Course Introduction: IS-700.b An Introduction to the National Incident Management System

This course provides training on and resources for personnel who require a basic understanding of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The training is comprised of the following lessons:

- NIMS Introduction
- Lesson 1: Fundamentals and Concepts of NIMS
- Lesson 2: NIMS Resource Management
- Lesson 3: NIMS Management Characteristics
- Lesson 4: Incident Command System (ICS)
- Lesson 5: Emergency Operations Centers (EOC)
- Lesson 6: Other NIMS Structures and Interconnectivity
- Lesson 7: Communications and Information Management
- Lesson 8: Course Summary

Lesson 1: Fundamentals and Concepts of NIMS

We'll now begin with the content of the first lesson. This lesson presents key concepts and principles underlying NIMS.

Objectives: At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe applicability and scope of NIMS.
- Describe the key concepts and principles underlying NIMS.

What is NIMS?

Communities across the Nation face diverse threats, hazards and events that require them to coordinate efforts to save lives, stabilize the incident, and protect property and the environment.

While many incidents are managed effectively at the local level, every day jurisdictions and organizations work together to share resources, integrate tactics and act collaboratively.

Incidents that may require a collaborative approach includes personnel from:

- Multiple jurisdictions
- A combination of specialties or disciplines
- Several levels of government
- Nongovernmental organizations

- The private sector

The National Incident Management System, or NIMS, provides the foundation needed to ensure that we can work together when our communities and the Nation need us the most.

NIMS is applicable all stakeholders with incident management and support responsibilities.

NIMS provides these stakeholders across the whole community with the shared vocabulary, systems, and processes to successfully deliver the capabilities described in the National Preparedness System.

NIMS integrates best practices into a comprehensive, standardized framework that is flexible enough to be applicable across the full spectrum of potential incidents and events, regardless size, complexity or scope.

Using NIMS allows us to work together to prepare for, prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents.

This course introduces you to the NIMS concepts, principles, and components.

NIMS Overview

WHAT? The National Incident Management System (NIMS) defines the comprehensive approach guiding…

WHO? …the whole community - solutions that serve the entire community are implemented while simultaneously making sure that the resources the different members of the community bring to the table are leveraged across all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and private sector organizations to work together seamlessly

WHY? …to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the effects of incidents.

WHEN? NIMS applies to all incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, from planned events to traffic accidents and to major disasters.

HOW? NIMS provides the shared vocabulary, systems, and processes to successfully deliver the National Preparedness System capabilities.

HISTORY: NIMS builds on best practices from more than 40 years of improving interoperability in incident management. NIMS evolved from the Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIRESCOPE) system that began in the 1970s. In 1982 NIMS was developed through government collaboration with incident management practitioners, NGOs and the private sector. The first NIMS document was published by FEMA in 2004 and was revised in 2008 and 2017.

Voices of Experience: NIMS Benefits

Steve Grainer, Former Chief, Incident Management Programs, VA Dept. of Fire Programs

NIMS is a national initiative to standardize the fundamental processes that are necessary for effectively managing significant emergencies, and it's applicable in all size and scale and scope emergencies.

Having been involved at the local, State, and Federal level in a number of different venues during my career, I'm truly and honestly pleased to say that this is an opportunity for us all to better establish a baseline of competencies for not only emergencies, obviously that would be the primary focus, but also to utilize a nationally vetted process that will work given A) participation and B) commitment. So I'm all for the idea of establishing a national systems approach as is pretty much formatted through the concepts of NIMS in their entirety. It's a good thing, that's about the best I can say.

Curry Mayer, Former Training & Exercise Chief, Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CA)

NIMS is the national structure that includes roles and responsibilities for responding to an incident that would require the Federal Government to be involved, a catastrophic or large-scale incident. It's also a system that provides common terminology, roles, and responsibilities so that everyone in the country can basically plug into the national system of response.

Kristy Plourde, Emergency Management Specialist, U.S. Coast Guard

NIMS has helped us be better structured, have less duplication, be more organized and more efficient and it covers the whole gambit of organization, communications, preparedness, it's the whole, it's everything.

Roberta Runge, National NIMS Coordinator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

NIMS is a system that allows us to plan and prepare and execute a response more effectively with our response partners.

The biggest benefit to us as an agency is to be able to understand how our response partners are also going to be executing the response. EPA is a fairly large organization, but we hardly ever respond to something very large and very complicated without other Federal and State and local partners. If everyone is operating the response using different terminology or a different management structure, it becomes very difficult, very fast.

NIMS Applicability and Scope

NIMS is a common framework for emergency management and incident response that is applicable to all stakeholders with incident related responsibilities.

The audience for NIMS includes:

- Emergency responders
- Other incident personnel
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as faith-based and community-based groups
- The private sector
- Elected and appointed officials
- People with disabilities or access and functional needs

The scope of NIMS includes:

- All incidents, regardless of size, complexity, or scope
- Planned events such as sporting events

Overview of NIMS

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) defines the comprehensive approach guiding the whole community - all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and the private sector - to work together seamlessly to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the effects of incidents. *See table below.*

NIMS Is	NIMS Is Not
• A comprehensive, nationwide, systematic approach to incident management, including the command and coordination of incidents, resource management, and information management	• Only the Incident Command System • Only applicable to certain emergency/ir response personnel • A static system
• A set of concepts and principles for all threats, hazards, and events across all mission areas (Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, Recovery)	• A response plan
• Scalable, flexible, and adaptable; used for all incidents, from day-to-day to large-scale	• Used only during large-scale incidents
• Standard resource management procedures that enable coordination among different jurisdictions or organizations	• A resource ordering system
• Essential principles for communications and information management	• A communications plan

NIMS Guiding Principles

Incident management is the application of resources by organizations to plan for, respond to, and recover from an incident.

Priorities for incident management in planning, response, and recovery efforts include saving lives, stabilizing the incident, and protecting property and the environment.

To achieve these priorities, incident management personnel use NIMS components in accordance with three NIMS guiding principles:

- Flexibility
- Standardization
- Unity of Effort

Flexibility

The NIMS guiding principle of flexibility allows NIMS to be scalable from routine, local incidents through those requiring interstate mutual aid up to those requiring Federal assistance.

Flexibility enables NIMS to be applicable to incidents that vary widely in terms of hazard, geography, demographics, climate, cultural, and organizational authorities.

NIMS components are adaptable to any type of event or incident.

Standardization

The NIMS guiding principle of standardization supports interoperability among multiple organizations in incident response.

NIMS defines **standard organizational structures** that improve integration and connectivity among organizations.

NIMS defines **standard practices** that allow incident personnel and organizations to work together effectively.

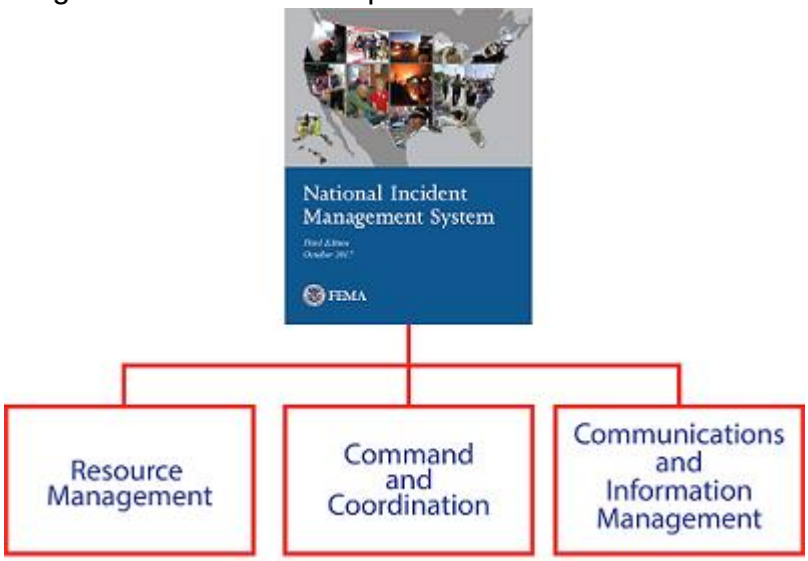
NIMS includes **common terminology**, which enables effective communication.

Unity of Effort

The NIMS guiding principle of Unity of Effort means coordinating activities among various organizational representatives to achieve common objectives. Unity of effort enables organizations with jurisdictional authority or functional responsibilities to support each other while allowing each participating agency to maintain its own authority and accountability.

NIMS Framework - Major Components

Jurisdictions and organizations involved in the management of incidents vary in their authorities, management structures, communication capabilities and protocols, and many other factors. The major Components of NIMS provide a common framework to integrate these diverse capabilities and achieve common goals.



Resource Management

Resource Management describes standard mechanisms to systematically manage resources, including personnel, equipment, supplies, teams, and facilities, both before and during incidents in order to allow organizations to more effectively share resources when needed.

Command and Coordination

Command and Coordination describes leadership roles, processes, and recommended organizational structures for incident management at the operational and incident support levels and explains how these structures interact to manage incidents effectively and efficiently.

Communications and Information Management

Communications and Information Management describes systems and methods that help to ensure that incident personnel and other decision makers have the means and information they need to make and communicate decisions.

Lesson 1: Fundamentals and Concepts of NIMS Summary

This lesson presented an overview of the Fundamentals and Concepts of NIMS.

The lesson specifically discussed:

- An Introduction and Background to NIMS
- NIMS Applicability and Scope
- NIMS Guiding Principles
- An Overview of the NIMS components

The next lesson will introduce you to NIMS Resource Management.

Lesson 2: NIMS Resource Management

This lesson presents an overview of NIMS Resource Management.

Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe the four key activities of NIMS Resource Management Preparedness.
- Identify the methods for Managing Resources during an Incident.
- Describe features of Mutual Aid.

(National Incident Management System, Third Edition, October 2017)

What Is NIMS Resource Management?

During an incident, getting the right resources, to the right place, at the right time, can be a matter of life and death.

Resource management involves collaboration and coordination across jurisdictions and organizations to systematically manage resources—including personnel, equipment, teams, supplies and facilities.

Since most jurisdictions or organizations cannot own and maintain all of the resources necessary to address all potential threats and hazards, effective resource management includes leveraging each jurisdiction's resources and encouraging the further development of mutual aid agreements.

Resource management preparedness involves four key activities: identifying and typing resources; qualifying, certifying, and credentialing personnel; planning for resources; and acquiring, storing, and inventorying resources.

Prior to an incident, resources are inventoried and categorized based on the characteristics of capability, category, kind and type.

Mutual aid partners exchange information about resource assets and needs. Resource readiness and credentialing are maintained through periodic training and exercises.

When an incident occurs, standardized procedures are used to:

- Identify resource requirements,
- Order and acquire resources, and
- Mobilize resources.

The purpose of tracking and reporting is accountability. Resource accountability helps ensure responder safety and effective use of incident resources. As incident objectives are reached, resources may no longer be necessary. At this point, the demobilization process begins.

Demobilization is the orderly, safe, and efficient return of an incident resource to its original location and status. Finally, reimbursement and restocking activities ensure that resource providers are paid for their expenses and resources that have been depleted are replenished.

When disaster strikes, we must be able to take full advantage of all available and qualified resources. In this lesson you will learn how NIMS provides the mechanisms for ensuring that we can be inclusive and integrate resources from all levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations.

Resource Management Key Activities Overview

Resource management preparedness involves four key activities:

- Identifying and typing resources
- Qualifying, certifying, and credentialing personnel
- Planning for resources
- Acquiring, storing, and inventorying resources

Qualifying, Certifying and Credentialing Personnel

The Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) has the authority and responsibility for qualification, certification, and credentialing within its organization or jurisdiction.

The establishment of national standards provide common, compatible structures for the qualification and certification of emergency management personnel.

Qualification, certification, and credentialing are the essential steps to help ensure that personnel deploying under mutual aid agreements can perform their assigned roles.

- **Qualifying:** Personnel meet the minimum established standards (including training, experience, physical and medical fitness) to fill specific positions.
- **Certification:** recognition from an Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) or a third party that an individual has completed qualification for a position (one example of a third party is an accredited body such as a state licensure board for medical professionals).
- **Credentialing**: documentation – typically an identification card or badge – that identifies personnel and verifies their qualifications for a particular position.

NIMS Overview of Supporting Tools and Aids

NIMS Guidelines for Credentialing Personnel (PDF)

Planning for Resources

Coordinated planning provides a foundation for interoperability and compatibility of resources.

