



National Incident Management System

Incident Complexity Guide

Planning, Preparedness and Training

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FEMA

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1. Introduction

The Incident Complexity Guide: Planning, Preparedness and Training supports the National Incident Management System (NIMS) doctrine by establishing guidance to support the incident management and emergency management community. This guide promotes a common understanding within the whole community by using a consistent method to describe incident complexity principles. It also establishes a framework for determining incident complexity level to inform emergency planning, preparedness and training and to improve operational readiness to respond to real events and incidents.

The intended audience for this Guide is any Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). This audience includes agencies and organizations at all levels of government, as well as private sector entities and Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) with emergency management or incident support responsibilities. The guide provides a standard, repeatable and scalable method of classifying the complexity of an incident, event or exercise.

Some organizations and jurisdictions have already developed guides and tools for identifying incident complexity. In these cases, this guide supports existing resources to enhance the decision-making process across all hazards and jurisdictions and improve overall readiness. In addition to using the guide for preparedness and training, AHJs may also use it to develop tools for supporting incident response.

The Incident Complexity Guide is recognized nationally as part of a host of emergency management guidance available from FEMA's National Integration Center (NIC). Its concepts and instructions can enhance national preparedness and promote effective implementation of NIMS and the National Preparedness System.

2. Overview

2.1. Purpose

The Incident Complexity Guide is intended for use during planning, preparedness and training efforts to help organizations and jurisdictions improve their readiness to respond to real-world events. This guide can help those involved in preparedness make more fully informed planning, preparedness and training decisions. Jurisdictions can use this guide to develop learning materials to identify the complexity level of each operational incident, planned event, training or exercise (“incident” for short).

FEMA encourages AHJs to incorporate the concept of incident complexity levels into planning and training, whether by instruction, scenario exercises or building their own tools for implementation. This guide is not designed for use as a complexity analysis or decision-making tool during incident response—though by supporting planning and training, this guide may help users as they respond to real-world incidents in their jurisdictions. In addition, identifying complexity level also supports incident/emergency management personnel as they manage additional, deployable resources.

The term *complexity level* quantifies the level of difficulty or resistance an incident presents to those working to successfully manage or mitigate it. As incidents may vary in their difficulty or resistance to mitigation or management, FEMA measures complexity level on a scale of 5 to 1, where Type 5 is the least complex incident and the least resistant to management or mitigation



Incident Complexity Guide: Planning, Preparedness and Training

The Incident Complexity Guide presents a national perspective that applies across multiple disciplines and incident types. This guide gives AHJs a shared understanding of how to define incident complexity and a flexible approach for building on that understanding. The result will be an improved approach to incident complexity that suits the whole community’s needs and resources.

2.1.1. SUPPORTING NIMS AND NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

Using a common approach and consistent method for determining complexity level will improve the effectiveness and implementation of NIMS and the National Preparedness System. This approach to incident complexity promotes a common understanding among whole community partners—state, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) and federal government agencies, NGOs, nonprofit organizations and the private sector.

This guide also promotes a better understanding of the complexity level assigned to the exercises incident management personnel complete to improve or maintain their qualifications. For more information on position qualifications, please refer to the following topics on the FEMA website:

- [FEMA NIMS National Qualification System \(NQS\)](#) – guidance and tools to help stakeholders develop processes for qualifying, certifying and credentialing deployable emergency personnel
- [FEMA NIMS Job Titles/Position Qualifications](#) – documents defining the minimum criteria personnel serving in specific incident-related positions must attain before deploying to an incident

2.2. Incident Complexity Levels

2.2.1. FACTORS IN IDENTIFYING INCIDENT COMPLEXITY LEVELS

Incident complexity reflects the combination of factors affecting how severe, widespread and difficult to control an incident is. Many factors determine complexity level, including the following:

- Geographic area involved
- Level of threat to life and property
- Political sensitivity
- Organizational complexity
- Jurisdictional boundaries
- Values at risk
- Weather
- Strategy and tactics
- Agency policy
- How routine or unusual the incident is

Incident and emergency management personnel consider complexity level when making decisions about incident management training, staffing and safety. Various obscure factors or concurrent events may complicate incidents—such as isolation of location, social factors, resource availability and long-lasting complications. Planning for potential incident escalation applies to complexity level due to potential adverse impacts or unknown variables. Being ready for potential adverse effects and the length of time for resources arriving on scene are important factors in determining how to respond to an incident. The AHJ has the freedom to determine how such factors affect incident complexity.

