

COMPONENT I: PREPAREDNESS

NIMS provides the mechanisms for emergency management/response personnel³ and their affiliated organizations to work collectively by offering the tools to enhance preparedness. Preparedness is achieved and maintained through a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action. Ongoing preparedness efforts among all those involved in emergency management and incident response activities ensure coordination during times of crisis. Moreover, preparedness facilitates efficient and effective emergency management and incident response activities.

This component describes specific measures and capabilities that emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations should develop and incorporate into their overall preparedness programs to enhance the operational preparedness necessary for all-hazards emergency management and incident response activities. In developing, refining, and expanding preparedness programs and activities within their jurisdictions and/or organizations, emergency management/response personnel should leverage existing preparedness efforts and collaborative relationships to the greatest extent possible. Personal preparedness, while an important element of homeland security, is distinct from the operational preparedness of our Nation's emergency management and incident response capabilities and is beyond the scope of NIMS.

A. CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

Within NIMS, preparedness focuses on the following elements: planning; procedures and protocols; training and exercises; personnel qualifications, licensure, and certification; and equipment certification. Effective adoption, implementation, and training of all NIMS components in advance of an incident or planned event will facilitate collaborative emergency management and incident response activities. Preparedness is a foundational step in emergency management and incident response; therefore, the concepts and principles that form the basis for preparedness are an integration of the concepts and principles of all NIMS components.

1. UNIFIED APPROACH

Preparedness requires a unified approach to emergency management and incident response activities. To achieve this, components of NIMS should be integrated within a jurisdiction's or organization's emergency management and incident response structure. Specifically, preparedness should be integrated into communications and information management, resource management, and command and management to form an effective system. Additionally, the unified-approach concept is at the core of the Command and Management component, as it is based on chain of command, unity of command, unity of effort, and when implemented, Unified Command. These characteristics allow organizations with

³ Emergency management/response personnel include Federal, State, territorial, tribal, substate regional, and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, private-sector organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, and all other organizations and individuals who assume an emergency management role.

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different jurisdictional, geographical, or functional responsibilities, authorities, and resources to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively in support of a commonly recognized objective.

2. LEVELS OF CAPABILITY

Preparedness involves actions to establish and sustain necessary capabilities to execute a full range of emergency management and incident response activities. For NIMS to function effectively, jurisdictions and organizations should set expectations about the capabilities and resources that will be provided before, during, and after an incident. The inventorying and categorizing of resources available for an incident or planned event is a critical element of preparedness, as it helps to establish and verify the level of capability needed. Additionally, the concept of identifying this level of capability is woven throughout the components of NIMS, including the credentialing system.

B. ACHIEVING PREPAREDNESS

Individual jurisdictions should prepare in advance of an incident, in coordination with and supported by Federal and State partners, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector, as appropriate. In order for successful emergency management and incident response to occur, emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations must have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This clarity is essential not only for emergency management/response personnel, but also for those acting in a policy, coordination, or support role.

- **Policy Role:** Development, revision, signing, and/or formalization of policies, procedures, mutual aid agreements, and assistance agreements and/or plans relating to emergency management and incident response programs and activities.
- **Coordination Role:** Resource management or any other necessary coordination efforts required for emergency management and incident response programs and activities.
- **Support Role:** Provision of assistance for emergency management and incident response programs and activities.

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NIMS AND OTHER PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS

To achieve national preparedness and coordinated response, emergency management and incident response activities should be coordinated at all levels of government and should include NGOs and the private sector, where appropriate. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD–5) established a single, comprehensive approach to incident management, with the objective of ensuring that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work together efficiently and effectively. Several other Homeland Security Presidential Directives are inextricably linked with HSPD–5, as they deal directly with national preparedness and the protection of critical infrastructure. These directives are discussed more fully below.

a. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7, “Critical Infrastructure Identification, Prioritization, and Protection”

HSPD–7 directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to establish a national policy for Federal departments and agencies to identify and prioritize critical infrastructure and key

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resources (CIKR) in order to prevent, deter, and mitigate the effects of deliberate efforts to destroy, incapacitate, or exploit them. Federal departments and agencies are to work with State, tribal, and local governments, NGOs, and the private sector to accomplish this objective. This effort includes the development, implementation, and ongoing management and maintenance of the *National Infrastructure Protection Plan* (NIPP). The NIPP and its complementary Sector-Specific Plans provide the unifying structure for integrating existing and future CIKR protection activities.

b. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8, “National Preparedness”

HSPD–8 directed DHS to lead a national initiative to develop a National Preparedness System—a common, unified approach to “strengthen the preparedness of the United States to prevent and respond to threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.” The requirements of HSPD–8 led to the National Preparedness Guidelines, which were developed to provide the means for the Nation to answer three fundamental questions:

- How prepared do we need to be?
- How prepared are we?
- How do we prioritize efforts to close the gap?

