

9 Training Resources

National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) Training Recommendations for 311 System Personnel

By Michael Docterman, Program Specialist, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Since 9/11, homeland security and emergency management issues have taken a prominent position on the agendas of local governments across the country. In 2003, the Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, "Management of Domestic Incidents," called for the establishment of a single, comprehensive national incident management system. As a result, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released the National Incident Management System (NIMS) in March 2004. Revised in 2008, NIMS provides a systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work seamlessly to prepare for, prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life, property, and harm to the environment.

Training in NIMS and the Incident Command System (ICS) training is intent on getting people who don't usually work together or even know each other to seamlessly respond to and recover from a disaster either natural or man-made. While the primary audience for this training may consist of the more traditional emergency response agencies (i.e. police, fire, EMS, public utilities, etc), the NIMS and ICS courses are equally applicable to 311 and other local government call center agents as well.

As 311 systems emerge as another key component of jurisdictional emergency planning so too does the importance of properly training and qualifying its personnel. Staff should understand the terminology, response doctrine, and the command structure inherent in the ICS since they are the ones who are responsible for communicating with the on-scene personnel. They also need to be familiar with the necessity of

using plain language during a multi-agency, multi-discipline, and multi-jurisdiction incident response scenario. Call center agents are a key element so if they lack an understanding of those vital concepts that could have a detrimental effect on how efficient and effective the response will be. Adequately trained and qualified 311 staff is critical to the national implementation of NIMS. They are an equal partner in a response scenario and they owe their constituency nothing less than the maximum possible compliance.

The National Integration Center (NIC) recommends that all 311 system staff complete training in IS-100: Introduction to Incident Command System, and IS-700: National Incident Management System, an Introduction. IS-100 describes the history, features and principles, and organizational structure of the Incident Command System while IS-700 provides an introduction to NIMS. Completion of those two courses provides a basic familiarity with NIMS and ICS and also serves as the basis for the more advanced ICS training.

Staff with supervisory responsibilities should receive additional ICS training by completing IS-200: ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents. The IS-200 course is designed to enable personnel to operate efficiently during an incident or event within the Incident Command System (ICS) and provides training on and resources for personnel who are likely to assume a supervisory position within the ICS.

Supervisors and above will also benefit from the IS-800 National Response Framework, An Introduction course. This course introduces participants to the concepts and principles of the NRF document and to the roles and responsibilities of the Federal departments that support the national response.

Managers and their deputies must be prepared to integrate themselves more deeply into the ICS

One county's policy on NIMS training for 311

By Lorenzo Williams, Assistant Manager, Public Safety Communications Division, Orange County, Florida

Orange County Government, Florida, has included National Incident Management System (NIMS) training as a requirement for 311 call agents since 2004 as part of their emergency response policy. The training gives 311 staff a solid understanding of the terminology, planned procedures, and basic command structure because these employees have a key communication function during an emergency. Since flexibility is desirable and change must be managed during an emergency, having a comprehensive understanding of the county's structure and standards is important for the agents.

During an emergency or disaster, employees may be temporarily assigned to duties other than the essential functions of their regular position or assigned to work at different job sites. In Orange County, 311 employees are designated as Emergency Essential staff. They are required to perform their regular work functions during the pre-disaster, disaster, and post-disaster phases of a declared emergency.

Strategic planning initiatives have directed managers of other divisions to identify selected staff as backup 311

call agents. The managers are responsible for identifying 311 Emergency Essential backup positions, supporting the training requirements, and ensuring that employees are aware of their individual responsibilities by communicating and notifying them of their emergency work assignment prior to the declaration of an emergency. Emergency Support Function 15, which coordinates volunteers and donations in Orange County and the State of Florida, maintains a list of employees who are participating in duties related to the emergency or emergency recovery. Successful completion of specific NIMS courses and training are required before an employee is placed on the certified list.

The need to provide emergency services during a disaster or emergency situation may supersede other County operations. This scenario provides a unique opportunity for reassignment of personnel resources to critical functions. 311 must ensure that employees report with the basic skills and knowledge to execute their plans.

structure during an incident. For this reason the NIC recommends completion of the two advanced level ICS courses, ICS-300 Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents and ICS-400: Advanced ICS Command and General Staff—Complex Incidents. They prepare persons to serve as section chiefs, task force leaders, division/group supervisors, or as members of the Command and General Staff in an ICS organization.

The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) offers several courses that are not a part of the current NIMS Implementation requirements but would be useful for persons operating in a 311 system environment:

- IS-701: NIMS Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS)
- IS-704: NIMS Communications and Information Management
- IS-775: EOC Management and Operations

Course descriptions and intended audiences for all of the NIMS/ICS courses can be found in Appendix C of the Five-Year NIMS Training Plan. A full listing of the courses offered by the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) Independent Study Program can be found on the EMI website at <http://www.training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp>.

- 1 NIMS Alert 06-09: http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/NIMS_ALERT_06-09.pdf
- 2 The NIMS/ICS independent study training can be found on the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) webpage: <http://www.training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.asp>
- 3 ICS-300 and ICS-400 are not available online and must be taken in-classroom through State, Tribal, and local emergency management training programs.