

## NIMS IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES FOR SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

NIMS uses a core set of concepts, principles, procedures, processes, standards, and terminology that may all be integrated with school emergency management practices. The collective use of NIMS across *all* local incident response agencies, including K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs), and disciplines creates a common operating picture, promoting mutual goals and responsibilities, and ultimately, more efficient and effective response services. Furthermore, in the event of a large-scale incident crossing multiple jurisdictions and disciplines, NIMS unites all response teams across all of the participating jurisdictions and facilitates effective and appropriate assistance from outlying communities when needed based on the size and complexity of the incident.

For more information on NIMS see the REMS TA Center publication, *ERCExpress* —*National Incident Management System* accessible at <http://rems.ed.gov/docs/NIMS.pdf>.

### NIMS COMPLIANCE FOR SCHOOLS AND IHEs

All K-12 schools and IHEs — urban, suburban, and rural; large and small — receiving Federal preparedness monies through the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and/or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are required to support the implementation of NIMS. For example, award recipients of ED's Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) and Emergency Management for Higher Education (EMHE) grants are required to implement, in conjunction with community partners, identified NIMS compliance activities. Furthermore, many State and local jurisdictions are requiring schools to complete these activities to ensure greater communication between community partners and schools as well as to provide for more efficient responses to school-based incidents. Because all schools and IHEs are integral components of every community and its government, DHS and ED recommend all schools and IHEs — regardless of whether they are recipients of Federal preparedness funds — implement NIMS.

U.S. Department of Education's *NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education* outlines those actions schools must take in order to 1.) Fulfill NIMS compliance requirements; 2.) Integrate NIMS into the educational setting; and 3.) Connect schools and campuses to their community partners. Although school and IHE officials are not tasked to be highly-trained, first-response, emergency management personnel, they play a vital role in the process; schools provide critical command and management directives in advance of a first response agency's arrival. Additionally, NIMS benefits the whole community and, in order to be effective, relies on all community agencies' implementation. Therefore, school adoption of NIMS and completion of *NIMS Implementation Activities for K-12 Schools and Institutions of Higher Education* mutually benefits schools and IHEs, its partners, and the greater community.

NIMS is applicable and suitable for all K-12 schools and IHEs — those in rural and urban settings, large and small, and those using traditional, alternative, and charter models as well as for local education agencies (LEAs), State education agencies (SEAs), regional, and intermediate units operating the schools. Building from the already established interdependent roles of government and schools, the NIMS goals are achieved through partnerships with community partners (e.g.,

local government officials, fire and rescue officials, emergency medical service providers, law enforcement, and public and mental health personnel).

## SCHOOL AND HIGHER EDUCATION EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Each school day, our nation's schools, administrators, teachers, and staff are entrusted to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for more than 55 million elementary and secondary students. Additionally, more than 15 million students attend postsecondary degree-granting institutions in the United States annually. To protect students, staff, and visitors day-to-day as well as in the event of an emergency, schools and IHEs should work with local government and community emergency response agencies in advance of any potential emergencies.

Each year, natural threats and risks such as weather-related events (e.g., wild fires, hurricanes) and public health threats (e.g., Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, [MRSA]) and even food-borne incidents can threaten the entire school or campus community. Schools and IHEs are not immune from accidents, intruders, crime, acts of violence, or the impacts of events taking place in the surrounding community. Schools and IHEs can take steps, in collaboration with their local government and community partners, to prevent and mitigate potential incidents as well as to prepare for, respond to, and recover from those that are unavoidable.

Schools and IHEs are tasked with providing a safe environment for teaching and learning, and therefore, must be integrated with the local, State, tribal, and Federal agencies who contribute to the well-being, health, safety, and security of the whole community. Lessons learned from recent school incidents (on K-12 and IHE campuses alike) show that school officials *and* first responders must both be knowledgeable and be trained to implement pre-established practices and procedures. If a school-based incident occurs, school personnel are the immediate responders — they provide first-aid, notify community response partners, and give command and management directives — all in advance of first response arrival.

School and campus staff members must be ready — ready to provide immediate and effective response, ready to transfer command to the local response agency's lead, and ready to work with the response agencies and teams. This readiness promotes safety and efficiency as well as increases the likelihood that the specific objectives of the incident are achieved. School and IHE officials and community officials should continually prepare and practice a seamless, coordinated response using the standard Federal terminology and approach to incident management; school and IHE officials should use National Incident Management System (NIMS).

## NIMS IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES FOR SCHOOLS

NIMS is the United States' single, comprehensive system for managing domestic incidents and is suitable for *all* schools and educational institutions to implement throughout all phases of school emergency management: 1) Prevention-Mitigation; 2) Preparedness; 3) Response; and 4) Recovery. NIMS was established March 1, 2004, following the Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 (HSPD-5) Management of Domestic Incidents<sup>1</sup>. NIMS puts forth one comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> The Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 5, Management of Domestic Incidents is accessible at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030228-9.html>

approach and builds a structure for private and public entities including Federal, State, territory, tribal and local jurisdictions to effectively, and collaboratively manage incidents. NIMS was designed to include State, regional, and local educational entities.

NIMS uses a core set of concepts, principles, procedures, processes, standards, and terminology that all may be integrated with school emergency management practices. The collective use of NIMS across *all* local incident response agencies (including K-12 schools and IHEs) and disciplines creates a common operating picture, promoting mutual goals and responsibilities, and ultimately, a more efficient and effective response. Furthermore, in the event of a large-scale incident crossing multiple jurisdictions and disciplines, NIMS is critical. In this scenario, the common use of NIMS unites all the response teams from all of the participating jurisdictions. The systematic approach of NIMS facilitates effective and appropriate assistance from outlying communities when needed based on the size and complexity of the incident.

School implementation of NIMS formalizes many of the partnerships, procedures, and activities already taking place at schools and on campuses around the nation. By fulfilling the *NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education*, educational entities will become compliant; formalizing existing effective practices; and be stronger in the event of an emergency incident. The *NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education* identifies those NIMS items schools should fulfill in close coordination with their community partners. Fulfilling NIMS implementation activities is a process for which schools may take steps to accomplish over time with their partners.

### **Activity 1: Adopt NIMS at the school and campus community level.**

K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) support the successful adoption of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) at the school and campus community level. This includes all applicable organizational and operational offices, departments, committees, and teams within the educational entity, and is not limited by geographical locations such as rural, urban, or suburban locations.

#### **Association to NIMS**

HSPD-5 requires NIMS adoption and implementation by all local jurisdictional levels and functional disciplines for use across the full spectrum of potential incidents and hazard scenarios. NIMS defines local jurisdictions and includes schools, school districts, and IHEs. Although schools and IHEs are not traditional response organizations, they have immediate and critical roles in response such as providing command and management directives until local first responders arrive.

When education and community response organizations (e.g., local emergency management authority, law enforcement, fire personnel, public and mental health officials) adopt NIMS, they are all taking on an uniform and systematic approach and integrating processes and methods into one unified framework. The NIMS (December 2008) structure features five integrated components that are the foundation of its systematic approach for responding to incidents: 1.) Preparedness; 2.) Communications and Information Management; 3.) Resource Management; 4.) Command and Management; 5.) Ongoing Management and Maintenance (which now includes Supporting Technology and the NIMS Incident Management Systems Integration Division). The NIMS framework forms the basis for interoperability and compatibility for all agencies with a key role in emergency management. Through joint planning, training, exercises, and evaluation activities, adoption of NIMS enables a diverse set of public and private organizations, including schools and IHEs, to conduct well-integrated and effective incident response operations.

#### **Implementation Guidance**

Since all K-12 schools and IHEs have a critical role in emergency management, it is important that they adopt NIMS at the organizational and operational levels and within all appropriate offices, departments, committees, and teams. The NIMS framework and its five components provide the necessary tools for developing an integrated school and campus emergency management program within the community's program.

NIMS adoption and implementation must be achieved in close coordination with the local government and with recognition of the first-responder capabilities held by the IHE, district and school, and the local government. As schools and IHEs are not traditional response organizations, first-responder services may typically be provided to schools and IHEs by local fire and rescue departments, emergency medical service providers, and law enforcement agencies. This traditional relationship must be acknowledged as schools and IHEs implement NIMS in coordination with community partners and collaborate on a NIMS compliance plan for both the local government

and the local education agency (LEA) or IHE. LEA/IHE participation in the NIMS preparedness program of the local government is essential in ensuring that requisite first-responder services are delivered to schools and campuses in a timely and effective manner.

When adopting NIMS, it is also important for education leadership to provide guidance to the campus community. IHEs, regional education agencies, State and local education agencies, and district boards of education can all adopt NIMS at the macro level, and then can provide adoption guidance to their individual school and campus sites. For example, applicable college and university offices managed under the Office of the President or the Office of the Provost may adopt NIMS in partnership with the relevant State and local governments. The same leadership should then provide guidance with its affiliated schools and systems, such as satellite campuses, and auxiliary buildings. Guidance may include timelines, strategies for implementation, and models for partner agreements.

**Example:** A State-managed university system should provide leadership, guidance, and support to its related campus and extension sites by facilitating and role-modeling adoption of NIMS and integration with the local emergency management agencies.

**Example:** Local school districts should facilitate each of their schools' adoption of NIMS and work in close collaboration with their community partners to conduct the implementation activities.

NIMS adoption should be formalized and documented through an authoritative rulemaking structure (e.g., board of education, board of regents) to be considered officially supporting the implementation of NIMS. The formal adoption should be continuous or include a process for renewing the adoption. For example, a school district wishing to formalize their NIMS adoption may obtain an annual Resolution from their School Board to provide formal documentation.

When applicable, as part of NIMS FY 2008 requirements, the educational entity should promote adoption by related partnerships and associations, such as their jurisdictional nonpublic education entities. For example, Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) grantees, who are required to provide equitable access to private schools within their jurisdictional boundaries, should provide nonpublic schools with the same leadership, guidance, and training opportunities for NIMS implementation, as are provided to their public schools.

**Sample activities demonstrating that schools and IHEs are formally adopting NIMS include:**

Formally adopting NIMS as the all-hazards incident management system at the school and campus community level via the lead authoritative rulemaking structure;  
Including a process for renewal if applicable; and  
Encouraging partners to document their adoption of NIMS.

