EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS OF FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS
IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
INTEGRATION OF THE NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM INTO
LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANS

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ABSTRACT

All risk hazard type emergencies must be managed by local jurisdictions, mutual aid partners, and State and Federal agencies. Agencies must work together, communicate with each other, and they must depend on each other.

The problem is the Town of Hudson, NH lacked a formalized Incident Management System in the current Emergency Management Plan. Without this system, the Town did not have the ability to work within a framework that facilitates government and private entities working together to manage domestic incidents and disasters. The plan did not have a set of standardized organizational structures or defined requirements for processes, procedures, and systems designed to improve interoperability and response to hazards and disasters.

The purpose of this research is to identify the benefits and steps to integrate the National Incident Management System (NIMS) into the local plan.

The descriptive research method was used. Descriptive research clarifies and reports the present status of the Town’s Plan and what actions are needed to incorporate NIMS into the current plan.

The following research questions will be answered:

1. What are the elements and concepts that comprise the National Incident Management System?

2. How will NIMS improve the Town of Hudson Emergency Management Plan and the response to disasters?

3. What steps can the Town of Hudson, NH take to integrate NIMS into its current Emergency Management Plan?

Procedures included an extensive literature review, evaluation of the Hudson
Emergency Management Plan and evaluation of the National Incident Management System.

The results clearly demonstrate a need for the Town to incorporate the National Incident Management System into its plan.

Results of the research recommend positive change and improvement will result. The final recommendation is to integrate the National Incident Management System into all Emergency Management plans for greater efficiency in emergency response and in saving lives.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCEDURES</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The Town of Hudson, NH like many other communities in the United States has created Emergency Management Plans derived from a boiler plate framework from FEMA and the State of NH Emergency Management Agency. The Town of Hudson developed its Emergency Management Plan (EMP) during the mid to late 80’s. This plan is used towards the development and management of procedures that are activated during a disaster or a serious emergency situation that requires the coordination and use of resources outside the capabilities of local emergency responders. The Emergency Management Plan (EMP) provided the guidelines, procedures, and protocols for dealing with a wide array (All Risk Hazards) of potential crisis or critical incidents faced by the Town of Hudson (Town of Hudson EMP, 2001).

The Town of Hudson benefited from the EMP and realized that the emergency planning process, by which an organization prepares, provides the ability to respond to a natural or man-made event that significantly improves its operations. An EMP must be designed to respond to a wide array of potential loss – from fire, explosion, earthquake, storm or wind, chemical release or spill, theft, hazardous material release or spill, theft, criminal acts or terrorist acts, etc. (Town of Hudson EMP, 2001).

The EMP was essential to the response to major emergencies and we learned if effectively implemented, it could mitigate the scope of potential loss by reducing the amount of time required to return to full operations. Unfortunately, as critical incidents do not routinely occur and are rare events, many emergency management agencies fail to review, improve and maintain their EMP. This oversight increases the risk of poor response to disasters that otherwise might have been a controllable incident at a disaster or catastrophic situation. Over the past years we have learned that the EMP must be written, tested, reviewed, and practiced routinely.
Critical events are time driven; the emergency response must be as rapid, smooth, and efficient as possible. Additionally, the Emergency Management Plan must be considered a living document. Many organizations have plans but fail to revise and update as conditions and operations change. The Town of Hudson’s EMP is written in three part organization. This consists of the Basic Plan, Annexes, and Appendices. The basic plan serves as the overview of our approach to emergency management and includes policies, plans, procedures, and protocols. It formed the basis for decision making, training of personnel, and management of the EMP. The annexes support the basic plan and provide the guidelines that address specific activities crucial to the emergency response and recovery. Annexes provide for the immediate methods of communicating and activating the program and are used by the personnel reporting and responding to the critical event(s). The appendices provided hazard specific data to support each functional annex and contained technical information, details and methods for use in emergency operations. It was clear to the Town of Hudson that the EMP process must combine emergency response, crisis management, and operational recovery into a sequential, integrated format.

The Emergency Management Agency for the Town of Hudson is administered by the Fire Chief who has the dual role of Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director. The Assistant Emergency Management Director responsibility is delegated to the Police Chief. This arrangement worked out well in that most disaster situations or incidents most often required the response of both agencies. Other Town agencies such as the Highway Department, Town Administration, Finance Department, Community Development Department and other agencies most often played a support role in the emergency management activities of the town. The Fire Department and Police Department were well versed in the use of the Incident Command System
and informally used this system in the implementation of the EMP during disasters or incidents. However, the other agencies that provide support to disaster response had little to no experience with an Incident Management System. This at times hampered our ability to work efficiently and in a systematic manner when responding to disaster or emergencies. The core Emergency Management Plan addressed leadership and management roles of personnel, but was not definitive in its delegation of roles and did not allow for an expansion of roles and responsibilities that would be necessary due to a changing emergency environment.

The problem is that the Town of Hudson, NH’s Emergency Management Plan lacks an Incident Management System (IMS) and structure within its EMP that will assist in managing all risks hazards identified in the current EMP. Without a IMS, the Town of Hudson does not have the ability to effectively work within a flexible framework that facilitates government and private entities at all levels working together to manage domestic incidents and disasters. Additionally, there is not a set of standardized organizational structures, as well as requirements for processes, procedures, and systems designed to improve interoperability and response to all risk hazards and disasters (USDHS, 2004).

This lack of a formalized Incident Management System prompted my subject choice of this Applied Research Paper and the need to study this local problem. The purpose of this research is to identify the benefits of and steps to integrate the National Incident Management System (NIMS) into the Town of Hudson’s Emergency Management Plan.

The descriptive research method was used to complete this project. Descriptive research will allow me to clarify and report the present status of our Emergency Management Plan that will in turn assist in defining if any further actions are needed to improve our current plan. Additionally, as a Chief Officer with both fire and emergency management responsibilities, this
research will assist me in managing the operational components of the Hudson Fire Department fire and rescue operations. At the same time, this research will afford me the opportunity to assimilate the concepts of the NIMS and correlating them with the current Town of Hudson EMP to enhance my role as Emergency Management Director and to provide a more efficient emergency response capability to disasters and emergency incidents. These efforts are consistent with the objectives of the *Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management* (National Fire Academy, 2001).

