribal communities are facing, NIMS offers a flexible framework that promotes standardized emergency management practices tailored to each community's needs. NIMS principles not only improve coordination and communication between tribal organizations, but also between tribal Nations and federal, state, and local resources.

Chickasaw Nation Emergency Management and NIMS

In 2005, Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby signed an Executive Order adopting NIMS. Since then, NIMS has been incorporated into several departments throughout the Chickasaw Nation, with the Chickasaw Nation Emergency Management (CNEM) implementing it as the shared method of operation when responding to incidents or disasters.

During incidents or disasters, such as the tornado in Kingston, Oklahoma in March 2022, CNEM relies on NIMS as the unified approach for coordinating response efforts. CNEM demonstrated NIMS principles by coordinating the sharing of resources such as command posts, multifrequency radios, and AT&T FirstNet Cellular on Wheels to enhance communication among first responders.

CNEM utilizes ICS within the NIMS framework to assign tasks and manage resources. In Kingston, the command post served not only as a hub for logistical operations but also

represented the resource management component of NIMS, organizing the collection and distribution of donated items.

CNEM has collaborated with the Chickasaw Nation Information Technology (CNIT) department to integrate NIMS training courses into online training services. This gives Chickasaw Nation employees access to courses such as ICS 100, ICS 200, ICS 700, and ICS 800, allowing them to enhance their emergency response skills and readiness in alignment with NIMS guidelines.

The Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS)

In describing its recent adoption of NIMS, the ICAS—a federally recognized Regional Tribal Government that resides within the entirety of the Arctic Slope of the U.S.—shared:

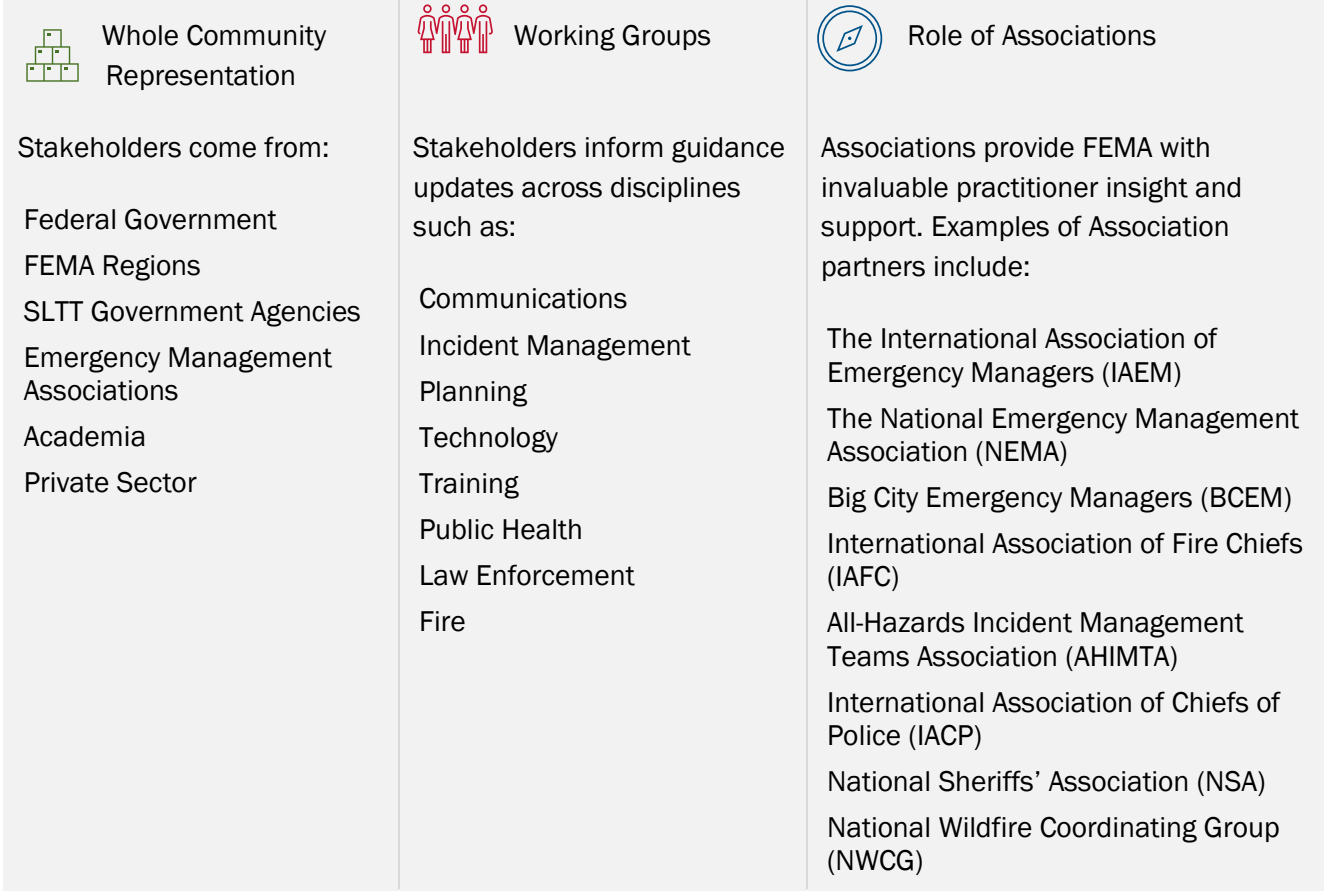
"On November 1, 2022, the ICAS adopted NIMS. With the NIMS foundation, the ICAS Department of Emergency Management has incorporated common terminology across our diverse region. This has provided a framework for coordinated response throughout the region and each community. Pre-planned traditional Inupiat events, including the Whaling Festival and Messenger Feast, have been integrated into the pre-planned events process. For incidents (disasters), we have created and developed our first Regional Tribal Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, which incorporates the principles and interface foundation of NIMS. This enables us to exercise the plan throughout our region and communities. During an ICS training as an example, our tribal and non-tribal partners contextualized ICS to our coastal communities, likening the system to how whaling is conducted. The incident commander is like the whaling captain, overseeing the crew, while the general staff interfaces with the roles of the crew members. We explained how the ICS system can enhance their operation and further elaborated on how it correlates with the Arctic slope-wide response and recovery."