*NIMS Implementation Activities for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education***Activity 2: Designate and maintain a *Single Point of Contact* to serve as principal coordinator for NIMS implementation at the school- and campus-community level.**

Once an educational entity has formally adopted NIMS, K-12 schools and higher education institution (IHE) designate a NIMS Single Point of Contact (NIMS POC) to serve as the principal coordinator for the organization's administrative and operational offices, departments, committees, and teams.

**Association to NIMS**

Adoption of NIMS puts forth the core set of concepts, principles, procedures, organizational processes, and terminology to build the national unified approach to incident response across the full spectrum of potential incidents and hazards scenarios. Additionally, NIMS adoption supports the national framework to collectively manage incidents by public agencies and private entities of all jurisdictional levels and disciplines using the same system.

One key attribute of NIMS is its use of the NIMS POC within each entity. The NIMS POC is a facilitation and coordination role helping to ensure the consistent adoption and implementation of NIMS by community response organizations, both internally and externally with partners. The NIMS POC position includes roles and responsibilities to facilitate NIMS adoption and integration. The NIMS POC is also responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and communicating NIMS implementation.

The NIMS POC is primarily responsible for communicating and coordinating NIMS activities internally in order to help facilitate and reinforce consistent NIMS adoption. The NIMS POC helps ensure NIMS implementation activities are put forth throughout the four phases (Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery) of school and IHE emergency management.

The NIMS POC also works with external partners (including the local emergency management authority and additional community response partners) as a means for ensuring seamless integration with partners; the NIMS POC serves as the single point of contact during emergency management activities to promote effective coordination and communication of NIMS implementation.

**Implementation Guidance**

Schools and IHEs that adopt and implement NIMS at the organizational and operational levels as well as within all appropriate offices, departments, committees, and teams should designate a NIMS POC. The NIMS POC role is designed to help ensure effective and consistent integration of NIMS both within the educational entity as well as when a district, school, or IHE partners with local community agencies such as local emergency management, law enforcement, and fire agencies. Schools' and IHEs' designation of a NIMS POC will support the implementation of NIMS, its systematic approach, and the pre-determined set of scalable response actions with community partners. The NIMS POC's name could be exchanged with partner NIMS POCs

affiliated via Memoranda of Agreement or partner agreements within each community to further coordinate implementation of NIMS at the local or regional levels.

Based on the responsibilities, the role of the NIMS POC should be assigned to a leadership position that has authority to supervise NIMS adoption and implementation as a means for ensuring it is consistently applied by the district, school, or IHE administrative and operational offices, departments, committees, and teams.

The designation should be attached to a leadership position that has the capacity to 1.) Ensure NIMS is well integrated into the entity's existing processes, procedures, and reporting activities, 2.) Conduct outreach activities on behalf of the school or IHE with community partners, and 3.) Report NIMS activities as a component of performance reviews. Depending upon the unique school, district, or IHE community, the role and responsibilities of the NIMS POC may vary as well as the position of the individual to which this role is assigned.

Furthermore, when applicable, some K-12 schools or IHEs may want to designate additional internal NIMS POCs at secondary and tertiary levels. For example, at the district level, the NIMS POC may elect to establish building-level NIMS POC positions, responsible for facilitating the communication, coordination, and oversight responsibilities from the district to the building level. Another example would be a large IHE; an IHE may consider designating secondary NIMS POCs at the departmental levels to facilitate implementation. (NOTE: These might be the same individuals that are serving as the campus or school emergency management team leads.)

As FY 2009 REMS and Emergency Management for Higher Education (EMHE) grantees, the Project Directors must ensure a NIMS POC is designated and formalized. The school or IHE emergency management team should ensure the NIMS POC contact information is shared internally and with external partners. When documenting NIMS implementation activities, Project Directors should document the date of designation as well as the date of internal and external announcement.

**Sample activities demonstrating how schools and IHEs have designated a NIMS Single POC include:**

- Establishing the position and identifying an individual who will serve as the NIMS POC;
- Sharing the current NIMS POC's name, telephone number, email address, and physical address with all of the organization's administrative and operational offices, departments, committees, and teams; and
- Sharing the current NIMS POC's name, telephone number, email address, and physical address with local emergency management authority and community response partners.

**Activity 3: Ensure that Federal preparedness awards to the school- and campus-community level support the implementation of NIMS.**

K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) ensure that all Federal preparedness awards to the school- and campus-community level support the implementation of NIMS.

**Association to NIMS**

To support the institutionalization of NIMS by all jurisdictions and all disciplines, those districts, schools, and IHEs receiving Federal preparedness funding are required to implement NIMS. NIMS adoption and implementation by all local jurisdictional levels and functional disciplines are intended to support the comprehensive, nationwide incident management system. All Federal preparedness awards and related training, resources, and activities are designed to support the implementation of NIMS by the recipient, the grantee. All recipients of Federal preparedness funds are required to ensure that all grant-supported activities are consistent with the implementation of NIMS.

The U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) discretionary grant awards as well as the Emergency Management for Higher Education (EMHE) discretionary grant awards qualify as Federal preparedness funding programs. As recipients of Federal preparedness funds, REMS and EMHE grantees must ensure that NIMS implementation is supported.

**Implementation Guidance**

Federal preparedness funding enhances school and IHE capacity throughout the four phases of school and IHE emergency management (Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery). Preparedness monies assist efforts to achieve training objectives, design planning activities, and design incident management public information processes as a part of broad comprehensive preparedness efforts. As Federal preparedness grant recipients, REMS and EMHE grantees must ensure funds support NIMS adoption and implementation at the school- and campus-community levels.

This responsibility can be addressed by an administrative office or by the IHE or school emergency management team leadership. For example, as part of both the REMS and EMHE grant application processes, each grantee's Authorized Representative (AR) provided a signed assurance that, as a grantee, the LEA or IHE will support the implementation of NIMS. The educational institution's AR can make assurances that the grantee's organization will be accountable both for the appropriate use of funds awarded and for the performance of the grant-supported project. The AR is an individual who is able to commit the district to financial agreements, such as the award and administration of the REMS and EMHE grants. The education entity can also create a mechanism in its proposal review process to ensure that additional proposals for Federal preparedness funds support the implementation of NIMS.



**Sample activities demonstrating that an LEA or IHE receiving Federal preparedness funds is ensuring all awards support the implementation of NIMS include:**

- The authorized representative provides an assurance that NIMS implementation activities will be supported by all Federal preparedness award programs, including REMS, EMHE, and other Federal preparedness grants; and
- NIMS implementation activities are integrated into all Federal preparedness awards project designs.

*NIMS Implementation Activities For Schools and Institutions of Higher Education*

**Activity 4: Routinely include NIMS implementation activities in all audits associated with Federal preparedness awards.**

This activity is not applicable to K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) receiving ED funds.

**Activity 5: Develop, implement, and refine emergency management plans to incorporate NIMS and reflect the National Response Framework (NRF).**

K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) work closely with community partners to develop, implement, and refine emergency management plans to incorporate NIMS components, principles, and policies as well as reflect the National Response Framework (NRF).

**Association to NIMS**

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5) puts forth the NIMS and the National Response Framework (NRF) to improve the nation's all-hazards incident management and response capabilities at all levels, and by all disciplines. The NRF is always in effect and works to ensure the nation is continually ready to coordinate assistance without formal activation. The NIMS creates command and management supports and the NRF serves as the key framework for building support to the nation in the event of an emergency incident.

NIMS and NRF are companions, and both extend flexible, scalable, and adaptable coordinating structures to align key roles and responsibilities across jurisdictions, throughout the nation using an all-hazards approach. Together, the NIMS and the NRF integrate the capabilities and resources of various governmental jurisdictions, incident management and emergency response disciplines, non-governmental organizations, and the private-sector into a cohesive, coordinated, and seamless national framework for domestic incident management, before, during and after an emergency. The NRF employs the NIMS standardized structures and tools that enable a unified approach to be effective both on scene and at the emergency operations centers.

The NRF is comprised of the core document, the Emergency Support Functions (ESF), Support, and Incident Annexes, as well as the Partner Guides. The core document describes the doctrine that guides our national response, roles and responsibilities, response actions, response organizations, and planning requirements to achieve an effective national response to any incident that occurs. Together, these five principles of operation constitute national response doctrine: engaged partnerships, tiered response, scalable, flexible and adaptable operational capabilities, unity of effort through unified command, and readiness to act. Furthermore, the NRF encourages a higher level of readiness through planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, and applying lessons learned.

The NRF framework also puts forth the Emergency Support Function Annexes, Support Annexes, Incident Annexes, and Partner Guides as described below:

- **Emergency Support Function (ESF) Annexes:** Organize resources and capabilities into functional areas that are most frequently needed in a national response (e.g., Transportation, Firefighting, Mass Care).
- **Support Annexes:** Describe essential supporting aspects that are common to all incidents (e.g., Financial Management, Volunteer and Donations Management, Private-Sector Coordination).

- **Incident Annexes:** Address the unique aspects of how we respond to seven broad incident categories (i.e., Biological, Catastrophic, Food and Agriculture, Nuclear/Radiological, Cyber, Mass Evacuation, and Terrorism).
- **Partner Guides:** Provide ready references describing key roles and actions for local, tribal, State, Federal, and private-sector response partners.

Additional information and guidance supporting the NRF are accessible at NRF Resource Center <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/>.

The school and IHE emergency management plan should document and describe any organizational structures, roles and responsibilities, policies, and protocols for providing emergency support as it relates to the NRF and their collaborative efforts with community partners such as the local emergency management authority. Schools and IHEs are not likely to be tasked with NRF management responsibilities; however, some may have support roles and responsibilities, depending upon their local community.

### Implementation Guidance

NIMS and NRF are interrelated and both work to build all-hazards emergency management capacity. By integrating the NIMS components, principles, and policies and NRF into planning activities and continually refining the plan, schools and IHEs working collaboratively can help facilitate a coordinated response; hasten the start of recovery activities; and drive decisions on prevention and mitigation efforts or risk-based preparedness measures for specific hazards.

Building from the NIMS and NRF frameworks, schools and campuses should work with the community partners and the local emergency management authorities to ensure they are not only continually ready to activate an all-hazards response, but also are continually compatible with partnering response entities across multiple jurisdictions and disciplines. Using the components, principles, and policies articulated in NIMS and NRF, schools and IHEs can engage community partners to develop and refine site-specific school and campus emergency management plans that provide strategies and appropriate timelines for providing training, practice, and enhancement opportunities.