This descriptive research compels the researcher to answer the following questions:

1. What are the elements and concepts that comprise the National Incident Management System?

2. How does the National Incident Management System (NIMS) improve the response to disasters and the local emergency management plan?

3. What steps can the Town of Hudson, NH take to integrate the National Incident Management System into the current Emergency Management Plan?

**BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Hudson Fire Department was organized in 1924, some 78 years ago. The Department has transitioned from an all volunteer to its current combination fire department status. A force of 60 personnel makes up the department. The Hudson Fire Department provides 24-hour coverage and is supplemented by a Call Force of 20 Firefighters. The Town of Hudson has an estimated 23,000 citizens within a 29 square mile area. (Town of Hudson Emergency Management Plan, 2001).

The Town of Hudson has had an Emergency Management Plan in place since the mid to late 1980s. The plan was developed during that time period to address preparedness, response,
mitigation, and recovery from disasters of all risk type hazards. The creation of the Town of Hudson EMP during this time period was a proactive attempt to prepare for disasters. There was no particular threat or need identified that required this planning, however the encouragement of the State of NH Emergency Management Division provided the initiative to create the plan. The Town of Hudson EMP has been revised a number of times during the ensuing years because of changing needs derived from lessons learned from disasters that the Town has responded to. The plan has fundamentally met the needs of the community and provided a plan that loosely identified leadership and decision making responsibilities, methods for disseminating public information, resource listings, and generic mitigation and recovery strategies.

The Fire Chief had the dual role of Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director delegated to him as part of his duties and responsibilities. It was during this time that the Incident Command System was developing into the recognized Incident Management System for all fire departments across the country. Police Department’s were also beginning to adopt the ICS but slower than fire department organizations. The abilities of the fire and police departments to understand the ICS system and apply it to disaster situations prompted the governing body to appoint the Fire Chief as Emergency Management Director. The experiences of the emergency response agencies allowed the Hudson EMP to adopt an informal, undocumented form of an Incident Management System. This past method of managing the Town’s Emergency Management Agency worked effectively given the needs of this time period.

The Emergency Management Plan for the Town of Hudson met state guidelines towards the following objectives:

- Provided for the overall environmental health, safety, and welfare of the people, Town of Hudson community, and region.
• Increased the potential for business recovery and continuity.
• Increased the potential for maintaining essential services.
• Provided for the effective and efficient response to a wide array of crisis or critical incidents.
• Reduced the cost of risk and the potential for claims and legal costs.
• Assisted in meeting regulatory and legal requirements by establishing EMP best practices.

The Hudson EMP continued to provide an adequate emergency response plan through 2003. The plan was updated as needed and reviewed at least once a year to which an annual concurrence statement was attested to by the governing body and Emergency Management Director (Town of Hudson Emergency Management Plan, 2001).

Currently, the Town of Hudson EMP is undergoing a revision that coincidentally coincided with the release of the *Homeland Security Presidential Directive* (HSPD5, 2004). The revision of the revised Hudson EMP will address the past problem of the lack of a structured Incident Management System by adopting the NIMS. This revision impacts the future of the Hudson EMP by providing a system of incident management that includes all the agencies who may have responsibilities in emergency management response to disaster. This system goes beyond police, EMS, and fire agencies. It includes all the government agencies that will respond to a disaster as well as some private organizations. Many of these organizations are the same ones that provide Emergency Support Functions (ESF) in the framework of emergency plans. For the first time in history, there will be a common and consistent template that will be implemented across the country.
The current and future impact of not addressing this problem now is that the Hudson Emergency Management Agency will not have the ability to effectively manage disasters and emergency situations that are beyond its capabilities in an effective manner. Another important factor is that interoperability and response to all risk hazards and disasters will be greatly improved. Another important incentive to incorporating an Incident Management System into the Town of Hudson EMP Plan is that future grant funding opportunities will not be available unless emergency management agencies have a documented Incident Management System as part of the local EMP. The Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, requires Federal departments and agencies to make adoption of the NIMS by state, tribal and local organizations as a condition for Federal preparedness assistance beginning in FY2005. The availability of this grant funding can make a significant difference in the ability of emergency management agencies to improve their interoperability communications and infrastructure to better prepare for disasters and incidents (HSPD5, 2004).

The Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management Course that I recently completed provides a definitive link to this research problem by assimilating the concepts of the operational components of the fire service and equating them to the emergency management structure of the Town of Hudson. This includes the use of an Incident Management System and the other subject areas such as Community Risk Assessment, Damage Assessment and the Emergency Operations Center. The unit on Incident Command reviews the Incident Command System (ICS) and its application by executive-level chief officers to large-scale and complex emergency incidents (National Fire Academy, 2001). The knowledge gained from this course enhanced my abilities as Emergency Management Director to incorporate the NIMS into the Town of Hudson Emergency Management Plan and to train other agencies in ICS operations.
related to disaster operations. The use of a systems approach to emergency management can increase the effectiveness of emergency response resources (National Fire Academy, 2001).

The unit on Community Risk Assessment would assist in strengthening the Town of Hudson’s risk assessment activities. The unit clearly expresses the benefits of community risk assessment as part of emergency planning and preparedness. Risk Assessment is important as most community’s response to perceived risk has been intuitive and has not been based on analytical assessment. Many communities are unaware of all of the risks they face and are unprepared to respond and the past mitigation strategies that were selected to deal with risks may not have been the appropriate ones. (National Fire Academy, 2001). This unit helps the Emergency Management Director by providing a valuable source of information for emergency management planning, priority setting, and strategy development. The Emergency Operations unit of this course provided an in-depth look at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The EOC is a critical part of emergency management operations. An EOC provides a location where officials and key support personnel can be located near each other, preferably in the same facility (National Fire Academy, 2001). The EOC unit provides an excellent tool for the training of emergency management personnel as to the operations and structure of the EOC. It provides detailed information on such subject areas as Standard Operating Procedures (SOP’s), determining layouts, needs for communication and warning, and the need for EOC supplies and equipment. The extensive practical exercises that were experienced during the class and the integration of the NIMS into the Hudson EOC portion of the EMP provides a direct benefit in improving the deficiencies noted in the current plan. The unit on EOC helps in understanding the relationship of the EOC to the field command elements and the policymakers of a community in the Integrated Emergency Management System (National Fire Academy, 2001). The
The EAFSOEM course clearly provides the most comprehensive linkage to Emergency Management and the fire service that has played a closely related role in response to fire emergencies and those related to disasters and incidents. This close correlation demonstrates the critical role that all agencies play in emergency management activities (National Fire Academy, 2001).

