NIMS and the Role of a Public Information Officer

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What is NIMS?

- National Incident Management System
  - Created in 2004 by Department of Homeland Security
- Systematic approach to incident management
- FEMA defines NIMS as:

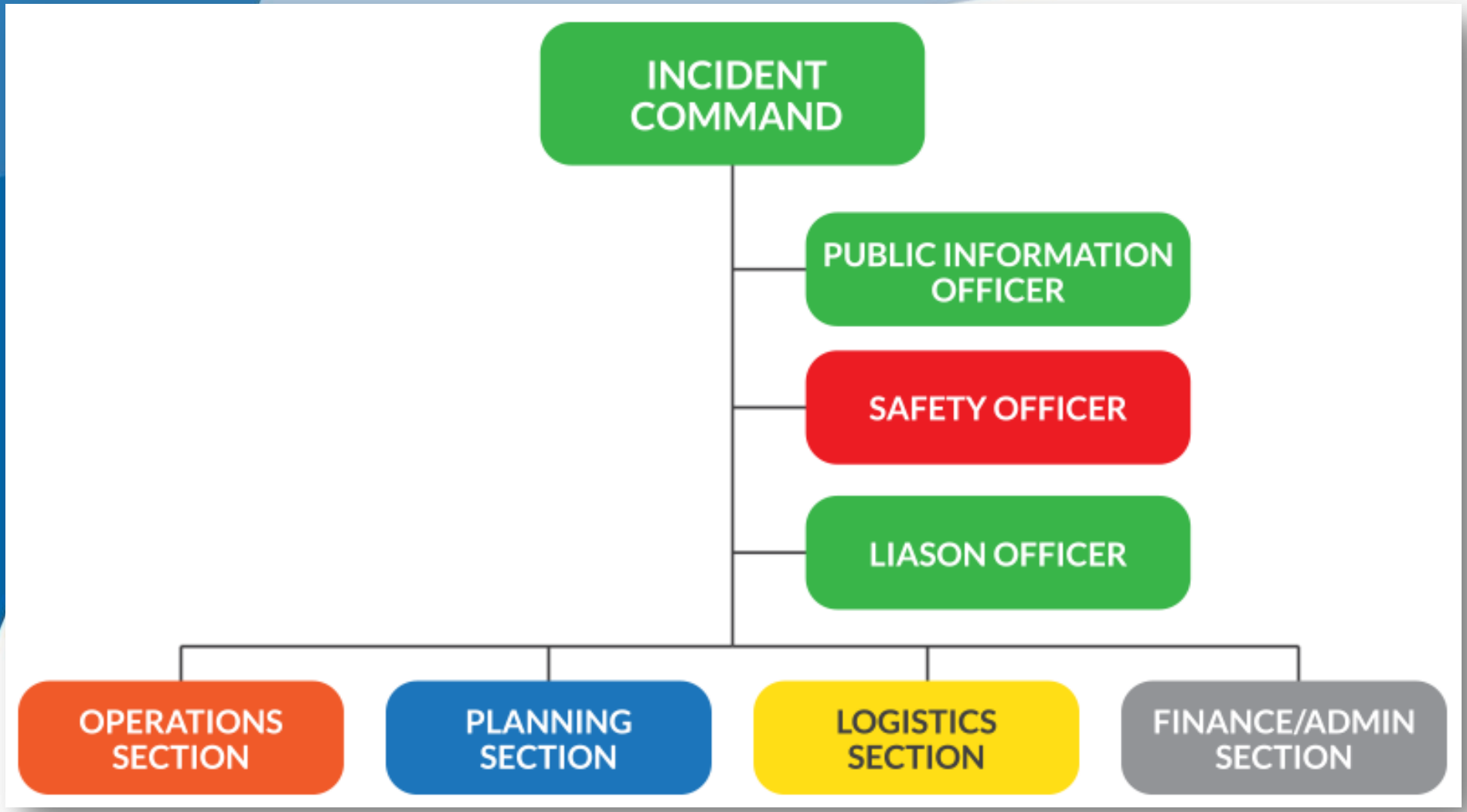
"Set of doctrine, concepts, principles, terms and processes that can be applied to incidents of any size and all levels of stakeholders, including first responders, government, private industry and critical infrastructure owners and operators."

