

Lesson 5: Preparedness

Lesson Overview

Preparedness is a key phase of the emergency management cycle. Through preparedness, jurisdictions take actions to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

This lesson covers preparedness measures that are required under NIMS. At the end of this lesson, you should be able to identify the ways in which NIMS affects how your jurisdiction prepares for incidents and events.

What Is Preparedness?

Preparedness is critical to emergency management. Preparedness involves all of the actions required to establish and sustain the level of capability necessary to execute a wide range of incident management operations.

Preparedness is implemented through a continual cycle of planning, training and equipping, exercising, and evaluating and taking action to correct and mitigate.

A major objective of preparedness is to ensure mission integration and interoperability in response to emergent crises across functional and jurisdictional lines.

Preparedness also includes efforts to coordinate between public and private organizations. Preparedness is the responsibility of individual jurisdictions, which coordinate their activities among all preparedness stakeholders. Each level of government is responsible for its preparedness.

NIMS provides tools to help ensure and enhance preparedness. These tools include:

- Preparedness organizations and programs that provide or establish processes for planning, training, and exercising
- Personnel qualification and certification
- Equipment certification
- Mutual aid
- Publication management

National-level preparedness standards related to NIMS will be maintained and managed through a multijurisdictional, multidiscipline center, using a collaborative process at the NIMS Integration Center.

Using NIMS as a basis, all preparedness stakeholders will be able to attain and sustain the level of readiness necessary to respond to the range of domestic incidents facing America today.

Preparedness Organizations

Preparedness organizations represent a wide variety of committees, planning groups, and other organizations. These organizations meet regularly to coordinate and focus preparedness activities. The needs of the jurisdiction will dictate how frequently the organizations must meet and how they are structured.

Responsibilities of Preparedness Organizations

Preparedness organizations at all levels should follow NIMS standards and undertake the following tasks:

- Establishing and coordinating emergency plans and protocols
- Integrating and coordinating the activities and jurisdictions within their purview
- Establishing guidelines and protocols to promote interoperability among jurisdictions and agencies
- Adopting guidelines and protocols for resource management
- Establishing priorities for resources and other response requirements
- Establishing and maintaining multiagency coordination mechanisms

Preparedness Planning

Preparedness plans describe how personnel, equipment, and other governmental and nongovernmental resources will be used to support incident management requirements. These plans represent the operational core of preparedness and provide mechanisms for:

- Setting priorities.
- Integrating multiple entities and functions.
- Establishing collaborative relationships.
- Ensuring that communications and other systems support the complete spectrum of incident management activities.

Types of Plans

Jurisdictions must develop several types of plans, including:

- **Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs)**, which describe how the jurisdiction will respond to emergencies.
- **Procedures**, which may include overviews, standard operating procedures, field operations guides, job aids, or other critical information needed for a response.
- **Preparedness Plans**, which describe how training needs will be identified and met, how resources will be obtained through mutual aid agreements, and the facilities and equipment required for the hazards faced by the jurisdiction.
- **Corrective Action or Mitigation Plans**, which include activities required to implement procedures based on lessons learned from actual incidents or training and exercises.
- **Recovery Plans**, which describe the actions to be taken to facilitate long-term recovery.

Training and Exercises

Organizations and personnel at all governmental levels and in the private sector must be trained to improve all-hazard incident management capability. These organizations and personnel must also participate in realistic exercises to improve integration and interoperability.

Training and Exercises and the NIMS Integration Center

To assist jurisdictions in meeting these training and exercise needs, the NIMS Integration Center will:

- Facilitate the development of and dissemination of national standards, guidelines, and protocols for incident management training.
- Facilitate the use of modeling and simulation in training and exercise programs.
- Define general training requirements and approved training courses for all NIMS users, including instructor qualifications and course completion documentation.
- Review and approve, with the assistance of key stakeholders, discipline-specific training requirements and courses.

Personnel Qualification and Certification

Under NIMS, preparedness is based on national standards for qualification and certification of emergency response personnel. Managed by the NIMS Integration Center, standards will help ensure that the participating agencies' and organizations' field personnel possess the minimum knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to perform activities safely and effectively.

Standards will include training, experience, credentialing, currency, and physical and medical fitness. Personnel who are certified to support interstate incidents will be required to meet national qualification and certification standards.

Equipment Certification

Incident managers and emergency responders rely on various types of equipment to perform mission-essential tasks. A critical component of operational preparedness is that equipment performs to certain standards, including the capability to be interoperable with equipment used by other jurisdictions.

To facilitate national equipment certification, the NIMS Integration Center will:

- Facilitate the development and/or publication of national equipment standards, guidelines, and protocols.
- Review and approve lists of emergency responder equipment that meet national requirements.

Mutual Aid Agreements and Emergency Management Assistance Compacts

Mutual aid agreements and Emergency Management Assistance Compacts (EMACs) provide the means for one jurisdiction to provide resources or other support to another jurisdiction during an incident. To facilitate the timely delivery of assistance during incidents, jurisdictions (including States) are encouraged to enter into agreements with:

- Other jurisdictions.
- Private-sector and nongovernmental organizations.
- Private organizations, such as the American Red Cross.

Publication Management

The NIMS Integration Center will manage publications dealing with domestic incident management and response. Publication management will include:

- The development of naming and numbering conventions.

- Review and certification of publications.
- Methods for publications control.
- Identification of sources and suppliers for publications and related services.
- Management of publication distribution.

The NIMS Integration Center will manage a wide range of publications—from qualification information and training courses to computer programs and best practices.