Community-Informed Updates

NIMS today remains a system developed by community members who use and benefit from it the most. Community members work in collaboration with FEMA to inform updates for NIMS guidance and tools, reflecting best practices and lessons learned from the field.

Contributing community members are diverse, representing a range of disciplines, jurisdictional levels, organization types, and geographic locations across the nation. They participate in working groups that focus on emergency management topics such as Communications, Planning, Training, Technology, and more. Every NIMS product that FEMA publishes has benefited from the input and review of the emergency management community. **Figure 4** provides an overview of NIMS community members as of 2023.

Figure 4: Overview of the NIMS Community



NIMS in Action: COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

The Atlanta-Fulton County Emergency Management Agency (AFCEMA) is a joint agency responsible for emergency management in Fulton County and the City of Atlanta.[21] To support COVID-19 vaccine distribution, AFCEMA used NIMS principles and concepts to coordinate vaccine distribution and administration. In March 2021, vaccination efforts went into effect through establishing a federally funded, locally managed mass vaccination clinic at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium. AFCEMA immediately began deliberate planning to expeditiously convert the stadium into a safe and efficient mass vaccination site. The overall operation was assessed as Type 1 complexity, driven by the operational and logistical challenges, extraordinary health and safety considerations, on-site and external coordination requirements, stakeholder involvement and engagement, critical resource management, financial considerations and cost estimates, expected duration, and public interest,

notwithstanding the high demand for vaccination and sheer volume of vaccine expected to be administered—over 10,000 per day.