HSPD–8 also required DHS to develop mechanisms for the improved delivery of Federal preparedness assistance to State, tribal, and local governments and to strengthen the Nation’s preparedness capabilities. Annex I to HSPD-8, titled “National Planning,” establishes a comprehensive approach to national planning and provides guidance for conducting planning in accordance with the *National Strategy for Homeland Security*. Annex I calls for the development and updating of an Integrated Planning System (IPS). Fifteen National Planning Scenarios were developed to illustrate the range, scope, magnitude, and complexity of incidents for which the Nation should prepare. Using this wide range of possible scenarios, including terrorism, natural disasters, and health emergencies, helps reduce uncertainty in planning.

After identifying the most important performance needs across the scenarios, DHS then developed the Target Capabilities List (TCL), designed to guide efforts to build a national network of capabilities that will be available when and where they are needed. The TCL outlines an all-hazards approach to development of capabilities that will be needed for natural or manmade disasters or other major incidents, and defines the primary roles that all levels of government, NGOs, the private sector, and individuals have in national preparedness. The capabilities provide the means to accomplish a mission and achieve desired outcomes by performing critical tasks, under specified conditions, to target levels of performance. Capabilities are delivered by appropriate combinations of properly planned, organized, equipped, trained, and exercised personnel.

2. NIMS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE NATIONAL RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

NIMS provides the template for the management of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity. This template establishes the structure, concepts, principles, processes, and language for the effective employment of capabilities nationally, whether those capabilities reside with Federal, State, tribal, or local jurisdictions or with the private sector or NGOs.

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The *National Response Framework* (NRF), which superseded the National Response Plan, is an all-hazards framework that builds upon NIMS and describes additional specific Federal roles and structures for incidents in which Federal resources are involved.

The NRF is a guide to how the Nation conducts all-hazards response.

The NRF provides the structure and mechanisms for national-level policy and operational direction for incident management to ensure timely and effective Federal support to State, tribal, and local related activities. The NRF is applicable to all Federal departments and agencies that participate in operations requiring a coordinated Federal response.

NIMS and the NRF are designed to improve the Nation's incident management capabilities and overall efficiency. During incidents requiring coordinated Federal support, the NRF provides the guidelines and procedures to integrate capabilities and resources into a cohesive, coordinated, and seamless national framework for incident management.

NIMS and the NRF are designed to ensure that local jurisdictions retain command, control, and authority over response activities for their jurisdictional areas.

A basic premise of both NIMS and the NRF is that incidents typically be managed at the local level first. In the vast majority of incidents, local resources and local mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements will provide the first line of emergency management and incident response. If additional or specialized resources or capabilities are needed, Governors may request Federal assistance; however, NIMS is based on the concept that local jurisdictions retain command, control, and authority over response activities for their jurisdictional areas. Adhering to NIMS allows local agencies to better utilize incoming resources.

The fundamental role of preparedness in emergency management and incident response is a universal concept incorporated in both NIMS and the NRF. Though the specific elements of preparedness described within each document may vary slightly, the concepts remain complementary. The key elements found within the Preparedness component of NIMS and the NRF are described and organized in a fashion to best assist stakeholders in the development of efficient, effective emergency management and incident response capabilities.

3. PREPAREDNESS ROLES

Preparedness activities should be coordinated among all appropriate agencies and organizations within the jurisdiction, as well as across jurisdictions. NGOs and the private sector should be involved in these efforts, as they often provide incident-related services, and are the owners and operators of critical infrastructure and key resources that may be involved in emergency management and incident response. Though not integrated directly into NIMS, individuals play a critical role in preparedness and are expected to prepare themselves and their families for all types of potential incidents. Jurisdictions should have outreach programs to promote and support individual and community preparedness (e.g., public education, training sessions, demonstrations), including preparedness of those with special needs.