Jurisdictions and organizations work together before incidents to develop plans that identify, manage, estimate, allocate, order, deploy and demobilize resources.

The planning process includes identifying resource requirements to meet anticipated threats and vulnerabilities.

Resource management planning should consider resources needed to support all mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response and Recovery.

Resource management strategies for planners to consider include:

- Stockpiling resources
- Establishing mutual aid agreements to obtain resources from neighboring jurisdictions
- Determining how and where to reassign resources performing non-essential tasks

- Developing contracts to acquire resources from vendors

Estimating resource needs is a key activity in resource planning that enables jurisdictions to assess their ability to take a course of action.

Acquiring, Storing and Inventorying Resources

Organizations acquire, store, and inventory resources for both normal operations and incidents.

Effective resource management requires a current, accurate resource inventory to track resource status and availability.

This inventory can be as simple as a paper spreadsheet or as advanced as computer-based inventory systems.

Accurate resource inventories:

- Enable organizations to resource incidents promptly when needed
- Support day-to-day resource management

In NIMS, resource inventorying refers to preparedness activities conducted outside of incident response; resource tracking occurs during an incident.

Voices of Experience: Resource Management Words of Advice

How resource management works for a specific response capability:

Kristy Plourde, Emergency Management Specialist, U.S. Coast Guard

With standardized resource management of type and kind you know, when I order a type 2 law enforcement vessel and I've standardized that vessel, I know what capability I'm getting and because I've standardized it before the incident, I know exactly what I am getting and it is, it is very cool.

Daryl Lee Spiewak, Former Emergency Programs Manager, Brazos River Authority, TX

Resource management is certainly important. We know each jurisdiction is going to have to have some resources available but they're never going to have enough, there is always going to be shortfalls, and part of resource management is to manage those gaps in the availability of the resources. So, resource management under NIMS gives us a structure and a process to be able to do that. Part of it was the resource typing, so it streamlines the requesting of equipment, particularly among different jurisdictions

and agencies. If I ask for a particular type of vehicle with certain equipment and with the right number of people, then I only need to make one request and I'll get all of that. If there is something else, I ask for a different type of equipment. So the typing is going to help us tremendously under resource management. It also requires that we do inventories. Inventories let us know what equipment we have on hand. We compare that to what we think we're going to need based on our planning and our exercising, we identified some of the gaps, and then we start looking for ways of filling those shortfalls. Mutual aid is one of those activities under resource management that is important in helping us use resources across levels, among different agencies, helps the taxpayers, helps the responders, helps the whole Nation.

Ron Britton, Former NIMS Coordinator, FEMA, Region 10

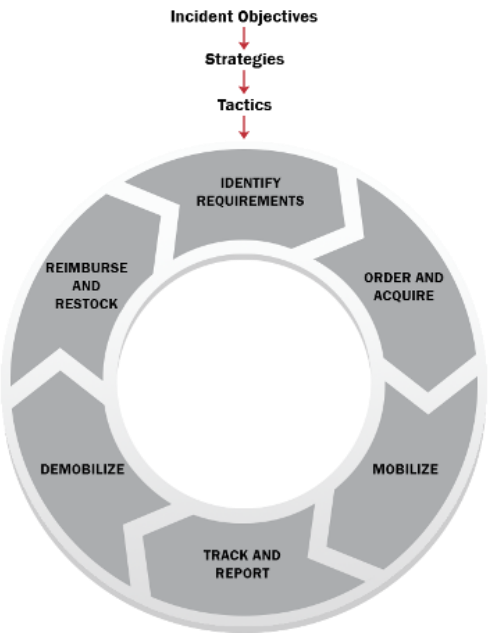
Resource management is much bigger than just identifying and moving vehicles or planes or so forth, that really, really involves the entire credentialing process of knowing all of our personnel resources capabilities and training background and so forth, that all needs to be done in a prior preparation event, so that we really know that when those folks arrive on scene, they're capable of doing the job we're asking them to do. So it starts with those folks, their credentialing, their qualifications, and then as well knowing the types of equipment that we would need to have on scene. So the equipment and the things that need to be there, and that would go under the communications as well because resource typing would involve the radios, the satellite phones, and all of the kinds of support communications that we would need for something to respond. So resource management is huge, and it really has to be done prior to the event.

Resource Management During an Incident Overview

The graphic below, depicts the resource management process during an incident; this process describes the six resource management tasks performed in an incident.

The resource management process includes methods to identify, order, mobilize, track, demobilize, and reimburse and restock resources during an incident.

While in a small incident the Incident Commander may order resources directly, in more complex incidents the Incident Commander relies on the resource management process and personnel to identify and meet resource needs.

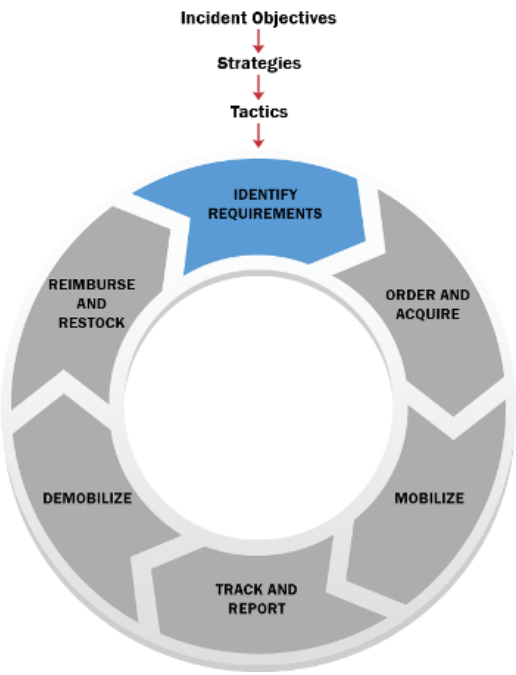


Identify Requirements

During an incident, personnel continually identify, validate, and refine resource needs. The process involves identifying:

- Type and quantity of resources needed
- Location where resources should be sent
- Who will receive and use the resources

Because the type and quantity of resources required and their availability changes as an incident progresses, incident management personnel and organizations should identify and coordinate resources as closely and as early as possible, both in advance of and during incidents. *See graphic below.*



Order & Acquire

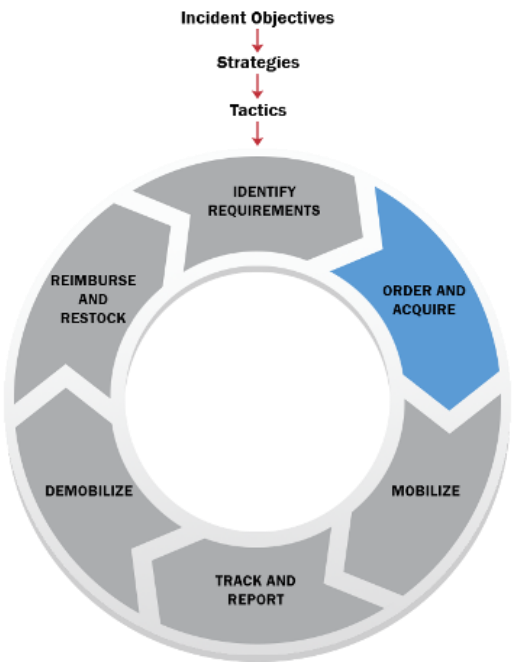
Both incident command and emergency operations center staffs make initial and ongoing assessments of resource requirements based on incident priorities and objectives.

If identified resource requirements are available locally they will be activated or ordered.

Resources that are not available locally can be ordered by executing contracts, implementing mutual aid agreements, or requesting assistance from another level of government (local government to a State, State to the Federal Government).

An external jurisdiction or organization that is requested to provide resources must consent to the request.

NIMS resource typing (discussed previously) is designed for use when ordering resources to ensure the resource provided meets the mission needs. A jurisdiction can use these resource type definitions to clearly define their resource requirements. *See graphic below.*



Mobilize

Personnel and other resources begin mobilizing when notified through established channels.

Upon notification, deploying personnel receive information to include:

- Date, time, and place of departure
- Mode of transportation to the incident
- Estimated date and time of arrival
- Reporting location and assigned supervisor
- Anticipated incident assignment
- Anticipated duration of deployment
- Resource order number
- Incident number
- Applicable cost and funding codes

Resource tracking directly links to the mobilization process.

Resources arriving on scene check in according to the receiving organization's check-in process.

The mobilization of fixed facility resources is referred to as activation rather than deployment.

Mobilize

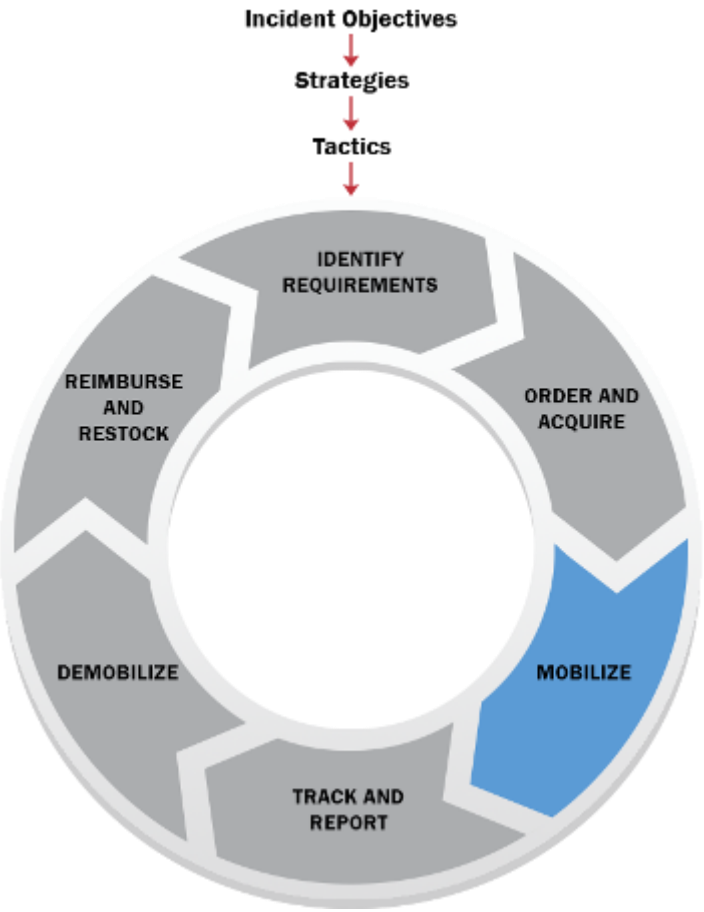
Unrequested Resources

During incidents responders sometimes arrive at the incident site without being requested.

This can interfere with incident management by:

- Creating additional supervisory, logistical and safety needs
- Depleting available resources
- Complicating resource tracking and accountability
- Interfering with access to the site by formally requested resources

Responders should wait for official deployment notification rather than self-deploying to an incident.



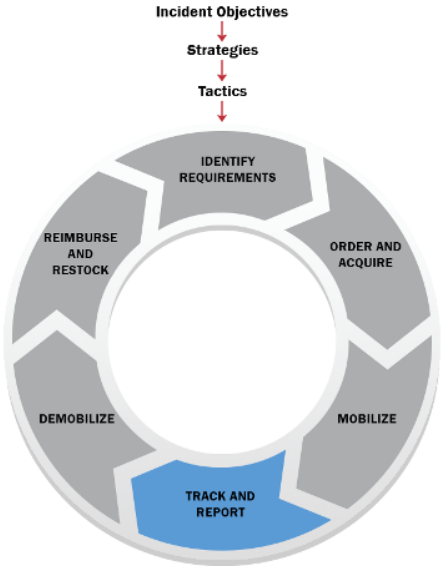
Track and Report

Incident personnel track resources from mobilization through demobilization using established resource tracking procedures.

This process:

- Tracks the location of resources
- Helps staff prepare to receive and use resources
- Protects the safety and security of personnel, equipment, teams and facilities
- Enables resource coordination and movement

Information management systems can aid in collecting, updating, and processing resource-related data and in real-time tracking of resources.