Why NIMS?

- Everyone's Doing It
  - First Responders
  - Regulators
  - Industry
- Required training
- One size fits all
  - Scalable for nearly every situation
- Communications pros need to know about NIMS

NIMS Components

- Preparedness
- Resources Management
- Command and Mangement
- Ongoing Management and Maintenance
- **Communications and Information Management**

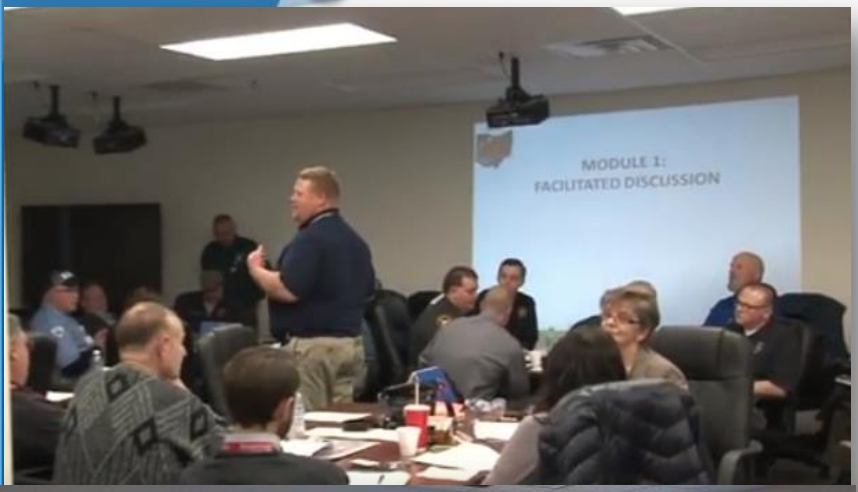


Incident Command in NIMS

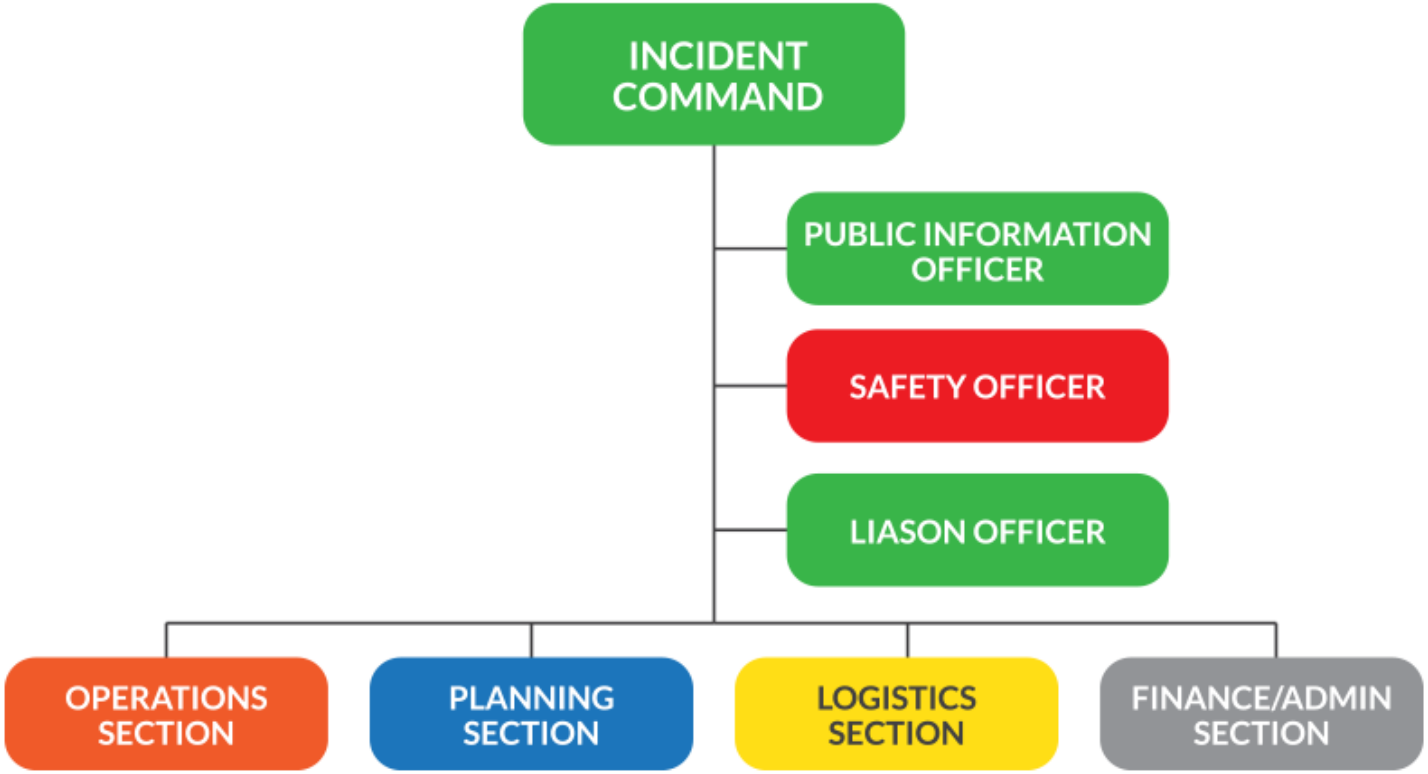
Start Planning Now

- "Time to start planning is not at 3 AM when you're across the table from a well control specialist."
- Learn what resources are available
- Figure out "Who's the Boss?"

Practice Makes Perfect



- Table Top Exercises
  - Oil and gas counties
  - Wide range of participants
- Communications MUST be part of the exercise!



"In an emergency, you must treat information as a commodity as important as more traditional commodities like food, water and shelter."

-Jane Holl Lute, Deputy Secretary, DHS

Incident Command in NIMS

Who Can Be a PIO?

- Preferably someone familiar with NIMS
  - FEMA Basic PIO Course (G-290)
- Could be PIO from regulator, industry or first responder
- Information is managed and flows ONE WAY

PIO Responsbilities

Gather–Verify–Coordinate-Disseminate

Information

Accurate-Accessible-Timely

Responsibility: Gather

- Information Comes From Everywhere
  - Command Staff
  - Industry
  - First Responders
  - Agencies
  - Experts
  - Elected Officials
  - Media

Gathering from Media

- Must monitor Social Media
- Learn if your messages are getting out and getting heard
- Learn what others are saying
- Correct wrong info!