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a. Preparedness Organizations

Preparedness organizations provide coordination for emergency management and incident response activities before an incident or planned event. These organizations range from groups of individuals to small committees to large standing organizations that represent a wide variety of committees, planning groups, or other organizations (e.g., Citizen Corps, Community Emergency Response Teams, Local Emergency Planning Committees, Critical Infrastructure Sector Coordinating Councils). Preparedness organizations should meet regularly and coordinate with one another to ensure an appropriate focus on helping jurisdictions and groups of jurisdictions to meet their preparedness needs.

The needs of the jurisdictions involved will dictate how frequently such organizations should conduct their business, as well as how they are structured. When preparedness activities routinely need to be accomplished across jurisdictions, preparedness organizations should be multijurisdictional and/or multiagency and include critical infrastructure owners and operators, NGOs, and the private sector, when relevant. Memorandums or agreements should be established between necessary parties so that each will be aware of the capabilities, expectations, and roles of the others.

Preparedness organizations may take the following actions, among others:

- Establish and coordinate emergency operations plans, protocols, and procedures, including public communications and awareness.
- Integrate and coordinate the activities and functions within their purview.
- Establish the standards, guidelines, and protocols necessary to promote interoperability and consideration for responder safety.
- Adopt standards, guidelines, and procedures for requesting and providing resources.
- Identify resources and other requirements and set priorities for their use.
- Encourage training, exercises, evaluation, and corrective action programs.
- Ensure the establishment and maintenance of necessary mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements and outreach to NGOs and the private sector.
- Use Multiagency Coordination Systems, as needed and where appropriate, for planned events (such as parades or sporting events) or for specific types of incidents (such as pandemic influenza or hurricanes).⁴
- Plan for operational scientific support, which can be done at each level of government, and contribute ideas to ongoing research and development of new technologies.⁵
- Conduct after-action reviews to strengthen future preparedness.

b. Elected and Appointed Officials

Elected and appointed officials should have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for successful emergency management and incident response. These officials include administrative and political personnel, as well as department/agency administrators who have leadership roles in a jurisdiction, including legislators and chief executives, whether elected (e.g., Governors, mayors, sheriffs, tribal leaders, and county executives) or appointed (e.g., county administrators and city managers). Although their roles may require providing direction and guidance to constituents during an incident, their

⁴ See page 64, Component IV: Command and Management, Multiagency Coordination Systems.

⁵ See page 79, Component V: Ongoing Management and Maintenance, Supporting Technologies.

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day-to-day activities do not necessarily focus on emergency management and incident response.

To better serve their constituents, elected and appointed officials should do the following:

- Understand, commit to, and receive training on NIMS and participate in exercises.
- Maintain an understanding of basic emergency management, continuity of operations and continuity of government plans, jurisdictional response capabilities, and initiation of disaster declarations.
- Lead and encourage preparedness efforts within the community, agencies of the jurisdiction, NGOs, and the private sector, as appropriate.
- Help to establish relationships (including mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements) with other jurisdictions and, as appropriate, NGOs and the private sector.
- Support and encourage participation in mitigation efforts within the jurisdiction and, as appropriate, with NGOs and the private sector.
- Provide guidance to their jurisdictions, departments, and/or agencies, with clearly stated policies for NIMS implementation.
- Understand laws and regulations in their jurisdictions that pertain to emergency management and incident response.
- Maintain awareness of CIKR within their jurisdictions, potential incident impacts, and restoration priorities.

Elected and appointed officials may also be called upon to help shape and revise laws, policies, and budgets to aid in preparedness efforts and to improve emergency management and incident response activities.

An incident may have a mix of political, economic, social, environmental, public safety, public health, and financial implications with potentially serious long-term effects. Frequently, incidents require a coordinated response (across agencies, jurisdictions, and/or including NGOs and the private sector), during which elected and appointed officials must make difficult decisions under crisis conditions. Elected and appointed officials should be aware of how NIMS can work to ensure cooperative response efforts, thereby minimizing the potential implications of an incident.

(1) Elected and Appointed Officials During an Incident

Generally, elected and appointed officials are not at the scene of the incident, but should have the ability to communicate and meet with the Incident Commander (IC)/Unified Command (UC), as necessary. Depending on the nature of the incident or level of the overall emergency, elected and appointed officials could function from the following locations:

- The agency or jurisdictional offices.
- An Emergency Operations Center.
- A location housing multiagency coordination.

