

NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM  
CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT SUPPORT TOOL (NIMCAST)

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# NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT SUPPORT TOOL (NIMCAST)

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## **PURPOSE**

The National Incident Management System Capability Assessment Support Tool (NIMCAST) is a self-assessment instrument for State, local, tribal, and private-sector and nongovernmental organizations to evaluate their jurisdiction's ability to effectively prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) and, by extension, the NIMCAST are designed to enhance the ability of the United States to manage domestic incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive system for incident management.

## **BACKGROUND**

In Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*, the President directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop and administer a unified, national system for managing incidents. The NIMS provides a consistent Nationwide approach for Federal, State, local, and tribal governments to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity.

The NIMS incorporates the best practices currently in use by incident managers at all levels and represents a core set of doctrine, concepts, principles, terminology, and organizational processes to enable effective, efficient, and collaborative incident management at all levels. HSPD-5 requires all Federal Departments and agencies to adopt the NIMS and to use it in their individual domestic incident management and emergency prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation programs and activities, as well as in support of those actions taken to assist State, local, or tribal entities.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate developed the NIMCAST to contribute to the establishment of a national baseline for compliance by all State, local, and tribal jurisdictions with the NIMS. It will also include readiness metrics and elements that support the national preparedness goal, including standards for preparedness assessments and strategies and a system for assessing the Nation's overall preparedness to respond to major events, especially those involving acts of terrorism.

HSPD-8, *National Preparedness*, provides that the primary mechanism for delivery of Federal preparedness assistance will be awards to the States. Federal preparedness assistance will support State and local entities' efforts, including planning, training, exercises, interoperability, and equipment acquisition for major events as well as building capacity for prevention activities such as information gathering, detection, deterrence, and collaboration related to terrorist attacks.

## **AUTHORITIES**

- Homeland Security Act of 2002
- Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*.

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- Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-8, *National Preparedness*.
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS), *National Incident Management System*, March 1, 2004.

### **WHY DO WE NEED A SELF-ASSESSMENT?**

Jurisdictions at all levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations must implement the requirements established in the NIMS in order to apply this comprehensive national approach. The NIMCAST assists in that compliance by allowing incident and resource managers to assess their current capabilities and determine what additional actions and resources are needed to effectively participate in the NIMS.

Additionally, HSPD-5 requires Federal Departments and agencies to make adoption of the NIMS by State and local organizations a condition for Federal preparedness assistance. The NIMCAST will facilitate the adoption of the NIMS by State, local, and tribal governments in order to meet the requirement established in HSPD-5.

### **USES OF THE NIMCAST**

This instrument provides a great benefit to incident managers at all levels of government by conducting a NIMS capabilities assessment. The instrument is designed for use as an automated assessment that provides instant feedback, such as tabulated results, reports, and graphic displays of results. The NIMCAST assessment process provides jurisdictions with additional management tools necessary to strengthen their incident management programs, including:

1. An assessment tool to measure compliance with incident management standards.
2. Establishment of a baseline (initial survey of capabilities) for strategic planning.
3. Assistance in the development of plans to achieve the prescribed capabilities and correct deficiencies.
4. A comprehensive incident management program review.
5. Justification of budget, staff, and resources.
6. Program orientation for new staff members or leadership.

### **PROCESS**

#### **1. Distribution Process**

The NIMCAST is rolled out through a permission-based system. All users will be invited by the next higher level to complete the assessment. This roll out will initially reach down to the county and independent city level. County and independent city incident managers distribute invitations to join the system to representatives of disciplines covered by the NIMS. This distribution includes appropriate private-sector and nongovernmental organization representatives. Discipline-specific representatives may also be invited by the county or city incident manager to view the NIMCAST online as "read only" users

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(meaning they can view the instrument and all of its functions online, but not fill out the assessment).

## 2. **Completing the NIMCAST**

The incident manager is responsible for collecting all feedback from those personnel tasked to provide input on the jurisdiction's incident management capabilities. Once all necessary information is gathered, the emergency manager must complete the online tool and submit the assessment for rollup.

### I. **Accessing the NIMCAST**

To access the NIMCAST, go to <http://www.beta.fema.gov/nimcast>. Registered users should log in using the login box on the right side of the page, which prompts users to enter their e-mail address and password to access the system.

First-time users will be prompted to enter their temporary password and change it to a permanent password. Note that when changing the password, new passwords must be at least 8 characters long and contain at least one number or special character.

### II. **Filling out the Assessment**

- A. Upon accessing the NIMCAST, note that it is separated into seven chapters (in accordance with the NIMS document).
- B. Choose a chapter to work with and click on its title.
- C. Choose a section to complete and click on its title.
- D. Each NIMCAST section has the following elements:
  1. A shaded box at the top of each section containing a specific NIMS reference. Each reference is taken verbatim from the NIMS document and its section and page number in the NIMS is annotated.
  2. Below the reference area, there are capability assessment statements adopted directly from the NIMS reference. Note that some NIMS-derived compliance statements are broken down into several bulleted statements. Additionally, if a NIMS reference has multiple unique parts, each part may be addressed individually in separate statements; however, there is only one "YES/NO" question for each NIMS reference section.
- E. Answering the NIMCAST Capability Assessment Questions
  1. For each NIMS-derived compliance statement, provide either a "Yes" or "No" answer.
  2. Voluntary information fields are available if users want to track their NIMS implementation progress. These fields include the following:

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- a. Month and year of compliance.
  - b. Proof of compliance.
  - c. Compliance strategy describing actions that will be taken to achieve compliance as appropriate.
  - d. Estimated percentage of compliance achieved to date.
3. Once a section is complete, click the box at the bottom of the page labeled "Save & Continue." A green check will appear next to the appropriate section on the main page for that chapter.

**3. Submitting the NIMCAST**

**Step 1.** The incident manager should submit a completed version of the NIMCAST instrument by using the "Submit for Rollup" link on the left side of the NIMCAST Web page. The instrument will roll up for review using the same channel by which it was rolled out. Users roll up to the next highest level. For instance, counties and independent cities roll up to States, and States then roll up to the Federal Government.

**Step 2.** At each level of the roll up process, the NIMCAST must be filled in, until a Statewide incident management capability and NIMS compliance can be accurately reflected. The State incident management administrator will submit the State's finalized NIMCAST to the NIMS Integration Center for review.