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

An extensive literature review was conducted for this research project. There are two critical documents that provided significant background on the need for incorporating the NIMS system into the Hudson EMP. These documents should be part of any initiative taken to improve upon any emergency management plan. The first document was a report titled *Responding to Incidents of National Consequence*. This report prepared for the Federal Emergency Management Agency provides a detailed comprehensive report that examines and makes recommendations for America’s Fire and Emergency Services based on the events of September 11, 2001 and other similar incidents. The purpose of the report was to provide guidance to fire departments and emergency services across America to prepare for, respond to, and recover from major multijurisdictional local incidents that have national consequences and may involve national resources (FEMA, 2004). When one considers these events, one can compare the events to the disasters both natural and man-made that may require the implementation of the local EMP. The report identifies lessons learned and provides recommendations that are consistent with the basic structure of emergency management plans. The recommendations in the report are prioritized under categories such as Awareness/Prevention/Preparedness, Initial Response, Stabilized Event/Ongoing Recovery, and Postevent/Long-term recovery (FEMA, 2004).
The report clearly states that successful management of a major multijurisdictional local incident that has national consequences and may involve national response requires:

- Rapid implementation of the Incident Command System (ICS), transitioning into a Unified Command Structure;
- A Unified Operations Center that includes deputies to coordinate tactical operations across all disciplines;
- Strong Planning and Logistics Sections for forecasting the need for and acquiring resources; and
- Close interagency coordination and cooperation before, during, and after an incident.

These are all areas that are addressed in the NIMS. The report discusses the need to ensure the proper transfer of command as dictated by incident needs. One of the weaknesses identified in the Hudson EMP is that while the responsibilities of emergency management staff are part of the plan, there is not any specific direction on how to ensure the proper transfer of command. This relates to both the transfer of command from federal agencies back to the local agency and the transfer of command at the local emergency management level as the disaster or incident progresses to the recovery phase of operations. This area is addressed in the preparedness planning section of the NIMS (USDHS, 2004).

The report concludes and summarizes the need to adopt and incorporate the National Incident Management System (NIMS) into local emergency plans. The report concludes that NIMS is a consistent, nationwide approach for Federal, State, tribal, and local governments to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from any type of incident (all risk type hazards), regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity. It
is a core set of concepts, principles, and terminology, and is applicable for all incidents and across all levels of government. (USDHS, 2004).

West, (2004) in an interview with Chief John M. Buckman representing the International Association of Fire Chiefs asked what the most important thing that fire service officials should know about the National Incident Management System. Buckman stated that NIMS is not just a fire service issue. “We’re expanding (incident management) to include all the agencies involved in response to emergencies – beyond police, EMS and fire – to include all the government agencies that will respond to a disaster as well as some private organizations. What NIMS does is give everyone a template to organize their response to assist in an emergency. For the first time in history we have a common and consistent template that we’ll begin implementing all across this country”.

The benefits of a “civilian” Incident Command System were well articulated by Lt. Col. Gregory Banner, U.S. Army retired in Army Magazine. Banner (2004), reported that among the things to know in understanding the civilian world at the operational level, there is one overarching system that is most important – the Incident Command System (ICS), which is the mechanism to organize command and control elements for complex emergencies. Banner further states that in analogous terms, ICS is the civilian “purple” joint command and control system that allows various agencies to organize a single intelligible structure so that they can work together. Understanding ICS is therefore essential for anyone needing to fit into this structure. Banner (2004) makes an important point in his article by stating that part of the reason that ICS has gained prevalence is because there was the recognition that some form of doctrine and system was needed for emergency operations when assets from multiple jurisdictions needed to cooperate and integrate. It was also an admission that the systems in existence for managing
day to day operations were insufficient for emergencies. This same thinking can be applied to the Town of Hudson’s need to integrate the NIMS into its emergency management planning. Instead of day to day operations, the Town of Hudson needed to improve upon its emergency management organization as a whole. Banner (2004) provides an important factor that directly relates to the Town of Hudson’s emergency management organization and the role the chief elected official plays in the leadership necessary during a large emergency. In the Town of Hudson’s emergency management organization, the chief elected official is the decision making authority during disasters, however few elected officials understand or practice the mechanics of emergency operations. Most of these kinds of operations occur all the time at levels too small to involve the chief elected official. They are therefore not prepared to exercise direct leadership when events get larger. Typically, chief elected officials are very involved and do make decisions; however at the direct response level, if there is a ICS system in place with a unified command system with its own leadership mechanism, then the chief elected official becomes more effective working within a team that can provide him/her with the technical expertise to make effective decisions. Unified command as typically employed during an emergency is more a system of close coordination rather than true decision making. Conflicts tend to be minimal because of this. Banner (2004) provides a simplified explanation of the need for an Incident Management System in emergency management organizations by stating that it is all about creating a structure where everyone understands roles, responsibilities, and chains of command.

Christen (2004) outlines the evolution of the NIMS. NIMS has evolved from the original ICS system known as FIRESCOPE, the program developed in California during the 1970’s as a result of devastating wildfires. The program was developed after several major faults were revealed in the command structure at these wildfires. These included:
- No common communications
- No common terminology
- No effective means of allocating scarce resources
- No system for incident planning and management
- No means of coordinating diverse agencies.

The ICS System continued to evolve and by the 1980’s the ICS system was adopted by fire departments throughout the United States. Unfortunately, the ICS was not adopted or embraced by non-fire agencies, including the Town of Hudson emergency management organization.

Christen (2004) further notes that the NIMS system places an emphasis on functions instead of a hierarchy. A hierarchy is a top down management/decision making system based on levels of authority. The key that makes this a good option for emergency management is the system’s ability to collaborate between functions instead of a rank-based hierarchy. As stated earlier this is one of the factors that has created the need to study the Hudson EMP. Christen stresses that the heart and soul of NIMS is multi-agency coordination. Multi-agency coordination is defined as “a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications integrated with a common system with responsibility for coordinating and supporting domestic incident management activities” (Christen, 2004).