2.2.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF INCIDENT COMPLEXITY LEVELS

Incident/emergency management personnel can determine the complexity level (Types 5 through 1) by reviewing a standard set of observable characteristics that an incident displays or an exercise encompasses. These characteristics fall into two categories:

Incident Effect Indicators

Incident Effect Indicators are observable characteristics that help leaders determine complexity level based on the impact an incident has. These characteristics vary in scale depending on an incident's complexity. FEMA defines Incident Effect Indicators as observable "damage, consequence or disruption to the residents, population, infrastructure and government operations surrounding the incident or event."

Incident Management Indicators

Incident Management Indicators assist incident and emergency personnel in managing and supporting incidents of any complexity level by helping them complete the following under the Incident Command System (ICS):

- Understand and anticipate incident management conditions and determine appropriate management structure
- Provide necessary and appropriate structures for response, management and coordination
- Align off-site resources and logistical support requirements

The Incident Complexity Level Table below lists specific characteristics for each of these two categories of indicators for all five complexity levels.

3. Instructions

3.1. How to Select Incident Complexity Level

To select the appropriate complexity level, an AHJ can refer to the Incident Complexity Level Table on the following pages and follow these steps:

1. Review the Incident Effect Indicators for Type 5 (the least complex incident level). If the incident displays all or most of these Incident Effect Indicators, move on to Type 4. But if the incident displays only a few of the Type 5 Incident Effect Indicators, the incident likely aligns with complexity level Type 5.
2. Review the Incident Effect Indicators for Type 4. If the incident displays all or most of these Incident Effect Indicators, move on to Type 3. But if the incident displays only a few of the Type 4 Incident Effect Indicators, the incident likely aligns with complexity level Type 4.
3. Review the Incident Effect Indicators for Types 3, 2 and 1, if necessary. You will know you have found the most likely complexity level when the incident displays all or most of the Incident Effect Indicators for the previous level but not for the current complexity level. That is, once you reach the type at which the incident does not display all/most of the Incident Effect Indicators, you can assume you have found the right complexity level.
4. Once you determine the complexity level, use the Incident Management Indicators to guide and inform a scalable response to the incident within ICS.
 - In rapidly escalating incidents, the Incident Management Indicators often lag behind the Incident Effect Indicators.
 - If the incident displays all or most of the Incident Effect Indicators at a particular complexity level but none or few of the Incident Management Indicators, you can assume that you have found the correct complexity level but that the response has not yet scaled to address the needs indicated under the Incident Management Indicators.
5. Note the following:
 - Incidents differ in their rate and extent of escalation to more complex levels. It is the emergency management personnel's responsibility to determine the new complexity level in the instance of incident escalation.
 - Most indicators are common to all incidents, but some may be unique to a particular complexity level.

4. Incident Complexity Level Table

The language in the Incident Complexity Level Table is intentionally flexible, allowing AHJs to apply this guide to their specific needs and situations. Due to differences in infrastructure, incident management capability, population density, available resources, and other factors, it is possible that one jurisdiction may identify an incident at one level of complexity while another jurisdiction may identify it as a different level. This guide applies to all hazards and is available for the whole community to use as appropriate.

| Type 5 | Incident Effect Indicators | Incident Management Indicators |
|--|--|---|
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident shows no resistance to stabilization or mitigation ▪ Resources typically meet incident objectives within one or two hours of arriving on scene ▪ Minimal effects to population immediately surrounding the incident ▪ Few or no evacuations necessary during mitigation ▪ No adverse impact on critical infrastructure and key resources (CIKR) ▪ Elected/appointed governing officials and stakeholder groups require minimal or no coordination, and may not need notification ▪ Conditions or actions that caused the incident do not persist; as a result, there is no probability of a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident Commander (IC) position is filled, but Command and General Staff positions are unnecessary to reduce workload or span of control ▪ EOC activation is unnecessary ▪ Unified Command is not typically necessary ▪ One or more resources are necessary and receive direct supervision from the IC ▪ Resources may remain on scene for several hours, up to 24, but require little or no logistical support ▪ Formal incident planning process is not necessary ▪ Written Incident Action Plan (IAP) is unnecessary ▪ Limited aviation resources may be necessary and may use varying levels of air support |
| <p>Examples: Type 5 incidents, events and exercises can include a vehicle fire, a medical response to an injured/sick person, a response to a suspicious package/ item, or a vehicle pursuit. Planned events can include a 5K or 10K road race.</p> | | |