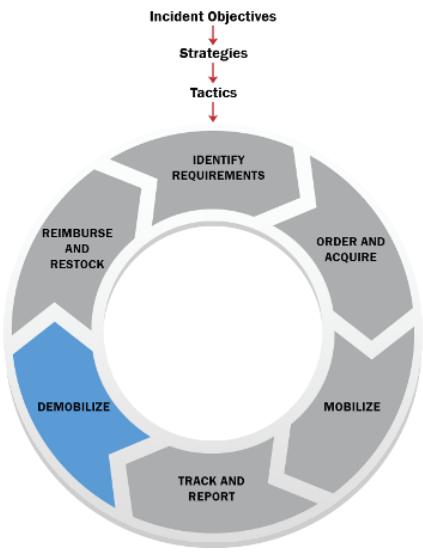
Demobilize

Managers begin planning and preparation for the demobilization process at the same time they begin mobilizing resources.

Those responsible for resources in an incident should either reassign or demobilize resources as soon as they are no longer needed.

Prior to demobilization, incident planning and logistics personnel plan for rehabilitation, replenishment, disposal of, and/ or return or restoration to operational condition for incident resources.

The goal of demobilization is the orderly, safe, and efficient return of a resource to its original location and status.



Reimburse and Restock

Reimbursement provides for payment of expenses incurred by resource providers.

Reimbursement processes:

- Establish and maintain the readiness of resources
- Collect bills and validate costs
- Ensure that resource providers are paid in a timely manner
- Restock through replacement or repair of damaged equipment

Reimbursement procedures are often specified in mutual aid and assistance agreements.

Mutual Aid Overview

Mutual aid is the sharing of resources and services between jurisdictions or organizations.

Mutual aid occurs routinely and is based on the resource needs identified by the requesting organization.

This assistance can range from routine dispatch of resources between local communities up to movement of resources across state lines for large-scale incidents.

Voices of Experience: Mutual Aid Agreements and Assistance Agreements

Read below to learn about each person's perspectives on Mutual Aid Agreements and Assistance Agreements.

Bill Bullock, Retired Battalion Chief, Fairfax County Fire Department, VA

Traditionally we've always considered mutual aid between fire departments, EMS agencies, or law enforcement agencies. In today's world it is expanded to virtually every emergency function identified in either the national, State, or local response plan. It includes communications assets, public health assets. Some cases may include military affairs, may include animal refuge, may include search and rescue assets, and a host of others.

Leon Shaifer, Senior EMAC Advisor, National Emergency Management Association

NIMS has proposed a number of solutions that could be applied very readily to mutual aid. One of the problems with mutual aid in the past has been a common terminology, a common nomenclature, speaking the same language. One term to one particular level of government doesn't necessarily mean the same thing to another, and NIMS addresses those particular types of issues. We all try to speak in a common language, plain English. The other real benefit that NIMS can bring is resource typing. We all know that when you need something that is not readily available within your jurisdiction, you need it fast. It speeds up the process when a person that has an asset can understand very quickly what you are asking for, and if those resources are typed, the benefit to one of the NIMS requirements is that a person requesting something and asks for it knows what they are going to get when they follow a typing scheme.

Bill Metcalf, Former Fire Chief, North County Fire Protection District, CA

At its simplest level, mutual aid is neighbor helping neighbor. It is adjoining fire departments sharing resources to suppress a fire that's bigger than one agency can handle. It's adjoining water companies helping each other replace a broken pipeline in an emergency because they don't have sufficient manpower or equipment to do it. It's anytime that neighboring agencies leave their jurisdictions to help each other.

Mutual Aid Agreements and Compacts

Mutual aid agreements establish the legal basis for two or more entities to share resources.

Various forms of mutual aid agreements and compacts exist among and between all levels of government in the United States.

These agreements may authorize mutual aid:

- Between two or more neighboring communities
- Among all jurisdictions within an state
- Between States, Territories and Tribal Governments
- Between Federal agencies
- Internationally
- Between government and NGOs and/or the private sector
- Among NGOs and/or private sector entities

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)

EMAC is a congressionally ratified mutual aid compact that defines a non-Federal, state-to-state system for sharing resources across state lines during an emergency or disaster. Signatories include all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. EMAC enables the movement of a wide variety of resources to meet the needs of impacted jurisdictions.

Mutual Aid Process

Upon receipt of a mutual aid request, the supporting jurisdiction evaluates the request against its capacity.

The supporting jurisdiction determines if it is able to meet its own requirements during the temporary loss of the resource(s).

If the providing jurisdiction determines it can accommodate the deployment of resources, it will identify and arrange the deployment of these resources in accordance with the mutual aid agreement.

The receiving jurisdiction can decline resources if they do not meet its needs.

Lesson 2: NIMS Resource Management Summary

This lesson presented an overview of NIMS Resource Management.

The lesson specifically discussed:

- Resource Management Preparedness
- Resource Management During an Incident
- Mutual Aid

The next lesson will introduce you to NIMS Management Characteristics.

Lesson 3: NIMS Management Characteristics

This lesson presents an overview of the NIMS Management Characteristics.

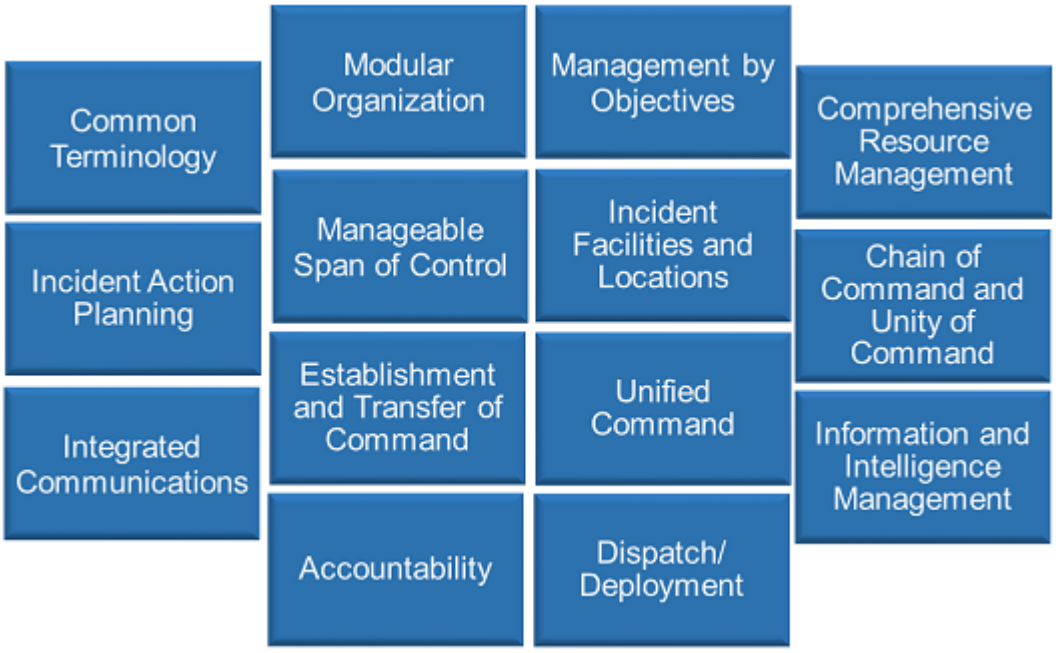
Objective:

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Differentiate among the fourteen NIMS Management Characteristics

NIMS Management Characteristics

NIMS bases incident command and coordination on fourteen NIMS Management Characteristics. These fourteen characteristics are building blocks that contribute strength and efficiency to the National Incident Management System.



NIMS Management Characteristic: Common Terminology

NIMS establishes common terminology that allows different organizations to work together in a wide variety of emergency functions and hazard scenarios.

Common terminology helps by reducing confusion and enhancing interoperability.

This common terminology covers:

- **Organizational Functions**: Major functions and units are named and defined using standardized terms
- **Resource Descriptions**: Resources (personnel, equipment, teams and facilities) have common naming based on their type and capabilities
- **Incident Facilities**: Facilities in an incident area are designated using common terms

NIMS Management Characteristic: Modular Organization

Organizational structures for incident management (ICS and EOCs) are modular, meaning that they are each building blocks that are put in place as needed based on an incident's size, complexity and hazards.

The ICS Commander and EOC director are responsible for the establishment and expansion of the modular organization based on the specific requirements for their incident.

As incident complexity increases, the organizational structure expands and management responsibilities are further divided.

The number of management, supervisory, and support positions expand as needed to meet the needs of the incident.

NIMS Management Characteristic: Management by Objectives

In an incident, all activities are directed to accomplish defined objectives. This is called Management by Objectives.

Under ICS the Incident Commander (or Unified Command) establishes incident objectives.

Management by objectives includes:

- Establishing specific, measurable objectives
- Identifying strategies, tactics, tasks, and activities to achieve the objectives
- Developing and issuing assignments, plans, procedures and protocols to accomplish tasks
- Documenting results against objectives to measure performance, facilitate corrective actions, and inform development of objectives for the next operational period

NIMS Management Characteristic: Incident Action Planning

Incident action planning guides incident management activities.

Incident Action Plans:

- Record and communicate incident objectives, tactics, and assignments for operations and support
- Are recommended for all incidents
- Are not always written, but a written IAP is increasingly important when an incident or activation:
  - Is likely to extend beyond one operational period
  - Becomes more complex
  - Involves multiple jurisdictions or agencies

NIMS Management Characteristic: Manageable Span of Control

Span of control refers to the number of subordinates that directly report to a supervisor.

Maintaining an appropriate span of control ensures effective incident management by enabling supervisors to:

- Direct and supervise subordinates
- Communicate with and manage resources

The optimal span of control for incident management is one supervisor to five subordinates; however, the 1:5 ratio is only a guideline and effective incident management often calls for different ratios.

When a supervisor's span of control becomes unmanageable, they can assign subordinate supervisors or redistribute subordinates to manage portions of the organization in order to regain a manageable span of control.

Span of control can change based on:

- Type of incident
- Nature of the task
- Existing hazards and safety factors
- Distances between personnel and resources

NIMS Management Characteristic: Incident Facilities and Locations

The Incident Commander, Unified Command or EOC director establishes incident support facilities for specific purposes.

These facilities are identified and located based on the requirements of the situation.

Incident size and complexity will influence the designation of facilities and locations.

Typical designated facilities include:

- Incident Command Post (ICP)
- Incident base
- Staging Areas
- Camps
- Mass casualty triage areas
- Points-of-distribution
- Emergency shelters

NIMS Management Characteristic: Comprehensive Resource Management

Maintaining accurate and up-to-date resource inventories and resource tracking are essential components of incident management.

Resources include personnel, equipment, teams, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment or allocation.

NIMS Management Characteristic: Integrated Communications

Integrated communications allow units from diverse agencies to connect, share information and achieve situational awareness.

Incident managers facilitate communications through the development and use of:

- A common communication plan
- Interoperable communications processes and systems
- Systems that include both voice and data links

Integrated Communications Planning occurs both before and during an incident to provide equipment, systems, and protocols needed to achieve integrated voice and data communications.

NIMS Management Characteristic: Establishment and Transfer of Command

When an incident is anticipated or occurs the organization with primary responsibility for the incident establishes command by designating the Incident Commander (IC) or Unified Command (UC). Command may need to be transferred to a different IC/UC one or more times over the course of a long duration or increasingly complex incident.

The current command determines the protocol for transferring command. This transfer process should always include a briefing for the incoming IC/UC on all essential information for continuing safe and effective operations. The transfer of command should also be communicated to all incident personnel.

NIMS Management Characteristic: Unified Command

In some incidents the Incident Command function is performed by a Unified Command (UC).

UC is typically used for incidents involving:

- Multiple jurisdictions
- A single jurisdiction with multiagency involvement
- Multiple jurisdictions with multiagency involvement

UC allows agencies with different authorities and responsibilities to work together effectively without affecting individual agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.

NIMS Management Characteristic: Chain of Command and Unity of Command

Chain of command refers to the orderly command hierarchy within an incident management organization.

Unity of command means that each individual reports to only one designated supervisor.

These principles:

- Clarify reporting relationships
- Eliminate confusion caused by conflicting instructions
- Enable incident managers at all levels to direct the actions of all personnel under their supervision

NIMS Management Characteristic: Accountability

Accountability for all resources during an incident is essential.

Incident management personnel should adhere to principles of accountability, including:

- Check-in/checkout
- Incident action planning
- Unity of command
- Personal responsibility
- Span of control
- Resource tracking

NIMS Management Characteristic: Dispatch/Deployment

Resources should deploy only when requested and dispatched through established procedures by appropriate authorities.

