

Putting the NIMS All Together

16

Introduction

Within any agency, department, or system, a proactive approach for establishing an organization-wide process of measuring and improving quality is a critical factor for continued success. Many different organizations have implemented **quality management programs** that seek to provide such a process. Examples of such programs and processes include total quality management (TQM), continuous quality improvement (CQI), benchmarking, best-evidenced approaches, and performance improvement and management programs. Such programs provide quality management through programmatic assessment and corrective actions that are taken to remedy any deficiencies identified through the assessment process.

In the same way that the ICS has undergone change and improvement over the years, the NIMS will follow a similar path of improvement. The overarching goal of the NIMS is to develop a well-integrated response system, where all of the parts have a purpose and the parts combine effectively to achieve the purpose of responding efficiently and effectively to any type of incident with a multidisciplinary, multiagency team. This process of ongoing management and maintenance will use best practices and evidence as well as information from lessons learned to continually refine and enhance the NIMS and its response partners. This process requires a proactive, constructive approach to sharing information among NIMS response community partners.

Ongoing Management and Maintenance of the NIMS

HSPD-5 requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish a mechanism for ensuring the ongoing management and maintenance of the NIMS. To sat-

isfy this requirement and to establish a system of continuous quality management and improvement, a multijurisdictional, multidisciplinary **NIMS Integration Center (NIC)** has been created. This center 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 center will develop and provide a mechanism for all NIMS partner agencies to participate directly in ongoing management. The NIMS Integration Center will consult with and solicit feedback from federal departments and agencies; state, local, and tribal incident management entities; emergency responder and incident management professional organizations; as well as private-sector and nongovernmental organizations.

The NIMS Integration Center will serve as the primary agency responsible for developing a process for ongoing revisions and updates to the NIMS (**Figure 16-1**). Changes to the NIMS and issues related to ongoing maintenance and revisions of the NIMS can be proposed by local, state, regional, and tribal entities, federal departments and agencies, private organizations (industry, volunteer, academia, and other nongovernmental groups), as well as NIMS-related professional associations (e.g., National Fire Protection Agency, League of Cities, etc.).

Concepts and Principles of NIMS Ongoing Management and Maintenance

One essential principle of the NIMS management and maintenance program is to ensure that every stakeholder in the NIMS response community has an opportunity to participate in NIMS Integration Center programs and activities. These partners include various levels of government, functional disciplines, nongovernmental organizations, and private entities.

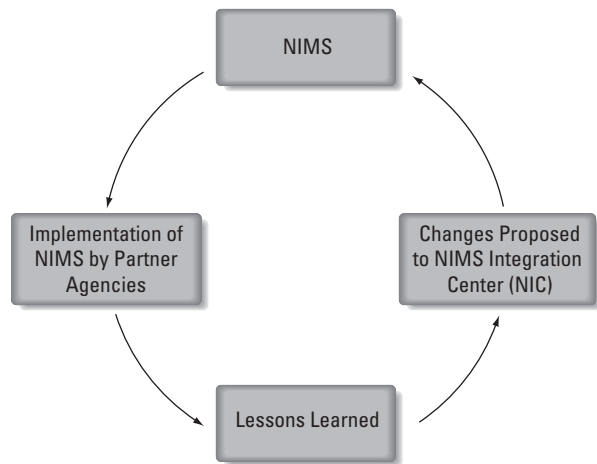


Figure 16-1 The NIMS will be subject to a process of ongoing management and maintenance. As adjustments become necessary, NIMS response community members at all jurisdictional, agency, and professional levels can submit proposed changes to the NIMS Integration Center for consideration, approval, and publication.

To accomplish this goal, the NIMS Integration Center, established in June of 2004 by the DHS, will maintain appropriate liaisons with response community partners and private organizations.

The NIMS management and maintenance process relies heavily on lessons learned from actual incidents and domestic incident management training and exercises, as well as recognized best practices across jurisdictions and functional disciplines. Currently, the NIMS Integration Center hosts a Web site that provides after-action reports and a host of reports outlining the experiences of other responders and agencies from actual events, exercises, and drills that can be accessed by NIMS partners.

Structure and Process of Ongoing Management and Maintenance of the NIMS

Proposed changes to the NIMS will be submitted to the NIMS Integration Center for consideration, approval, and publication. These changes over time will likely include new certifications for responders, new or updated training materials, policy and procedural changes, and revisions to the overall system. The Secretary of Homeland Security has ultimate authority and responsibility for publishing revisions and modifications to NIMS-related documents. This includes sup-

plementary standards, procedures, and other materials, in coordination with all NIMS response community partners with incident management and emergency responder responsibilities, expertise, and experience.