Responsibility: Verify

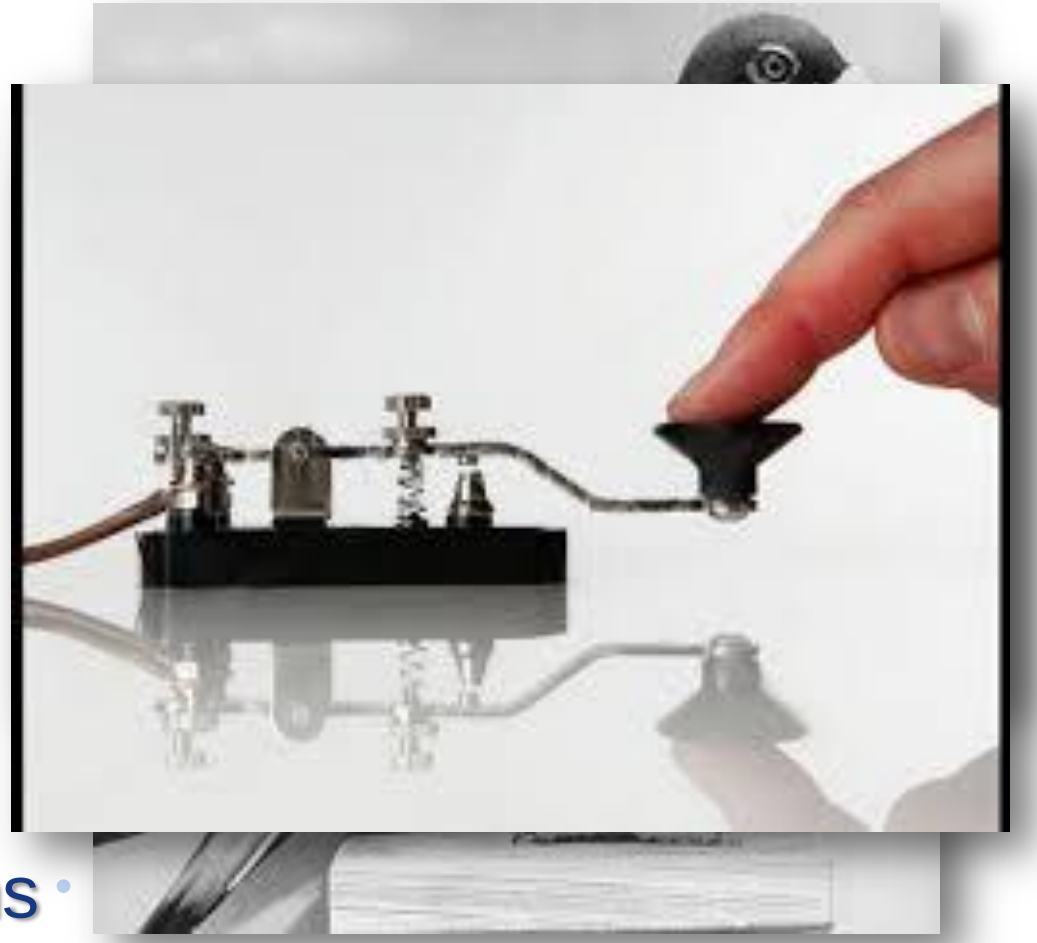
- Verification is even more important in emergency situation
- Experts are available; use them!
- Not just verifying accuracy; verifying consistency too

Responsibility: Coordinate

- Internal Coordination
- PIO should share information within NIMS/ICS
- No “Need to Know;” everyone in ICS should know!

Responsibility: Dissemination

- Get information out WHEN & AS necessary
- Use everything
  - TV
  - Social
  - Web
  - Radio
  - Print
  - Online
  - Carrier Pigeon
  - Morse Code
- Monitor all forms