Resources that authorities do not request should not deploy spontaneously - unrequested resources can overburden the IC/UC and increase accountability challenges.

NIMS Management Characteristic: Information and Intelligence Management

Incident-related information and intelligence is managed by the incident management organization through established processes for:

- Gathering
- Analyzing
- Assessing
- Sharing
- Managing

Information and intelligence management includes identifying essential elements of information (EEI). EEI ensures incident personnel gather the most accurate and appropriate data, translate it into useful information, and communicate it with appropriate personnel.

Lesson 3: NIMS Management Characteristics Summary

This lesson presented an overview of NIMS Management Characteristics. The lesson specifically discussed:

- Common Terminology
- Modular Organization
- Management by Objectives
- Incident Action Planning
- Manageable Span of Control
- Incident Facilities and Locations
- Comprehensive Resource Management
- Integrated Communications
- Establishment and Transfer of Command
- Unified Command
- Chain of Command and Unity of Command
- Accountability
- Dispatch/ Deployment
- Information and Intelligence Management

The next lesson will introduce you to the Incident Command System.

Lesson 4: Incident Command System (ICS)

This lesson presents an overview of the Incident Command System (ICS).

Objective:

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe the Incident Command System (ICS) Organizational Structure

What Is NIMS Command and Coordination?

This lesson is about the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS is one of the four NIMS structures. Before we explore ICS, let's briefly look at all four NIMS structures.

“NIMS is a system to provide a framework for all of the team to work together towards common goals.” Craig Fugate, former FEMA Administrator (and past Director, FL Division of Emergency Management).

What is NIMS Command and Coordination?

There are three major components of the NIMS framework:

- Resource Management
- Command and Coordination
- Communications and Information Management

Together these NIMS components provide a framework for effective management during incident response.

You have already explored Resource Management and the 14 NIMS Management Characteristics. Next, we'll cover the NIMS structures that enable incident managers to manage and coordinate incident response in a unified, consistent manner.

The four NIMS Structures are: the Incident Command System, Emergency Operations Centers, the Multi-Agency Coordination Group, and the Joint Information System. Together, these four elements comprise the NIMS Command and Coordination structures.

Multiagency Coordination Systems, or MACS, is an overarching term for the four NIMS Command and Coordination systems: ICS, EOCs, MAC Group and JIS.

The Incident Command System, or ICS, is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management concept. ICS allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demands of incidents.

As an incident becomes more complex, multiagency coordination and the need for additional resources becomes increasingly important. Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) support on-scene incident command from off-site through multiagency coordination and resources.

MAC Groups are high level multiagency coordination bodies that support ICS and EOCs through policy and scarce resource allocation.

The final Command and Coordination element is the Joint Information System (JIS). The Joint Information System ensures coordinated and accurate public messaging among the ICS, EOCs and MAC Group.

NIMS is summed up by former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate: [". . .when we fail to work as a team, we fail our citizens … NIMS is a system to provide a framework for all of the team to work together towards common goals."]

NIMS Command and Coordination Structures

NIMS structures enable incident managers to manage incidents in a unified, consistent manner.

When an incident occurs or threatens, local emergency personnel manage response using **ICS**.

If the incident is large or complex, off-site **EOCs** activate to support on-scene operations.

The incident personnel in the field and in EOCs receive policy guidance from **MAC Groups**.

A Joint Information Center manages the Joint Information System **(JIS)** to ensure coordinated and accurate public messaging among all levels: ICS, EOC and MAC Group.

The first NIMS structure we will examine is ICS.

Voices of Experience: Incident Command System

Read below to learn about each person's perspectives on NIMS Incident Command System.

George Nuñez, Emergency Management, George Washington University

ICS is a system to allow responders to be able to organize and respond to an incident. It is specifically useful during on-scene response. It is a format, a system of tools that

allow police, fire, and other personnel to respond to that incident in a systematic way to facilitate the response but also meet the needs of those impacted.

Kristy Plourde, Emergency Management Specialist, U.S. Coast Guard

You use NIMS and ICS and you organize yourself around this structure. It's got the common language, its common command structure. You work out who is in the Unified Command, you know, and you work this all out, and so that's what they did, and it was, you know, it's not perfect because we're not there yet, we're getting there with how we organize ourselves, but the key is, is that: is it better than when we did it before? And that's the bottom-line answer of that is that NIMS has helped us be better structured, have less duplication, be more organized and more efficient.

Steve Grainer, Former Chief, Incident Management Programs, VA Dept. of Fire Programs

The basic functional elements of ICS are the way everything is managed. What ICS has done has provided a template, a flexible yet standardized template that is available on a moment's notice and is constructed in such a manner that you just basically open the book or pull the template off the shelf and identify which component parts of command or management, if you will, are needed at any moment in time. It just provides you a fill-in-the-blanks format for what is necessary, and the good thing about it is you use what you need and you don't use what you don't need.

ICS Introduction

The Incident Command System (ICS) provides:

- A standardized approach to the command, control, and coordination of on-scene emergency management
- A common structure within which personnel from different organizations can work together
- A structure for incident management that integrates and coordinates procedures, personnel, equipment, facilities, and communications

ICS is used by all levels of government and many NGOs and private sector organizations.

This system includes five major functional areas: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.

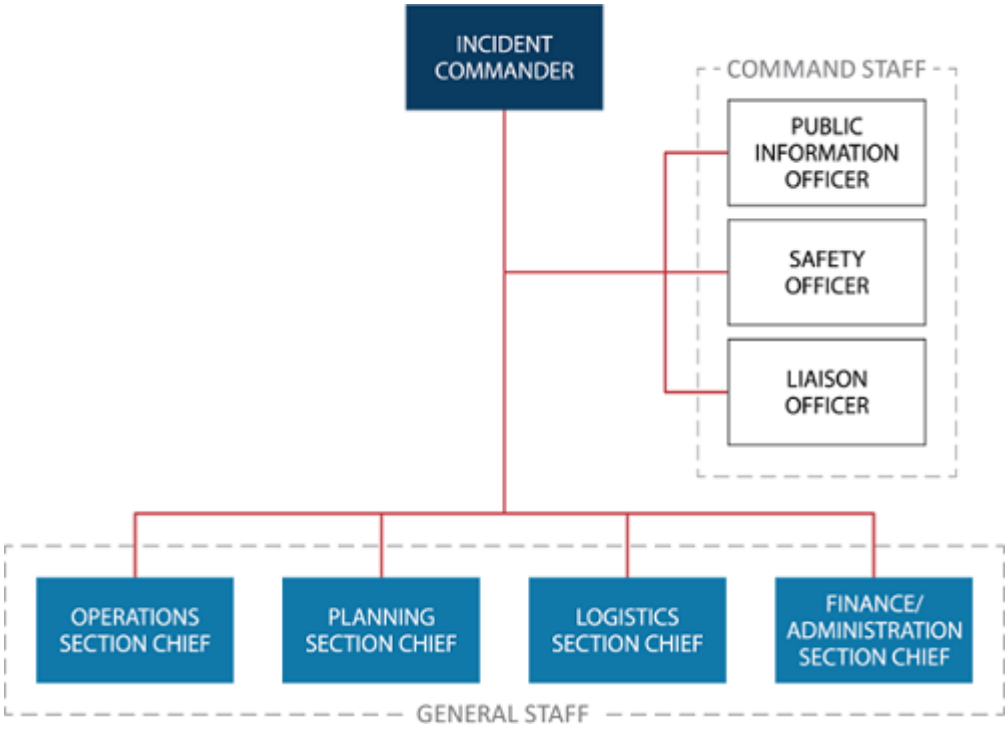
Incident Command Concept

The ICS term Incident Command refers to the person or group responsible for overall on-scene management of an incident.

There are two general forms of the incident command function:

- A single Incident Commander
- A Unified Command

Command and General Staff support the incident command in management of the incident.



Incident Commander

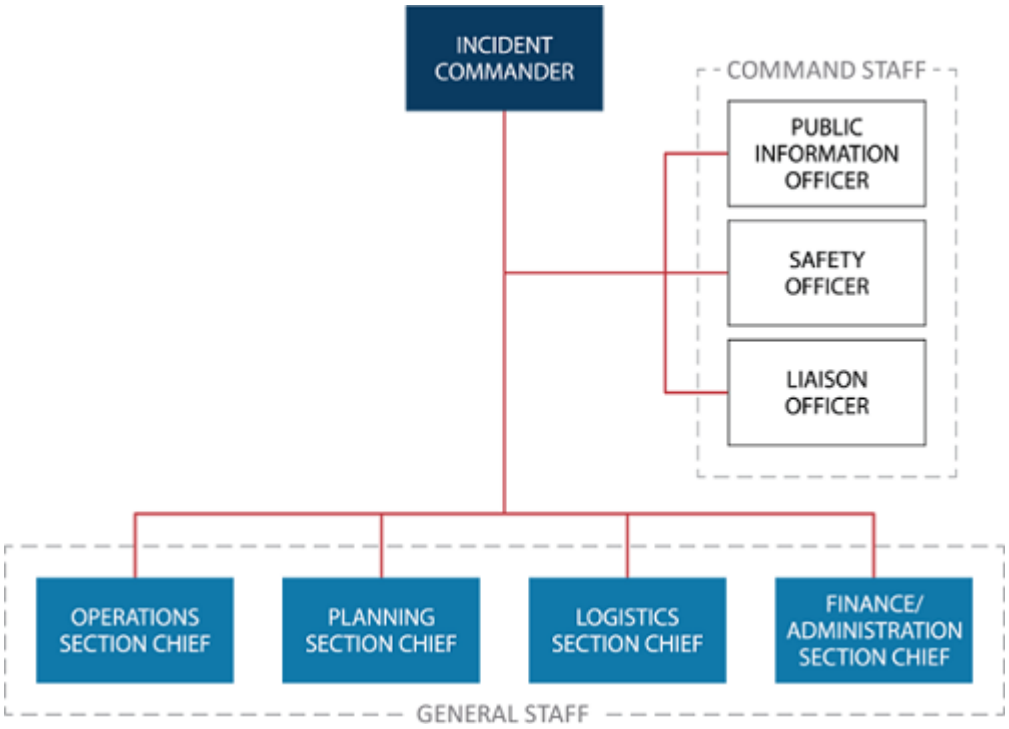
When an incident occurs within a single jurisdiction and there is no overlapping responsibility, the appropriate authority designates a single Incident Commander who has overall incident management responsibility.

When incident management crosses jurisdictional and/or functional agency boundaries, the various jurisdictions and organizations may still agree to designate a single Incident Commander.

The Incident Commander establishes the incident objectives that guide incident action planning and operations.

When there is a single Incident Commander, he or she is solely responsible (within limits of authority) for:

- Establishing incident objectives
- Ensuring that incident activities work to accomplish objectives



Unified Command

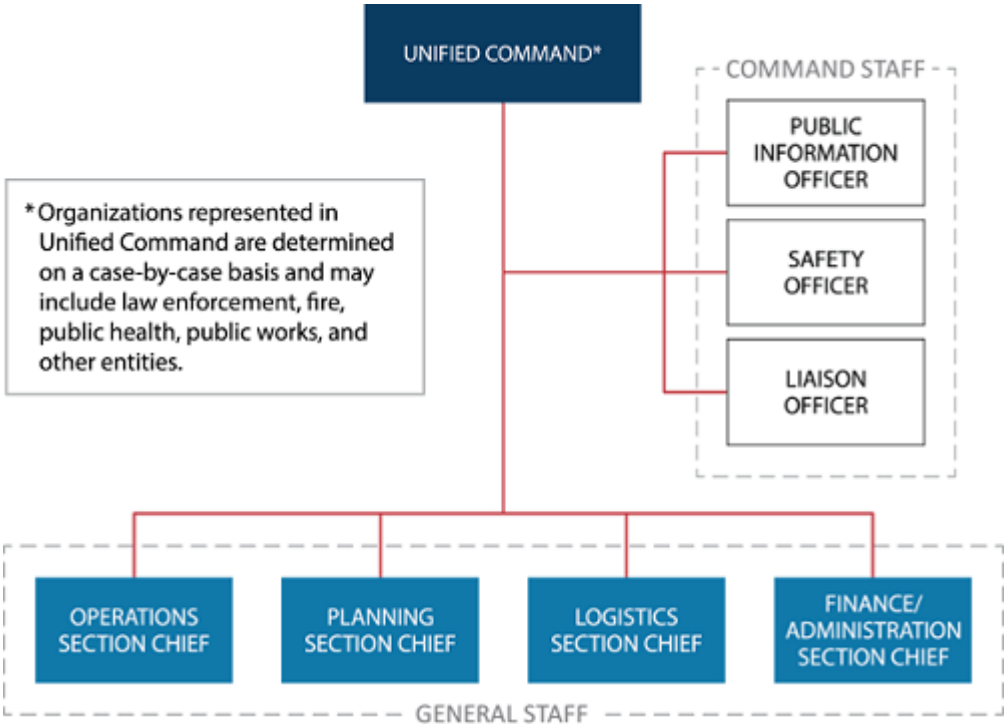
Unified Command is used for improved unity of effort in multijurisdictional or multiagency incident management.