The article Puzzling Command provided some insight into some of the shortfalls of Incident Management Systems when they are not used properly. Although the article was written based on fire service ICS, it also provides a correlation to emergency management plans that lack an IMS. Daniels (2002) states that regardless of what system components are used, if an incident management system doesn’t function effectively, it fails to accomplish its primary function and threatens the safety of both responders and potential victims alike. Daniels (2002)
suggests that many incident management systems might best be described as dysfunctional. Daniels (2002) lists six dysfunctions of command that can be used to equate to the similar issues within the Hudson emergency management organization:

- Lack of risk assessment
- Lack of responder discipline
- Lack or misuse of incident management systems
- Lack of effective incident commanders
- Lack of incident accountability, and
- Lack of effective communications.

An important element that has advanced the use of the NIMS in emergency management planning and response to disasters was the issuance of Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5 on February 28, 2003. A review of this document provides the purpose and policy statement relative to the development of the NIMS. The purpose of the directive was to enhance the ability of the United States to manage domestic incidents by establishing a comprehensive national incident management system. The directive further establishes policy language that states in order to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, the United States Government shall establish a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management. The objective of the United States Government is to ensure that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work efficiently and effectively together, using a national approach to domestic incident management (HSPD-5).

The second critical document for this research project is the National Incident Management System (USDHS, 2004). This document was released on March 1, 2004 by the
Department of Homeland Security. This document establishes the basic elements of the NIMS and provides mechanisms for the further development and refinement of supporting national standards, guidelines, protocols, systems, and technologies. (USDHA, 2004). The NIMS builds upon the foundation created by existing incident management and emergency response systems used by jurisdictions and functional disciplines at all levels, this document integrates best practices that have proven effective over the years into a comprehensive framework for use by incident management organizations in all-hazards context (terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and other emergencies) nationwide. It also sets in motion the mechanisms necessary to leverage new technologies and adopt new approaches that will enable continuous refinement of the NIMS over time. This document was developed through a collaborative, intergovernmental partnership with significant input from the incident management functional disciplines, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations (USDHS, 2004). The NIMS reveals that while most incidents are generally handled on a daily basis by a single jurisdiction at the local level, there are important instances in which successful domestic incident management operations depend on the involvement of multiple jurisdictions, functional agencies, and emergency responder disciplines. These instances require effective and efficient coordination across the broad spectrum of organizations and activities. The NIMS uses a systems approach to integrate the best of existing processes and methods into a unified national framework for incident management. This framework forms the basis for interoperability and compatibility that will, in turn, enable a diverse set of public and private organizations to conduct well-integrated and effective incident management operations. It does this through a core set of concepts, principles, procedures, organizational processes, terminology, and standards requirements applicable to a broad community of NIMS users (USDHS, 2004).
The NIMS is based on an appropriate balance of flexibility and standardization. The flexibility of the system within NIMS provides consistent, flexible, and adjustable national framework within which government and private entities at all levels can work together to manage domestic incidents regardless of their cause, size, location or complexity. This flexibility applies across all phases of incident management: prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Standardization is a second element of NIMS that provides a set of standardized organizational structures such as the Incident Command System, multiagency coordination systems, and public information systems – as well as requirements for processes, procedures, and systems designed to improve interoperability among jurisdictions and disciplines in various areas, including: training; resource management; personnel qualification and certification; equipment certification; communications and information management; technology support; and continuous system improvement (USDHS, 2004).

The NIMS model defines six key components of the system. These include:

1. Command and Management
2. Preparedness
3. Resource Management
4. Communications and Information Management
5. Supporting Technologies
6. Ongoing Management and Maintenance

The NIMS model is a comprehensive document of approximately 140 pages. The document takes the six key components of the system and breaks them down into applicable sections of the NIMS. The document provides comprehensive details and explanations of each of the six components. This document does clarify that the NIMS is not an operational incident
management plan, it is not a resource allocation plan, it is not a specific terrorism/weapons of mass destruction plan, nor is it designed to address international events. The *National Incident Management System* (USDHS, 2004) is a guide that leads the producer of an emergency management plan to develop a framework consistent with the stated goals and objectives of the NIMS in order to facilitate the incorporation of the system into local, state, or federal emergency management plans.

In summary, this extensive literature review has identified findings and observations that the use of an Incident Management System such as the NIMS will significantly improve the ability of local emergency management agencies, and in this particular case the Town of Hudson, with an improved ability and efficiency in its planning and response to all risk hazard type disasters and incidents. The report *Responding to Incidents of National Consequence* (FEMA, 2004) studied the terrorist events of September 11, 2001 and incorporated recommendations and best practices as lessons learned from the response of multiple agencies at all levels of government. The use of an Incident Management System within the emergency management plan would improve the ability of agencies to respond to these types of disasters and other all risk hazard emergencies. The report stresses close interagency coordination and cooperation before, during, and after an incident. Chief John Buckman discussed the expansion of incident management systems to include all agencies involved in response to emergencies (West, 2004). The use of an Incident Management System should include all the government agencies that will respond to a disaster as well as private organizations. The current Hudson EMP while addressing the incorporation of other agencies lacks the formalized structure that would define their role and structure during a disaster. Banner (2004) in his comparison of the Army’s system of ICS recognized that understanding the ICS is essential for anyone needing to fit into this
structure. While Police and Fire Department agencies are well versed in the ICS, support agencies that have responsibilities under annexes or emergency support functions most likely have not had any formal training in ICS. Banner (2004) suggests that the emergency management plans and systems in place today may be insufficient for response to emergencies. The Town of Hudson current EMP fits that profile. Christen (2004) assimilates the evolution of the ICS system through the creation of FIRESCOPE in the 1970’s and explains how the NIMS follows the core structure of the original ICS. Christen (2004) provides an explanation that the NIMS system places an emphasis on functions instead of a hierarchy type of system that provides for greater accountability and collaboration. The current Hudson EMP (2001) uses the hierarchy type of delegation of responsibilities and lacks the accountability and collaboration that Christen speaks of. This is another reason to consider the use of the NIMS in the Town of Hudson EMP (2001). Daniels (2002) in his article speaks of dysfunctions of ICS. While the article relates to fire service ICS, one can assimilate the same issues as applied to the Hudson EMP (2001). A lack of a clearly defined system and framework leaves the Hudson plan with vulnerabilities that provides for the lack of risk assessment, lack of responder discipline, and in some cases leads to ineffective communications. The Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD5, 2004) demonstrates the purpose and scope of the objective of adopting the NIMS in emergency planning. The United States Government’s objective is to ensure that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work together. This Presidential Directive applies to all levels of government and should include the Hudson EMP. The National Incident Management System (USDHS, 2004) document provides a comprehensive, in-depth document that assists local, state, and federal agencies in establishing an Incident Management System for incorporation into emergency plans. The document is not an actual response plan but would
provide a model for agencies to develop Incident Management Systems within their local jurisdiction. The goal of the model is to have a system that is flexible and standardized (USDHS, 2004).

