



## **National Response Plan and National Incident Management System Review and Revision Process Stakeholders Meeting Wednesday, October 25, 2006**

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### **NIMS Upgrade Summary**

The NIMS is a systematic, proactive approach for guiding and enabling government agencies at all levels, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work seamlessly to manage the consequences of domestic incidents efficiently and effectively, regardless of cause, size or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life and property. The NIMS is a living document which requires refinement over time to integrate best emergency management practices, procedures, and systems into the NIMS framework. The NIMS has not been upgraded or refined since its original release in March 2004.

The 2005 hurricane season highlighted the need to focus on improving integrated incident management activities. The importance of this need was emphasized in the White House's February 2006 report "The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned." To accomplish this goal, refinements to the NIMS should ensure that the document can be easily understood by all stakeholders, as a lack of NIMS understanding was noted as a significant hindrance to its implementation.

To fully engage all levels of stakeholders in the review and implementation process of the NIMS upgrade, the NIMS Integration Center (NIC),<sup>1</sup> with the assistance of the Homeland Security Institute, held two meetings with NIMS practitioners to generate recommended upgrades to the NIMS document. Participants represented the following disciplines: fire, law enforcement, public works, public health, emergency management, emergency medical services, search and rescue, hazardous materials, private sector and nongovernmental organizations. After the meetings, recommendations were analyzed, collated and considered for input into the NIMS document. Participants were then given the opportunity to review the input containing their recommendations and provide comments on the proposed upgrades.

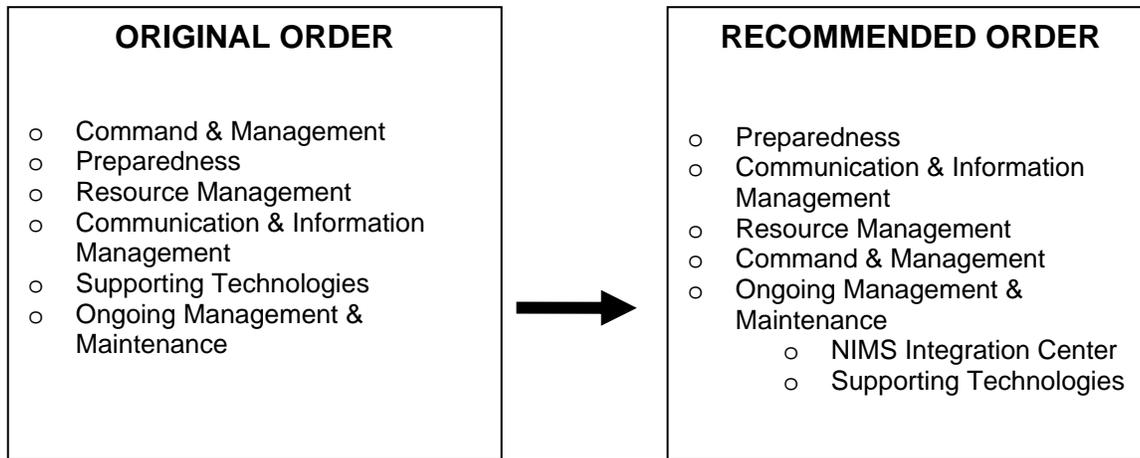
The Working Groups provided many constructive recommendations for an upgraded NIMS document. Many of the recommendations focused on making the NIMS document easier to understand, while few policy level changes were suggested. A mission statement was proposed for addition in the beginning of the document to immediately orient readers to the purpose of the NIMS.

One of the most notable recommendations was to increase the emphasis on preparedness. This would cause the reordering of the document to focus on the importance of preparedness efforts, to clearly reflect the linear progression of the components of NIMS and to lessen the perception that NIMS is only the incident command system.

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<sup>1</sup> The NIC is the "executive agent" for both the NIMS and the National Response Plan.

The following graphic illustrates the proposed change in the order of the NIMS document components:



Proposed changes to the Preparedness component include the linking of the NIMS to other Homeland Security initiatives (including Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8, *National Preparedness*) in order to provide stakeholders with an integrated picture of Federal preparedness efforts. Additionally, reviewers proposed that the NIMS document should more fully describe the relationships between the NIMS, the National Response Plan (NRP) and other federal response efforts.

To further highlight the importance of incident management coordination, the practitioners recommended the addition of several sections to the Preparedness component to specifically identify the roles of chief elected and appointed officials, the private sector and nongovernmental organizations. These sections seek to ensure cooperative incident management efforts by identifying the roles that individuals or organizations may have prior to and during an incident. It was proposed that the Preparedness component be further bolstered by adding guidance on mutual aid agreements identifying the various types of mutual aid and specifying what at a minimum, should be included in the agreements.

Practitioners noted that the original document did not tie together the NIMS components (formerly chapters). To illustrate that all components are integrally interrelated, it is proposed that clarifying language be added showing the integration within the NIMS as a whole. Furthermore, to promote the understanding of the distinct roles within incident management, it was recommended that clarifying language be added throughout the document specifying command and management functions (ICS) and coordination and support functions (EOC & MACS). In that regard, the roles of the chief elected and appointed officials during an incident should be highlighted in the Command and Management component. Also, it was recommended that significant detail be added to both the Public Information Systems and the Multiagency Coordination Systems sections, providing greater clarity about the purpose and the benefits of those systems and their roles in incident management.

Based on recommendations from the practitioners, the contents of the Resource Management component should be expanded to include more explanation of preparedness efforts such as the identification, typing and inventorying of resources, as well as the further development of the concepts of pre-deployment strategies and the pre-positioning of assets. Group members believed that Resource Management was a critical component of the NIMS and a frequently noted shortfall in many reports. Clarifying this component of the NIMS can improve the understanding of resource management thereby aiding in proper implementation of asset coordination during an incident.

Lastly, several recommendations dealt specifically with stylistic elements of the document. For added clarification, it was recommended that graphics and examples be added and text boxes utilized to highlight key concepts. These noted recommendations should be incorporated into the NIMS resulting in a stronger, more detailed document.

Over the next several months, the draft NIMS upgrade document will be disseminated for review and comment using the same collaborative process as the review of the NRP. Stakeholders will be asked to participate in a two-step review process with the comment period beginning in December 2006. Comments will be compiled and adjudicated with a second draft being released February 2007. Throughout the comment and revision periods, NRP/NIMS groups participating in the NRP review will also review the NIMS upgrade to ensure consistency between the documents. The final NIMS document will be released in June 2007 in tandem with the NRP. After the document is finalized, DHS will coordinate a comprehensive outreach and training program for both the NRP and NIMS, and DHS will begin the process of implementing a continuous cycle of periodic review and revision of the NRP and NIMS.