Unified Command enables different jurisdictions and organizations to jointly manage and direct incident activities through a common set of incident objectives, strategies and a single incident action plan.

Each partner in the Unified Command maintains authority, responsibility and accountability for its own personnel and other resources, but the members of the Unified Command work together to:

- Determine objectives, priorities and strategic guidance
- Establish a single system for ordering resources
- Execute integrated incident operations
- Maximize the use of assigned resources

Because requirements vary based on the location and type of incident, the composition of the Unified Command structure adapts to fit the specific incident.



Command Staff

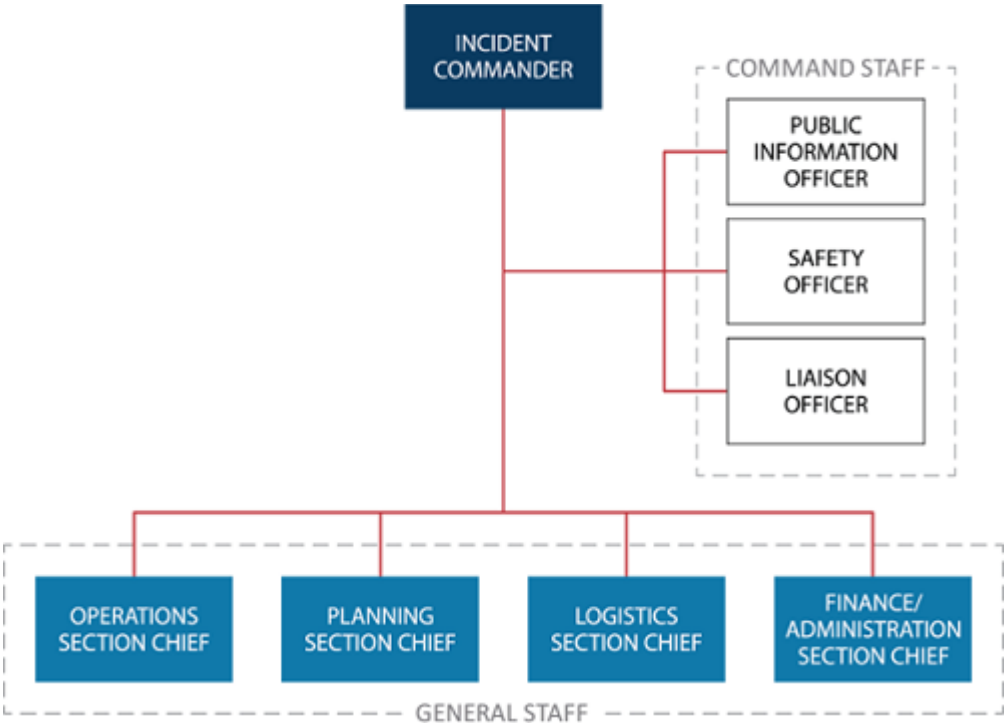
The Command Staff are incident management personnel that the Incident Commander or Unified Command assign to directly support the command function.

Command Staff positions are established by the Incident Commander or Unified Command as needed to support the management of an incident.

Command staff report directly to the Incident Commander or Unified Command and are assigned assistants as necessary to perform their duties.

The ICS Command Staff typically includes:

- The **Public Information Officer (PIO)** who interfaces with the public, media, and others needing incident information
- The **Safety Officer** who monitors incident operations and advises the Incident Commander or Unified Command on matters relating to health and safety
- The **Liaison Officer** who serves as the incident command's point of contact for organizations not included in the Incident Command or Unified Command



Click on a **Command Staff** *position to access a more detailed description.*

Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer is responsible for interfacing with the public and media and/or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements. The Public Information Officer gathers, verifies, coordinates, and disseminates accurate, accessible, and timely information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest for both internal and external audiences. The Public Information Officer may also perform a key public information-monitoring role. Whether the command structure is single or unified, only one Public Information Officer should be designated per incident. Assistants may be assigned from other involved agencies, departments, or organizations. The Incident Commander/Unified Command must approve the release of all incident-related information. In large-scale incidents or where multiple command posts are established, the Public Information Officer should participate in or lead the Joint Information Center in order to ensure consistency in the provision of information to the public.

Safety Officer

The Safety Officer monitors incident operations and advises the Incident Commander/Unified Command on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel. The ultimate responsibility for the safe conduct of incident management operations rests with the Incident Commander/Unified Command and supervisors at all levels of incident management. The Safety Officer is, in turn, responsible to the Incident Commander/Unified

Command for the systems and procedures necessary to ensure ongoing assessment of hazardous environments, including the incident Safety Plan, coordination of multiagency safety efforts, and implementation of measures to promote emergency responder safety, as well as the general safety of incident operations. The Safety Officer has immediate authority to stop and/or prevent unsafe acts during incident operations. It is important to note that the agencies, organizations, or jurisdictions that contribute to joint safety management efforts do not lose their individual identities or responsibility for their own programs, policies, and personnel. Rather, each contributes to the overall effort to protect all responder personnel involved in incident operations.

Liaison Officer

The Liaison Officer is Incident Command's point of contact for representatives of other governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector (with no jurisdiction or legal authority) to provide input on their agency's policies, resource availability, and other incident-related matters. Under either a single Incident Commander or a Unified Command structure, representatives from assisting or cooperating agencies and organizations coordinate through the Liaison Officer. Agency and organizational representatives assigned to an incident must have the authority to speak for their parent agencies or organizations on all matters, following appropriate consultations with their agency leadership. Assistants and personnel from other agencies or organizations (public or private) involved in incident management activities may be assigned to the Liaison Officer to facilitate coordination.

General Staff Overview

The General Staff is a group of incident management personnel organized according to function.

The ICS General Staff consists of 4 Sections:

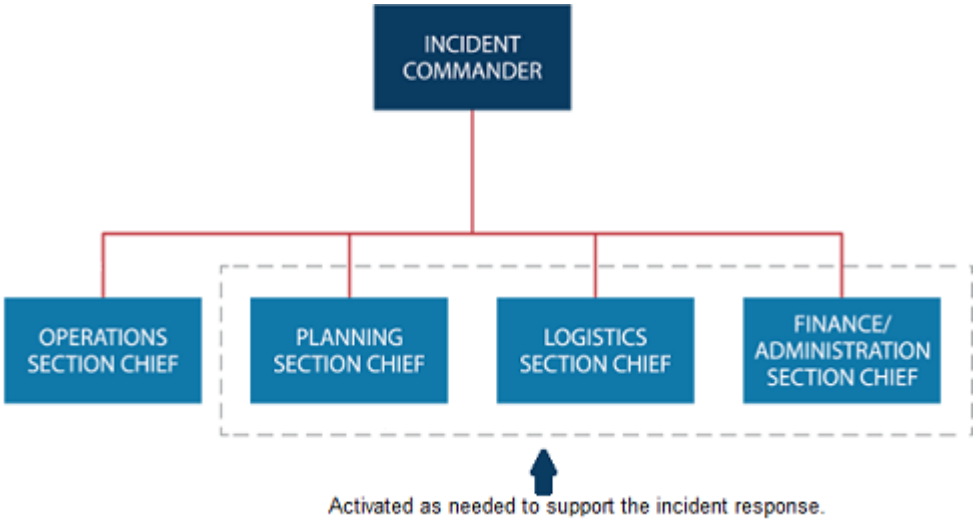
- Operations
- Planning
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration

Each ICS General Staff Section is led by a Section Chief who reports directly to the Incident Commander or Unified Command.

These individuals are responsible for managing tasks within their functional area.

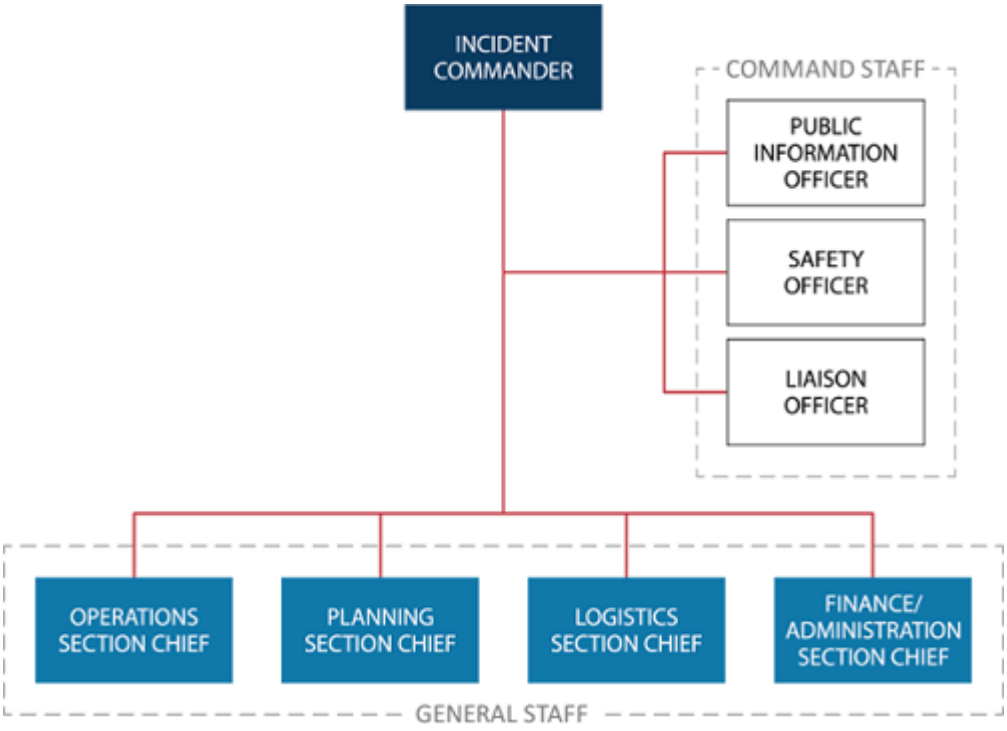
The Incident Commander or Unified Command activates these section chiefs as needed.

The Incident Commander or Unified Command is responsible to perform each General Staff function until a section chief is assigned to manage that function.



General Staff Sections

Click on a General Staff Section in the diagram below to access a more detailed description.



Operations Section

The Operations Section plans and performs tactical activities to achieve the incident objectives established by the IC/UC. Incident objectives typically focus on:

- Saving lives
- Reducing the immediate hazard
- Protecting property and the environment
- Establishing situational control
- Restoring normal operations

Planning Section

Planning Section personnel collect, evaluate, and disseminate incident information to the Incident Commander/Unified Command and other incident personnel.

Planning Section staff:

- Prepare status reports
- Display situation information
- Maintain the status of assigned resources
- Facilitate the incident action planning process
- Prepare the Incident Action Plan (IAP) based on input from the General Staff, Command Staff and Incident Commander/Unified Command guidance.

Logistics Section

Logistics Section personnel are responsible for providing services and support for the incident.

Logistics Section staff provide:

- Facilities Security (of the incident command facilities and personnel)
- Transportation
- Supplies
- Equipment maintenance and fuel
- Food services
- Communications and information technology support
- Medical services for incident personnel

Finance/Administration Section

The IC/UC establishes a Finance/Administration Section when the incident management activities require on-scene or incident-specific finance and administrative support services.

