

National Incident Management System Fact Sheet for Private Sector Organizations

Introduction

Private sector organizations play vital roles in incident management. These entities have a significant impact on local, regional, and national economic recovery, regardless of the incident size or type. Small, medium, and large organizations in business, industry, and academia, as well as nongovernmental and cultural organizations are part of the whole community and essential to the function of the Community Lifelines.

Private sector organizations are often key partners in the community lifelines because they have immediate access to commodities and services that can support incident response and stabilize those lifelines. They are therefore potential contributors of resources critical to human health and safety or economic security.

Private sector owners of critical infrastructure ensure resilient communications, enabling coordination between government leaders and maintaining government's connection with critical infrastructure. Building and maintaining stronger bonds between government and the private sector helps support rapid restoration in response to catastrophic incidents.

To maximize their impact, private sector organizations with the capacity and willingness to participate in incident operations should coordinate and integrate with governmental incident management efforts—including planning, training, and preparedness exercises.

Many organizations already have emergency procedures and business continuity plans in place. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) supports unity of effort by providing stakeholders across the community with the shared vocabulary, systems, and processes to meet challenges that are beyond the capacity of any single jurisdiction or organization, equipping them to conduct well-integrated, accessible, and effective incident management operations.

How NIMS Benefits Private Sector Organizations and the Nation

Every day in the United States, organizations work together to share resources, integrate tactics, and act collaboratively. Whether these organizations are leading or supporting a response, they can amplify their efforts by following the NIMS approach to sharing resources, coordinating and managing incidents, and communicating information. Organizations can apply the NIMS principles to help their staff achieve the following:



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- Manage all incidents, from minor incidents to major disasters
- Coordinate with all levels of government (local, state, tribal, territorial, and Federal) that are required to implement NIMS to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from incidents
- Manage planned events as well as unplanned incidents

The economic impact of a disaster can be catastrophic for the entire community. A fundamental responsibility of private sector organizations is to provide for the welfare of their employees in the workplace and to help employees return to normal daily operations as quickly as possible following an incident.

While implementing NIMS is not mandatory for unregulated¹ private sector organizations,² adopting NIMS procedures and terminology helps these organizations further integrate into the community's incident management preparedness efforts. Effective incident management can make the difference between advancing or damaging an organization's reputation.

Private sector integration ultimately results in a strengthened national ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from any type of incident.

NIMS is more than just the Incident Command System (ICS). It applies to all incident personnel, from the local command post to FEMA's National Response Coordination Center. Likewise, the processes and systems within NIMS can direct an organization's on-scene responders to the appropriate senior leaders. It reflects lessons learned from exercises and real incidents, while remaining flexible to allow for differing missions, authorities, and resources in communities across the nation.

NIMS Implementation Recommendations for Private Sector Organizations

FEMA recommends that private sector organizations consider the following NIMS implementation activities:

General

1. Adopt NIMS with a valid legal authority, indicating that NIMS is your organization's system of choice.
2. Designate and maintain a point of contact (POC) to serve as the principal coordinator for your NIMS implementation:

¹ Owners/operators of certain regulated facilities or hazardous operations may be legally responsible for preparing for and preventing incidents and responding when an incident occurs.

² Recipients and subrecipients of preparedness grants (non-disaster) should check notices of funding opportunity (NOFO) for grant-specific NIMS implementation requirements.

- Engage with other NIMS POCs in your community, such as officials at your local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and first response organizations, and develop a contact and capabilities list
 - Keep your POC list current, accessible, and accurate
 - Contact your FEMA Regional NIMS Coordinator for help in finding the right people to engage with in your community³
3. Participate in exercises:
- Private sector organizations often provide incident-related services and own/operate critical infrastructure and other key incident management resources; participating in preparedness efforts will ensure your resources are effectively integrated into incident management activities
 - Develop after-action reports to identify key NIMS principles, such as using ICS, following EOC operations, and applying plain language in accessible formats; use these reports to improve your organization's plans and training programs
4. Promote staff training and credentialing:
- Use the NIMS Training Program to develop a training plan based on your organization's needs
 - Encourage members of your organization to participate in NIMS training⁴ according to their level of incident responsibility; these courses (often self-paced, accessible, and free of charge) can promote a more collaborative relationship with public and nonprofit partners