NIMS and NRF also emphasize ongoing plan maintenance and continual improvement. School and campus emergency management teams should collaboratively review and update plans with partners. The plans should reflect the tenets for continual improvement through training, exercises, and debriefing activities and document the relationships with community partners.

The district, school, and IHE emergency management program should be a collaborative effort and be continually supported through close coordination with community partners. Although schools, districts, and IHEs may not be tasked with leadership roles under the NRF, depending upon their broader community, they may serve as critical team members and be tasked with related, supportive roles and responsibilities. Therefore, schools, districts, and IHEs, in close coordination with their community partners should include processes for continually incorporating NIMS and NRF components, principles, and policies such as working with community partners to assess risk, continually refining the plan, conducting training and exercises, and securing partnership agreements for resource management.

Participation in ESF activities reflects the nature of the regional, state, or local emergency management initiatives; takes into consideration the unique role, capacity, and resources of each entity, including schools and IHEs, and acknowledges the traditional relationship schools have with response service agencies. Although most schools and IHEs may not have specific support roles and responsibilities under the NRF, many of its principles (e.g., practice, training, continual improvement) can be integrated into school emergency management programs.

The following sample activities build upon the NIMS and NRF framework and work to build readiness and capacity of schools and IHEs in close coordination with local traditional response agencies:

- Scheduling and conducting plan review meetings with community partners;
- Providing ongoing training to support the implementation and continual improvement of the plan;
- Designing, conducting, and evaluating collaborative emergency exercises that include testing specific components of the plan and its capabilities;
- Leading debriefing meetings and writing after-action reports that put forth tangible activities and timelines for updating the plan; and
- Submitting the revised plan to the local community government.

Schools and IHEs, regardless of Federal awards, may also have roles and responsibilities under the NRF by nature of the regional, state, or local emergency management initiatives designed to support the whole community, including educational entities, their students, and their staff. Both the REMS and EMHE discretionary grant programs' priorities as well as OSDFS resources put forth key NIMS and NRF principles. As the LEA or IHE reviews and revises its emergency management plans, officials can incorporate the key principals of the NIMS and NRF such as continual improvement based on exercises and training with community partners.

**Sample activities demonstrating that K-12 schools and IHEs develop, implement, and refine emergency management plans to incorporate NIMS and reflect the National Response Framework (NRF) include:**

- Coordinating with State and local government and or emergency management coordinating body on issues such as resource management, support functions, mutual aid, etc.;
- Utilizing the four phases of school and IHE emergency management framework to create, strengthen, or improve campus, school, and district plans with community partners; and
- Planning for improvement through ongoing training of personnel, exercises, and continual review of policies and procedures that support the NIMS and NRF.

### **Activity 6 – Participate in and promote mutual aid agreements.**

Schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) participate in and promote interagency partnerships and mutual aid agreements to include agreements with public and private sector and/or non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

#### **Association to NIMS**

Assistance agreements are established by districts, schools, and IHEs with the public and private sector and/or nongovernmental organizations to assist and/or supply personnel, equipment, supplies, facilities, services (i.e. transportation, mental health services), etc. There are a variety of assistance agreements such as Mutual Aid Agreements (MAA), Memorandums of Understanding and/or Agreement, and partnership agreements. These agreements need to be authorized by officials (e.g., authorized representative, legal counsel) from each of the participating agencies and jurisdictions.

Mutual aid is a legal agreement between two or more entities in which they agree to assist one another when their respective resources cannot meet demands. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and/or Agreement (MOA) are voluntary commitments exercised at the discretion of the participating entities based on partnerships' specific needs and available resources to meet demands. The signed agreements reflect each partner's roles and responsibilities for providing assistance.

#### **Examples of mutual aid agreements include:**

- **Direct One-on-One Mutual Aid:** resources are obtained from local entities.
- **State Coordinated Mutual Aid:** once local and direct one-on-one mutual aid resources have been exhausted, schools and IHEs can coordinate with local emergency management who can request additional resources through the state emergency management agency.
- **Interstate Mutual Aid:** once State coordinated mutual aid resources have been exhausted, State emergency management can activate Emergency Mutual Aid Compact (EMAC). EMAC is more readily available when conditions for providing assistance have been established prior to an event.

#### **Examples of partner agreements include:**

- **REMS and EMHE Partner Agreements:** Submitted as part of the application process, the REMS and EMHE partner agreements detail the participation of the school district and community-based partners. The agreements should include a description of each partner's roles and responsibilities in improving and strengthening emergency management plans at the LEA and school level, or at the campus and building level. The partnership agreement should include the partners' role during response and any assistance the partner might provide.

Partners can include the local emergency management authority, law enforcement and fire personnel, public safety, public health agency, mental health agency, the head of the local government, and personnel from other entities that have a direct role supporting and enhancing emergency management and response for the campus. Additionally, partners can include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army and may be included in Mutual Aid Agreements with LEAs and IHEs.

### **Implementation Guidance**

Under the leadership of the Authorized Representative and legal counsel, schools and IHEs should establish written agreements that address mutual assistance and or mutual aid with neighboring districts and campuses, community public and mental health agencies, law enforcement and fire agencies, healthcare systems, transportation service providers, and relevant NGOs. Established agreements should be shared with local emergency management prior to an incident occurring and should detail the roles and responsibilities specific to each individual partner as opposed to generic statements of support. The responsibilities listed should connect directly to activities and objectives outlined in the school and campus emergency management plan.

The use of agreements and the mutual aid system is not a replacement for any individual district, school, or campus emergency planning; rather, it will provide schools or IHEs with additional resources to build their capacity during response and recovery from an incident if needed. It is intended to reinforce each partner's commitment to the sustainability and improvement of the plan as well as each partner's role in response.

### **Agreements demonstrating mutual assistance aid may include:**

- Definitions of key terms used in the agreement;
- Roles and responsibilities of individual parties;
- Procedures for requesting and providing assistance;
- Procedures, authorities, and rules for payment, reimbursement, and allocation of costs;
- Notification procedures;
- Protocols for interoperable communications processes and systems;
- Relationships with other agreements among jurisdictions;
- Workers compensation;
- Treatment of liability and immunity;
- Recognition of qualifications and certifications; and
- Sharing agreements, as required.

As part of the application process for participation in the REMS and EMHE programs, applicants submit partnership agreements detailing various partner's roles in developing and supporting the emergency management planning process at the school or IHE. IHE. As the agreements are reviewed and enhanced over time, it is recommended that parties review the terms to ensure they detail assistance responsibilities during response. For example, if schools are relying upon a specific set of personnel or resources during response from a partner, these should be identified in the agreements. Likewise, if a community is relying on a school or IHE for resources or facilities during response, these should be identified in the agreement. Furthermore, if for example, a school facility is integrated with a community's response and shelter plans, and it is facilitated through a

partnership with a nongovernmental organization such as the Red Cross, all parties' roles and responsibilities should be detailed.

When applicable, school and IHE leadership should develop and participate in mutual aid assistance agreements with partners. FEMA offers resources and guidance for their development at <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/Preparedness.shtm#item2>. For example, FY 2010 Emergency Management for Higher Education (EMHE) grantees will be required to develop or update a series of memorandum of agreements (MOAs) during their grant periods. These MOAs should detail any key elements of their mutual aid assistance agreements with their partners.

**Sample activities demonstrating schools or IHEs participate in and promote interagency mutual aid agreements and partnerships agreements include:**

- Coordinating through partnerships with local law enforcement, public safety or emergency management, public health, mental health agencies, and local governments;
- When formalizing partnerships with signed agreements partners can detail response and assistance roles and; and,
- Sharing resources during an actual emergency.



**PREPAREDNESS: TRAINING**  
**Key Personnel and NIMS Training**  
*NIMS Implementation Activities For Schools and Institutions of Higher Education*

**Activity 7: Use existing resources such as programs, personnel, partners, and training facilities to coordinate and deliver NIMS training requirements.**

K-12 schools and IHEs will use existing resources such as programs, personnel, partners, and training facilities to coordinate and deliver NIMS training.

**Association to NIMS**

NIMS equips multiple jurisdictions and disciplines with a diverse and varied set of roles, responsibilities, and resources throughout all phases of the IHE and school emergency management cycle. The NIMS unifying framework is built upon the mutual goals and responsibilities shared by all agencies.

NIMS preparedness and training activities validate and maintain plans, policies, and procedures. Plans form the basis of training and should be exercised periodically to ensure that all individuals involved in response are able to execute their assigned roles and tasks in the event of an emergency. Therefore, training opportunities should closely mimic potential and probable all-hazards scenarios and use actual programs, processes, partners, equipments, etc, as a means to maximize training opportunities, capture current capacity, and identify gaps in the plans. Use of existing resources, both internal resources and partner resources, will not only increase the quality of training delivered and knowledge outcomes, but will also increase effective response through familiarity by response officials.

**Implementation Guidance**

Training opportunities are designed to improve incident response through knowledge and integration of 1.) NIMS and its key concepts and principles, and 2.) the emergency management plan and its related processes and protocols.

School and IHE emergency management teams should look for opportunities to integrate existing resources such as personnel, facilities, and equipment into all training opportunities as a means to increase familiarity with those resources. Integrating these resources may help conserve resources, create a more realistic training environment, foster positive working relationships, and increase familiarity of the additional resources needed and used during a response. Therefore, some schools and IHEs may be able to incorporate NIMS training requirements with existing training requirements, programs, and delivery methods. For example, some schools and IHEs might expand traditional professional development programs (such as new teacher orientation) to include NIMS training, integrate NIMS training with initial training activities at the launch of the academic year, or include NIMS training as a requirement of a related role or responsibility.

Schools and IHEs can pursue opportunities to participate in State and local training programs or leverage the knowledge and expertise of their community partners as they design the training plan

and facilitate the provision of training opportunities for key personnel. For example, many State, tribal, and local emergency management agencies administer in-person training programs.

Because K-12 schools' and IHEs' mission and primary functions differ from those of traditional response agencies, they present a unique set of resources that may be integrated into training efforts and activities. Although schools and campuses vary across the nation and from community to community, some may have resources that can be of support to the broader emergency management discipline, including local emergency management agencies/authorities. For example, school and IHEs facilities may be available during non-instructional hours and days offering classrooms for training or even an empty building which will directly increase familiarity in the event of an emergency. Additionally, school and IHE classrooms are designed and equipped to facilitate teaching and learning and could be equally valuable for training opportunities (for example, many have large computer labs which can be used to administer independent study courses on NIMS).