Finance/Administration Section Staff:

- Record personnel time
- Negotiate leases
- Maintain vendor contracts
- Administer claims
- Track and analyze incident costs

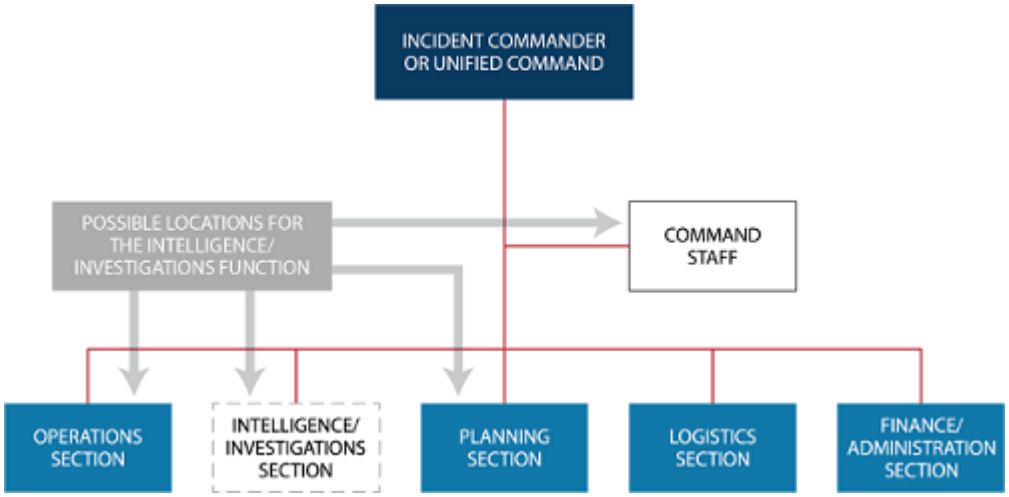
Intelligence/Investigations Function in ICS

Intelligence/Investigations (I/I) is an ICS function identified in NIMS.

When I/I is required, the Incident Commander/Unified Command can place the I/I function in multiple locations within the incident command structure based on factors such as the nature of the incident, the level of I/I activity, and the relationship of I/I to other incident activities.

The I/I can be placed in the Planning Section, in the Operations Section, within the Command Staff, as a separate General Staff section, or in some combination of these locations.

You can learn more about the I/I function by reading NIMS and the I/I Function Guidance and Field Operations Guide available on the FEMA NIMS website.



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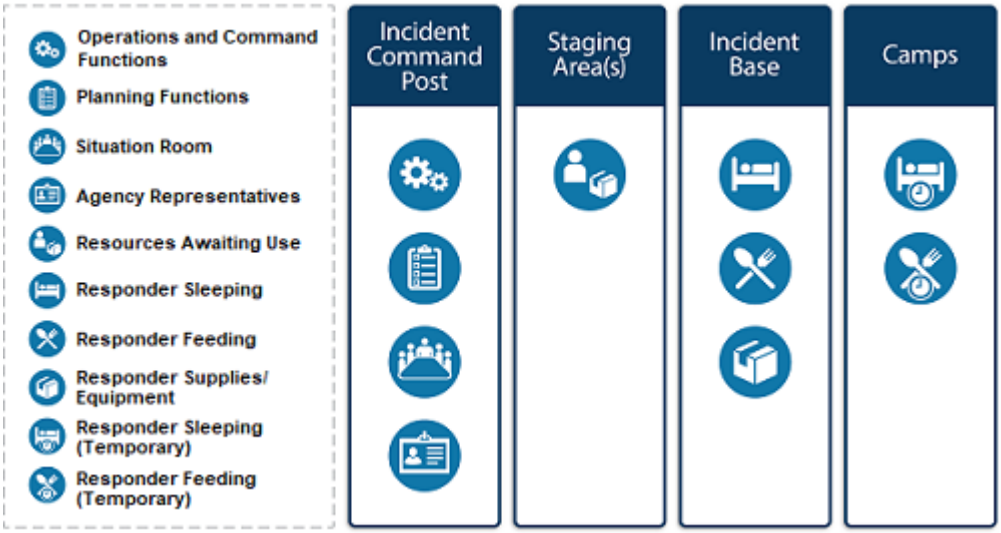
Common Types of ICS Facilities

The Incident Commander or Unified Command determines the kinds and locations of ICS facilities based on what is required to support the incident.

The Incident Commander or Unified Command may establish several different kinds of facilities in and around the incident area.

Common ICS facilities:

- The **Incident Command Post (ICP)** - location of the tactical-level, on-scene incident management (Incident Commander or Unified Command and Staff)
- **Staging Areas** - temporarily position and account for personnel, supplies, and equipment awaiting assignment
- **Incident Base** - location at which personnel conduct primary support activities (may be co-located with the ICP)
- **Camps** - satellites to an Incident Base, established where they can best support incident operations by providing food, sleeping areas, sanitation and minor maintenance and servicing of equipment



Incident Management Teams

Incident Management Teams (IMT) are a rostered group of ICS-qualified personnel composed of an Incident Commander, other incident leadership, and personnel qualified for other key ICS positions.

IMTs are:

- Established at local, regional, state, tribal, and national levels with formal notification, deployment, and operational procedures in place.
- Typed based on the team member qualifications.
- Assigned to manage incidents or to accomplish supporting incident-related tasks or functions.

When assigned to an incident, IMTs are typically delegated the authority to act on behalf of the affected jurisdiction or organization.

Incident Management Assistance Teams

Some IMTs are referred to as Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMAT) to clarify that they **support** on-scene personnel and/or the affected jurisdiction(s).

IMATs ensure that federal activities align with local priorities through participation in Unified Command or a Unified Coordination Group with representatives from local, state, and/or tribal government.

IMATs exist at various levels of government and within the private sector.

Regardless of who owns particular IMATs or their specific missions, IMATs operate using the principles and practices of ICS.

Example: FEMA IMATs deploy to an incident or venue to assist in the identification and provision of Federal assistance, and coordinate and integrate inter-jurisdictional response in support of an affected state or tribe.

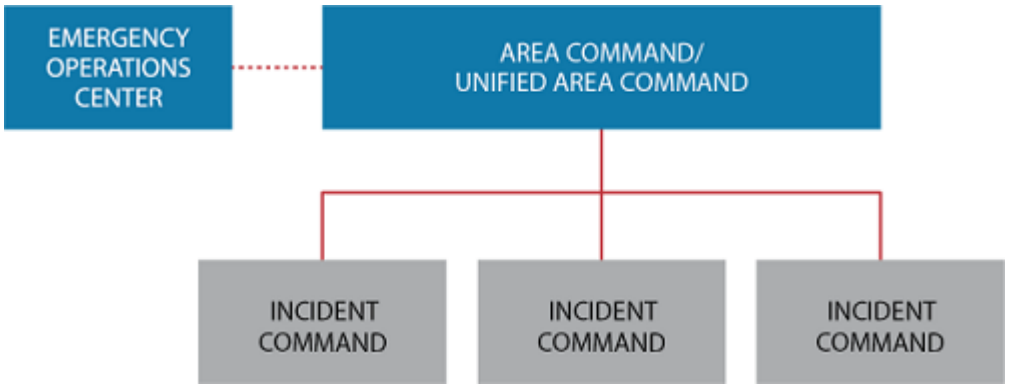
Area Command

An Area Command organization oversees the management of multiple incidents or a very complex incident through establishing multiple ICS organizations.

- An Area Command is activated only if necessary based on the complexity of the incident and span-of-control considerations.
- Area Command is particularly relevant to situations with several ICPs requesting similar, scarce resources.

- Area Commands are frequently established as Unified Area Commands and use the same principles as a Unified Command.

Additional coordination structures, such as EOCs or MAC Groups, may assist with coordinating the resource needs of multiple incidents.



Lesson 4: Incident Command System (ICS) Summary

This lesson presented an overview of the Incident Command System (ICS).

The lesson specifically discussed:

- Incident Command
- Command Staff
- General Staff
- Incident Management Teams
- Incident Management Assistance Teams
- Area Command

The next lesson will introduce you to Emergency Operations Centers.

Lesson 5: Emergency Operations Centers (EOC)

This lesson presents an overview of Emergency Operations Centers.

Objective:

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to describe basic:

- Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Functions
- EOC Staff Organization Models
- EOC Activation Level

Emergency Operations Centers (EOC): Introduction

Emergency Operations Centers are one of four NIMS Command and Coordination structures.

ICS is used to manage on-scene, tactical-level response; EOCs are off site locations where staff from multiple agencies come together to:

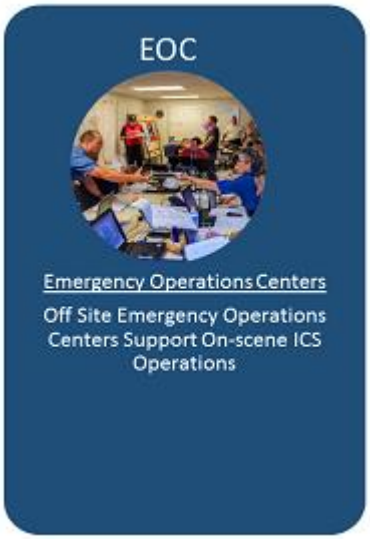
- Address imminent threats and hazards
- Provide coordinated support to incident command, on-scene personnel and/or other EOCs

The purpose, authorities, and composition of EOCs vary widely, but EOCs generally perform the following primary functions:

- Collecting, analyzing and sharing information
- Supporting resource needs and requests, including allocation and tracking
- Coordinating plans and determining current and future needs
- In some cases providing coordination and policy direction

Some agencies and departments utilize operations centers. EOCs are multidisciplinary and in this aspect are different from operations centers employed by a single organization.

EOCs can be fixed locations, temporary facilities or virtual structures with staff participating remotely.



Configuration of Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs)

EOC teams vary widely. Organization of the EOC staff can vary based on:

- Jurisdictional/organizational authorities
- Staffing
- Partner and stakeholder agencies represented
- EOC facilities
- EOC communications capabilities
- Political considerations
- The mission

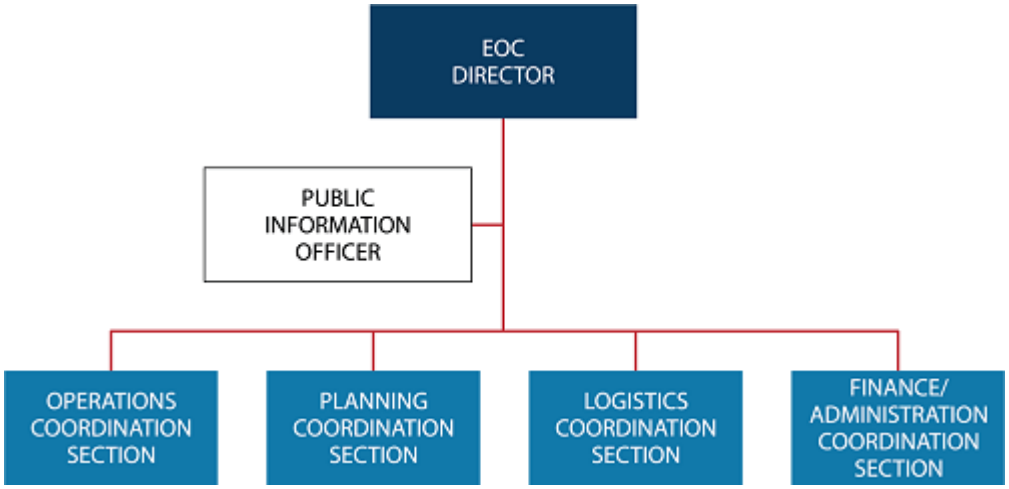
NIMS identifies three common ways of organizing EOC Teams:

1. ICS or ICS-like structure
2. Incident Support Model structure
3. Departmental structure

Like ICS, EOCs utilize the NIMS management characteristic **modular organization**.

