



NWCG Training Working Team

Briefing Paper: Management of Wildland Fire Training Within the Framework of NIMS

Background

On 28 February 2003, Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)–5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*, was issued, directing the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish a National Incident Management System (NIMS). Initially published in March 2004, the NIMS provides, “a consistent national approach for Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments; the private sector; and Non Governmental Organizations (NGO’s) to work together to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity.”¹

HSPD–5 requires all Federal departments and agencies to adopt NIMS and to use it in their individual incident management programs and activities, as well as in support of all actions taken to assist State, Tribal, and local governments. The directive requires Federal departments and agencies to make adoption of NIMS by State, Tribal, and local organizations a condition for Federal preparedness assistance through grants, contracts, and other activities.

Subsequent expansion of the NIMS by DHS removed most components of the NWCG’s original National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) from their control.

Two of the five components of the NIMS have had an impact on the mission and work of the NWCG working teams. Component #1, *Preparedness*, includes training and exercises, personnel qualifications and certification, and equipment certification and typing. Component #4, *Command and Management*, includes a standardized incident management structure based on three key organizational constructs NWCG partners are familiar with: the Incident Command System, Multi-agency Coordination Systems, and Public Information.

Training Working Team (TWT) Actions

The NIMS presented an opportunity for the TWT to form new partnerships and strengthen existing ones that could assist in its mission. The TWT acknowledged that it needed to research, adopt, and implement new methods and procedures for developing its training products in light of the changing environment the NIMS brought. The TWT also recognized the potential impact NIMS could have on several areas it managed and

¹ *National Incident Management System*, revision. Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, FEMA 501, Draft August 2007. <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-nims.pdf>, (last access 10/04/2007).

during the past two years has been involved in several collaborative efforts to minimize those impacts. The collaborative efforts the TWT has been involved in include:

Common Development of ICS Curricula and Interchangeable Courses

The NIIMS ICS, with subtle changes, is now NIMS ICS controlled by DHS. Several groups sought to develop NIMS ICS curriculum at the same time the TWT was revising its curricula. In an effort to prevent divergent or conflicting versions of curricula and the resulting confusion to the wildland fire community, the TWT was able to incorporate Subject Matter Experts (SME's) from the other stakeholder groups into one expanded SME development group that settled on one common set of learning objectives for each ICS course. As a result, the term "interchangeable" was developed to describe courses from different entities that use the same learning objectives and the same SME group to develop the course. The I-100, 200, 300, and 400 courses are interchangeable with courses from Emergency Management Institute and the US Fire Administration/National Fire Academy (USFA/NFA). This effort ensures that NWCG's material will be recognized under NIMS.

Competency Development, Position Task Books (PTB's), and the Competency Change Management Board

The original NWCG training design was based on competencies. Over the years the focus moved toward tasks in the PTB's and the original competencies were "lost". Because competency-based training is the adult education norm the TWT, in partnership with the United States Fire Administration (USFA), had competencies developed for all ICS positions. After the public comment, the Incident Operations Standards Working Team (IOSWT) developed new PTBs incorporating the tasks related to the competencies. As training courses are revised they will incorporate these competency related objectives. This effort will assist in eliminating unnecessary duplication in our PTB's, align course content, improve coordination and cooperation with other disciplines, and ensure NIMS compliance. In order to stabilize these benefits, the TWT pushed for a change management board to be established by the DHS. The Board is responsible for administering and managing ICS competencies and behaviors for the emergency management / incident management communities. NWCG will maintain one seat on the Board through an IOSWT representative.

The NIMS Training Program, Credentialing System, and Wildland Fire

One of the three broad objectives of the National Training Program for NIMS is to define the minimum personnel qualifications for service in complex multi-jurisdictional incidents nationwide. The NIMS Integration Center is developing a national credentialing system that will, "help verify, quickly and accurately, the identity and qualifications of emergency personnel responding to an incident. The National Emergency Responder Credentialing System will document minimum professional qualifications, certifications, training and education requirements that define the standards required for specific emergency response functional positions."² "Participation in national incidents will

² National Incident Management System, revision. Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, FEMA 501, Draft August 2007. <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-nims.pdf>, (last access 09/04/2007).

require credentials based on personnel qualifications that meet or exceed the NIC guidelines for personnel qualification.”³ The partnership between the USFA/NFA and the TWT during the development of all-hazards Command and General Staff position courses commissioned by DHS ensures that the foundation has been laid to minimize the potential for conflict with current or future NWCG courses. Each of the courses pilot presentations’ were reviewed by a training specialist from the Training Development Unit of NWCG to ensure that the wildland fire curriculum matched up as close as possible to the all-hazards position specific training. The TWT continues to work closely with stakeholders to ensure that NWCG courses will remain in compliance with NIMS guidelines and mandates.

NIMS 5 Year Training Plan Comments

The TWT was provided an opportunity to comment on the newly released draft copy of the NIMS 5 Year Training Plan. This plan is significant to the wildland fire community because all non-DHS developed ICS position specific coursework must meet or exceed the guidelines contained within the plan⁴.

Integration of All Hazards Courses into NWCG Courses

One of the goals the NWCG gave the TWT is to improve training program efficiency where possible. As cooperation between NWCG and the All Hazards communities increase, the TWT will work with or adopt appropriate course work from other agencies in lieu of independent development of some courses. This process will assist in meeting the goal of reducing costs and increasing efficiency. Courses adopted through this method will be listed in the Field Managers Course Guide (FMCG) and will be referenced as interchangeable or replace outdated NWCG course work. Replacement of NWCG’s I-402 course has already been accomplished and is now referenced in the FMCG as EMI G-402.

Enhancing Partnerships

The TWT has also coordinated or strengthened all-hazards relationships by the following actions:

- Coordinated a joint meeting with the NIC (IOSWT and TWT, USFA, EMI, Coast Guard, and EPA) to establish baselines for future development and thereby reducing duplication.
- Incorporated all-hazards advisors from the US Fire Administration, Coast Guard and Forest Service on the TWT.
- The TWT was asked to review the National Response Plan (NRP) that includes many overarching concepts that will be incorporated into the NIMS process.

³ *NIMS Five Year Training Plan*, Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2007, P-9

⁴ *NIMS Five Year Training Plan*, Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2007, P-2

Critical Actions Needed for Future Survival

Several adjustments may occur in the coming months as the National Training Program matures and is implemented. There are many pieces of the NIMS outside the purview of the TWT that will also affect other working teams. Those working teams will likewise need to engage to ensure preservation of their programs. Those that involve the TWT include:

Instructor Certification and Qualifications

The NIMS Training Plan contains minimum instructor qualification levels that must be met or exceeded for a course to be deemed, “as taught by DHS.” The TWT must continue to work closely with the Incident Management Systems Division (IMSD) and the National Integration Center (NIC) to ensure NWCG’s training program is NIMS compliant. NWCG must recognize that instructor levels are being set at a national level for all-hazards instruction and latitude of instructor qualifications is narrowing.⁵ The TWT has developed a draft set of instructor qualification levels that closely resembles the qualifications in use by similar stakeholder groups.

Policy Level Coordination

Most of the work completed by the TWT has been reactive to rapidly emerging systems development by DHS. NWCG would benefit greatly if a policy level liaison were established with the IMSD and NIC to ensure issues are resolved while in the formative stages. The assignment of Steve Gage has been a tremendous assistance in reacting to policy decisions from the NIC, but NWCG needs to engage at a higher level to ensure continued coordination of our wildland fire program within the larger framework of the all-hazards National Training Program.

⁵ *NIMS Five Year Training Plan*, Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2007, P-16