**Sample activities demonstrating that schools and IHEs use existing resources such as programs, personnel, partners, and training facilities to coordinate and deliver NIMS training requirements include:**

- Participating in existing State, tribal, and local emergency management training programs;
- Providing avenues for key personnel to complete independent study courses on NIMS and the incident command system (ICS); and
- Identifying and inventorying existing resources such as programs, personnel, partners, and training facilities to support the coordination and delivery NIMS training requirements.

**PREPAREDNESS: TRAINING**  
**Key Personnel and NIMS Training**  
*NIMS Implementation Activities For Schools and Institutions of Higher Education*

**Activities 8-13 –School and campus “key personnel” complete NIMS training.**

Key K-12 school and campus personnel complete, as applicable, NIMS training courses: NIMS: IS-700 NIMS; IS-800 National Response Framework (NRF); IS-100 (including SC, and HE) Introduction to ICS; IS-200 ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents; ICS-300 Intermediate ICS; and ICS-400 Advanced ICS.

**Association to NIMS**

Training is important to comprehensive implementation of at the Federal, State, Tribal and local levels. The Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers training, through the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), to all officials with emergency response roles and responsibilities.

**Implementation Guidance**

U.S. Departments of Homeland Security and Education recommend all "key personnel" involved in school emergency management and incident response be trained to the concepts and principles of NIMS, Incident Command System (ICS), and the National Response Framework (NRF). Because the process for defining key personnel is complex and schools and IHEs have frequently requested feedback, ED has developed recommendations for consideration when determining who should be trained in which courses. Note, these recommendations are intended as guidance and are not prescriptive. Each entity should develop a tailored NIMS training plan that meets their needs and takes into consideration staffing levels and other resources and assets within the LEA or IHE.

Schools, LEAs, and IHEs should identify *key personnel* to receive training based on their roles and responsibilities in the overall emergency management program as well as the specific responsibilities related to emergency preparedness, incident management, or response. For training purposes, ED recommends schools, LEAs, and IHEs identify their personnel in the following four categories: 1.) Executive Leaders, 2) General Personnel, 3.) Command Staff, and 4.) Incident Managers.

**Definitions of Key Personnel Categories for schools, LEAs, and IHEs**

**1. Executive Leaders:** Executive leaders must be familiar with the comprehensive systems supporting emergency management, even though they may not having a designated role in the incident command system. Executive leaders are often responsible for making financial, administrative, and managerial decisions supporting the school or IHE emergency management program and will likely have very high-level responsibilities before and after an incident, as opposed to command responsibilities in the field during an actual incident response.

Depending upon the unique school, LEA, or IHE, executive leaders may include:

- Institution President
- Superintendent
- Provost
- Chancellor
- Principal

**Executive Leaders should take the following two courses:**

- G-402 Incident Command System (ICS) Overview for Executives/Senior Officials
- IS-700: NIMS: An Introduction

**2. General Personnel:** General personnel with *any* role in emergency preparedness, incident management, or response. Depending on the school, LEA or IHE campus, general personnel may include:

- Emergency Management (ICS) team members
- Nurses and Health Officials
- School Resource Officers
- School Security Officials
- Counselors, Psychologists, Psychiatrists
- [Information] Technology Specialists
- Bus Drivers
- Administrators
- Educators/Faculty
- Coaches and Athletic Staff
- Facilities, Housing, and Food Preparation Staff
- Campus Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) members
- Resource staff, paraprofessionals, and support personnel

**General personnel should take the following TWO courses:**

- IS-700: NIMS: An Introduction
- IS-100: Introduction to Incident Command System, **OR** IS-100.SC: An Introduction to ICS for Schools **OR** IS-100.HE: Introduction to ICS for Higher Education\*

**3. Command Staff** are personnel assigned to lead any key campus emergency management effort; they have a specific role within the ICS.

Depending on the school, LEA, or IHE, Command Staff may include the following:

- Public information officer
- Safety officer
- Liaison officer
- Any staff that plays a vital role on the operations, planning, logistics, or finance/administration branches of the ICS team for the school, LEA, or IHE.

**Command staff should take the following FOUR courses:**

- IS-700 NIMS: An Introduction
- IS-100: Introduction to Incident Command System, **OR** IS 100.SC: An Introduction to ICS for Schools **OR** IS-100. HE: Introduction to ICS for Higher Education\*
- IS-800: National Response Framework, An Introduction\*\*
- IS-200: ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents

**4. Incident Managers:** Personnel with a leadership role in command (e.g., district, school or IHE Incident Commander, School Police Chief). These individuals are typically obligated to command and manage incidents that occur on the school or IHE campus in the absence of traditional incident response personnel (local Fire Chief, local Police Chief). These personnel also include those school officials, including school police, who would likely be integrated into a more advanced ICS role (e.g., unified command) should it become necessary.

Depending on the unique school, LEA, or IHE, incident managers would likely include the following personnel:

- Director of School/Campus Security
- School/Campus Chief of Police, School Security Chief

**The following additional courses are recommended for Incident Managers:**

- ICS-300 Intermediate Incident Command System
- ICS-400 Advanced Incident Command System

**Additional considerations for incident managers regarding ICS-300 and ICS-400 courses:**

- ICS-300 and ICS-400 *may* be appropriate for school or IHE campus personnel typically obligated (required) to command and/or manage an incident in the absence of traditional incident commander – for example, Fire and/or Police chiefs.
- ICS-400 *may* be appropriate for school or IHE campus personnel who would likely be integrated into a more advanced ICS role (unified command)
- K-12 school or IHEs emergency management teams might discuss the need for this training for appropriate campus staff in close consultation with their local community partners. ICS-300 and ICS-400 are not offered online and must be taken in-classroom offered in State, tribal, and local emergency management training programs.

*\* Completion of course IS-100.SC: Introduction to the Incident Command System for Schools, or IS-100. HE: Introduction to ICS for Higher Education, both constitute completion of course IS-100. These courses were specifically designed to provide ICS training within a K-12 school-based or IHE-based context. There are additional versions of the IS-100 course that have been modified to meet the specific roles and responsibilities of professions in other disciplines. All IS-100 courses use the same curriculum and provide examples and learning activities unique to each discipline. Therefore, completion of any of these IS-100 courses by school and IHE emergency management personnel also constitutes completion of IS-100.*

*\*\* A new course IS-800.: National Response Framework has replaced the previously existing IS-800, National Response Plan training. If personnel have completed the previous version of this course, they do not need to take the replacement course in order to be considered compliant. However, it is recommended they complete the updated course in order to have the same information as their partners.*

*\*\*\* G-402 Incident Command System (ICS) Overview for Executives/Senior Officials is not typically required for DHS compliance and does not fulfill mandatory training requirements for*

*Key Personnel under NIMS. However, the Department of Education has received feedback from the field that this course can be very useful for helping senior leaders understand the overall process of NIMS and ICS. Accordingly, for the purposes of the REMS and EMHE grant administration, the school or IHE emergency management team may use its discretion to recommend this course to executive personnel in place of IS-100: Introduction to Incident Command System. Also, for the purposes of the REMS and EMHE discretionary grants and the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) performance indicator calculations, Project Directors and Project Evaluators may include this course in their determination of average number of courses completed by key personnel provided the course administration is compliant with NIMS. The G-402 course may be downloaded [http://training.fema.gov/STCourses/crsdesc\\_spec.asp?courseid=G402](http://training.fema.gov/STCourses/crsdesc_spec.asp?courseid=G402).*

***NOTE:*** *The preceding guidance was intended to support schools and IHEs in their efforts to be compliant with the minimum NIMS requirements for training of key personnel. However, schools and IHEs may determine that additional courses offered through FEMA and EMI as well as their State and local emergency management partners are applicable and beneficial, and may pursue these additional training opportunities, as well.*

## **NIMS courses are administered and accessible in multiple formats.**

### **1. Instructor-Led Courses**

Schools and campuses can work with their community partners to identify a qualified instructor to conduct training. The NIC Incident Management Systems Division developed and provides guidance in the Five-Year NIMS Training Plan, “Course Summaries” (Appendix C). These summaries clearly state course objectives, discussion topics, and minimum requirements for instructional time and instructor qualifications per course. This guidance does not preclude any State, tribal, or local partner from maintaining more restrictive instructor qualifications. Any agency or organization sponsoring NIMS training is responsible for ensuring that the materials being taught adhere to the guidelines provided. The sponsoring organization must also verify the qualifications of the instructors based on the guidance provided by the NIC.

Additionally, the certificates of course completion are also the responsibility of the sponsoring agency or organization. The Five-Year NIMS Training Plan is accessible at <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/NIMSTrainingCourses#item5>.

### **2. On-line, Independent Study (IS) Courses**

Emergency Management Institute (EMI) is one of FEMA’s training branches and develops training materials supporting NIMS, and ICS, and additional emergency management training materials. EMI offers numerous online, independent study courses that are free and include certificates of completion. The IS- 100, 200, 700, and 800 courses are all available online as Independent Study (IS) courses offered through EMI at <http://training.fema.gov/IS>. (NOTE: ICS-300 and ICS-400 are not available online and must be taken in the classroom.)

### **3. State Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agencies**

Local or State Emergency Management Agencies often offer training in a classroom setting. School emergency management officials should contact their partners for details on course schedules and logistics. To complete ICS-300 and ICS-400, personnel should contact their local or State emergency management agency for course dates and locations in their area.

## **Additional Training Opportunities**

FEMA offers additional NIMS-related and school and IHE emergency management courses, online and in the classroom that may provide additional support to K-12 and IHE emergency management teams.

**Additional relevant independent study courses include:**

- IS-139 Exercise Design
- IS-197.SP Special Needs Planning Considerations for Service and Support Providers (recommended for school and IHEs)
- IS-362: Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools
- IS-701: NIMS Multi-Agency Coordination System (recommended for heads of school and IHE campus emergency management planning programs and ICS Teams)
- IS-702: NIMS Public Information System (recommended for school and IHE campus Public Information Officers)
- IS-703: NIMS Resource Management (recommended for heads of school and IHE campus emergency management planning programs and ICS Teams)
- IS-706 NIMS Intrastate Mutual Aid - An Introduction (recommended for heads of school and IHE campus emergency management planning programs and ICS Teams)

**Additional relevant classroom courses include:**

- G-290 - Basic Public Information Officers Course and the Advanced Public Information Officers Course (E-388). The basic course is conducted by the States and the advanced course is delivered at the Emergency Management Institute, in Emmitsburg, MD.
- E361 - Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools (formerly E362 Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools Train-the-Trainer) The course is conducted by the States and the advanced course is delivered at the Emergency Management Institute, in Emmitsburg, MD.
- L363 Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Higher Education

**Note to REMS and EMHE Grantees:** These courses do not fulfill mandatory training requirements for key personnel under NIMS. However, for the purposes of the REMS and EMHE grants programs and the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) performance indicator calculations, if the individual key personnel has already completed all of the NIMS training requirements, grantees may include these courses in their determination of average number of courses completed by key personnel.