| Type 4 | Incident Effect Indicators | Incident Management Indicators |
|--|---|--|
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident shows low resistance to stabilization or mitigation ▪ Resources typically meet incident objectives within several hours of arriving on scene ▪ Incident may extend from several hours to 24 hours ▪ Limited effects to population surrounding incident ▪ Few or no evacuations necessary during mitigation ▪ Incident threatens, damages, or destroys a minimal number of residential, commercial or cultural properties ▪ CIKR may suffer adverse impacts ▪ CIKR mitigation measures are uncomplicated and can be implemented within one operational period ▪ Elected/appointed governing officials and stakeholder groups require minimal or no coordination, but they may need to be notified ▪ Conditions or actions that caused the original incident do not persist; as a result, there is low to no probability of a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IC/Unified Command role is filled, but Command and General Staff positions are typically not necessary to reduce workload or span of control ▪ EOC activation may be necessary ▪ Resources receive direct supervision either from the IC/Unified Command or through an ICS leader position, such as a Task Force or Strike Team/Resource Team, to reduce span of control ▪ Division or Group Supervisor position may be filled for organizational or span of control purposes ▪ Multiple kinds and types of resources may be necessary ▪ Aviation resources may be necessary and may use varying levels of air support ▪ Resources may remain on scene for 24 hours or longer and may require limited logistical support ▪ Formal incident planning process is not necessary ▪ Written IAP is unnecessary, but leaders may complete a documented operational briefing for all incoming resources |
| <p>Examples: Type 4 incidents, events and exercises can include a barricaded suspect, a hazardous materials (HAZMAT) spill on a roadway or waterway, a detonation of a small explosive device, a large commercial fire or a localized flooding event affecting a neighborhood or subdivision. Planned events can include a march, protest, festival, fair, or parade.</p> | | |

| Type 3 | Incident Effect Indicators | Incident Management Indicators |
|-----------------|--|--|
| <p>3</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident shows moderate resistance to stabilization or mitigation ▪ Resources typically do not meet incident objectives within the first 24 hours of resources arriving on scene ▪ Incident may extend from several days to over one week ▪ Population within and immediately surrounding incident area may require evacuation or shelter during mitigation ▪ Incident threatens, damages, or destroys residential, commercial or cultural properties ▪ CIKR may suffer adverse impacts ▪ CIKR mitigation actions may extend into multiple operational periods ▪ Elected/appointed governing officials and stakeholder groups require some level of coordination ▪ Conditions or actions that caused the incident may persist; as a result, there is medium probability of a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IC/Unified Command role is filled ▪ EOC activation may be necessary ▪ Command Staff positions are filled to reduce workload or span of control ▪ At least one General Staff position is filled to reduce workload or span of control ▪ Numerous resources receive supervision indirectly through the Operations Section and its subordinate positions ▪ Branch Director position(s) may be filled for organizational purposes and occasionally for span of control ▪ Division Supervisors, Group Supervisors, Task Forces and Strike Teams/Resource Teams are necessary to reduce span of control ▪ ICS functional units may be necessary to reduce workload ▪ Incident typically extends into multiple operational periods ▪ Resources may need to remain on scene for over a week and will require logistical support ▪ Incident may require an incident base to support resources ▪ Numerous kinds and types of resources may be required ▪ Aviation operations may involve multiple aircraft ▪ Number of responders depends on the kind of incident but could add up to several hundred personnel ▪ Leaders initiate and follow formal incident planning process ▪ Written IAP may be necessary for each operational period |

| Type 3 | Incident Effect Indicators | Incident Management Indicators |
|--------|--|--------------------------------|
| | <p>Examples: Type 3 incidents, events and exercises can include a tornado that damages a small section of a city, village or town; a railroad tank car HAZMAT leak requiring evacuation of a neighborhood or section of a community; a detonation of a large explosive device; an active shooter; a water main break; a Category 1 or 2 hurricane; or a small aircraft crash in a populated area. Planned events can include a county fair or an auto racing event.</p> | |