Major Responsibilities of Elected and Appointed Officials

- **Clearly state agency/jurisdiction policy**
- **Evaluate effectiveness and correct deficiencies**
- **Support a multiagency approach**

Elected and appointed officials should provide input on policy, direction, and authority to the IC/UC. Proper coordination between elected and appointed officials and the IC/UC can be crucial to the successful management of an incident. Elected and appointed officials should

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clearly communicate views to the IC/UC. As time and agency policy dictate, the following considerations should be clearly communicated, documented, and provided to the IC/UC:

- Safety considerations.
- Environmental issues.
- Legal and policy limitations.
- Issues relating to critical infrastructure services or restoration.
- Economic, political, and social concerns.
- Cost considerations.

In some circumstances, if information is not delineated in policies or laws, it should be defined through a formal delegation of authority or letter of expectation.

c. Nongovernmental Organizations

NGOs, such as community-based, faith-based, or national organizations (e.g., the Salvation Army, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, American Red Cross), play vital roles in emergency management and incident response activities. NGOs that have the capacity and desire to be involved should be fully integrated into a jurisdiction's preparedness efforts, especially in planning, training, and exercises. Furthermore, memorandums of agreement should be established with NGOs prior to an incident so that each organization is aware of the capabilities, expectations, and roles of others.

It is recommended that key executives and administrators of NGOs use NIMS for planned events or incidents, because its use improves the organizations' ability to integrate into incident management. While compliance with NIMS is not mandated for NGOs, adhering to NIMS procedures and terminology, and requiring staff with disaster-related missions to take appropriate training, will support the continued integration of the NGOs into a jurisdiction's preparedness efforts.

d. Private Sector

The private sector plays a vital role in emergency management and incident response and should be incorporated into all aspects of NIMS. Utilities, industries, corporations, businesses, and professional and trade associations typically are involved in critical aspects of emergency response and incident management. These organizations should prepare for all-hazards incidents that may affect their ability to deliver goods and services. It is essential that private-sector organizations directly involved in emergency management and incident response, or identified as a component of critical infrastructure (e.g., hospitals, public and private utility companies, schools), be included, as appropriate, in a jurisdiction's preparedness efforts. Although private-sector entities cannot be required to be NIMS compliant, it is strongly encouraged that those private-sector organizations that are directly involved in response operations have their response personnel receive NIMS training and that the response elements of their organization be NIMS compliant.

Governments at all levels should work with the private sector to establish a common set of expectations consistent with Federal, State, tribal, and local roles, responsibilities, and methods of operations. These expectations should be widely disseminated and the necessary training and practical exercises conducted so that they are thoroughly understood in advance of an actual incident. These expectations are particularly important with respect to private-sector organizations involved in CIKR areas. In addition, private-sector organizations may wish to consider entering into assistance agreements with governments or other private-sector organizations to clarify the respective capabilities, roles, and

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expectations of the parties involved in preparing for and responding to an incident. Finally, the private sector may be a source for best practices in emergency management and incident response.

Academia also plays a significant role in NIMS. Many academic institutions assist in providing NIMS training to responders and community leaders. Additionally, many courses of study include NIMS training and concepts in their curricula. The academic community is also a primary vehicle for the development of new concepts and principles.

4. PREPAREDNESS ELEMENTS

Preparedness efforts should validate and maintain plans, policies, and procedures, describing how they will prioritize, coordinate, manage, and support information and resources. The elements described below build the foundation necessary for efficient and effective response and recovery. Ongoing support is provided by the National Integration Center (NIC) in the following areas: training and exercises; personnel qualifications, licensure, and certification; and equipment certification.⁶

a. Preparedness Planning

Plans should be realistic, scalable, and applicable to all types of incidents, from daily occurrences to incidents requiring the activation of interstate mutual aid to those requiring a coordinated Federal response. Plans should form the basis of training and be exercised periodically to ensure that all individuals involved in response are able to execute their assigned tasks. It is essential that plans address training and exercising and allow for the incorporation of after-action reviews, lessons learned, and corrective actions, with responsibility agreements following any major incident or exercise. Plans should be updated periodically to reflect changes in the emergency management and incident response environment, as well as any institutional or organizational changes.