**Sample activities demonstrating that schools or IHE key personnel are completing required NIMS training courses:**

- Creating a NIMS Training program outlining key personnel by roles and responsibilities alongside courses to be completed;
- Monitoring the number of National Incident Management System (NIMS) course completions for key personnel; and
- Documenting training achievements (e.g., key personnel completing required courses) in the emergency management program documents.

### **Activity 14 – Incorporate NIMS and ICS into all emergency management training and exercises.**

K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) incorporate the NIMS and ICS frameworks, principles, and approaches into all trainings and exercises (e.g., table-tops, full-scale drills etc.).

#### **Association to NIMS**

School and campus incident response personnel must be adequately trained and practiced in the systematic implementation of NIMS and the ICS. Continual training, practice, and updates to the plan are critical components. Every opportunity should be provided to better integrate NIMS and ICS into these activities. School staff needs practical exposure to NIMS and its tenets, in both their school emergency management activities and day to day activities when possible. Because of NIMS reliance on multiple organizations conducting themselves in a similar manner, everyone will need to practice the system developed in conjunction with partners. The strength of NIMS and ICS as foundations for effective response are dependent on training, exercises, and updates to the plan.

K-12 schools' and IHEs' participation in realistic multi-disciplinary and multi-jurisdictional exercises improve integration, interoperability, and response. Functional exercises provide opportunities for realistic practice using the standardized NIMS approach for building relationships and increasing integration with partners.

#### **Implementation Guidance**

Schools and IHEs should include NIMS and ICS policies and practices in all internal and external trainings and exercises. During trainings and exercises, plans should be reviewed to ensure school officials are knowledgeable and able to carry out properly their roles and responsibilities during an incident. This is especially critical for scenarios that require a transfer of command. All staff must know, at all times, who is in charge and how to respond under the new command.

In addition to training and practice directly with first responder partners, schools should consider conducting activities that involve the greater community – students, staff, families, and the media. Everyone needs to be informed and trained on their responsibilities in advance of an emergency. For example, families should know how to get information (i.e., website, local radio or TV station) for reunification during an event at a K-12 school. If there is an evacuation or a lockdown in progress, parents and guardians arriving at the school door will impede effective responses. With prior instructions, emergency response and reunification can take place safely and smoothly.

#### **Sample activities demonstrating that schools and IHEs are incorporating NIMS and ICS principles into all emergency management training and exercises include:**

- Documenting the use of NIMS and ICS in all training and exercise programs;
- Creating a timeline for providing appropriate training in collaboration with community partners; and
- Creating a timeline for conducting an exercise(s) with community partners.



**Activity 15 – Participate in an all-hazard exercise program based on NIMS that involves first responders from multiple disciplines, agencies, and organizations.**

Schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) will participate with local, State, and community partners in an all-hazards exercise program that integrates NIMS concepts and principles and involves first responders from multiple disciplines, agencies, and organizations.

**Association to NIMS**

When K-12 schools and IHEs are appropriately trained with their community partners, the all-hazards incident response capabilities are improved. All agencies involved in incident response and emergency management participate in realistic multi-disciplinary and multi-jurisdictional exercises to improve integration and interoperability. This type of training ensures that personnel at all jurisdictional levels and across disciplines can function effectively together during an incident. Joint practice helps to bridge the gaps between the educational community and their partners.

Schools and campuses can design, conduct, and evaluate a variety of functional exercises to achieve proficiency. Or, they can collaborate with local, State, and or community emergency management agencies to participate in pre-existing large-scale exercise program or drill. Drills provide instruction and/or training for personnel on particular roles, responsibilities, plans, and/or equipment. Additionally, these exercises test the plan. These scenario-based trainings are categorized by tabletops, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises.

- **Tabletops** allow the collaborative team to talk through an emergency scenario in an informal, stress-free environment. A tabletop exercise is a facilitated, scenario-based group discussion regarding the coordination of plans, procedures, and resources with partners. It typically lasts two to four hours.
- **Functional Exercises** are stressful simulated events that allow participants to work through plans and procedures in a real-time scenario, typically based in an operations center environment. The exercise pace can be increased or decreased depending on participants' ability to work through their plans and procedures. School buildings and campuses are useful settings for hosting simulated events because they provide realistic sites for training and give partners advance-knowledge of the building.
- **Full-scale Exercises** involve multi-agency responses where resources are actually deployed. Exercises require participants to move actual people and resources while working through plans and procedures in real-time.

**Implementation Guidance**

Schools and IHEs should participate in local, regional, and/or State multi-discipline and multi-agency exercises on a regular basis (dependent on the type of drill or exercise to be held and the size and complexity of the systems involved). Exercise activities should address immediate response actions (lockdown, evacuation, and shelter-in-place), notification and communication systems, transfer of command, first-aid, family reunification, and resource management. Practice

can include drills, tabletop, functional, and/or full-scale exercises. The exercise program should build from NIMS concepts and principles and include evaluation and corrective action activities.

Evaluations can play an important role in exercise. Evaluations should provide both quantitative and qualitative data and contribute to improvements in the plan. The ability to identify both strengths and areas for improvement is critical to strengthening the exercise program, the plan, and the partnerships. The findings of the evaluation team meetings are compiled in the After Action Report, which documents the effectiveness of the exercise. It serves as the basis for planning future exercises, enhancing the plan, and taking corrective action. The After Action Report is the responsibility of the evaluation team leader or chief evaluator, working with the evaluation team.

**Sample activities demonstrating that K-12 schools and IHEs are participating in an all-hazards exercise program based on NIMS with community partners include:**

- Scheduling and conducting a series of planning meetings and an exercise with community partners;
- Developing a timeline for an exercise program — i.e., schedule meetings for tabletops, functional exercises and full-scale drills;
- Using an evaluator in meetings for developing a tailored tool capturing the effectiveness of the plan, capacity of the team, implementation of NIMS activities, and the ability to respond to the specific scenario; and
- Informing the local media and community of the exercise event before, during, and after it occurs.

### **Activity 16 –Incorporate corrective actions into preparedness and response plans and procedures.**

K-12 schools and IHEs incorporate corrective actions into preparedness and response plans and procedures with community partners.

#### **Association to NIMS**

NIMS implementation activities work to build emergency management capacity at the community, State/territorial, and Federal levels. This capacity depends on continual improvement activities such as training, exercises, and updates to the plan. Corrective action plans are designed to apply lessons learned from actual events, trainings, or exercises. For example, following a full-scale drill, exercise participants would host a debriefing meeting with the partners and evaluator identifying what went well, and what did not. Using these lessons learned, an After Action Report (AAR) is created along with identified changes for strengthening the plan.

#### **Implementation Guidance**

After schools and IHE campuses conduct a drill or exercise, a review of activities should be conducted to identify strengths and weaknesses in the plan regarding preparedness, protocols, personnel, equipment, and resources. The school and campus emergency management team should host a debriefing meeting and review the data captured in the evaluation process. After a thorough analysis of the exercise, a corrective action plan should be created in order to apply lessons learned to plans and the following aspects should be included:

- The identified corrective action to address the issue(s) or deficiency(ies) found;
- The responsible person or group of people to implement the corrective action(s);
- The due date for completion of the corrective action(s);
- Assessment to determine effectiveness of corrective action(s) installed; and
- An indication that the resulting corrective action(s) will be incorporated into all plans and procedures once completed.

#### **Sample activities that demonstrate K-12 school and IHEs teams are incorporating corrective actions into preparedness and response plans include:**

- Identifying strengths and weakness identified in the plan by:
  - Holding debriefing meetings after real or simulated events,
  - Reviewing evaluation data collected, and
  - Writing after action reports;
- Developing corrective action plans that include:
  - A description of the issue and corrective action,
  - A timeline and person(s) responsible for implementation, and
  - Standards for ensuring the issue is adequately addressed;
- Updating the plan to reflect corrective actions.

## **COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT** *NIMS Implementation Activities For Schools and Institutions of Higher Education*

### **Activity 17—Apply standardized and consistent terminology for school and campus incidents, including the establishment of plain language communication standards across the public safety sector.**

K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) apply and use common and consistent terminology for school and campus incidents, including the establishment of plain language communication standards.

#### **Association to NIMS**

Effective communications, information management, and information- and intelligence-sharing are critical aspects of emergency response and emergency management. The ability of emergency management/response personnel from different disciplines, jurisdictions, organizations, and agencies to work together depends greatly on their ability to communicate with each other. Common terminology enables emergency management/response personnel to communicate clearly with one another and effectively coordinate activities, no matter the size, scope, location, or complexity of the incident. To support this, NIMS emphasizes the importance of using plain language to ensure that incident response commands can be easily understood by all.

Communications and information management is reciprocal and requires all partners to speak the same language and use the terminology. When operating in a multi-discipline and multi-jurisdictional setting, using a common language among entities will help to alleviate confusion and miscommunication. This includes both verbal communication and communication equipment.

#### **Implementation Guidance**

To support the implementation of NIMS and to ensure effective multi-agency responses, schools and IHEs should use plain language known and understood by all—educational staff (including new personnel, substitutes and volunteers), first responders, and all other community partners. Furthermore, schools and IHEs should establish a common language that is consistent with the language used by their community partners. Schools, IHEs, local emergency management, law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire department, and public health personnel all need to become familiar with a common set of terminology based on plain language. Plain language will bridge the cultural and technical gaps between partners.

When groups use code words to communicate information during an emergency, they are only effective if all partners agree to their meaning and everyone is trained in the system and is able to remember the codes under duress — new staff, new students, substitutes, new community members, new first response partners, etc. For example, if a district uses terminology such as —Code Red— to indicate a lockdown, a new student or a substitute teacher who is new to the school or to the district may not know what this code means and may not be trained on the required response procedures. Furthermore, everyone would have to be able to recall and process codes. This may be a challenge for many people during an emergency. Instead, if the word —lockdown—

is used, and if response instructions are given, new or temporary staff will have more information and are likely to respond more effectively, ensuring the safety of the entire school community.