**PROCEDURES**

The desired goal and result of this research project was to determine if a need exists within the *Town of Hudson’s Emergency Management Plan* (2001) to incorporate the National Incident Management System.

The need for this research project resulted from my completion of the *Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management* course (National Fire Academy, 2001) that provided the motivation and need to evaluate the current *Town of Hudson Emergency Management Plan* (Town of Hudson EMP, 2001). The course provided significant new information in such subject areas as Community Risk Assessment, Capability Assessment, Media Relations, Damage Assessment and Emergency Operations Centers. Extensive exercises brought forth many scenarios that identified a number of areas that needed improvement and paralleled some of the identified problems I had seen in our local emergency management structure. Additionally, the Hudson Emergency Management Agency was contacted by the State of NH Division of Emergency Management and was encouraged to reformat our local emergency management plan proactively due to anticipated changes in the FEMA boiler plate plan that had been in use since the mid 1980’s. Utilizing the descriptive method of research and after an extensive research process into our current emergency management plan and of the NIMS concept, I gathered the information necessary to compare and contrast our system and that of the NIMS and how it may be incorporated into our emergency plan. The descriptive research process determines and reports the present status of the issue at hand. In this case, it was
relevant to the Hudson Emergency Management Plan that was currently in place. The purpose of
descriptive research is to clarify and report the way things are at the present time. An extensive
literary review produced a number of documents that clearly allowed me to build a foundation in
which to research our problem. While it was clear that there were definitive weakness within the
Hudson EMP (2001), it was not clear if the NIMS would meet the needs of our local EMP. It
should be noted that the NIMS (USDHS, 2004) concept was just released in March of 2004 and
it there has not been sufficient time to evaluate if this system is going to meet the needs of
response agencies. Additional research and study of research reports, magazine and journal
articles assisted in the conclusions drawn from this research. All of the literary resources
provided in-depth information as to the benefits of the NIMS.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations in this research paper do not significantly impact the goals for this
research paper. In the early stages of determining this research subject it was evident that
February 2003, and the National Incident Management System in March of 2004, research and
statistical information was going to be limited. An attempt to obtain statistical information
relative to the number of emergency management plans, emergency planning efforts, and how
many agencies could be positively impacted by the use of NIMS was unsuccessful.
Consideration was given if the study subject area would provide sufficient research information
to be able to meet the objectives of the research paper and also if the information gathered would
be sufficient enough to determine if the Town of Hudson would benefit by incorporating the
NIMS into its EMP. I believe that the knowledge gained in the EAFSOEM Course (National
Fire Academy, 2001), the comprehensive NIMS model (USDHS, 2004), the report on
Responding to Incidents of National Consequence (FEMA, 2004), and the evaluation of the Town of Hudson Emergency Management Plan (Town of Hudson EMP, 2001) has met the need. The articles written on ICS and NIMS provided an outside perspective that is consistent with the benefits of using the NIMS system. In the EAFSOEM (National Fire Academy, 2001) course there were a number of discussion sessions related to NIMS and its implication on emergency response and disasters related to planning that provided me with additional compelling information on the benefits of the system. An extensive search of the internet allowed me to view other emergency management plans throughout the country that in comparison with the Town of Hudson EMP is similar in content and framework due to its boiler plate nature as mentioned earlier.

In summary, it is clear as to why the NIMS system is needed and why it was developed. Despite limited statistical information, the current information available on NIMS is sufficient to draw solid conclusions as to the benefits of using the NIMS. Additionally, this research paper will provide others with information that is perhaps the most current information on how the NIMS can be incorporated into their emergency management plans. Within a short period of time, perhaps two years, there will be a number of model NIMS emergency management plans that will allow anyone considering revision of their plans to incorporate NIMS. This will further provide an incentive to update and improve emergency management plans nationwide.

**Definitions**

**Agency:** A division of government with a specific function offering a particular kind of assistance. In ICS, agencies are defined either as jurisdictional (having statutory responsibility for incident management) or as assisting or cooperating (providing resources or other assistance).
**Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs):** The physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support domestic incident management activities normally takes place. An EOC may be a temporary facility or may be located in a more central or permanently established facility, perhaps at a higher level of organization within a jurisdiction. EOCs may be organized by major functional disciplines (e.g., fire, law enforcement, and medical services), by jurisdiction (e.g., Federal, State, regional, county, city, tribal), or some combination thereof.

**Emergency Operations Plan; Emergency Management Plan (EMP):** The “steady-state” plan maintained by various jurisdictional levels for responding to a wide variety of potential hazards.

**Incident Command System (ICS):** A standardized on-scene emergency management construct specifically designed to provide for the adoption of an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of emergencies and is applicable to small as well as large and complex incidents. ICS is used by various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private, to organize field-level incident management operations.

**Incident Commander (IC):** The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and the release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site.

**Jurisdiction:** A range or sphere of authority. Public agencies have jurisdiction at an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authority. Jurisdictional authority at an incident can be
political or geographical (e.g., city, county, tribal, State, or Federal boundary lines) or functional (e.g., law enforcement, public health).