| | Type 2 Incident Effect Indicators | Incident Management Indicators |
|----------|---|--|
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident shows high resistance to stabilization or mitigation ▪ Resources typically do not meet incident objectives within the first several days ▪ Incident may extend from several days to two weeks ▪ Population within and surrounding the general incident area is affected ▪ Affected population may require evacuation, shelter or housing during mitigation for several days to months ▪ Incident threatens damages, or destroys residential, commercial, and cultural properties ▪ CIKR may suffer adverse impacts, including destruction ▪ CIKR mitigation actions may extend into multiple operational periods, requiring considerable coordination ▪ Elected/appointed governing officials, political organization and stakeholder groups require a moderate level of coordination ▪ Incident has resulted in external influences, has widespread impact and involves political and media sensitivities requiring comprehensive management ▪ Conditions or actions that caused the original incident may persist, so a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident is highly probable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IC/Unified Command role is filled ▪ EOC activation is likely necessary ▪ All Command Staff positions are filled ▪ All General Staff positions are filled ▪ Large numbers of resources receive supervision through the Operations Section ▪ Branch Director position(s) may be filled for organizational or span of control purposes ▪ Division Supervisors, Group Supervisors, Task Forces, Strike Teams and Resource Teams are necessary to reduce span of control ▪ Most ICS functional units are filled to reduce workload ▪ Incident extends into numerous operational periods ▪ Resources may need to remain on scene for several weeks and will require complete logistical support, as well as possible personnel replacement ▪ Incident requires an incident base and other ICS facilities for support ▪ Numerous kinds and types of resources may be required ▪ Complex aviation operations involving multiple aircraft may be involved ▪ Size and scope of resource mobilization necessitates a formal demobilization process ▪ Length of resource commitment may necessitate a transfer of command from one Incident Management Team (IMT) to a subsequent IMT ▪ Number of responders depends on the kind of incident but could add up to over 1,000 personnel ▪ Leaders initiate and follow formal incident planning process ▪ Written IAP is necessary for each operational period |

| Type 2 | Incident Effect Indicators | Incident Management Indicators |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders may order and deploy out-of-state resources such as through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) |
| <p>Examples: Type 2 incidents, events and exercises can include a tornado that damages an entire section of a city, village or town; a railroad tank car HAZMAT leak requiring a several-days-long evacuation of an entire section of a city, village or town; a wildland fire in an area with numerous residences, requiring evacuations and several days of firefighting; a multi-event explosive device attack; or a river flooding event affecting an entire section of a city, village or town, with continued precipitation anticipated. Planned events can include a VIP visit, a large demonstration, a strike or a large concert.</p> | | |

| Type 1 | Incident Effect Indicators | Incident Management Indicators |
|--------|--|---|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident shows high resistance to stabilization or mitigation ▪ Incident objectives cannot be met within numerous operational periods ▪ Incident extends from two weeks to over a month ▪ Population within and surrounding the region or state where the incident occurred is significantly affected ▪ Incident threatens, damages, or destroys significant numbers of residential, commercial, and cultural properties ▪ Incident damages or destroys numerous CIKRs ▪ CIKR mitigation extends into multiple operational periods and requires long-term planning and extensive coordination ▪ Evacuated or relocated populations may require shelter or housing for several days to months ▪ Elected/appointed governing officials, political organizations and stakeholder groups require a high level of coordination ▪ Incident has resulted in external influences, has widespread impact and involves political and media sensitivities requiring comprehensive management ▪ Conditions or actions that caused the original incident still exist, so a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident is highly probable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IC/Unified Command role is filled ▪ EOC activation is necessary ▪ Unified Command is complex due to the number of jurisdictions involved ▪ All Command Staff positions are filled; many include assistants ▪ All General Staff positions are filled; many include deputy positions ▪ Many resources receive supervision through an expanded Operations Section ▪ Branch Director position(s) may be filled for organizational or span of control purposes ▪ Division Supervisors, Group Supervisors, Task Forces, Strike Teams, and Resource Teams are necessary to reduce span of control ▪ Most or all ICS functional units are filled to reduce workload ▪ Incident extends into many operational periods ▪ Resources will likely need to remain on scene for several weeks and will require complete logistical support, as well as possible personnel replacement ▪ Incident requires an incident base and numerous other ICS facilities for support ▪ Numerous kinds and types of resources may be required, including many that trigger a formal demobilization process ▪ Federal assets and other nontraditional organizations – such as Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and NGOs – may be involved in the response, requiring close coordination and support ▪ Complex aviation operations involving numerous aircraft may be involved ▪ Size and scope of resource mobilization necessitates a formal demobilization process |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Length of resource commitment may necessitate a transfer of command from one IMT to a subsequent IMT▪ Number of responders depends on the kind of incident but could add up to over 1,000 personnel▪ Leaders initiate and follow formal incident planning process▪ Written IAP is necessary for each operational period▪ Leaders may order and deploy out-of-state resources, such as through EMAC |
| <p>Examples: Type 1 incidents, events and exercises can include a tornado with damage or destruction to an entire community; a Category 3, 4 or 5 hurricane; a pandemic; a railroad tank car explosion or multilevel explosive device destroying several neighborhoods and damaging others; a large wind-driven wildland fire threatening an entire city, village or town, causing several evacuations and destroying many homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure assets; or a widespread river flooding event in a city, village, or town, with continued precipitation anticipated. Planned events can include a political convention, the Super Bowl, the World Series or a presidential visit.</p> | |