Federal resources—including military resources—were incorporated into the operation. Existing AFCEMA partnerships with Georgia Emergency Management Agency and Georgia Department of Health were expanded, in addition to the existing local and non-governmental partnerships. The Mercedes-Benz Stadium mass vaccination clinic was operational for roughly 12 weeks and administered over 300,000 vaccinations, including more than 14,000 in a single day. AFCEMA application of NIMS principles resulted in one of the most efficient mass vaccination clinics in the nation.

Global Reach

While NIMS was designed and is maintained for use by U.S. emergency personnel, responders in other nations have recognized the value of ICS and implemented it in their communities. Since 2002, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has supported this process and assisted other nations in adopting ICS. According to a USAID disaster management official, USAID helps to "strengthen the capacities of first response organizations and [supports] countries in their efforts to establish procedures and protocols for managing emergencies."[22]

USAID has conducted ICS training in many parts of the world including Central and South America, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Europe. Nations that adopt ICS adapt the system to their emergency systems, their culture, and their governance structures. However, the basic principles and goals of ICS remain the same—to support effective incident response and seamless interoperability with response partners.

NIMS in Action: USAID/OFDA Incident Command System—Technical Assistance Program

USAID/OFDA promotes and supports the regional adoption and implementation of ICS as a standard incident management model, as it can be used to efficiently manage small- or large-scale emergencies by integrating equipment, facilities, staff, processes, and communication under a common organizational structure and language. ICS also facilitates the command and control of personnel and resources and allows emergency agencies to coordinate responses without being limited by jurisdictional boundaries.[23]

Conclusion

As we mark the 20th anniversary of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) it's important to recognize and commend the tireless efforts by all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and the private sector that work together to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from incidents. Their dedication to implementing the NIMS to ensure a common, interoperable approach to sharing resources, coordinating, managing incidents, and communicating information has been instrumental in safeguarding our communities and enhancing nationwide emergency preparedness.

NIMS is built on over 50 years of incident management best practices. Since NIMS was introduced 20 years ago, it evolved—and continues to grow—into a comprehensive approach that addresses the ever-changing landscape of disasters and emergencies.

From its earliest days, FEMA has worked with community members to maintain and advance NIMS to ensure the system remains broadly applicable. No matter the size, complexity, or requirements of a specific incident, the emergency management community relies on NIMS to support effective and efficient response.

Over the years, many large-scale incidents required support that was beyond what a single jurisdiction could provide, and thus demonstrated the need for a national system for incident management. NIMS supports collaboration among multiple jurisdictions, disciplines, and levels of government.

Looking to the future there are several exciting possibilities for leveraging the NIMS to ensure a more secure and resilient nation:

- Enhanced Integration of Technology: As technology continues to advance, we can expect to see increased integration of cutting-edge tools and platforms within the NIMS framework. This could include advanced communication systems, real-time data analytics, and artificial intelligence for more efficient decision-making during incidents.
- Interagency Collaboration: NIMS has already facilitated improved collaboration among federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies. In the future, we can anticipate even deeper levels of cooperation, with streamlined processes for information sharing, resource allocation, and joint operations across different jurisdictions and disciplines.
- Community Engagement and Resilience: Recognizing the importance of community involvement in emergency preparedness and response, future iterations of NIMS may place a greater emphasis on engaging and empowering local communities. This could involve initiatives to enhance public education, promote volunteerism, and build community resilience to withstand and recover from disasters.
- Adaptation to Emerging Threats: As new hazards and threats emerge; NIMS will need to evolve accordingly to address these challenges. This may involve updating protocols, training programs, and resource allocation strategies to ensure readiness for a diverse range of incidents, including cybersecurity threats, pandemics, and climate-related disasters.

- International Collaboration: Given the interconnected nature of modern emergencies, there's potential for NIMS to serve as a model for international collaboration in emergency management. By sharing best practices, lessons learned, and resources with other countries, we can strengthen global resilience and response capabilities.

The future of NIMS holds promise for greater efficiency, effectiveness, and resilience in responding to all-hazards incidents; driven by innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to safeguarding lives and communities.

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