**Local Government:** A county, municipality, city, town, township, local public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments (regardless of whether the council of governments is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law), regional or interstate governmental entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government; an Indian tribe or authorized tribal organization, or in Alaska a Native village or Alaska Regional Native Corporation; a rural community, unincorporated town, or village, or other public entity.

**Major Disaster:** As defined under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122), a major disaster is any natural catastrophe (including any hurricane, tornado, storm, high water, wind driven water, tidal wave tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, or drought), or regardless of cause, any fire, flood, or explosion, in any part of the United States, which in the determination of the President causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance under this Act to supplement the efforts and available resources of States, tribes, local governments, and disaster relief organizations in alleviating the damage, loss, hardship or suffering caused thereby.

**Multiagency Coordination Systems:** Multiagency coordination systems provide the architecture to support coordination for incident prioritization, critical resource allocation, communication systems integration, and information coordination. The emergency operation centers (EOCs), specific multiagency coordination entities, personnel, procedures, and communications. These systems assist agencies and organizations to fully integrate the subsystems of the NIMS.
**National Incident Management System (NIMS):** A system mandated by HSPD-5 that provides a consistent nationwide approach for Federal, State, local and tribal governments; the private-sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. To provide for interoperability and compatibility among Federal, State, local, and tribal capabilities, the NIMS includes a core set of concepts, principles, and terminology. HSPD-5 identifies these as the ICS; multiagency coordination systems; training; identification and management of resources (including systems for classifying types of resources); qualification and certification; and the collection, tracking, and reporting of incident information and incident resources.

**Nongovernmental Organization:** An entity with an association that is based on interest of its members, individuals, or institutions and that is not created by government. Such organizations serve a public purpose, not a private benefit. Examples of NGOs include faith-based charity organizations and the American Red Cross.

**Preparedness:** The range of deliberate, critical tasks and activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the operational capability to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents. Preparedness is a continuous process. Preparedness involves efforts at all levels of government and between government and private-sector and nongovernmental organizations to identify threats, determine vulnerabilities, and identify required resources. Within the NIMS, preparedness is operationally focused on establishing guidelines, protocols, and standards for planning, training and exercises, personnel qualification and certification, equipment certification, and publication management.
**Prevention:** Actions to avoid an incident or to intervene to stop an incident from occurring.

Prevention involves actions to protect lives and property. It involves applying intelligence and other information to a range of activities that may include such countermeasures as deterrence operations; heightened inspections; improved surveillance and security operations; investigations to determine the full nature and source of the threat; public health and agricultural surveillance and testing processes; immunizations, isolation, or quarantine; and, as appropriate specific law enforcement operations aimed at preemption, interdicting, or disrupting illegal activity and apprehending potential perpetrators and bring them to justice.

**Private Sector:** Organizations and entities that are not part of any governmental structure. It includes for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, formal and informal structures, commerce and industry, and private voluntary organizations.

**Resources:** Personnel and major items of equipment, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment to incident operations and for which status is maintained. Resources are described by kind and type and may be used in operational support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at an EOC.

**Response:** Activities that address the short-term, direct effects of an incident. Response includes immediate actions to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs. Response also includes the execution of emergency operations plans and of mitigation activities designed to limit the loss of life, personal injury, property damage, and other unfavorable outcomes. As indicated by the situation, response activities include applying intelligence and other information to lessen the effects or consequences of an incident; threat; ongoing public health and agricultural surveillance and testing processes; immunizations, isolation, or quarantine; and
specific law enforcement operations aimed at preempting, interdicting, or disrupting illegal activity, and apprehending actual perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

**Supporting Technologies:** Any technology that may be used to support the NIMS is included in this subsystem. These technologies include orthophoto mapping, remote automatic weather stations, infrared technology, and communications, among various others.

**Unified Command:** An application of ICS used when there is more than one agency with incident jurisdiction or when incidents cross political jurisdictions. Agencies work together through the designated members of the UC, often the senior person from agencies and/or disciplines participating in the UC, to establish a common set of objectives and strategies and a single Incident Action Plan.

**RESULTS**

The results derived and compiled from the research conducted clearly demonstrate a need for the Town of Hudson, NH to integrate the National Incident Management concepts and principals into the current Town of Hudson Emergency Management Plan. The responses to the research questions were answered through the extensive literature review.

**Answers to Research Questions**

**Research Question 1.** What are the elements and concepts that comprise the National Incident Management System (NIMS)?

NIMS is a comprehensive national approach to incident management that is applicable at all jurisdictional levels and across functional disciplines. The NIMS is intended to be applicable across a full spectrum of potential incidents and hazard scenarios, regardless of size or complexity and to improve coordination between public and private entities in a variety of domestic incident management activities. (USDHS, 2004)
NIMS is a required system under Homeland Security Presidential Directive -5 and requires Federal departments and agencies to make the adoption of NIMS by State and local organizations a condition for Federal preparedness assistance (grants, contracts, and other activities) by FY2005. Jurisdictions can comply in short term by adopting the Incident Command System. Other aspects of NIMS require additional development and refinement to enable compliance at a future date.(USDHS, 2004).

NIMS provides a framework for interoperability and compatibility by balancing flexibility and standardization. It provides a flexible framework that facilitates government and private entities at all levels working together to manage domestic incidents. This flexibility applies to all phases of incident management, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity. NIMS also provides a set of standardized organizational structures, as well as requirements for processes, procedures, and systems designed to improve interoperability. (USDHS, 2004)

NIMS is comprised of several components that work together as a system to provide a national framework preparing for, preventing, responding to, and recovering from domestic incidents. These components include:

- Command and management.
- Preparedness.
- Resource Management.
- Communications and information management
- Supporting technologies.
- Ongoing management and maintenance.

Command and Management structures are based on three key organizational systems; the Incident Command System (ICS) which defines the operating characteristics, management
components, and structure of incident management organizations throughout the life cycle of an incident. **Multiagency Coordination Systems** which define the operating characteristics, management components, and organizational structure of supporting entities. The third component is **Public Information Systems**, which include the processes, procedures, and systems for communicating timely and accurate information to the public during emergency situations.