5. Incident Effect Indicators Summary Table

This table supports the Incident Effect Indicators listed in the above Incident Complexity Level Tables across all hazards and provides a basis for training to determine incident complexity. Users can identify indicators with ease of use in addition to the detail provided above.

| Incident Complexity Level: Incident Effect Indicators Summary | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|-------------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| Type | Resistance to stabilization or mitigation | How long does it take for resources to meet incident objectives? | Effects on population immediately surrounding the incident | Length of incident effects | Evacuations necessary during mitigation | Adverse impact on CIKR | CIKR impact / mitigation measures | Coordination required with elected/ governing officials and stakeholder groups | Do conditions or actions that caused original incident persist? | Probability of cascading event or exacerbation of current incident |
| 5 | None | 1-2 hours | Minimal | Minimal | Few or none | None | None | Minimal or none | No | None |
| 4 | Low | Several to 24 hours | Limited | Up to 24 hours | Few or none | Minimal | Uncomplicated within one operational period | Minimal or none | No | Low to none |
| 3 | Moderate | At least 24 hours | Moderate | Several days to over one week | Possible; may require shelter | Threatens, damages, or destroys property | Adverse; multiple operational periods | Some | Possibly | Medium |
| 2 | High | Several days | Significant | Several days to two weeks | Possible; may require shelter/ housing for several days to months | Threatens, damages, or destroys property | Destructive; requires coordination over multiple operational periods | Moderate, including political organizations | Possibly | High |
| 1 | High | Numerous operational periods | Significant | Two weeks to over a month | May require shelter/ housing for several days to months | Significantly threatens, damages, or destroys property | Highly destructive; requires long-term planning and extensive coordination over multiple operational periods | High, including political organizations | Yes | High |

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| AHJ | Authority Having Jurisdiction |
| CIKR | critical infrastructure and key resources |
| EMAC | Emergency Management Assistance Compact |
| FEMA | Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| HAZMAT | hazardous materials |
| HSEEP | Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program |
| IAP | Incident Action Plan |
| IC | Incident Commander |
| ICP | Incident Command Post |
| ICS | Incident Command System |
| IMT | Incident Management Team |
| NIC | National Integration Center |
| NIMS | National Incident Management System |
| NGO | Nongovernmental Organization |
| NPG | National Preparedness Goal |
| NQS | National Qualification System |
| PSC | Planning Section Chief |
| PTB | Position Task Book |
| RTL | Resource Typing Library Tool |
| SLTT | state, local, tribal and territorial |
| SPR | Stakeholder Preparedness Review |
| THIRA | Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment |
| VOAD | Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster |

Glossary

agency: A government element with a specific function offering a particular kind of assistance.

Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ): An entity that has the authority and responsibility for developing, implementing, maintaining and overseeing the qualification process within its organization or jurisdiction. The AHJ may be a state or federal agency, training commission, NGO, private sector company or a tribal or local agency such as a police, fire or public works department. In some cases, the AHJ may support multiple disciplines that collaborate as part of a team, such as an IMT.