**Sample K-12 activities demonstrating that K-12 schools and IHEs are placing an emphasis on using standard and consistent language based on plain language include:**

- Documenting in the emergency management plan the use of plain language;
- Conferring with partners to agree upon a set of common terminology (e.g., lockdown, evacuate) based on plain language;
- Providing training activities that emphasize the use of plain language; and
- Designing, conducting, and evaluating emergency exercises to identify that communications are accessible to all participants and presented using plain language.

**COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**  
***NIMS Implementation Activities For Schools and Institutions of Higher Education***

**Activity 18: Utilize systems, tools, and processes to present consistent and accurate information (e.g., common operating picture) during an incident/planned event.**

K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) will use systems, tools, and processes to present consistent and accurate information (e.g., common operating picture) during an incident/planned event.

**Association to NIMS**

Emergency management and incident response activities rely on communications and information systems to provide the necessary information to continually support situation awareness and a common operating picture for use by all emergency management personnel. The common operating picture is the descriptive overview of an incident and is used by all response partners. The common operating picture provides the incident information needed to make effective, consistent, and timely decisions. Furthermore, use of a common operating picture helps to ensure that the Incident Commander and response partners are all using the same set of information. Use of systems and processes provide timely, accurate information and sustain a common operating picture will support situational awareness and more effective response.

K-12 school and IHE use of information systems will support the NIMS framework, its unifying approach, and its key attributes of interoperability, reliability, scalability, and portability, as well as resiliency and redundancy:

- **Interoperability** refers to the capacity of the information and communication systems, processes, and tools to deliver continuous, real time information between their emergency management team and their response partners.
- **Reliability, scalability, and portability** refers to the capacity of the communications and information systems, processes, and tools to operate in any incident, regardless of the cause, size, complexity, location and support operations whether they are of a single jurisdiction or involve multiple response partners.
- **Scalability** in particular refers to the systems, processes, and tools capacity to support numerous additional users and partners as the response scale is increased.
- **Resiliency** refers to the capacity to continue operations in the event of damage or loss and redundancy ensures multiple modes for exchanging information in the event one system fails.

**Implementation Guidance**

The use of timely and accurate information by incident command supports effective decision-making and effective response activities whether the K-12 school or IHE incident serves as the single response jurisdiction or is supported by community response partners such as the local emergency management authority. The common operating picture supports the incident command

system managing short- and long-term operations as it facilitates the collection and exchange of timely and accurate information.

K-12 schools' and IHEs' information systems, tools, and processes should facilitate information-sharing aimed at maintaining a common operating picture for use by all response parties. As K-12 schools and IHEs develop comprehensive all-hazards emergency management plans in collaboration with their community partners, efforts should be taken to help ensure that internal activities as well as activities with community partners utilize compatible and complementary information and communication systems, tools, and processes. The communication activities should work to continuously present a common operating picture and support all involved response agencies and personnel.

K-12 schools and IHEs should pursue opportunities to help build effective communication systems and programs that allow for critical functions:

- Accessibility and interoperability among all partners;
- Reliability, scalability, and portability regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity of operations (e.g., multiple jurisdictional response); and
- Resiliency and redundancy, or contingency options, within the program allowing for continued performance after damage or loss.

**K-12 schools and IHEs emergency management teams** should address communication and information management within the communications portion of the all-hazards emergency management plan. The teams should build an information system that supports incident command; the system should describe how and what information is gathered, shared, and analyzed to create situational awareness and a common operating picture. The emergency management team should also work closely with partners to create compatible communication systems that can work together. For example, the teams should ensure there is a mutual process for sharing information. Ideally, the radio communications system would be interoperable. But, if this is not feasible, there should be a redundant system for sharing information quickly between partners that ensure information is shared even if the actual equipment is not interoperable.

As K-12 schools and IHE institutionalize the NIMS concepts and principles, applying NIMS to any large-scale, school-hosted events (even non-emergency events) such as athletic events, ceremonies, and dances, the emergency management team can identify opportunities to ensure the systems, tools, and processes work to share information in real time. For example, when the ICS is activated for planning and hosting a planned school event (e.g., large sporting competition, graduation), efforts to create and work from a common operating picture may be practiced.

**Sample activities demonstrating that K-12 schools and IHEs are utilizing systems, tools, and processes to present consistent and accurate information (e.g., common operating picture) during an incident/planned event include:**

- Determining interoperability and compatibility of communication systems and tools with all community partners;
- Creating communication policies and processes for creating a common operating pictures; and
- Designing, conducting, and evaluating emergency exercises to identify that communications equipment and processes are timely and interoperable.

**Activity 19: Maintain an inventory of organizational response assets—equipment, resources, and supplies.**

K-12 schools and IHEs maintain an inventory of any applicable organizational response assets—equipment, resources and supplies—that support NIMS and incident response.

**Association to NIMS**

Resource management involves the coordination, oversight, and processes necessary to provide timely and appropriate resources during an incident. Utilization of standardized resource management concepts such as typing, inventory, ordering, and tracking of resources will facilitate their dispatch, deployment, and recovery before, during, and after an incident. Furthermore, standardization of resource management between community partners will strengthen the unified approach, ensuring a seamless and integrated response.

Maintaining and assessing inventory is a key preparedness activity and directly impacts response capacity. Resource management facilitates the continual assessment of available assets to be made available during incident response, and also helps to identify internal gaps and redundancies among response partners such as local emergency management authority.

Resource management involves acquisition procedures, management information, and redundant systems and protocols for ordering, mobilizing, dispatching, and demobilizing resources. Acquisition procedures are used to obtain resources to support operational requirements and work to determine specific items needed prior to an incident, which items need to be replenished over time, and which will need to be acquired at the time of response.

**Implementation Guidance**

To increase preparedness in the event of an emergency incident, K-12 schools and IHEs should work with community partners to continually inventory response assets, maintain current data on the available resources, and coordinate these with community partners including the local emergency management authority. Schools and IHEs should internally maintain emergency equipment and supplies, work with community partners to identify additional needs in the event of an emergency, and establish processes for securing the necessary support, services, and supplies at the time of a response action.

Because schools and IHEs are not traditional response agencies, they likely will not have comparable resources to those in the community resource management system. Inventory systems for resource management are adaptable and scalable, and therefore, schools should also work with the local emergency management authority and community partners to determine their unique needs, and any necessary steps for procuring the critical equipment and tools the schools or IHE may need in the event of an incident. Through the collective management of resources,



redundancies and needs are better identified, and the community is better prepared to effectively respond in the event of an emergency. Schools, districts, and IHEs with large emergency inventories should work with their partners to apply NIMS resource typing principles as presented in the IMSI “Resource Management” Fact Sheet presented at <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/ResourceMngmnt.shtm#item4>.

Schools and IHEs might choose to store emergency supplies in preparation for or an emergency that requires students and staff to shelter in place. Administrative or classroom “Go-kits” (i.e., portable stockpile of emergency supplies) can be created in preparation for those emergencies that require an evacuation. The emergency management team should select supplies and *go-kit* contents that address the needs of the specific school or IHE, its population, climate, facilities, and resources. Because emergency supplies and *go-kit* contents are so important, the school emergency management plan should reference both the supplies to be stockpiled, their dates of expiration, and staff role responsible for stocking and replenishing.

**Sample activities demonstrating that schools and IHEs are maintaining an inventory of any applicable organizational response assets—equipment, resources and supplies—that support NIMS and incident response.**

- Identifying supplies and *go-kit* contents necessary for effective response;
- Inventorying any equipment, resources, or supplies maintained at the LEA or IHE and sharing that information with relevant local partners;
- Maintaining and continually replenishing supplies and go-kits to support response efforts; and
- Creating partner agreements providing for and securing additional equipment, supplies, and resources from community partners during response.

## **Activity 20 – Resource Acquisition**

To the extent permissible by law, schools and IHEs ensure that relevant national standards and guidance to achieve equipment, communication, and data interoperability are incorporated into acquisition programs

### **Association to NIMS**

In order for a common operating system to exist, equipment, communications, and data interoperability must be standardized and understood by all. An incident or event may disable one or more communication methods, resulting in limited communication resources. For that reason, it is helpful for schools and campuses to build redundancy into their communications plans by ensuring multiple modes of communication are available in case of an emergency. The coordination and usage of common equipment and data sources allows for communications still to function when infrastructure (e.g., phone lines, computer lines) has been impacted.

IHE and school emergency response teams all report to the operations center and should work from the same communication system. Similarly, local emergency management authorities or local governments report the data to dispatch centers and emergency management operations centers. Community partners and school emergency management teams should identify systems, equipment and resources needed for interoperability or for integrating communication systems during response.

### **Implementation Guidance**

To the extent possible, schools and IHEs should work with their community partners to establish common equipment, communications, and data interoperability processes supporting integration, and standards for resource acquisition. If possible and appropriate, school and campus assets, systems, and processes should be compatible with those of their community partners allowing for integrated communication efforts as well as timely and accurate information-sharing during incident response. For example, the common use of plain language will facilitate information-sharing and interoperability. Similarly, an LEA might purchase the same wave-length of radios as their local law enforcement agencies so they can communicate easily on a secured channel during an emergency. Another example would be if a school district “piggy-backed” onto a purchase order of a local fire department to save costs on the purchase of AEDs and to ensure consistent equipment is available. Partners include law enforcement, fire personnel, local hospitals, emergency medical services (EMS), public health, mental health, and any partner with a role in emergency response.

#### **School and campus activities demonstrating an effort to achieve national, State and local equipment, communication, and data interoperability standards includes:**

- Encouraging interoperability with partners by establishing plain language in information-sharing protocols;
- Coordinating with community partners to emphasize the interoperability and integration of response equipment, communications and data systems; and
- Making purchasing decisions and designing processes to allow for integration among community partners whenever possible or appropriate.

**Activity 21: Utilize response asset inventory for intrastate/interstate mutual aid requests [such as Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)], training, exercises, and incidents/planned events.**

When applicable, schools and IHEs will utilize response asset inventory for intrastate/interstate mutual aid requests [such as Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)], training, exercises, and incidents/planned events.