Responsibilities of the NIMS Integration Center

Education and Training

The NIMS Integration Center is responsible for developing a national program for NIMS education and awareness. The education and awareness program will include materials for specific instruction on the purpose and content of the NIMS in general. The NIMS Integration Center will guide the definition of general training requirements and the development of national-level training standards and course curricula associated with the NIMS, including the following: (1) the use of modeling and simulation capabilities for training and exercise programs, (2) field-based training, specification of mission-essential tasks, requirements for specialized instruction and instructor training; and (3) course-completion documentation for all NIMS users. Another responsibility will include facilitating the development and publication of materials (e.g., training tools, supplementary documentation, and desk guides).

Standards, Protocols, and Guidelines

The NIMS Integration Center will also promote the compatibility of standards, protocols, and guidelines between national-level agencies as well as those developed by other public, private, and/or professional groups for the NIMS. These standards will allow for universal templates to support implementation and continuous refinement of the NIMS and will include guidelines and protocols for incident management training and exercises. The NIMS Integration Center will assist in developing assessment criteria for the various components of the NIMS, as well as compliance requirements and time lines. The NIMS Integration Center also is responsible for the development of national standards and the establishment and maintenance of a publication management system for documents supporting the NIMS, including the development or coordination of general publications for all NIMS users and their distribution via a NIMS publication management system.

Certification Standards

The NIMS Integration Center will ensure the development and publication of national standards, guidelines, and protocols for the qualification and certification of emergency responder and incident management personnel. This includes reviewing and approving (with the assistance of national professional organizations and with input from federal, state, local, tribal, private-sector, and nongovernmental entities) discipline-specific qualification and certification requirements. Much of this will be developed based on information submitted by emergency responders and incident management organizations and associations. The NIMS Integration Center also will oversee the establishment of a documentation and database system to track the qualification, certification, and credentialing of emergency responders, incident management personnel, and organizations to provide incident managers with the detailed qualification, experience, and training information needed to credential personnel for prescribed “national” incident management positions. This system will provide coordination of minimum professional certification standards as well as a credentialing system that can be used nationwide.

Interoperability Standards

A core element of successful incident response and management is the ability of all agencies and responders to operate in conjunction with each other. This will require the establishment of standards for the performance, compatibility, and interoperability of incident management and response equipment and communications systems. The NIMS Integration Center is charged with facilitating, in coordination with standards-making, certifying, and accrediting organizations and all NIMS response community partners, the development and publica-

tion of national standards, guidelines, and protocols for equipment certification. This includes reviewing and approving lists of equipment that meet these established equipment certification requirements and collaborating with organizations responsible for emergency responder equipment evaluation and testing. A final ongoing step is facilitating the development and distribution of national standards for the typing of resources.

Information Sharing

The NIMS Integration Center is responsible for the development and maintenance of an information framework that will guide the development of NIMS information systems, including the development of data standards for the following: incident notification and situation reports, status reporting, data analysis, geospatial information, wireless communications, identification and authentication, and incident reports. **Information sharing** will be further enhanced by the establishment and maintenance of a repository and clearinghouse for reports and lessons learned from actual incidents, training, and exercises, as well as for best practices, model structures, and model processes for NIMS-related functions.

Supporting Technology

The NIMS Integration Center will coordinate the establishment of technical and technology standards for NIMS users in concert with the **Undersecretary for Science and Technology** of the DHS and recognized standards development organizations. These standards will be integrated into the national research and development agenda for the incident management science and technology needs of departments, agencies, disciplines, private-sector, and nongovernmental organizations operating within the NIMS at all levels.

Wrap-up

Summary

- The management and maintenance of NIMS is a continuous process. It is important for all NIMS response community partners to realize that the NIMS development will be changed and refined over the years to come.
- The NIMS Integration Center is the central, national coordinating body that ensures that incident response, management, recovery, and planning are efficient and effective across all disciplines, jurisdictions, and agencies.
- The NIMS process of ongoing management and maintenance requires quality management through systemwide assessment and corrective actions that are taken to remedy any deficiencies that may be identified. Proposed changes to NIMS will be submitted to the NIMS Integration Center for consideration, approval, and publication.
- The NIMS Integration Center is responsible for the following:
 - Developing a national program for NIMS education and awareness
 - Ensuring compatibility of standards, protocols, and guidelines
 - Developing and publishing national standards, guidelines, and protocols for the qualification and certification of emergency responders and incident management personnel
 - Establishing standards for the performance, compatibility, and interoperability of incident management and response equipment
 - Developing data standards for incident notification, situation reports, geospatial information, and communications
 - Establishing technical and technology standards for NIMS users
- Ongoing management, maintenance, and continuous quality improvement depend on the input and participation of all NIMS response community members at all jurisdictional, agency, and professional levels.

Glossary

Information sharing The development of a framework connecting various information systems, including incident notification and situation reports, status reporting, data analysis, geospatial information, wireless communications, and incident reports.

Performance improvement and management programs A program that provides quality management through assessment and corrective actions to remedy any deficiencies identified through the assessment process.

Quality management programs A program that provides quality management through assessment and corrective actions to remedy any deficiencies identified through the assessment process.

Undersecretary for Science and Technology The position within the DHS responsible for working with the NIMS Integration Center to coordinate the establishment of technical and technology standards for NIMS users.