Resource Management

The NIMS Resource Management component can help your organization track and share resources seamlessly across organizational and jurisdictional lines. FEMA recommends the following activities:

1. Identify and inventory deployable incident resources within your organization that fit the NIMS resource typing definitions and Job Titles/Position Qualifications published in the Resource Typing Library Tool (RTLTL)⁵. Resource typing definitions establish a common language for discussing resources by defining minimum capabilities for personnel, teams, facilities, equipment, and supplies. Resource typing enables communities to plan for and request resources and have confidence in the capabilities of the resources they receive.

³ Find your FEMA Regional NIMS Coordinator here: <https://www.fema.gov/fema-regional-nims-contacts>.

⁴ View the NIMS Training Program here: <https://training.fema.gov/nims/>.

⁵ For more information about the Resource Typing Library Tool (RTLTL), visit <https://www.fema.gov/resource-management-mutual-aid>.

2. Use the NIMS Incident Resource Inventory System (IRIS) or another applicable system to identify and manage your inventory response assets. Share this information with your local emergency management authority and other private sector organizations prior to an incident.
3. Coordinate allocation of goods and services with other organizations, neighboring jurisdictions, and the nonprofit sector to eliminate duplication of efforts and resources.
4. Develop or participate in a qualification, certification, and credentialing program for staff. The National Qualification System (NQS) provides baseline qualifications for incident personnel.
5. Participate in mutual aid. Establishing Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) with other organizations and agencies prior to an incident can help identify capabilities and facilitate the sharing of resources and personnel.

Command and Coordination

The NIMS Command and Coordination structures can help organizations integrate decision-making and unity of effort with all incident personnel. FEMA recommends that organizations apply these structures to the four areas of incident responsibility:

- Tactical activities: applying ICS-guided resources on the scene
- Incident support: typically conducted at EOCs⁶ through operational and strategic coordination, resource acquisition, and information gathering, analysis, and sharing
- Policy guidance and senior-level decision-making: organized by Multiagency Coordination Groups (MAC Groups)⁷
- Outreach and communication to keep the media and public informed: using the Joint Information Systems (JIS)

The Multiagency Coordination System (MACS) exists to coordinate these four areas across the various NIMS functional groups. FEMA recommends the following activities:

1. Apply the ICS as the standard organizational structure for on-scene incident management:

⁶ Because incident support takes place in a variety of facilities, including virtual structures, NIMS refers to all such facilities, including emergency coordination centers, as EOCs.

⁷ MAC Groups, sometimes called policy groups, typically consist of agency administrators and organizational executives or their designees. MAC Groups provide policy guidance to incident personnel, support resource prioritization and allocation, and enable decision-making among elected and appointed officials and senior executives who are directly or indirectly responsible for incident management.

- Regardless of the size, complexity, or scope of the incident, effective command and coordination helps save lives and stabilize the situation
 - ICS enables effective, accessible, and efficient incident management by integrating equipment, personnel, procedures, and communication operations
 - ICS is flexible and scalable, so your organization can adapt based on incident needs
2. Incorporate the NIMS management characteristics into standard operating procedures and Emergency Operations Plans (EOP).
 3. Provide support to—or, if requested, participate as a representative of your organization in—any MAC Groups established to support the management of the incident.
 4. Gather and share information with local EOCs, nonprofit partners, and other organizations during an incident to enable efficient, accessible, and effective communication.

Communications and Information Management

The NIMS Communications and Information Management guidance helps ensure your organization gets its information to the right audiences, at the right times, and in ways they can understand. FEMA recommends the following activities:

1. Use plain language and clear text in accessible formats:
 - When communicating during an incident, use standard, consistent terminology and avoid overusing acronyms
 - Maintain a Common Operating Picture (COP) to promote situational awareness; a key communications goal is ensuring accessibility and interoperability
2. Control rumors and prevent social media misinformation:
 - Develop and maintain procedures for collecting and sharing incident information to ensure that your organization's information gets to the appropriate audiences in a timely manner

Supersession

This document supersedes the *NIMS Implementation for Nongovernmental Organizations Fact Sheet*, dated December 8, 2006.