Preparedness components reveal that effective incident management begins with a host of preparedness activities. These activities are conducted on a “steady-state” basis, well in advance for any potential incident. Preparedness involves a combination of planning, training, and exercises. It also includes personnel qualification and certification standards as well as equipment acquisition and certification standards. Publication management processes and activities and Mutual Aid agreements and Emergency Management Assistance Compacts are also elements of the preparedness component.

The Resource Management component with the NIMS will define standardized mechanisms and establish requirements for describing, inventorying, mobilizing, dispatching, tracking, and recovering resources over the life cycle of an incident.

The Communications and Information Management component of NIMS identifies the requirements for a standardized framework for communications, information management, and information sharing support at all levels of incident management. This component states that incident management organizations must ensure that effective, interoperable communications processes, procedures, and systems exist across all agencies and jurisdictions. The information management systems help to insure that information flows efficiently through a commonly accepted architecture. Effective information management
enhances incident management and response by helping to insure that decision-making is better informed (USDHS, 2004).

Support technologies components of the NIMS uses technology and technological systems that provide support capabilities essential to implementing and refining NIMS. Examples include voice and data communication systems, information management systems such as record-keeping, resource tracking, and data display systems.

The success of the NIMS system is dependent upon ongoing management and maintenance components. The Department of Homeland Security has established the NIMS Integration Center. This center provides strategic direction and oversight in support of routine review and continual refinement of both the NIMS system and its components over the long term. This website is located at [http://www.fema.gov/preparedness/nims/index.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/preparedness/nims/index.shtm) (USDHS, 2004).

**Research Question 2.** How does the National Incident Management System (NIMS) improve the response to disasters and the local emergency management plan?

The events of September 11th underscored the need for and showed the importance of establishing national standards for incident operations, incident communications, personnel qualifications, resource management, information management and supporting technology. Previous emergency planning had not included an Incident Management System that provided standards for response to domestic incidents that reached across all levels of government and all emergency response agencies. The NIMS accomplishes this ability. The NIMS system improves the response to disasters by incorporating the core concepts and components into the jurisdictional emergency plan. The NIMS incorporates into local plans a multi-agency coordination concept. The multi-agency coordination concept is defined as “a combination of
facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications integrated with a common system with responsibility for coordinating and supporting domestic incident management activities” (USDHS, 2004). The end goal of the NIMS is to have interoperability and a common operational picture. (Christen, 2004). Each of the key components of the NIMS plays an important role in the improvement of emergency management plans. For example under the **Command and Management** component it is known that the most common cause of response failure is poor management. Confusion about who is in charge of what and when, together with unclear lines of authority have been the greatest contributors to poor performance. NIMS used in emergency management plans will improve them by having a system that is interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible to meet the needs of incidents of any kind, size, or level of complexity. It allows the use of personnel from a variety of agencies that can meld rapidly into a common management structure. It utilizes the functionality element rather than a hierarchal system (USDHS, 2004).

**Preparedness** is a key phase of the emergency management cycle. Through preparedness, jurisdictions can take actions to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from emergencies. Preparedness is critical to emergency management. A major objective of preparedness is to ensure mission integration and interoperability in response to emergent crises across functional and jurisdictional lines (USDHS, 2004). Using NIMS in the Hudson EMP will allow the organization to be able to attain and sustain a level of readiness necessary to respond to the range of domestic incidents facing America today. **Resource Management** involves the coordination and oversight of tools, processes, and systems that provide Incident Commanders with the resources that they need during an incident. The NIMS includes standard procedures, methods, and functions in resource management processes. The Hudson EMP has never had
these procedures or methods and relied on a generic boiler plate annex to address these issues.

By following the standards established by NIMS, resource managers are able to identify, order, mobilize, dispatch, and track resources more efficiently. When all of the elements of the Resource Management component are included in emergency planning, an integrated, efficient resource management system is realized. Communication and Information Management Principles of NIMS provide for effective communications, information management, and supporting technologies. These are all critical aspects of domestic incident management and can substantially improve emergency planning and response. A common operating picture helps to ensure consistency at all levels, among all who respond to or manage incident response.

Effective communications, both within and outside the incident response structure, are enhanced by adherence to standards. **Supporting Technologies** with NIMS improves the response and emergency management plans by assuring interoperability and compatibility so that all systems are able to work together. The use of NIMS will enhance all aspects of incident management and emergency response. The development of national standards will also facilitate interoperability and compatibility of major systems. NIMS provides a mechanism for aggregating and prioritizing new technologies, procedures, protocols, and standards. The NIMS Integration Center will coordinate with the Department of Homeland Security to create a national research and development agenda that will keep the NIMS system on the cutting edge of incident management and emergency planning. **Ongoing Management and Maintenance** of NIMS ensures that all users and stakeholders are given the opportunity to participate in the NIMS Integration Center Activities. The NIMS management and maintenance process relies heavily on lessons learned from actual incidents and domestic incident management training and exercises, as well as best practices across jurisdictions and functional disciplines (USDHS, 2004).
In summary, all of the information obtained from the literary review and research clearly points to the importance of the core six components of the NIMS. This is the framework of the model that makes this system as comprehensive and beneficial to emergency planning. Each of these components of the NIMS has not been incorporated in the majority of emergency plans nationwide, including the Town of Hudson EMP. These critical elements will provide significant improvement and efficiency in the Town of Hudson’s response to disasters. The extensive information provided in the NIMS model provides a clear and substantiating argument to incorporate the NIMS into the Hudson EMP. The benefits of a structured system will advance the efforts of the organization by ten fold. The additional elements of the plan are too large to be able to incorporate them into this particular research paper. However, the model provides the background and supporting documentation (including sample forms) for anyone looking to incorporate this model into their Emergency Management Plan.

**Research Question 3.** What steps can the Town of Hudson, NH take to integrate the National Incident Management System into its current Emergency Management Plan?