Plans should describe how personnel, equipment, and other governmental and nongovernmental resources will be used to support emergency management and incident response requirements. Plans are the operational core of preparedness and provide mechanisms for setting priorities, integrating multiple jurisdictions/organizations and functions, establishing collaborative relationships, and ensuring that communications and other systems effectively support the full spectrum of emergency management and incident response activities. Plans should also incorporate strategies for maintaining continuity of government and continuity of operations during and after incidents, provide mechanisms to ensure resiliency of critical infrastructure and economic stability of communities, and incorporate the advance planning associated with responder protection, resource management, and communications and information management.

Plans should integrate all relevant departments, agencies, and organizations (including NGOs and the private sector, where appropriate) to facilitate coordinated emergency management and incident response activities. Where appropriate, plans should incorporate a clearly defined process for seeking and requesting assistance from necessary departments, agencies, or organizations. While it is recognized that jurisdictions and organizations will develop multiple types of plans, such as response, mitigation, and recovery plans, it is essential that these plans be coordinated and complement one another. State, tribal, and local governments are encouraged to comply with the Integrated Planning

⁶ See page 75, Component V: Ongoing Management and Maintenance, National Integration Center.

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System (IPS) by using Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101, “Producing Operations Plans for State, Territorial, Tribal, and Local Governments.” CPG 101 meets the Annex I requirement that IPS include a “guide for all-hazards planning . . . that can be used at Federal, State, local, and tribal levels to assist the planning process.” IPS is flexible enough to accommodate the many planning formats, styles, and processes used by State, tribal, and local governments. Over time, the use of IPS is expected to facilitate standardization of plans across the United States at all levels of government and enhance preparedness. Together IPS and CPG 101 support national vertical integration by clearly articulating Federal planning procedures to State, tribal, and local governments and by establishing a consistent planning process across all levels of government.

Each jurisdiction, in coordination with appropriate agencies and organizations, should develop plans that define the scope of necessary activities for preparedness, emergency management, and incident response for that jurisdiction. As appropriate, jurisdictions should also develop scenario-specific plans or annexes derived from their threat assessment. These plans should describe organizational structures, roles and responsibilities, policies, and protocols for providing support; should be flexible enough for use in all incidents; and should be comprehensive enough to meet the wide variety of public needs that may arise. While preparedness of the public is generally beyond the scope of NIMS, plans should also include public awareness, education, and communications plans and protocols.

(1) Continuity Capability

Recent natural and manmade disasters have demonstrated the need for a robust continuity capability at the Federal, State, territorial, tribal, and local levels, as well as within the private sector, in order to ensure the preservation of our form of government under the Constitution and the continuation of essential functions under all conditions. Ensuring that the right leadership, support staff, communications, facilities, infrastructure, and other resources with the right continuity planning and program management are available to support a jurisdiction is critical to the success of emergency management and incident response operations.

The goal of a robust continuity capability is to have the resiliency to confront any challenge, threat, or vulnerability. Continuity planning should be instituted within all organizations—to include all levels of government and the private sector—and especially within those organizations that support the National Essential Functions found in National Security Presidential Directive 51/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 20 (NSPD-51/HSPD-20), “National Continuity Policy,” dated May 4, 2007. NSPD-51/HSPD-20 and Federal Continuity Directive 1, dated February 4, 2007, outline the continuity requirements for all Federal departments and agencies (with guidance for non-Federal organizations). These requirements include such things as essential functions, orders of succession, delegations of authority, continuity facilities, continuity communications, vital records management, and human capital.

(2) *Mutual Aid Agreements and Assistance Agreements*

Mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements are agreements between agencies, organizations, and jurisdictions that provide a mechanism to quickly obtain emergency assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and after an incident. A signed agreement does not obligate the provision or receipt of aid, but rather provides a tool for use should the incident dictate a need. There are several types of these kinds of agreements, including but not limited to the following:

- **Automatic Mutual Aid:** Agreements that permit the automatic dispatch and response of requested resources without incident-specific approvals. These agreements are usually basic contracts; some may be informal accords.
- **Local Mutual Aid:** Agreements between neighboring jurisdictions or organizations that involve a formal request for assistance and generally cover a larger geographic area than automatic mutual aid.
- **Regional Mutual Aid:** Substate regional mutual aid agreements between multiple jurisdictions that are often sponsored by a council of governments or a similar regional body.
- **Statewide/Intrastate Mutual Aid:** Agreements, often coordinated through the State, that incorporate both State and local governmental and nongovernmental resources in an attempt to increase preparedness statewide.
- **Interstate Agreements:** Out-of-State assistance through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) or other formal State-to-State agreements that support the response effort.
- **International Agreements:** Agreements between the United States and other nations for the exchange of Federal assets in an emergency.
- **Other Agreements:** Any agreement, whether formal or informal, used to request or provide assistance and/or resources among jurisdictions at any level of government (including foreign), NGOs, or the private sector.

