NATIONAL RESPONSE FRAMEWORK (NRF)

In January 2008, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) implemented the National Response Framework (NRF). It defines the roles and responsibilities that all levels of government and private entities must play to ensure a state of national emergency preparedness and response readiness.

The framework is an all-hazards response framework. It is designed to provide a uniform structure for emergency cooperation and communication for both local as well as larger-scale emergencies. It is built upon the concept of implementing scalable, flexible and adaptable coordinating structures that align key roles and responsibilities and link together governmental organizations and private sector organizations.

Chief local officials are assigned responsibility for ensuring implementation of the NRF emergency readiness and response requirements within their communities.

The NRF requires a coordinated and seamless emergency preparedness and response capability:

Leaders at all levels must communicate and actively support engaged partnerships by developing shared goals and aligning capabilities so that no one is overwhelmed in times of crisis. Layered, mutually supporting capabilities at Federal, State, tribal, and local levels allow for planning together in times of calm and responding together effectively in times of need. Engaged partnership includes ongoing communication of incident activity among all partners to the Framework, and shared situational awareness for a more rapid response...

LOCAL COMMUNITIES HAVE SIGNIFICANT RESPONSIBILITIES

The NRF implements a multi-tiered cooperative response structure that is underpinned and managed at the local level. This local response focus recognizes the need for close cooperative incident based communications within a community, and also the ability to reach out and seamlessly communicate with other support entities as required. An essential aspect of compliant planning requires broad participation that includes first responders and significant private entity cooperation.

Incidents must be managed at the lowest possible jurisdictional level and supported by additional capabilities when needed. ... Incidents begin and end locally, and most are wholly managed at the local level. Many incidents require unified response from local agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, and some require additional support from neighboring jurisdictions or the State.
READINESS TO ACT REQUIRES UNIFIED COMMUNICATION

The NRF employs the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) as the procedural and protocol framework to enable a coordinated unified command structure that manages response objectives, information sharing, priorities and risk management. The NRF stresses that communication is the foundation to enable a state of readiness.

LOCAL ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES AT A GLANCE (EXCERPTED)

CHIEF ELECTED OR APPOINTED OFFICIAL

The mayor, city manager, or jurisdiction’s chief executive officer is responsible for ensuring the public safety and welfare of the people of that jurisdiction. The Chief Elected Official’s (CEO) role is one of leadership in local NRF implementation. The CEO provides “strategic guidance and resources during preparedness” and “emergency management, including preparation and training for effective response, is a core obligation…”

EMERGENCY MANAGER

Local emergency managers have day-to-day authority and responsibility for overseeing emergency management programs and activities. They work with the CEO to ensure that unified objectives are established and the community’s jurisdiction’s emergency plans and capabilities are implemented. This role entails coordinating all aspects of the local community’s unified response capabilities.

DEPARTMENT AND AGENCY HEADS

Departments and agencies that perform emergency management functions (e.g., firefighting, law enforcement, emergency medical services, public works, environmental and natural resources agencies) assist the emergency manager and direct their response assets. Department and agency heads collaborate with the emergency manager, and participate in local emergency plan implementations to provide an integrated preparedness and response framework. See, NRF at 17.

Acting swiftly and effectively requires clear, focused communication and the processes to support it. Without effective communication, a bias toward action will be ineffectual at best, likely perilous.

NRF at 11.

Elected and appointed officials help their communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from potential incidents. Key responsibilities include:

- Establishing strong working relationships with local jurisdictional leaders and core private-sector organizations, voluntary agencies, and community partners. The objective is to get to know, coordinate with, and train with local partners in advance of an incident and to develop mutual aid and/or assistance agreements for support in response to an incident.
- Leading and encouraging local leaders to focus on preparedness by participating in planning, training, and exercises.
- Supporting participation in local mitigation efforts within the jurisdiction and, as appropriate, with the private sector...

NRF at 15-16.

The emergency manager coordinates all components of the local emergency management program, to include assessing the availability and readiness of local resources most likely required during an incident and identifying and correcting any shortfalls...Other duties of the local emergency manager might include the following:

- Coordinating the planning process and working cooperatively with other local agencies and private-sector organizations...
- Involving the private sector and NGOs in planning, training, and exercises...

NRF at 16-17.
PRIVATE SECTOR

Private sector entities are “partners” in emergency management. It is recognized that various private entities play key roles in protecting and minimizing damage and loss of life, and control key community assets and infrastructure that may be vital to in-crisis and post-crisis support.

Participation of the private sector varies based on the nature of the organization and the nature of the incident. The NRF defines five roles that private-sector organizations play. They are summarized in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Sector Categories</th>
<th>Sector Roles</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impacted Organization or Infrastructure</td>
<td>Private entities that may be impacted by direct or indirect consequences of the incident. Examples include transportation, telecommunications, private utilities, financial institutions, schools and hospitals. Critical infrastructure and key resources (CIKR) are grouped into 17 sectors that together provide essential functions and services supporting various aspects of the American government, economy, and society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated and/or Responsible Party</td>
<td>Owners/operators of regulated facilities or hazardous operations responsible for preparing for and preventing and responding to incidents once it occurs. Examples include nuclear power plants, dams, hazardous waste storage and processing facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Resource</td>
<td>Private-sector entities that provide response resources (donated or compensated) during an incident – including specialized teams, equipment, and advanced technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner With Emergency Organizations</td>
<td>Private-sector serving as partners in local and State emergency preparedness and response organizations and activities. Example – American Red Cross.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Components of the Nation’s Economy</td>
<td>Key elements of the national economy, private-sector resilience and continuity of operations planning, as well as recovery and restoration from an actual incident, represent essential homeland security activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Private sector organizations play a key role before, during, and after an incident. First, they must provide for the welfare and protection of their employees in the workplace. In addition, emergency managers must work seamlessly with businesses that provide water, power, communication networks, transportation, medical care, security, and numerous other services upon which both response and recovery are particularly dependent.

NRF at 18.
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEADERSHIP AND VISION

The NRF is a serious call to all leaders to raise the level of emergency preparedness and response capabilities through a unified community-wide and multi-jurisdictional communications and incident response framework. Local leaders have a unique opportunity to contribute to the long term safety and emergency response capabilities of their communities by being a motivational and moving force for preparedness and cooperation across local agencies and local private partners.

Implementing a seamless community-wide emergency communications platform that enables affordable real time collaboration for emergency incident preparedness and response is an essential aspect of improving your community's safety and welfare, and implementing the NRF.

NRF RESOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NRF Resource Center</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/">http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIMS Compliance Center</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/nims_compliance.shtm">http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/nims_compliance.shtm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dhs.gov/xprevprot/programs/editorial_0827.shtm">http://www.dhs.gov/xprevprot/programs/editorial_0827.shtm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources (CKIR)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dhs.gov/xprevprot/programs/gc_1189168948944.shtm">http://www.dhs.gov/xprevprot/programs/gc_1189168948944.shtm</a></td>
</tr>
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MUTUALINK

Mutualink is an affordable community-wide interoperable multi-media communications platform that links together police, fire, EMS, hospitals, schools, utilities, malls and other key community assets.

Through Mutualink, two-way radios, telephones, public address systems, video, and data files can be shared among parties on a real time incident basis providing critical communications that enhance preparedness and effective emergency management, coordination and response.