

NIMS Compliance and Day-to-Day Emergency Operations

WASHINGTON – The NIMS Integration Center has received a number of questions recently asking if organizations must use National Incident Management System (NIMS) concepts and principles in day-to-day emergency operations versus only during major incidents involving federal participation.

The requirement to adopt and implement NIMS and ICS means NIMS and ICS for incident management everyday. Those who don't are not NIMS compliant.

The intent of Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5, which ordered the development of the NIMS, is clear: "The objective of the United States Government is to ensure that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work efficiently and effectively together, using a [single, comprehensive] national approach to domestic incident management."

The point is that all responders at all levels use the same organizational structures, terminology, procedures and systems all the time. The idea is to achieve interoperability among jurisdictions and disciplines. Those who do not train for, exercise and use NIMS and ICS in their day-to-day operations will not be able to integrate their activities into a system they do not know, haven't practiced and don't use.

To underscore the importance of the nationwide adoption of NIMS, the Department of Homeland Security has directed that all federal preparedness assistance to states and local jurisdictions be tied to compliance with the requirements of NIMS. Beginning Oct. 1, 2005, all recipients of federal preparedness funds must adopt and use NIMS as a condition for the receipt of FY06 preparedness assistance funding. This does not just include funds from the Department of Homeland Security; it includes preparedness funds from all federal departments and agencies, although there is no linkage between post disaster assistance funds and NIMS compliance. Specific preparedness grants will outline the requirements for eligibility in the grant language.

A preliminary list of affected federal preparedness grant programs is listed on the NIMS Integration Center's Web page at www.fema.gov/nims. The NIMS Integration Center has made this preliminary list available to help state and local entities identify funding streams that may be affected in connection with NIMS implementation requirements. The listing should not be considered a definitive list of federal preparedness grants and agreements. Questions? Ask the NIMS Integration Center at NIMS-Integration-Center@dhs.gov, or 202-646-3850.

*The NIMS Integration Center
DHS/Federal Emergency Management Agency
Aug. 17, 2005*