Command Staff: A group of incident personnel that the IC or Unified Command assigns to support the command function at an ICP. Command Staff often include a Public Information Officer (PIO), a Safety Officer and a Liaison Officer, who have assistants as necessary. Additional positions may be necessary, depending on the incident.

critical infrastructure and key resources (CIKR): Assets, systems, networks, functions and resources—physical or virtual—that are so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security or public health and safety.

deputy: A qualified individual who, in the absence of a superior, can be delegated the authority to manage a functional operation or perform a specific task. In some cases, a deputy can act as relief for a superior; therefore, the deputy should be fully qualified in the position. Generally, deputies can serve the IC, EOC director, General Staff and branch directors.

director: The ICS title for an individual responsible for supervising a branch. Also, an organizational title for an individual responsible for managing and directing the team in an EOC.

division: The organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area. Divisions are established when the number of resources exceeds the section chief's manageable span of control.

emergency: Any incident, whether natural, technological or human caused, that necessitates responsive action to protect life or property.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC): A national interstate mutual aid agreement that enables member states and territories to share resources during times of disaster.

evacuation: The organized, phased and supervised withdrawal, dispersal or removal of people from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas, and their reception and care in safe areas.

event: See *planned event*.

General Staff: A group of incident personnel organized according to function and reporting to the IC or Unified Command. The ICS General Staff consists of the Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief (PSC), Logistics Section Chief and Finance/Administration Section Chief.

hazard: Something potentially dangerous or harmful; often the root cause of an unwanted outcome.

incident: Per NIMS, an occurrence, natural or human caused, that necessitates a response to protect life or property. In this document, *incident* includes planned events as well as emergencies and disasters of all kinds and sizes.

Incident Action Plan (IAP): An oral or written plan outlining the IC's or Unified Command's objectives, tactics and support activities for the planned operational period, generally 12 to 24 hours.

incident base: A location where personnel coordinate and administer logistics functions for an incident. There is typically only one base per incident. The incident base may be co-located with the ICP.

Incident Commander (IC): The individual responsible for all incident activities, including developing strategies and tactics and ordering and releasing resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident activities.

Incident Command Post (ICP): The field location where staff perform the primary functions of incident command. The ICP may be co-located with the incident base and other incident facilities.

Incident Command System (ICS): A standardized approach to the command, control and coordination of on-scene incident management, providing a common hierarchy within which personnel from multiple organizations can work. The ICS brings procedures, personnel, facilities, equipment and communications into a common organizational structure to aid in the management of on-scene resources during incidents. The ICS applies to small, large and complex incidents of all kinds, including planned events.

incident complexity: The incident level determined by the level of difficulty, severity or overall resistance the incident or event presents to incident management or support personnel as they work to manage it; a categorization that helps leaders compare one type of incident or event to another.

Incident Effect Indicators: Characteristics that help leaders determine the incident complexity level based on the impact an incident has. These indicators vary in scale with the complexity of an incident. FEMA defines them as "the characteristics seen as damage, consequence or disruption to the residents, population, infrastructure and government operations surrounding the incident or event." See also *Incident Management Indicators*.

incident management: The broad spectrum of activities and organizations providing operations, coordination and support at all levels of government, using both governmental and nongovernmental

resources to plan for, respond to and recover from an incident, regardless of cause, size or complexity.

Incident Management Indicators: Characteristics that incident or emergency management personnel likely observe as the ICS expands or contracts in relationship to the complexity of an incident. These indicators can assist emergency and incident managers in managing and supporting an incident of any complexity level. See also *Incident Effect Indicators*.

Incident Management Team (IMT): A rostered group of ICS-qualified personnel consisting of an IC, Command and General Staff and personnel assigned to other key ICS positions.

jurisdiction: Jurisdiction has two definitions depending on the context:

- A range or sphere of authority: Public agencies have jurisdiction at an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authority. Jurisdictional authority at an incident can be political or geographical (for example, SLTT or federal boundary lines) or functional (for example, law enforcement or public health).
- A political subdivision (for example, municipal, county, parish, state or federal) with the responsibility to ensure public safety, health and welfare within its legal authorities and geographic boundaries.

mitigation: Applying the capabilities necessary to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impacts of natural and human-caused disasters, incidents and events.

mutual aid agreement: A written or oral agreement between or among agencies, organizations and jurisdictions that provides a mechanism for quickly obtaining assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate the rapid, short-term deployment of support before, during and after an incident.

national: Of a nationwide character, including the SLTT and federal aspects of governance and policy.

National Incident Management System (NIMS): A systematic, proactive approach designed to guide all levels of government, NGOs and the private sector to work together to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from the effects of incidents. NIMS provides stakeholders across the whole community with the shared vocabulary, systems and processes to successfully deliver the capabilities described in the National Preparedness System. NIMS provides a consistent foundation for dealing with all incidents, from daily occurrences to incidents requiring a coordinated federal response.

