

# NIMS Implementation Objectives for Federal Departments and Agencies

---

## Introduction

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) has been a key component of U.S. incident management efforts since its release in 2004. The purpose is to help the nation prepare for catastrophic disasters by enabling unity of effort among organizations from across the country during incidents, no matter the size, complexity or duration. This nationwide unity of effort hinges on a shared understanding of what “NIMS implementation” entails among state, local, tribal, territorial and federal entities as well as the private sector, non- governmental and faith-based organizations.

Federal departments and agencies play an important role in ensuring effective NIMS implementation. Not only do they implement NIMS themselves, they also ensure that the systems and processes are in place to communicate and support NIMS implementation at all jurisdictional levels.

Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 (HSPD-5), Management of Domestic Incidents, requires all federal departments and agencies to formally adopt and maintain NIMS and use it in their individual domestic incident management activities, supporting full and robust preparedness nationwide. Since the release of HSPD-5, FEMA has engaged its federal stakeholders to identify implementation objectives necessary to enhance incident management throughout federal departments and agencies, including their sub-component organizations.

In this current update, the [NIMS Implementation Objectives for Federal Departments and Agencies \(2021 Update\)](#) seeks to ensure the objectives are consistent with the third edition of the NIMS, published in October 2017. The third edition of NIMS retains the concepts and principles from the 2008 and 2004 versions while reflecting changes to laws, policies and best practices. Additionally, the third edition of NIMS provides additional information on the roles of off-scene incident personnel such as senior leaders and emergency operations center workers.

This version continues to incorporate federal stakeholder input with the goal of providing better clarity and usefulness in implementing and applying NIMS. To this end, FEMA developed implementation indicators and metrics for each implementation objective.

The indicators are examples of characteristics that are frequently associated with federal departments and agencies that have achieved the objective. They are not requirements, nor are the indicators intended as a checklist for achieving the objectives. The indicators are a tool to assist Federal departments and agencies in meeting the new Implementation Objectives.

Taken together, these objectives and their associated indicators and metrics provide guidance for Federal departments and agencies to clarify the types of activities to be undertaken when implementing NIMS. Doing so will



# FEMA

help ensure a common, comprehensive and interoperable approach to sharing resources, coordinating and managing incidents, and communicating information critical to the successful implementation of NIMS.

## General

Vision: Policies and processes are in place to support NIMS implementation

1. Objective: Formal adoption, maintenance and updating of the [National Incident Management System](#).  
Indicator: A current authorizing authority indicating that NIMS is the designated incident management system for the federal department/agency, including associated sub-agencies and departments.
2. Objective: Designate and maintain a single point of contact (POC) to serve as the principal coordinator for the implementation and on-going maintenance of NIMS.  
Indicator: Submission of name and POC information to FEMA for the current NIMS point of contact. This POC should be responsible for the overall coordination, continuing development and/or evaluation of NIMS-related activities for their departments and agencies, including sub-component organizations.
3. Objective: Develop and conduct periodic reviews (at least annually) of a continuous NIMS implementation or improvement plan in alignment with current NIMS doctrine as issued by FEMA.  
Indicator: Documentation clarifying department/agency specific incident positions, roles and procedures in alignment with NIMS. Guidance specifying how NIMS implementation is incorporated into each incident or exercise after-action report.
4. Objective: Ensure that preparedness grantees adopt NIMS throughout their jurisdiction or organization to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from incidents.  
Indicator: Grants monitoring program includes NIMS implementation as eligibility and assessment criteria. NIMS eligibility criteria aligns with the [NIMS Implementation Objectives for Local, State, Tribal, and Territorial Jurisdictions](#).
5. Objective: Ensure that incident personnel receive pertinent NIMS training in alignment with the [NIMS Training Program](#).  
Indicator: Official training guidance that specifies:
  - Which training course incident personnel must take;
  - Completion deadlines for new department or agency members, and;
  - Frequency of refresher training.

