NVAP Reference Guide: National Incident Management System

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Since the terrorist attacks in September 2001, the Federal Government has re-evaluated how to respond to emergencies on U.S. soil. In 2003, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established the National Incident Management System. This presidentially mandated system provides a consistent nationwide approach for Federal, Tribal, State, and local 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 provides a managerial and organizational structure for use in accomplishing these objectives. Use of the NIMS also provides the agricultural community with ready access to the human and material resources of the wider emergency management community, thus facilitating the potential mobilization of large-scale resources for response to major emergencies.

The NIMS works hand in hand with the NRF. The NIMS provides the template for managing incidents, while the NRF provides the structure and mechanisms for national level policy for incident management.

Under most circumstances, the existing well-trained cadre of local, State, and Federal animal health professionals is sufficient to cope with a disease outbreak threatening American agriculture. In the event of a sizable regional or national disease outbreak, however, the agricultural community would need help from the larger emergency management community to avoid being overwhelmed by the logistical, operational, and administrative demands of a rapidly changing situation.

The U.S. agricultural community is accelerating its efforts to prepare to respond to a potentially major epidemic by reaching out to the emergency management community. This outreach involves learning and using the NIMS as well as building partnerships with other emergency management agencies and groups for coordinated responses to various emergency scenarios. Such partnerships are vital to planning for the mobilization of large- scale human and material resources to address potentially catastrophic animal health emergencies.

One key component of the NIMS is the Incident Command System (ICS), which is the managerial and organizational structure for use with emergencies that may increase in size or evolve in complexity—whether within a few hours or over several days, weeks, or months. The ICS is designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communication operating within a common organizational structure, designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management.

APHIS has adopted the NIMS and ICS organizational structures and processes to manage emergency responses and other events.

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