**Association to NIMS**

NIMS systems work to help ensure that the flow of necessary resources (such as personnel, equipment, or supplies) is fluid and matches the needs of the incident. NIMS defines standardized mechanisms and establishes the resource management processes to identify requirements, order and acquire, mobilize, track and report, recover and demobilize, reimburse, and inventory resources. These NIMS systems create mechanisms for emergency management teams and their affiliated organizations to work collectively by offering a consistent and common approach to preparedness and pre-planned process for accessing resources in the event of an emergency.

Mutual aid agreements, assistance agreements, and partner agreements between agencies, organizations, and jurisdictions can provide a mechanism to quickly obtain emergency assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and after an incident.

**Implementation Guidance**

The use of or participation in asset inventory systems combined with agreements is intended to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and after an incident and supports the overall NIMS mission, framework, and approach. Although many LEAs schools and IHEs will not need to be directly involved in such a compact (as this tends to occur through State emergency managers), it is important that they work with their community partners to jointly determine any applicable roles or any indirect role they may have.

Therefore, those K-12 schools and IHEs who do not utilize an inventory asset system should look to participate in their partners' system, if applicable. There may be an opportunity for a school or IHE to be a part of a State and or local agency partner's asset inventory system that will facilitate intrastate/interstate mutual aid requests [such as Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)], training, exercises, and incidents/planned events. Although K-12 schools and IHEs may not manage a comprehensive asset inventory system independently, they may be able to participate in a meaningful system through a collaborative with their partners at the local or State level. As K-12 schools and IHEs develop and enhance comprehensive all-hazards emergency management plans, they should collaboratively consider resource management and the schools' or IHEs' use of or role in the collective asset inventory system of their community or State.

Schools and IHEs should consider their potential response needs when working with and coordinating with their State education agency as well as their State emergency management authority as they may be the administrators of a State-wide mechanism for quickly obtaining emergency assistance and resources for their local and regional emergency management officials. The state will likely need to assist schools and IHEs if they need to access assistance (e.g., personnel, equipment, materials, services) in response to a large-scale emergency incident. In order for the State to do this, it is helpful if they know the currently existing assets of the school or IHE. One example of a mutual assistance program is the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), an interstate mutual aid agreement that allows States to assist one another in responding to all kinds of natural and manmade disasters. EMAC is administered by the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) and supports a Governor of a disaster-impacted state so that they request and receive assistance from other member states. The Governor's request would reflect its State emergency management teams' assessment and would be aimed at supporting an efficient and effective response. EMAC is supported by pre-established relationships and agreements among members States and establishes a foundation for rapid response by States. Therefore, schools and IHEs may be able to receive assistance through pre-established mechanisms developed by their State Education agency or emergency management agency.

**Activities demonstrating schools and IHEs utilize response asset inventory for intrastate/interstate mutual aid requests [such as Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)], training, exercises, and incidents/planned events.**

- When applicable, as determined jointly by the school or IHE emergency management team and their community partners, schools and IHEs schools utilize a response asset inventory for intrastate/interstate mutual aid requests.

**Activity 22: Initiate development of a State/Territory/Tribal-wide system (that incorporates local jurisdictions) to credential emergency management/response personnel to ensure proper authorization and access to an incident including those involving mutual aid agreements and/or assistance agreements.**

Schools and IHES will work with State education and emergency management officials to ensure proper authorization and access to credentialed personnel during an incident response, including those persons provided through mutual aid agreements.

**Association to NIMS**

The resource management process can be separated into two parts: resource management as an element of preparedness and resource management during an incident. The preparedness activities (resource typing, credentialing, and inventorying) are conducted on a continual basis to help ensure that resources are ready to be mobilized when needed. For the purpose of NIMS, credentialing is the administrative process for validating personnel qualifications and providing authorization to perform specific functions and to have specific access to an incident involving mutual aid.

The credentialing process entails the objective evaluation and documentation of an individual's current certification, license, or degree; training and experience; and competence or proficiency to meet nationally accepted standards, provide particular services and/or functions, or perform specific tasks under specific conditions during an incident. Organizations, governmental agencies responsible for coordinating emergency responses, volunteer management agencies (e.g., Red Cross, Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals, Medical Reserve Corps, etc.), and other potential users of volunteers (e.g., schools, hospitals, fire and police departments, etc.) all must develop protocols governing the activation and use of volunteers.

**Implementation Guidance**

K-12 schools and IHEs should work closely with their community partners and local emergency management authority to determine any potential needs for volunteers during response. Schools and IHEs should also be prepared to receive additional response and recovery staff from partners as well as volunteers from the greater community. IHEs, districts, and schools utilizing volunteers, especially spontaneous volunteers, are responsible for ensuring each volunteer's eligibility and qualifications to participate in a response. Therefore, schools and IHEs should take steps in advance to ensure any additional personnel aiding in response and recovery efforts are trained and qualified. Schools and IHEs should develop a system for determining qualified personnel before providing them with applicable access and authorization to participate in response and recovery efforts.

The credentialing process helps ensure in advance of emergency incidents that the professionals are highly-qualified and trained in the task needed. Securing qualified service providers and professionals in advance will help ensure that qualified persons are accessible and available on behalf of the school and campus communities in advance of an emergency incident. Through the

establishment of partner agreements, schools may better access additional services and service personnel in the event of an incident. Qualifications for additional personnel can be stated in the agreements.

Schools and IHEs can take advance measures to help ensure that assistance can first be provided by qualified service providers arranged in advance and secondly supplanted by credentialed volunteers. This can be addressed in the overall planning process and supported by partner agreements established among partners. Schools and IHEs should also prepare to respond to a potential onslaught of seemingly well-intentioned persons wanting to volunteer. Having a written policy in place for receiving volunteers, will help schools and IHEs determine in a consistent and documented fashion who can or cannot assist when spontaneous volunteers arrive after an incident occurs.

Schools and IHEs will want to consider protective measure on behalf of its students and staff. For example, many schools and IHEs use systems that immediately verify a person's identity and compare it to known sex offenders lists, prior to granting school building access. Schools can consider similar efforts when determining spontaneous volunteer procedures into their response plans as well as creating roles for untrained volunteers.

**Sample activities demonstrating that schools and IHEs are working with State education and emergency management officials to identify qualified personnel and a credentialing system for maintaining registries of trained, qualified volunteers to be used during response include:**

- Schools and IHEs work with their State education agency partners to identify potential staff resources and create systems for securing assistance;
- Schools and IHEs contact State education and emergency management offices to seek opportunities to access State-level credentialing systems or registries.
- Schools and IHEs work with community partners to identify and secure applicable service providers and create systems or partner agreements securing additional personnel in the event of an emergency.
- Schools and IHEs look to regional educational partners and create agreements to provide assistance in the form of emergency response and service providers;
- Schools and IHEs develop written policies for the use of volunteers and qualified staff: and,
- Schools and IHEs work with local community partners to develop opportunities to maintain common sets of volunteers.

### **Activity 23 – Institutionalize the Incident Command System (ICS) for managing all emergency incidents and pre-planned school and campus events.**

All schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) institutionalize the Incident Command System (ICS) for managing all emergency incidents, exercises, and preplanned (recurring/special) events in accordance with ICS organizational structures, doctrine, and procedures, as defined in NIMS.

#### **Association to NIMS**

The *Command and Management* component of NIMS creates the ICS that facilitates incident response activities across five major functional areas: *Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/ Administration*. The school's, district's, or IHE's emergency management plan(s) detail the use of ICS, its members, their roles and responsibilities, incident action planning activities, and a common communication plan. The established processes and protocols put forth by the ICS must be supported by ongoing training opportunities, collaborative functional exercises, and updates to the plan based on lessons learned.

ICS is scalable and flexible and uses a standardized approach. This approach makes it adaptable to the complexities and demands of a wide variety of education-related incidents. Additionally, the standardized approach facilitates a joint operations response among schools and their emergency management partners including:

- Fire personnel and law enforcement;
- Hospitals and emergency service personnel;
- Public and mental health officials;
- Local government and community representatives;
- Media; etc.

When schools and their community response partners institutionalize the ICS, they are better able to implement an effective and coordinated response and hasten the recovery process. Use of ICS serves as the bridge uniting the school response teams to the community first response team partners. The strength of the system is reliant on the standardized approach.

#### **NIMS Implementation Guidance**

ICS was designed to create one, standardized, on-scene, all-hazard emergency management approach and operating structure to be used by *all* communities (e.g., school and campus personnel, local government officials, community response personnel.) The capacity of NIMS and ICS to support schools is reliant upon strong partnerships that include ongoing communication, coordination, and collaboration among school officials, local government officials, and community response partners (public and private).

ICS roles and responsibilities should be developed, practiced, and enhanced as a team. Each member of the school, campus or LEA emergency management team, should understand which roles on the ICS structure they are responsible for completing before, during, and after an emergency. In addition, school officials should contact representatives from related agencies and offices in order to ensure appropriate coordination and planning amongst team members from the campus and the community. Furthermore, school and campus leaders should provide the same guidance to auxiliary schools, satellite campuses, and subsidiary schools.

Because the ICS structure is comprehensive yet flexible - able to grow and shrink - it is a practical, cost-effective management tool that is equally appropriate for organizing large-scale, school-hosted events such as athletic events, ceremonies, and dances. These realistic scenarios offer opportunities for practice and evaluation.

Teams should lead debriefing meetings, draft after-action reports, and provide guidance for changes and updates to the plan. Whenever possible and appropriate, emergency management teams should seek feedback from participants such as staff, faculty, students, and parents. The data collected should be analyzed and directly linked to the effectiveness of the plan. Subsequently, these lessons learned become the basis for modifications and strengthening the plan. Institutionalizing the ICS and applying its functions to more common events can be a powerful tool for training, developing positive relationships with partners, and evaluating established plans.

**Sample activities demonstrating that schools and IHEs are institutionalizing of ICS include:**

- Determining, designating, and documenting in advance key personnel and their roles and responsibilities within ICS, including the chain of command;
- Determining, designating, and documenting back-ups to personnel with leadership positions within ICS;
- Using ICS to manage all related activities before, during, and after school and campus events to provide for the safety and well-being of attendees; and
- Providing joint training opportunities to support ICS.



### **Activity 24 – Coordinate and support the development and use of an integrated Multi-agency Coordination System (MACS).**

All schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) coordinate and support emergency incident and event management through the development and use of an integrated multi-agency coordination system (MACS).