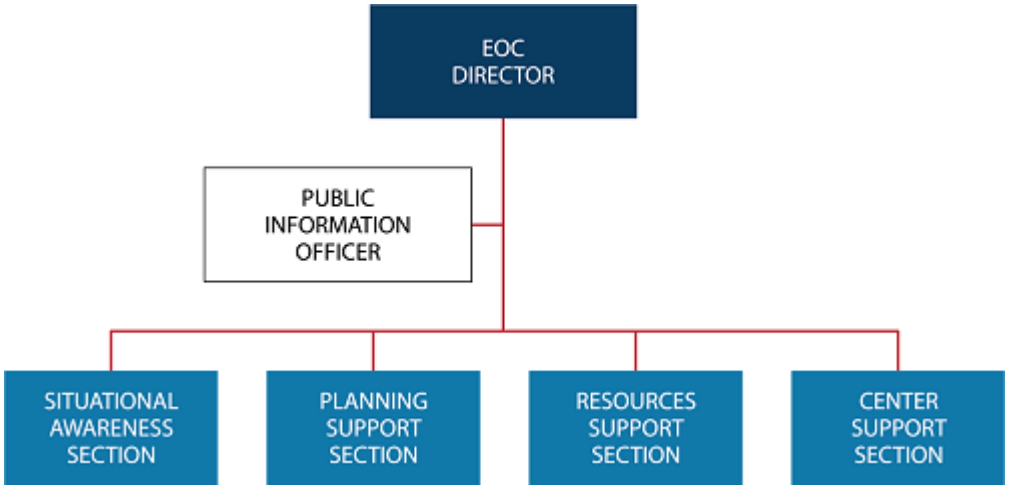
ICS or ICS-like EOC Structure

Many jurisdictions/organizations configure their EOCs using the standard ICS organizational structure, either exactly as it is performed in the field or with slight modifications. The structure is familiar and it aligns with the on-scene incident organization.



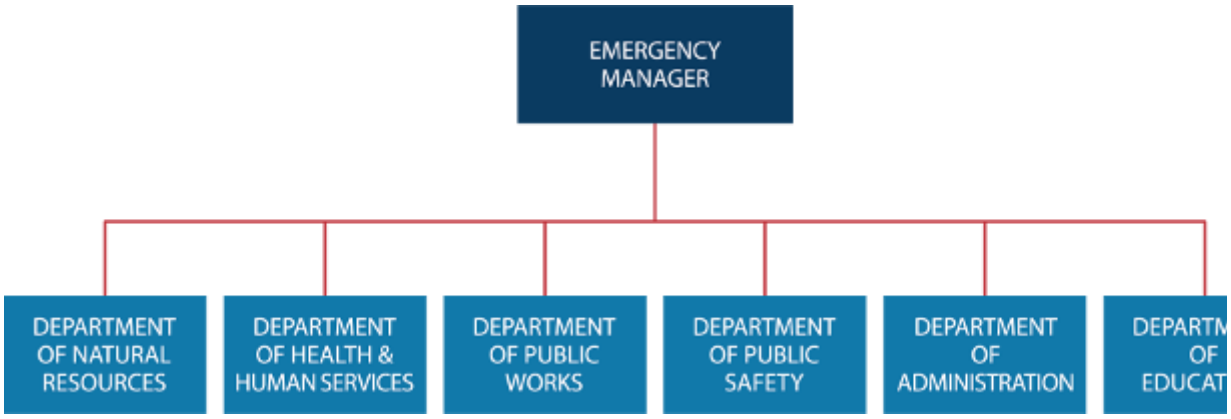
Incident Support Model (ISM) EOC Structure

Jurisdictions/organizations that focus their EOC team's efforts on information, planning, and resource support may choose to separate the situational awareness function from planning and combine operations and logistics functions into an incident support structure.



Departmental EOC Structure

Jurisdictions/organizations may opt instead to use their day-to-day departmental/agency structure and relationships in their EOC. By operating in the context of their normal relationships, department/agency representatives can function in the EOC with minimal preparation or startup time.



EOC Activation and Deactivation

Emergency Operations Centers are activated for a variety of incidents, threats and events.

Some circumstances that might trigger center activation include:

- Multiple jurisdictions or agencies involved in an incident.
- The Incident Commander or Unified Command indicates an incident could expand rapidly, involve cascading effects or require additional resources.
- A similar incident in the past led to EOC activation.
- The EOC Director or an appointed or elected official directs EOC activation.
- An incident is imminent such as predicted hurricane, flooding, hazardous weather, or elevated threat levels.
- Threshold events described in an emergency operations plan occur.
- Significant impacts to the population are anticipated.

EOC Activation Levels

Emergency Operations Centers frequently have multiple activation levels to allow for:

- Response scaled to the incident
- Delivery of the exact resources needed
- A level of coordination appropriate to the incident

The level of activity within a center often increases as the size, scope, and complexity of the incident grow. If the incident requires additional support and coordination, the EOC director may activate additional staff to involve more disciplines, mobilize additional resources, inform the public, address media inquiries, involve senior elected and appointed officials, and request outside assistance.

Activation Level	Description
3 Normal Operations/ Steady State	• Activities that are normal for the EOC when no incident or specific risk or hazard has been identified • Routine watch and warning activities if the EOC normally houses this function
2 Enhanced Steady-State/ Partial Activation	• Certain EOC team members/organizations are activated to monitor a credible threat, risk, or hazard and/or to support the response to a new and potentially evolving incident
1 Full Activation	• EOC team is activated, including personnel from all assisting agencies, to support the response to a major incident or credible threat

Lesson 5: Emergency Operations Centers Summary

The lesson presented an overview of NIMS Emergency Operations Centers.

The lesson specifically discussed Emergency Operations Center:

- EOC Functions
- EOC Staff Organization Models
- EOC Activation Levels

The next lesson will introduce you to other NIMS Structures and Interconnectivity.

Lesson 6: Other NIMS Structures and Interconnectivity

This lesson presents an overview of the Other NIMS Structures and Interconnectivity.

Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of the Multiagency Coordination Group (MAC Group)
- Describe the Joint Information System (JIS)
- Describe Interconnectivity of NIMS Command and Coordination Structures

Other NIMS Structures and Interconnectivity Introduction

The Incident Command System (ICS) and Emergency Operations Centers (EOC), which were discussed in the prior lessons of this course, are two of the four NIMS Command and Coordination structures.

In this lesson, we will learn about Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Groups and the Joint Information System (JIS), and discuss the interconnectivity between the NIMS Command and Coordination structures.

MAC Group Definition and Composition

Multiagency Coordination Groups (MAC Group) are part of the off-site incident management structure of NIMS.

MAC Groups are also sometimes referred to as policy groups.

MAC Group members are typically agency administrators, executives or their designees from stakeholder agencies or organizations impacted by and with resources committed to the incident. The MAC Group may also include representatives from non-governmental organizations such as businesses and volunteer organizations.

During incidents, MAC Groups:
• Act as a policy-level body
• Support resource prioritization and allocation
• Make cooperative multi-agency decisions
• Enable decision making among elected and appointed officials and the Incident Commander responsible for managing the incident.

The MAC Group does not perform incident command functions, nor does it replace the primary functions of EOCs or other operations, coordination, or dispatch organizations.

Elected and Appointed Officials

Elected and appointed officials such as governors, tribal leaders, mayors, city managers and county commissioners are key players in incident management because they are responsible for:

- The safety and welfare of their constituents

- The overall effectiveness of incident management efforts within their jurisdiction

Elected and appointed officials operate at the policy level of incident management. The MAC Group provides a way for these policy-level officials to work together, enhancing unity of effort at the senior level.

Voices of Experience: Role of Elected and Appointed Officials

Steve Grainer, Former Chief, Incident Management Programs, VA Dept. of Fire Programs

Our elected and senior appointed officials have first a moral obligation to do whatever is possible to provide for the well-being, the welfare if you will, of the citizens that elected them and entrusted them with their well-being. On that count my feeling is that elected officials should at a minimum be familiar enough with the core reasoning behind NIMS and the primary components of NIMS, the concepts on which NIMS is built.

Curry Mayer, Former Training & Exercise Chief, Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CA)

NIMS has let people know that everyone who is responsible for public welfare really should have at least an understanding of what the NIMS is about, what are the important pieces of it, what do you have to know to be able to plug into it, and how does it facilitate all of those levels of government working together. So I think the important piece is that appointed officials and our elected officials are those that, they really have two roles. One is that they are charged with protecting the public, and then from their point of view, how do they know that they will be able to do that, and NIMS provides a system that is workable anywhere in the country so that any government entity or any response agency that is needed can plug into the system. And there is the requirement that not only do you, are you aware of what the system is but that you practice it, that you have some training in it so you're not only, so it's not just a check the box but that you are actually able to perform a role in the system and ensure that the public is secured for in a large event.

Joint Information System (JIS) Purpose

The Joint Information System (JIS) is the fourth NIMS Command and Coordination structure.

JIS integrates incident information and public affairs into a unified organization that provides consistent, coordinated, accurate, accessible, timely and complete information to the public and stakeholders during incident operations.

JIS operates across and supports the other NIMS Management and Coordination structures: ICS, EOC and MAC Group.

JIS activities include:

- Developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages
- Developing, recommending and executing public information plans and strategies
- Advise on public affairs issues that could affect the incident management effort
- Addressing and managing rumors and inaccurate information that could undermine public confidence

The JIS performs these activities in support of the Incident Commander or Unified Command, the EOC Director, and the MAC Group.

JIS Description and Components: PIO and JIC

The Public Information Officer (PIO) and Joint Information Center (JIC) are two supporting elements of the JIS.

The PIO is a key member of ICS and EOC organizations, though they might go by a different title in EOCs. PIO functions include:

- Advising the Incident Commander, Unified Command or EOC director on public information matters
- Gathering, verifying, coordinating, and disseminating accurate, accessible, and timely information
- Handling inquiries from the media, public and elected officials
- Providing emergency public information and warnings
- Conducting rumor monitoring and response

The JIC is a central location that houses JIS operations and where public information staff perform essential information and public affairs functions.

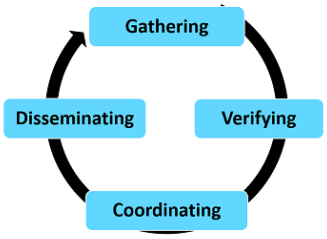
Normally, an incident should have a single JIC, but the JIS is flexible and can accommodate multiple JICs if necessary.

Informing the Public and Stakeholders

In some cases, lives will depend on getting information to the public quickly and those responsible take necessary steps to alert the public.

Getting information to the public and stakeholders during an incident requires an ongoing information cycle:

- **Gathering** complete information for the public and other stakeholders
- **Verifying** information to ensure accuracy
- **Coordinating** information with other public information personnel who are part of the JIS to ensure consistency
- **Disseminating** consistent, coordinated, accurate, accessible, timely and complete information to the public and stakeholders



Public Information Communications Planning

Well-developed and coordinated public information, education and communications plans enable the sharing of public safety information.

This can include information such as lifesaving measures or evacuation routes.

The information communications plan can include:

- Draft news releases
- Media lists
- Contact information for elected/appointed officials, community leaders, private sector organizations, and public service organizations

Public information communications plans should be included in training and exercises in order to prepare for actual incidents.

Voices of Experience: Public Information

Read below to learn about each person's perspectives on NIMS Public Information.
Curry Mayer, Former Training & Exercise Chief, Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CA)

Public information is of course important in any event, and NIMS emphasizes that public information in a large event be coordinated so that all those entities—either jurisdictions, agencies, or levels of government—those Public Information Officers come together and have a joint message. So different agencies that, it might be that you have, you know, transportation and food and agriculture that are involved in the event so what are, what those public, the public information message, although one coordinated message needs to include the elements from those different agencies that

are involved, and who are the stakeholders, who are the people that have been impacted, and ensuring that your message is coordinated so that everyone that needs to have some kind of information about the event gets what they need from that. The new thing for NIMS is that each level of government and each agency involved has a public information responsibility, but they come together and have one, one message that comes out.

Bill Campbell, Former Director of Training, NY State Emergency Management Office

Public information is number one, it's one of the command staff positions within the ICS structures so that tells you right up front that in the incident command system we place a lot of emphasis on public information and information in general. I think the importance and significance of public information is higher and greater now than it's ever been in our history. You've got to have a coordinated way to get a consistent message out. We've got to be very clear and concise in our message to the public as to what we want them to do. Public information is more than just the public, it's also the response community too.

Daryl Lee Spiewak, Former Emergency Programs Manager, Brazos River Authority, TX

We need to have a single point of contact for the media so that we can get our information out to the general public. We use the media to get our message out. The citizens of our jurisdiction expect information from us. They want to know what we're doing, want to know why we are doing things, and more important they want to know what they should be doing. We also found out that if the media isn't kept in the loop, they are going to go out and start finding stories themselves, finding out information themselves, that means then that we are losing control of the message. The message is being developed by the individual reporters in the media and that's going to start confusing our citizens and get the wrong message to them. We need a coordinated effort for public information for the safety of the public and the security of the public and that's what public information allows us to do.