The incorporation of the NIMS into the Hudson Emergency Management Plan will require a systematic approach. The current Hudson EMP plan is still a valid plan and should remain so. There are a number of elements in the current plan that is relative to the emergency management agency and specific to the Town of Hudson relative to demographics, infrastructure, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The EMP must be considered a living document. The NIMS model contains components within its model that are similar to the Hudson EMP and can be added to the current plan. The first step will be to formally recognize and adopt NIMS as the framework for the Hudson EMP. The development of a time-frame and strategy for full NIMS implementation should be completed next. While the Hudson EMP plan
is in revision, training of emergency management personnel and supporting agencies on the
NIMS should be conducted. An excellent starting course would be the basic Incident Command
Course. This course provides an excellent starting foundation towards the understanding of
Incident Management Systems. The Hudson EMP can be expanded to include those areas of the
NIMS that have not been previously addressed or included into the plan. The EMP should then
be reviewed by any and all personnel who play a role with the emergency management
organization. Once the final draft is completed, the plan should be exercised to evaluate its
content and ability to meet the requirements of the local jurisdiction’s needs. Formal adoption of
the plan should occur next. There are a number of emergency management models available on
line that can provide a framework for creating the emergency management plan. Emergency
Management Plans that incorporate the NIMS system should begin to become available within
the next year as they are developed and make their way onto the internet.

DISCUSSION

The research and information compiled for this research is consistent throughout the
various references noted in this research paper.

Christen (2004) discussed the core components of the National Incident Management
System and how it related to the Incident Command System. Christen (2004) emphasizes that
NIMS is based on function instead of a hierarchy. Christen (2004) denotes that both the ICS and
NIMS models have flexibility that is a necessary part of the systems in order to adjust to the
dynamic conditions of emergencies. The strength of the NIMS is that it mandates the use of an
Incident Management System throughout the United States and at all levels of government.

*Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5* also refers to a single comprehensive approach to
domestic incident management. The directive states that the objective of the United States
Government is to ensure that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work efficiently and effectively together using a national approach to domestic incident management (HSPD-5). Chief Jon Buckman stated that for the first time in history we have a common and consistent template that we’ll begin implementing all across this country (West, 2004). Banner (2004) in his article stated its all about creating a structure where everyone understands roles, responsibilities, and chain of command. The six core concepts of the National Incident Management System were discussed in depth in the NIMS model. The NIMS model discusses how NIMS represents a core set of doctrine, concepts, principles, terminology, and organizational processes to enable effective, efficient, and collaborative incident management at all levels (USDHS, 2004).

My interpretation of the results is that there is clear and convincing documentation within this research project that the incorporation of the NIMS model in local emergency management plans will significantly improve the emergency management capabilities during domestic disasters. The Incident Command System has proven itself during the past 20 years to be an effective Incident Management System. The NIMS takes the best practices of the Incident Command System and combines them with core components to create a solid system to address incident and emergency management. The NIMS model addresses not only the Incident Command System model, but also provides and in-depth map of how the core components of the NIMS will work into the emergency management plan. My role as Emergency Management Director for the Town of Hudson and the person responsible for the review and update of the EMP, I have seen the weaknesses of the plan due to the lack of an Incident Management System. The NIMS system will strengthen the Hudson EMP (Town of Hudson EMP, 2001) and provide for a more efficient structure in the emergency management organization.
Organizationally, the implications for the organization is that the NIMS will provide a consistent balanced level of responsibility and allow the various departments who participate in the emergency management organization the ability to play more of a role due to the structure of the system that focuses on functions rather than hierarchy. Additionally, the NIMS system will improve our ability to have effective accountability at all jurisdictional levels and within individual functional areas during an incident. Another positive implication of the NIMS is the ease in understanding the system because of its design and common terminology which will provide emergency management personnel with a greater understanding of their role in the emergency management organization and how their contribution to the organization is critical for the system to work.

This research paper has a direct correlation to meeting the U.S. Fire Administration operational objective of responding appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues. (United States Fire Administration, 2001). The introduction of the NIMS to emergency management initiatives is a direct result of the changing role we must play due to the increase in domestic terrorism and other all risk type disasters. The ability to respond to these emerging issues is paramount in providing the highest level of service to the public. Additionally, the lessons learned and recommendations detailed in the Responding to Incidents of National Consequence (FEMA, 2004) provides a surreal awakening to improve our emergency planning, response, and mitigation to be as effective as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results derived from this research project demonstrate that the Town of Hudson will benefit by incorporating the NIMS into the Hudson Emergency Management Plan (Town of
Hudson EMP, 2001). The following recommendations are presented and will need to be implemented in the future:

1. The first step is to adopt the NIMS as part of the core Incident Management System for the Town of Hudson Emergency Management Plan.

2. Conduct an in-depth study into the current Hudson Emergency Management Plan and identify those areas of the plan that meet the core concepts of the NIMS.

3. Incorporate the NIMS into the Hudson Emergency Management Plan and provide a review of the plan by all emergency management stakeholders.

4. Exercise the newly revised plan and test all areas of the plan to assure that the NIMS correlates with the needs and response of the local jurisdiction.

5. Review and revise the plan into a final draft. Forward the drafts to the authority having jurisdiction for final approval and adoption. Hold appropriate public meetings as necessary and as required by law.

6. Provide training in the Incident Command System for all Emergency Management organization members and other support agencies before the release of the Emergency Management Plan. Once basic Incident Command Training is complete, introduce emergency management personnel to the NIMS. Additional training in functional areas should be conducted over time.

7. Continually evaluate the plan and revise as needed. The Emergency Management Plan is a working document that should be reviewed often to assure it is meeting the organizations needs.

The final recommendation that would benefit all of the fire service is for us to promote the National Incident Management System not only as a tool for the fire service but most
importantly as a tool for emergency management organizations. The NIMS provides an organized, consistent incident management system that is applicable to all levels of government and agencies. It is the result of best practices from Incident Command System known as FIRESCOPE developed in California in the 1970’s. The NIMS is a modern day updated Incident Management System that will address the challenges of disasters and incidents in our continually changing emergency services environment.

The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) has developed an Independent Study Course titled *IS700 – National Incident Management System (NIMS). An Introduction.* The course introduces NIMS and takes approximately three hours to complete. It explains the purpose, principles, key components and benefits of NIMS. The course summary is located at [http://training.fema.gov/EMIWEB/IS/is700.asp](http://training.fema.gov/EMIWEB/IS/is700.asp) This course provides an excellent training document for emergency management personnel to grasp the concepts and structure of the NIMS. The manual also acts as a model that will assist in emergency management planning.
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