#### **Association to NIMS**

MACS is a coordination process that supports the ICS when a multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional incident response structure is activated and when an incident requires a comprehensive response from agencies across more than one jurisdiction. The role of MACS is critical for seamless multiagency coordination activities and essential to the success and safety of the response whenever more than one jurisdictional agency responds. Moreover, the use of MACS is one of the fundamental components of Command and Management within NIMS, as it promotes scalability and flexibility necessary for a coordinated response. For example, MACS is often employed in response to wide spread seasonal wildfires when firefighters from around the nation provide assistance.

The cooperating agencies may develop a MACS to better define how each will work together. Fundamentally, MACS provide high-level support, coordination, and assistance with policy-level decisions to support the ICS structure managing an incident. In some instances, MACS is informal and based on oral agreements between jurisdictions, but usually it is more formalized and supported by written agreements, operational procedures, and protocols. The formal process, where potential issues are identified and addressed before an incident occurs, is the preferred and recommended approach, as it streamlines the coordination function. While ad hoc arrangements between jurisdictions may result in effective multiagency coordination on relatively minor incidents, coordination on larger, more complex incidents is most successful when it takes place within a planned and well-established system. Some districts, schools, and particularly some IHEs may be involved in MACS with their local emergency management agencies.

#### **MACS Primary Functions:**

##### **Policy-level decision-making to:**

- Coordinate interagency and intergovernmental issues regarding emergency management policies, priorities, and strategies;
- Support emergency management policies and priorities;
- Facilitate logistics support and resource tracking; and
- Provide information regarding resource allocation decisions to incident response personnel in concert with incident management priorities.

##### **Possible MACS Cooperating Entities:**

- Local and/or state emergency management agencies;
- Local law enforcement offices and fire departments;

- Local public and mental health departments;
- Emergency medical services (EMS) (both private and public);
- Local 911 centers;
- Hazardous materials response teams;
- Local hospitals, ambulatory and urgent care centers, community health centers, and private physicians' offices; and
- K-12 districts, schools and IHEs.

### Implementation Guidance

The MACS coordination system is used by representatives from multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional entities cooperating to support incident response and the ICS. It is a decision-making body that makes policy decisions (e.g., priorities, strategies) to support the ICS when an incident requires a comprehensive response from agencies across more than one jurisdiction. The role of MACS is critical for seamless multiagency coordination activities and essential to the success and safety of the response whenever more than one jurisdictional agency responds.

In some cases, formally and informally, including ad-hoc circumstances, a district, school, or IHE may become involved in a MAC. School and IHE participation in the local MACS will help reinforce the NIMS standardized framework used by partners and will serve to strengthen school emergency management capacity. When schools and IHEs adopt standardized methods with community partners, they will be better prepared to participate in a MACS if needed and appropriate.

School and campus emergency management officials should work closely with local government and community partners to identify the appropriate avenues for coordinating and supporting the local or regional MACS. Building from pre-established relationships with community partners, schools and IHEs can take steps to ensure that they could be both represented and integrated into a MACS coordination system. Additionally, education officials should work to ensure that school and campus procedures and equipment complement those of community responders, and support the functions of a MACS.

Once MACS relationships have been explored and established, education officials and community response officials participate in ongoing, collaborative planning sessions, including training and emergency exercises. Although the exercises are designed to test the MACS' capacities; identify gaps and weaknesses; and test and validate facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and integrated communications, they offer additional opportunities for practice and nurturing relationships with partners for individual schools and campuses.

#### **Activities demonstrating that schools/IHEs support MACS coordination include:**

- Identifying the MACS located in the school/IHE community and determining the appropriate role for the school/district/IHE to play in the MACS;
- Participating in MACS exercises and debriefings (when applicable), and integrating determined modifications to plans;
- Ensuring interoperability of communication systems and or devices with partners and local government; and
- Writing partnerships agreements that detail each partner's roles and responsibilities, procedures and protocols, and transfer of command.

### **Activity 25 - Establish a Public Information System (PIS) within the ICS framework.**

All schools and institutions of higher education (IHEs) establish a Public Information system within the ICS framework. Public Information includes the assignment of a Public Information Officer and the creation of a Joint Information System and a Joint Information Center.

#### **Association to NIMS**

The Public Information System establishes a system and protocol for gathering, verifying, coordinating, and disseminating timely and accurate information during a crisis or emergency situation on behalf of the incident commander.

This system uses a single Public Information Officer (PIO) to create a single message on behalf of the many agencies and organizations involved. Using pre-established policies and protocols, the PIO is the sole person responsible for communicating with the community and media and working to ensure every stakeholder has the necessary information for supporting an effective response. For schools and IHEs, a PIO may communicate to the media a brief description of the event; the school's or IHE's response; and the condition of the students, staff, and visitors. The PIO is pivotal for giving directives on family reunification for K-12 schools, making connections between families and students on campus at IHEs, as well as communicating with students about staff.

Two additional and critical components of the Public Information System are the Joint Information System (JIS) and the Joint Information Center (JIC). The JIS works to create a single message from multiple response agencies. This is another mechanism to ensure delivery of timely and accurate information. The JIC is a physical location where public information professionals from the various organizations involved in the incident response activities can co-locate to exchange critical emergency information, communicate crisis communications, and conduct public affairs functions.

#### **Implementation Guidance**

K-12 schools and IHEs should identify and train at least one Public Information Officer (PIO) who is responsible for media and public inquiries before, during, and after an incident. Prior to an incident occurring, the designated PIO should establish working relationships with a variety of local media outlets. The stronger a PIO's relationship is with the local media, the more the media can be of help during an emergency. A single point of contact for the media will help ensure the community receives the necessary information, and subsequently contribute to an effective incident response. The PIO has a distinct role within the ICS, and therefore, the Incident Commander should not also serve the role of the PIO.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities of the District, School, or IHE Public Information Officer**

During an event, the school or IHE Public Information Officer (PIO) handles:

- Media and public inquiries;
- Emergency public information and warnings;

- Rumor monitoring and response;
- Media monitoring;
- Coordinating with the JIS/JIC as appropriate;
- Disseminating accurate and timely information related to K-12 school family reunification;
- Disseminating accurate and timely information related to creating contact between students on campus and family members at home; and
- Other functions required for coordinating and clearing information with appropriate authorities.

The PIO will have roles and responsibilities throughout the four phases of school emergency management. The PIO can create information awareness campaigns for students, staff, and families promoting key prevention-mitigation and preparedness messages. The PIO should also create basic communication templates in advance addressing a wide variety of scenarios. Therefore, if an emergency were to occur, templates could be tailored quickly to provide the community with essential information. For example, a PIO can maintain an informational page on the school or IHE's campus website, providing preventative information such as how to prevent the spread of germs and critical response information such as how to get information and directives in the event of an emergency.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the joint information center might be located on or near a school campus. During incidents that occur beyond school grounds, the joint information center will likely be situated at a separate location predetermined by the local emergency plan. Schools and IHEs should plan for both scenarios.

**Activities demonstrating schools and IHEs are establishing a Public Information System within the ICS framework include:**

- Identifying a school/LEA/campus PIO to be the primary liaison for communicating with the public during an emergency; and
- Creating their own information centers to execute predetermined processes and procedures for communication during and after a crisis;

**Activity 26: Ensure PIO procedures can gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate information during an incident or planned event.**

K-12 schools and IHEs ensure that public information procedures and processes can gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate information during an incident/planned event.

**Association to NIMS**

To support the NIMS, information is shared and used to provide and maintain a common operating picture among responders and to facilitate all government, private-sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together during domestic incidents and planned events. A comprehensive emergency management plan should provide procedures for gathering and or reporting information, coordinating among the command team and partners represented, as well for disseminating information.

Comprehensive communication planning identifies and outlines key personnel and their roles and responsibilities for supporting the incident command and communicating with each stakeholder. To support NIMS, communication planning will incorporate the needs of a variety of stakeholders including Federal, State, and local education agencies, response partners, the local emergency management authority and additional response partners, as well as the key members of the school and campus community such as students, staff and parents.

**Implementation Guidance**

Schools and IHEs should include communication policies and procedures in their comprehensive all-hazards plans. Plans should include procedure for gathering real-time accurate data necessary for decision-making as well as coordinating information to create a common operating picture, and a process for disseminating timely and accurate information to the educational community and greater public. Furthermore, schools can incorporate alert and notification activities in their plans that may be supported by systems, tools, templates.

Throughout, schools and IHE emergency management team should be thoughtful to uphold privacy laws and include assurances in the plan that are aligned with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* and the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)* Privacy Rule. The Department of Education offers resources on the Family Educational Rights and Protection Act (FERPA) through its Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO). It can be accessed at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html>. The office can also be reached at [FERPA@ed.gov](mailto:FERPA@ed.gov). Additionally, the Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights (OCR) also offers information and resources for schools and IHEs regarding HIPPA accessible at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/>.

A school or IHE emergency management plan should address role of a PIO; develop processes and agreements; and coordinate with community partners about the release of information. This is especially important for large-scale incidents requiring support from community partners such as local emergency management authority, law enforcement, fire personnel, and emergency medical

services. The background information and incident status information provided by the PIO to the incident commander will be instrumental, upon arrival of community responders and transfer of command, in the joint efforts to create a common operating picture.

In a joint response, the school, district, or IHE PIO would become a member of the command agency's Public Information System, providing support to the command agency's PIO. If the incident escalates and requires a multi-agency response that includes numerous community partners, a joint information center (JIC) would be established. Each participating agency PIO then becomes a member of the JIC, which is led by the command agency's PIO and IC.

Schools and IHEs should also develop plans and train the PIO on developing partnerships with the media and procedures for informing the public through the media. A plan combined with a cooperative relationship will facilitate effective dissemination of timely and accurate information necessary to support the response and the community. IMSI offers the "National Incident Management System (NIMS) Basic Guidance for Public Information Officers (PIOs)". at the NIMS Resource Center Web page accessible at <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/AdditionalResources.shtm>.

**Activities demonstrating that schools and IHEs are ensuring public information procedures and processes can gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate information during an incident/planned event include:**

- Disseminating all pertinent information through the designated PIO;
- Creating their own information centers to execute predetermined processes and procedures for communication during and after a crisis;
- Creating processes for verifying, coordinating, and disseminating information during an incident;
- Detailing the management and coordination of publication information with community partners, the media, and the community, including parents, guardians and families; and
- Completing all applicable on-line Emergency Management Institute Independent Study courses.