Ron Britton, Former NIMS Coordinator, FEMA, Region 10

Public information is for public safety. We really want that information for people in the environs as well as people who are part of the response community to know what the situation is. They need to know that to stay safe and to perform best. It can also be used to establish information exchanged with the local public to know evacuation routes, where the hospitals they should go to—any number of things that would be of safety interest to the public. One of the reasons it was developed was to provide a consistent message so that different people in different parts of the organization aren't reporting just what they are seeing, but that there is a centralized system that allows that information to be one-stop shopping and one message that goes out to the public

to keep everyone informed, and that's all very, very safety related, and I think that's a real key point.

Interconnectivity of NIMS Command and Coordination Structures

NIMS structures enable incident managers to manage incidents in a unified, consistent manner.

Interconnectivity of NIMS structures is important to allow personnel in diverse geographic areas, with differing roles and responsibilities, and operating within various functions of ICS and/or EOCs to integrate their efforts through common organizational structures, terminology, and processes.

- When an incident occurs or threatens, local emergency personnel manage response using NIMS principles and **ICS**.
- If the incident is or becomes large or complex, local **EOCs** activate.
- EOCs receive senior level guidance from **MAC Groups**.
- A Joint Information Center (JIC) manages the Joint Information System **(JIS)** operations to ensure coordinated and accurate public messaging among all levels: ICS, EOC and MAC Group.

If required resources are not available locally, they can be obtained under **mutual aid agreements** from neighboring jurisdictions, or State, tribal, territorial, and interstate sources and assigned to the control of the Incident Commander or Unified Command.

Federal Support to Response Activities

The Federal Government has a variety of capabilities and resources to support domestic incidents.

Most incidents are resolved using capabilities available from the local jurisdiction.

Larger incidents are resolved with support from by neighboring jurisdictions, or State, tribal, territorial, and interstate sources.

The Federal Government only becomes involved with a response:

- When state governors or tribal leaders request Federal assistance and their requests are approved
- When Federal interests are involved
- As statute or regulation authorizes or requires

In most cases the Federal Government plays a supporting role to state, tribal, or territorial governments by providing Federal assistance to the affected jurisdictions.

For example, the Federal Government provides assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) when the President declares an emergency or major disaster.

In some cases the Federal Government may play a leading role in response, such as when an incident occurs on Federal property or when the Federal Government has primary jurisdiction (such as in a terrorist attack or a major oil spill).

Lesson 6: Other NIMS Structures and Interconnectivity Summary

The lesson presented other NIMS Structures and Interconnectivity.

The lesson specifically discussed the :

- Multiagency Coordination Group (MAC Group)
- Joint Information System (JIS)
- Interconnectivity of NIMS Command and Coordination Structures

The next lesson will introduce you to Communications and Information Management.

Lesson 7: Communications and Information Management

This lesson presents an overview of Communications and Information Management.

Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify the four key principles of communications and information management.
- Describe the communications management practices and considerations.

- Identify how incident information is used.
- Identify the three concepts related to Communications Standards and Formats.

What is NIMS Communications and Information Management?

Effective emergency response depends on communication—the ability to maintain situational awareness through the constant flow of information.

During and after Hurricane Katrina, communications systems failed, severely hampering information flow and response operations. In New Orleans, most of the city was flooded. The combined effects of wind, rain, storm surge, breached levees, and flooding knocked out virtually the entire infrastructure—electrical power, roads, water supply and sewage, and communications systems.

[Thomas Stone, Fire Chief, St. Bernard Parish: “We lost our communications system, and when you are not able to communicate, you can’t coordinate your response. You never think that you will lose your entire infrastructure.”]

Communications problems are not limited to systems being destroyed or not functioning. Similar problems arise when agencies cannot exchange needed information because of incompatible systems. NIMS identifies several important features of public safety communications and information systems.

Communications systems need to be . . .

- Interoperable—able to communicate within and across agencies and jurisdictions.
- Reliable—able to function in the context of any kind of emergency.
- Scalable—suitable for use on a small or large scale as the needs of the incident dictate.
- Portable—built on standardized radio technologies, protocols, and frequencies.
- Resilient—able to perform despite damaged or lost infrastructure.
- Redundant—able to use alternate communications methods when primary systems go out.
- Secure—able to protect sensitive or classified information from those without a need to know.

Regardless of the communications hardware being used, standardized procedures, protocols, and formats are necessary to gather, collate, synthesize, and disseminate incident information. And in a crisis, life-and-death decisions depend on the information we receive.

This lesson introduces you to the NIMS Communications and Information Management component.

Communications and Information Management Introduction

In order to maintain situational awareness, incident personnel update incident information continually.

Effective incident management relies on flexible communications and information systems that provide accurate, timely, and relevant information.

During an incident, this integrated approach:

- Links all incident personnel, whether on-scene, in an EOC, or in another support location
- Maintains communications connectivity and situational awareness

Four key communications and information systems principles support the ability of incident managers to maintain this constant flow of information during an incident:

- Interoperability
- Reliability, Scalability, and Portability
- Resilience and Redundancy
- Security

Interoperability

Interoperability: Interoperability is the capacity for emergency management and response personnel to interact and work well together.

Interoperable communications systems enable personnel and organizations to communicate:

- Within and across jurisdictions and organizations
- Via voice, data, and video systems
- In real time

Reliability, Portability, and Scalability

Communications and information systems should be designed to be:

Reliable - familiar to users, adaptable to new technology and dependable in any situation

Portable - can effectively be transported, deployed, and integrated to enable support of incidents across jurisdictions

Scalable - able to expand to support situations, from small to large scale, and support the rapid increase in the number of system users

Resiliency and Redundancy

Resilient and redundant communications ensure the uninterrupted flow of information.

Resiliency - systems can withstand and continue to perform after damage or loss of infrastructure

Redundancy - when primary communication methods fail, duplicate systems enable continuity through alternate communication methods

Security

Because some incident information is sensitive, voice, data, networks, and systems should be secure to the appropriate level to control access to sensitive or restricted information.

For example, law-enforcement may discuss sensitive, personally identifiable or classified information and must ensure this information is shielded in accordance with applicable laws.

Additionally, incident communications and information sharing should comply with data protection and privacy laws.

Communications Management Characteristics

Incident management personnel must manage incident communications and information effectively using a variety of communications methods.

Management procedures should change to use new technologies and improved methods of exchanging information.

Standardized Communications Types

Successful communications and information management requires the use of standard communications types:
Strategic Communications:

High-level directions, including resource priority decisions, roles and responsibilities determinations, and overall incident management courses of action.

Tactical Communications:

Communications among and between on-scene command and tactical personnel and cooperating agencies and organizations.

Support Communications:

Coordination of support of strategic and tactical communications (e.g., communications among hospitals concerning resource ordering, dispatching, and tracking; traffic and public works communications).

Public Communications:

Alerts and warnings, press conferences.

Policy and Planning

All stakeholders should be involved in communications planning to formulate integrated and interoperable communications plans, technology and equipment standards.

Coordinated communications policy and planning supports effective communications and management of information.

Communications planning determines:

- What communications systems and platforms are used
- Who can use the communications systems
- What information is essential
- What the technical requirements are for communications equipment and systems

Agreements

Agreements should be in place between all parties in a jurisdiction's emergency operations plan to ensure that the communications elements within plans and procedures are in effect at the time of an incident.

Agreements typically specify the communication systems and platforms that the parties will use to share information.

Agreements also typically include connection of networks, data format standards, and cybersecurity agreements.

Equipment Standards

Communications equipment standards are designed to produce unified communications systems.

When developing communications systems, personnel should consider:

- The range of conditions under which personnel will use the systems.
- The range of potential system users.
- The current nationally recognized communications standards.
- The need for durable equipment.

Training

Training and exercises that employ interoperable communications systems and equipment enable personnel to understand their capabilities and limitations before an incident.

Incident Information

During an incident, timely and accurate information assists decision making at all levels.

Information is used for many functions within ICS, EOCs, MAC Groups, and JIS, including:

- Aiding in planning
- Communicating with the public, including emergency protective measures
- Determining incident cost
- Assessing the need for additional involvement of non-governmental organizations or private sector resources
- Identifying safety issues
- Resolving information requests

Communications Standards and Formats

During an incident, all incident personnel are linked by common communications standards and formats:

- Common Terminology, Plain Language and Compatibility
- Technology Use and Procedures
- Information Security/Operational Security

Voices of Experience: Prompting Effective Communications

Read below to learn about each person's perspectives on Prompting Effective Communications.

Kristy Plourde, Emergency Management Specialist, U.S. Coast Guard

We have HF, UHF, and VHF, all these different frequencies and radios and radio frequencies and what's neat about NIMS is NIMS is helping push everyone to change and establish better intercommunications. In the past we just kind of said, well, too bad they don't have the right radio with us so we'll just do this little inefficient method of communication by calling ashore and having the guy talk to the other guy and then have him radio back to have the boat come over and pick us up. That's very inefficient and it's very wrong, and we just kind of wave our arms and go, oh, it's just too bad. What NIMS is doing is pushing it and saying, hey, change, have these good intercommunications, have systems, electronic systems that support, you know, interfrequency variations, and establishing common frequencies that everyone can use.

Daryl Lee Spiewak, Former Emergency Programs Manager, Brazos River Authority, TX

One of the difficulties that we've had in coordinating response is the different radio systems and the different pieces of equipment—whether it is part of the Internet, computer programs, telephones, cell phones, satellite phones, whatever. If you can't talk to each other, you are not going to be able to work together. So, part of the interoperability is making sure that our equipment is compatible. We can talk. The second part of equipment compatibility is that the equipment works together. You can't take a firetruck that has a 6-inch hose and try to put it to a fire hydrant that operates with a 4-inch connector. So if I take my truck from my facility and I bring it out to help you, if I can't get the water pumped in, if I can't hook our systems together, we're not going to be able to work in a coordinated effort. Second thing is interoperability between people and organizations. Part of that is the verbal communications where I say something, use a particular term, and it means the same thing to you. If the terms that I use mean different things to different people, we're going to have a hard time communicating and doing what needs to be done to accomplish our mission. So, it's a little bit of both. The equipment, the people, and then how do people work together within the organization to accomplish those objectives and get the mission done.

Lesson 7: Communications and Information Management Summary

The lesson presented an overview of Communications and Information Management.

The lesson specifically discussed the:

- Key Principles of Communications and Information management
- Communications and Information Management Characteristics
- Elements of Incident Information
- Communication Standards and Format

The next lesson will provide a summary of the information introduced in this course along with additional resources.

Lesson 8: Course Summary

Congratulations! You should now be able to demonstrate a basic understanding of NIMS concepts, principles, and components.

The course specifically discussed:

- NIMS Overview
- Fundamentals and Concepts of NIMS
- NIMS Resource Management
- NIMS Management Characteristics
- Incident Command System (ICS)
- Emergency Operations Centers (EOC)
- Other NIMS Structures and Interconnectivity
- Communications and Information Management

The next few visuals will describe additional documents and resources that can provide assistance with understanding NIMS and its components.

Related NIMS Documents and Resources

FEMA has developed a variety of documents and resources to support NIMS implementation.

Links related to this course material include:

- FEMA's Emergency Management Institute
- NIMS Training Program (PDF)
- NIMS Intelligence and Investigations Function Guidance and Field Operations Guide
- Guidelines for the Credentialing of Personnel (PDF)
- ICS Forms Booklet

- FEMA's NIMS Web site provides guidance on NIMS implementation.
- FEMA's Independent Study Program offers numerous courses related to the NIMS components.
- The ICS Resource Center includes a summary of ICS principles, job aids, position checklists, forms, and reference materials.
- The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) provides a standardized policy, methodology, and language for designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating all exercises.
- The SAFECOM Web site provides the emergency response community with information, best practices, and resources for meeting communications and interoperability needs.

NIMS Summary

NIMS is a comprehensive nationwide framework developed through a consensus process based on incident management best practices proven by thousands of responders.

NIMS is about unifying how we respond. In time of crisis, our communities and country count on us to be able to work together as a team. We all must commit to a common way of doing business. And that way of doing business is NIMS.

"As NIMS continues to mature, its purpose remains the same: to enhance unity of effort by providing a common approach for managing incidents." Brock Long, FEMA Administrator