

Handout 2-2: NIMS Management Characteristics

- **Common Terminology:** Allows diverse incident management and support organizations to work together across a wide variety of functions and hazard scenarios.
- **Modular Organization:** ICS and EOC organizational structures develop in a flexible and integrated fashion based on an incident's size, complexity, and hazard environment
- **Management by Objectives:** A management approach, fundamental to NIMS, that involves establishing specific, measurable objectives, identifying strategies, tactics, and tasks to achieve the objectives; developing and issuing assignments, plans, procedures, and protocols to accomplish the identified tasks; and documenting results against the objectives to measure performance, facilitate corrective actions, and inform development of incident objectives for the subsequent operational period
- **Incident Action Planning:** Concise, coherent means of capturing and communicating incident objectives, tactics, and assignments for operational and support activities
- **Manageable Span of Control:** Span of control is key to effective and efficient incident management operation. Helps ensure an effective and efficient incident management. It enables management to direct and supervise subordinates and to communicate with and manage all resources under their control. The optimal span of control for incident management is one supervisor to five subordinates; however, effective incident management frequently necessitates ratios significantly different from this. The 1:5 ratio is a guideline, and incident personnel use their best judgment to determine the actual distribution of subordinates to supervisors for a given incident or EOC activation.
- **Incident Locations and Facilities:** Various types of operational support facilities are established in the vicinity of an incident to accomplish a variety of purposes and direct their identification and location based on the incident. Typical designated facilities include the Incident Command Post, incident base, camps, staging areas, mass casualty triage areas, points of distribution, and emergency shelters.
- **Comprehensive Resource Management:** Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date inventory of resources is an essential component of incident management. Resources are defined as personnel, teams, equipment, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment or allocation in support of incident management and emergency response activities.
- **Integrated Communications:** Provide and maintain contact among and between incident resources, enable connectivity between various levels of government, achieve situational awareness, and facilitate information sharing

- **Establishment and Transfer of Command:** The Incident Commander or Unified Command should clearly establish the command function at the beginning of an incident. The jurisdiction or organization with primary responsibility for the incident designates the individual at the scene responsible for establishing command and protocol for transferring command. When command transfers, the transfer process includes a briefing that captures essential information for continuing safe and effective operations, and notifying all personnel involved in the incident.
- **Chain of Command and Unity of Command:** Chain of command refers to the orderly line of authority within the ranks of the incident management organization. Unity of command means that each individual only reports to one person. This clarifies reporting relationships and reduces confusion caused by multiple, conflicting directives, enabling leadership at all levels to effectively direct the personnel under their supervision.
- **Unified Command:** When no one jurisdiction, agency or organization has primary authority and/or the resources to manage an incident on its own, Unified Command may be established. In Unified Command, there is no one “commander.” Instead, the Unified Command manages the incident by jointly approved objectives. A Unified Command allows these participating organizations to set aside issues such as overlapping and competing authorities, jurisdictional boundaries, and resource ownership to focus on setting clear priorities and objectives for the incident. The resulting unity of effort allows the Unified Command to allocate resources regardless of ownership or location. Unified Command does not affect individual agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.
- **Accountability:** Effective accountability for resources during an incident is essential. Incident personnel should adhere to principles of accountability, including check-in/check-out, incident action planning, unity of command, personal responsibility, span of control, and resource tracking. Some principles related to accountability include:
 - **Check-In:** All responders, regardless of agency affiliation, must report in to receive an assignment in accordance with the procedures established by the Incident Commander.
 - **Incident Action Plan:** Response operations must be directed and coordinated as outlined in the IAP.
 - **Unity of Command:** Each individual involved in incident operations will be assigned to only one supervisor.
 - **Personal Responsibility:** All responders are expected to use good judgment and be accountable for their actions.
 - **Span of Control:** Supervisors must be able to adequately supervise and control their subordinates, as well as communicate with and manage all resources under their supervision.
 - **Resource Tracking:** Supervisors must record and report resource status changes as they occur.

- **Dispatch/Deployment:** Resources should deploy only when appropriate authorities request and dispatch them through established resource management systems. Resources that authorities do not request should refrain from spontaneous deployment to avoid overburdening the recipient and compounding accountability challenges.
- **Information and Intelligence Management:** The incident management organization establishes a process for gathering, analyzing, assessing, sharing, and managing incident-related information and intelligence. Information and intelligence management includes identifying essential elements of information (EEI) to ensure personnel gather the most accurate and appropriate data, translate it into useful information, and communicate it with appropriate personnel. In NIMS, “intelligence” refers exclusively to threat-related information developed by law enforcement, medical surveillance, and other investigative organizations.