Agreements, preferably written, should include the following elements or provisions:

- Definitions of key terms used in the agreement
- Roles and responsibilities of individual parties
- Procedures for requesting and providing assistance
- Procedures, authorities, and rules for payment, reimbursement, and allocation of costs
- Notification procedures
- Protocols for interoperable communications
- Relationships with other agreements among jurisdictions
- Workers' compensation
- Treatment of liability and immunity
- Recognition of qualifications, licensure, and certifications
- Sharing agreements, as required
- Termination clause

Jurisdictions should be party to agreements with the appropriate jurisdictions and/or organizations (including NGOs and the private sector, where appropriate) from which they expect to receive, or to which they expect to provide, assistance. States should participate in interstate compacts and look to establish intrastate agreements that encompass all local jurisdictions. Authorized officials from each of the participating jurisdictions and/or organizations should collectively approve all mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements.

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Memorandums of understanding and memorandums of agreement are needed with the private sector and NGOs, including community-based, faith-based, and national organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army, to facilitate the timely delivery of assistance during incidents.

b. Procedures and Protocols

Procedures and protocols should detail the specific actions to implement a plan or system. All emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations should develop procedures and protocols that translate into specific, action-oriented checklists for use during incident response operations.

Procedures are documented and implemented with checklists; resource listings; maps, charts, and other pertinent data; mechanisms for notifying staff; processes for obtaining and using equipment, supplies, and vehicles; methods of obtaining mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements; mechanisms for reporting information to Department Operations Centers and Emergency Operations Centers; and communications operating instructions, including connectivity among governments, NGOs, and the private sector.

There are four standard levels of procedural documents:

- **Standard Operating Procedure or Operations Manual:** Complete reference document that provides the purpose, authorities, duration, and details for the preferred method of performing a single function or a number of interrelated functions in a uniform manner.
- **Field Operations Guide or Incident Management Handbook:** Durable pocket or desk guide that contains essential information required to perform specific assignments or functions.
- **Mobilization Guide:** Reference document used by agencies/organizations outlining agreements, processes, and procedures used by all participating organizations for activating, assembling, and transporting resources.
- **Job Aid:** Checklist or other visual aid intended to ensure that specific steps for completing a task or assignment are accomplished. Job aids serve as training aids to teach individuals how to complete specific job tasks.

Protocols are sets of established guidelines for actions (which may be designated by individuals, teams, functions, or capabilities) under various specified conditions. Establishing protocols provides for the standing orders, authorizations, and delegations necessary to permit the rapid execution of a task, function, or a number of interrelated functions without having to seek permission. Protocols permit specific personnel—based on training and delegation of authority—to assess a situation, take immediate steps to intervene, and escalate their efforts to a specific level before further guidance or authorizations are required.

c. Training and Exercises

Personnel with roles in emergency management and incident response at all levels of government—including persons with leadership positions, such as elected and appointed officials—should be appropriately trained to improve all-hazards capabilities nationwide. Additionally, NGOs and private-sector entities with direct roles in response operations should be strongly encouraged to participate in NIMS training and exercises. Standardized NIMS training courses focused on the structure and operational coordination processes and

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systems, together with courses focused on discipline-specific and agency-specific expertise, help to ensure that emergency management/response personnel can function together effectively during an incident. Training and exercises should be specifically tailored to the responsibilities of the personnel involved in incident management. Mentoring or shadowing opportunities, to allow less experienced personnel to observe those with more experience during an actual incident, should be incorporated to enhance training and exercising. Additionally, exercises should be designed to allow personnel to simulate multiple command, supervisory, or leadership roles whenever possible.

NIMS training levels are dependent on the individual's, jurisdiction's, or organization's level of involvement in emergency management and incident response activities.

Training should allow practitioners to:

- Use the concepts and principles of NIMS in exercises, planned events, and actual incidents.
- Become more comfortable using NIMS, including the Incident Command System.