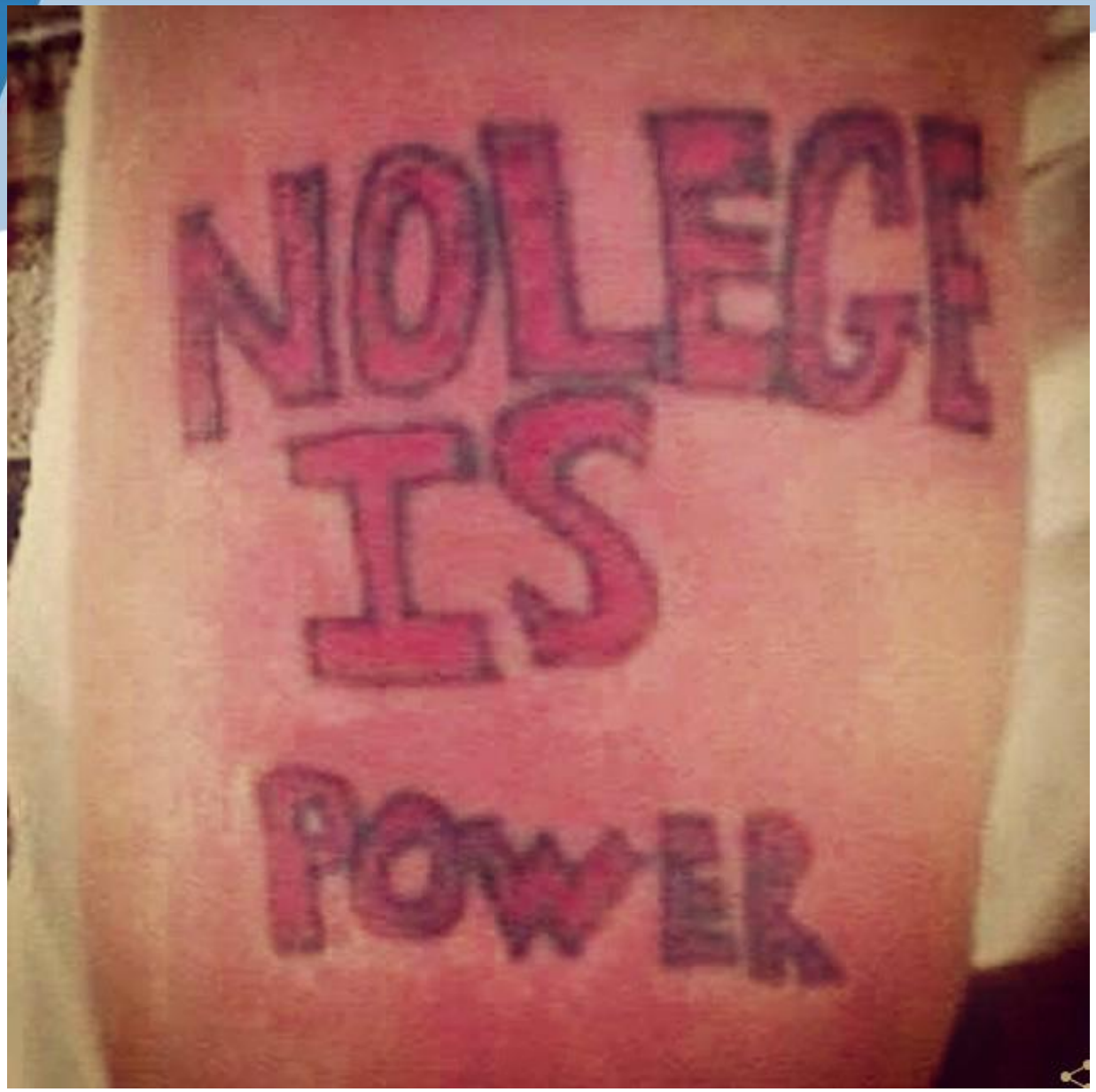


Information: Accurate, Accessible & Timely

- Timeliness is important but Accuracy is Imperative
  - Can't leave a vacuum, because it'll get filled
  - As soon as info is gathered, verified and coordinated, get it out!
- Accessible: share as many ways as possible
- Time matters
- Remember: information is managed and flows ONE WAY

JIS/JIC

- JIS: Joint Information System
  - Organize, integrate and coordinate information across jurisdictions
  - Simply sharing information
  - Great example of NIMS at work: can be used in any size incident
  - Message consistency avoids panic and confusion
  - It's not approval; awareness of what's being said
  - Put egos aside
- JIC: Joint Information Center
  - Physical or virtual center may be necessary



NIMS: Knowledge is Power

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- Learn about NIMS
  - FEMA Training
    - ICS-100
    - NIMS IS-700
    - Basic PIO Course G-290
    - Advanced PIO E-388
  - Size of incident will determine the size of a response, but NIMS can be applied in any case and communication is critical

"Tomorrow Is Your (*Everyone's*) Reward for Working Safe Today!"