



FEMA

NIMS *Alert*

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NIMS Integration Center
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NIMS AND USE OF PLAIN LANGUAGE

It is important that responders and incident managers use common terminology. There simply is little or no room for misunderstanding in an emergency situation.

The use of plain language in emergency response is matter of public safety, especially the safety of first responders and those affected by the incident. It is critical that all local responders, as well as those coming into the impacted area from other jurisdictions and other states as well as the federal government, know and utilize commonly established operational structures, terminology, policies and procedures. This is what NIMS and the Incident Command System (ICS) are all about—achieving interoperability across agencies, jurisdictions and disciplines.

The use of common terminology is about the ability of area commanders, State and local EOC personnel, federal operational coordinators, and emergency responders to communicate clearly with each other and effectively coordinate response activities, no matter what the size, scope or complexity of the incident. The ability of responders from different jurisdictions and different disciplines to work together depends greatly on their ability to communicate with each other.

While the NIMS Integration Center does not require plain language for internal operations, it strongly encourages it, as it is important to practice everyday terminology and procedures that will need to be used in emergency incidents and disasters. NIMS implementation is a long-term effort and it is probably not possible to persuade everyone to change ingrained habits overnight. But we do hope that over time, everyone will understand the important of using common terminology, that is, plain language, every day.

It is required that plain language be used for multi-agency, multi-jurisdiction and multi-discipline events, such as major disasters and exercises. Beginning FY 2006, federal preparedness grant funding is contingent on the use of plain language in incidents requiring assistance from responders from other agencies, jurisdictions, and functional disciplines.

The FY 2006 NIMS Implementation requirement to use plain language does not abolish the use of 10-codes in everyday department communications. Accordingly, the use of 10-codes in daily operations will not result in the loss of federal preparedness funds.

This alert replaces the one on 10-Codes issued on February 8, 2006.

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