## Resource Management

Vision: Consistent, interoperable identification, management and sharing of resources

6. Objective: Identify and inventory deployable incident resources consistent with national NIMS resource typing definitions and job titles/position qualifications, available through the [Resource Typing Library Tool \(RTL\)](#).  
Indicator: Up-to-date resource inventory (such as the [Incident Resource Inventory System](#)) that uses national resource-typing definitions for all shareable or deployable resources. Standard operating procedures specify how

to identify requirements, order and acquire, mobilize, track and report, demobilize, reimburse, and restock resources during incidents.

7. Objective: Participate in a program for the qualification, certification, and credentialing of incident personnel that aligns with the [National Qualification System \(NQS\)](#).  
Indicator: Official guidance documents specify how incident personnel are qualified, certified, and credentialed consistently with NQS guidance. Use of [OneResponder](#), or similar system, to track and maintain personnel Position Task Books.
8. Objective: Promotion of public, non-governmental and private sector use of cooperative agreements (e.g. Mutual Aid Agreements, Memorandums of Understanding/Agreement, Letters of Agreement, and Interagency Agreements) in alignment with NIMS.  
Indicator: Use of multi-organizational plans, funding mechanisms, training, exercises and after-action reports to develop and evaluate mutual aid agreements, indicating consistent use of NIMS structures, principles and procedures.

## Command and Coordination

Vision: Integrated decision making and unity of effort among all incident personnel

9. Objective: Apply the Incident Command System (ICS) as the standard approach to the on-scene command, control and coordination of incidents.  
Indicator: Operational plans, policies, standard operating procedures, organizational structures, and training address the NIMS concepts and principles of accountability, span of control, incident action planning, mutual aid, unity of command and effort, and resource management.
10. Objective: Organize and manage Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) and EOC teams consistent with pertinent NIMS guidance.  
Indicator: Emergency Operations Plans (EOP), Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), organizational charts or training program materials reflecting NIMS EOC guidance.
11. Objective: Use Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Groups/Policy Groups as the policy-level body during incidents to support resource prioritization and allocation, and enable decision making among elected and appointed officials and those responsible for incident response and recovery activities.  
Indicator: Exercise or real-world incident documentation or after-action reports indicating consistent use of NIMS principles, procedures and structures. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) describe MAC Group processes for senior leadership within the department/agency.
12. Objective: Gather, verify, coordinate and disseminate public information during an incident to include the establishment and/or coordination of Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Centers (JIC).  
Indicator: Exercise or real-world incident documentation or after-action reports indicating consistent use of JIS principles, procedures and structures. Standard operating procedures and emergency operations plans that reflect NIMS guidance such as the NIMS Management Characteristics, ICS, MAC Groups and JIS.

## Communications and Information Management

Vision: Information gets to who it needs to, when it needs to, and in a means that they can understand

13. Objective: Apply plain language and clear text communication standards.

Indicator: SOPs, standard operating guidelines and training program materials direct the use of plain language and clear text for incident communications.

14. Objective: Ensure that Federal communications are coordinated, interoperable, and secure within and across jurisdictions and organizations.

Indicator: Exercise, planned event, real-world incident documentation and/or after-action reports indicate that:

- Communications and information systems that are reliable and scalable, and can function in any type of incident;
- Establishment of a federal interoperability office or a designated Federal Interoperability Coordinator;
- Leverages the [National Emergency Communications Plan](#) and the tools and resources identified within to inform communications plans and investment strategies to increase standardization and interoperability;
- Incident data, networks and systems are appropriately protected and secure;
- Incorporate realistic communications objectives into federally funded exercises to test and validate information and data security; and,
- Incident communications personnel have experience establishing and supporting interoperable communications.

15. Objective: Develop, maintain and implement procedures for data collection, analysis and dissemination to meet organizational needs for situational awareness.

Indicator: Exercise or real-world incident documentation indicate that incident personnel are collecting, analyzing and disseminating situational awareness effectively and consistently with NIMS guidance.