

**Press Office
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Fact Sheet**

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Contact: 202-282-8010

**NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NIMS) FACT SHEET
"One mission, one team, one fight."**

(Washington, DC) March 1, 2004 - U. S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge today announced approval of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Nation's first standardized management approach that unifies Federal, state, and local lines of government for incident response.

- NIMS makes America safer, from our Nation to our neighborhoods:

NIMS establishes standardized incident management processes, protocols, and procedures that all responders -- Federal, state, tribal, and local -- will use to coordinate and conduct response actions. With responders using the same standardized procedures, they will all share a common focus, and will be able to place full emphasis on incident management when a homeland security incident occurs - whether terrorism or natural disaster. In addition, national preparedness and readiness in responding to and recovering from an incident is enhanced since all of the Nation's emergency teams and authorities are using a common language and set of procedures.

- Advantages of NIMS:

NIMS incorporates incident management best practices developed and proven by thousands of responders and authorities across America.

These practices, coupled with consistency and national standardization, will now be carried forward throughout all incident management processes: exercises, qualification and certification, communications interoperability, doctrinal changes, training, and publications, public affairs, equipping, evaluating, and incident management. All of these measures unify the response community as never before.

- NIMS was created and vetted by representatives across America including:
 - Federal government,
 - States,
 - Territories,
 - Cities, counties, and townships,
 - Tribal officials,
 - First responders.
- Key features of NIMS:

- Incident Command System (ICS).

NIMS establishes ICS as a standard incident management organization with five functional areas - command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration - for management of all major incidents.

To ensure further coordination, and during incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies, the principle of unified command has been universally incorporated into NIMS. This unified command not only coordinates the efforts of many jurisdictions, but provides for and assures joint decisions on objectives, strategies, plans, priorities, and public communications.

- Communications and Information Management.

Standardized communications during an incident are essential and NIMS prescribes interoperable communications systems for both incident and information management. Responders and managers across all agencies and jurisdictions must have a common operating picture for a more efficient and effective incident response.

- Preparedness.

Preparedness incorporates a range of measures, actions, and processes accomplished before an incident happens. NIMS preparedness measures including planning, training, exercises, qualification and certification, equipment acquisition and certification, and publication management. All of these serve to ensure that pre-incident actions are standardized and consistent with mutually-agreed doctrine. NIMS further places emphasis on mitigation activities to enhance preparedness.

Mitigation includes public education and outreach, structural modifications to lessen the loss of life or destruction of property, code enforcement in support of zoning rules, land management, and building codes, and flood insurance and property buy-out for frequently flooded areas.

- Joint Information System (JIS).

NIMS organizational measures enhance the public communication effort. The Joint Information System provides the public with timely and accurate incident information and unified public messages. This system employs Joint Information Centers (JIC) and brings incident communicators together during an incident to develop, coordinate, and deliver a unified message. This will ensure that Federal, state, and local levels of government are releasing the same information during an incident.

- NIMS Integration Center (NIC).

To ensure that NIMS remains an accurate and effective management tool, the NIMS NIC will be established by the Secretary of Homeland Security to assess proposed changes to NIMS, capture, and evaluate lessons learned, and employ best practices. The NIC will provide strategic direction and oversight of the NIMS, supporting both routine maintenance and continuous refinement of the system and its components over the long term. The NIC will develop and facilitate national standards for NIMS education and training, first responder communications and equipment, typing of resources, qualification and credentialing of incident management and responder personnel, and standardization of equipment maintenance and resources. The NIC will continue to use the collaborative process of Federal, state, tribal,

local, multi-discipline and private authorities to assess prospective changes and assure continuity and accuracy.