To improve NIMS performance, emergency management/response personnel should also participate in realistic exercises—including multidisciplinary, multijurisdictional incidents, and NGO and private-sector interaction—to improve coordination and interoperability. Thorough exercising of NIMS components may be done using a single exercise or a series of exercises, each of which evaluates specific aspects of NIMS and its components.

Exercises should contain a mechanism for incorporating corrective actions into the planning process.

Exercises should be conducted with parties identified in strategic and operational plans (e.g., the emergency operations plan), including departments, agencies, partners in mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements, NGOs, and the private sector. Exercises should contain a mechanism for incorporating corrective actions and lessons learned from incidents into the planning process. For guidance on exercise design, methodology, and evaluation, refer to the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program or other exercise development tools. Exercises should also cover the following:

- All aspects of a plan, particularly the processes and procedures for activating local, intrastate, and/or interstate mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements.
- Knowledge needed to activate those agreements.

d. Personnel Qualifications and Certification

A critical element of NIMS preparedness is the use of national standards that allow for common or compatible structures for the qualification, licensure, and certification of emergency management/response personnel.⁷ Standards will help ensure that these personnel possess the minimum knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to execute incident management and emergency response activities safely and effectively. Standards typically include training, experience, credentialing, validation, and physical and medical fitness. Federal, State, tribal, and local certifying agencies, and professional and private organizations with personnel involved in emergency management and incident response, are encouraged to credential those individuals in their respective disciplines or jurisdictions.

⁷ See page 40, Component III: Resource Management, Credentialing.

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The baseline criteria for this voluntary credentialing will be established by the NIC after consultation with appropriate experts, partners, and/or recognized authoritative bodies, which will detail the standards associated with the minimum thresholds for specific emergency management positions, allowing those credentialed personnel to participate, as needed, in national-level incidents.

e. Equipment Certification

Emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations rely on various types and kinds of equipment to perform essential tasks.⁸ A critical component of preparedness is the acquisition of equipment that will perform to certain standards (as designated by organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association or National Institute of Standards and Technology), including the capability to be interoperable with equipment used by other jurisdictions or participating organizations.⁹ Associated with this is the need to have a common understanding of the abilities of distinct types of equipment, to allow for better planning before an incident and rapid scaling and flexibility in meeting the needs of an incident.

5. MITIGATION

Mitigation is an important element of emergency management and incident response. It provides a critical foundation in the effort to reduce the loss of life and property and to minimize damage to the environment from natural or manmade disasters by avoiding or lessening the impact of a disaster. Mitigation provides value to the public by creating safer communities and impeding the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. Mitigative actions should effectively be coordinated between the IC/UC and the operator of the CIKR facilities. These activities or actions, in most cases, will have a long-term sustained effect. Risk management—the process for measuring or assessing risk and developing strategies to manage it—is an essential aspect of mitigation. Risk management strategies may include avoiding the risk (e.g., removing structures in floodplains), reducing the negative effect of the risk (e.g., hardening buildings by placing barriers around them), or accepting some or all of the consequences of a particular risk.

Examples of mitigation activities include the following:

- Ongoing public education and outreach activities designed to reduce loss of life and destruction of property.
- Complying with or exceeding floodplain management and land-use regulations.
- Enforcing stringent building codes, seismic design standards, and wind-bracing requirements for new construction, or repairing or retrofitting existing buildings.
- Supporting measures to ensure the protection and resilience of CIKR designed to ensure business continuity and the economic stability of communities.
- Acquiring damaged homes or businesses in flood-prone areas, relocating the structures, and returning the property to open space, wetlands, or recreational uses.
- Identifying, utilizing, and refurbishing shelters and safe rooms to help protect people in their homes, public buildings, and schools in hurricane- and tornado-prone areas.
- Implementing a vital records program at all levels of government to prevent loss of crucial documents and records.

⁸ See page 31, Component III: Resource Management for more information on equipment certification.

⁹ See page 75, Component V: Ongoing Management and Maintenance, National Integration Center.

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- Intelligence sharing and linkage leading to other law enforcement activities, such as infiltration of a terrorist cell to prevent an attack.
- Periodic remapping of hazard or potential hazard zones, using geospatial techniques.
- Management of data regarding historical incidents to support strategic planning and analysis.
- Development of hazard-specific evacuation routes.