National Integration Center (NIC): A FEMA office that develops doctrine and tools to lead the whole community in implementing the National Preparedness System and NIMS.

national preparedness: Planning, organizing, equipping, training and exercising to build and sustain the capabilities necessary to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from the threats that pose the greatest risk to national security.

National Preparedness Goal (NPG): Doctrine describing what it means for the whole community to be prepared for the types of incidents that pose the greatest threat to national security, including acts of terrorism, emergencies and disasters, regardless of cause. The goal reads, “A secure and resilient Nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.”

National Preparedness System: An organized process to achieve the NPG’s stated goal of a secure and resilient nation.

National Qualification System (NQS): A nationwide approach, including best practices, for AHJs to use in qualifying, certifying and credentialing incident management and support personnel.

Nongovernmental Organization (NGO): A nonprofit group that is based on the interests of its members, individuals or institutions. An NGO is not created by a government, but it may work cooperatively with government. Examples of NGOs include faith-based groups, relief agencies and animal welfare organizations.

operational period: The time scheduled for executing a given set of operation actions, as the IAP specifies. Operational periods can vary in length but are typically 12 to 24 hours.

planned event: A scheduled, non-emergency activity such as a sporting event, concert or parade.

Position Task Book (PTB): A document that describes the minimum competencies, behaviors and tasks necessary for a person to qualify or recertify for a NIMS position. The PTB documents a trainee’s performance of given tasks.

resource management: Systems for identifying available resources at all jurisdictional levels to enable timely, efficient and unimpeded access to resources necessary to prepare for, respond to or recover from an incident.

resources: Personnel, equipment, teams, supplies and facilities available or potentially available for assignment to incident operations. NIMS describes resources by kind and type and uses them in operational support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at an EOC.

response: The capabilities necessary to save lives, protect property and the environment and meet basic human needs after an incident has occurred.

span of control: The number of subordinates for which a supervisor is responsible, usually expressed as a ratio of supervisors to individuals.

Unified Command: An ICS command structure that applies when more than one agency has incident jurisdiction or when incidents cross political jurisdictions.

whole community: A focus on enabling a wide range of players from the private and nonprofit sectors to participate in incident management activities to foster better coordination and working relationships. Stakeholders include NGOs, the general public and all levels of government.

Reference Resources

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

- On the NIMS website, users can find links to NIMS documents, guidelines and operational tools, as well as training information, implementation guidance, updates and contact information.
 - <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims>

National Qualification System (NQS)

- The NIMS Guideline for the NQS describes the components of a qualification and certification system, defines a process for certifying the qualifications of incident personnel, describes how to establish and implement a peer review process and introduces the process of credentialing personnel.
- NQS also provides Job Titles/Position Qualifications and PTBs for a range of incident management, incident support and emergency management positions, as well as supplemental guidance regarding Qualification Review Boards.
 - <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims/components#nqs>
 - [NIMS NQS Supplemental Guide for Qualification Review Boards](#)

Resource Typing Library Tool (RTLTL)

- FEMA's RTLTL is an online catalog of national resource typing definitions and NIMS Job Titles/Position Qualifications.
 - <https://rtlt.preptoolkit.fema.gov/Public/Combined>

Incident Command System (ICS) Resource Center

- The Emergency Management Institute's ICS Resource Center provides information about and links to an extensive array of ICS training materials, job aids, position checklists and forms.
 - <https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/index.htm>

NIMS Training Program

- The NIMS Training Program specifies NIC and stakeholder responsibilities and activities for developing, maintaining and sustaining NIMS training.
 - <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims/implementation-training#training>

NIMS Guideline for Mutual Aid

- The NIMS Guideline for Mutual Aid outlines common practices for mutual aid agreements, compacts and plans for use before and after an incident or planned event. Private and nonprofit sectors, faith-based organizations and governments can use this guidance as a resource in developing or refining mutual aid agreements or plans.
 - <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims/components#mutual-aid>

Integrated Preparedness Planning

- The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) provides a set of guiding principles for exercise and evaluation programs, as well as a common approach to exercise program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation and improvement planning.
 - [Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program \(HSEEP\)](#)
- Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 201 provides guidance for conducting a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR).
 - [CPG 201: Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment \(THIRA\) and Stakeholder Preparedness Review \(SPR\) Guide](#)