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# The Collaborative Public Manager

New Ideas for the Twenty-first Century

Rosemary O'Leary and  
Lisa Blomgren Bingham, Editors

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findings presented in this chapter suggest that service delivery options with other governments, nonprofits, and for-profit firms can be improved through collaboration.

Professionals in acquisition, procurement, and contract management cite the importance of relationship building as a part of their responsibilities. Government's increasing use of and reliance on contracting requires that contract managers do more than verify that the Ts are crossed and the Is dotted. Public managers are needed who can manage complex contract projects that involve a diverse range of stakeholder relationships and solve difficult contract issues through communication, information exchange, joint involvement in decision making and coordination. Each of these tools can build trust and is necessary to achieve a collaborative relationship. Though there are issues of endogeneity and causality between trust and collaboration, it appears clear that trust and collaboration develop over time and to some extent in tandem with one another.

Relationships can and do evolve and lead to mutual benefits for both parties,<sup>6</sup> but this is a calculated risk as each party exposes itself to some vulnerability that the other will enhance their own self-interest at the expense of goal alignment. Understanding how this evolution takes place is important. Public managers often approach collaboration incrementally, recognizing that trust takes time to develop. Much work continues to be needed on the necessary skills for the collaborative public manager operating in a networked contract environment. This chapter makes a modest contribution to linking these topics and literatures.

#### NOTES

1. The quotations in order of presentation come from Palmer 2006, Palmer 2005a, and Palmer 2005b. All are available at [www.govexec.com](http://www.govexec.com) and represent just a small sampling of contracting stories with this emphasis.
2. The U.S. General Accounting Office (2002, 3) documented that of the 88 percent of total Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds contracted by state governments, 73 percent were with nonprofit providers.
3. Demand-side imperfections are also a problem, given that some types of social services are monopsonistic in which government agencies are the only buyer of services.
4. Shleifer and Vishny (1998) refer to these types of contracts as incomplete contracts.
5. Milward and Provan (2000) refer to this challenge as governing the hollow state.
6. Just as relationships can evolve, they can also deteriorate. See Brown, Potoski, and Van Slyke (forthcoming).

## Chapter 9 Mechanisms for Collaboration in Emergency Management: ICS, NIMS, and the Problem with Command and Control

William L. Waugh Jr.

The September 2001 attacks on the United States had a profound impact on the profession and practice of emergency management and on the nation's approach to preparing for and responding to catastrophic disasters. Following the attacks, the government single-mindedly focused on the threat of terrorism. State and local emergency managers, however, remained concerned with and responsible for dealing with the more certain risks posed by hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfire, and other familiar hazards. The attacks also brought a fundamental change in the structure and process of emergency management, particularly because the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was largely disassembled and moved under the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Relationships between FEMA and its state and local counterparts changed fundamentally as DHS centralized decision-making processes, funding and training shifted quickly from "all hazards" to terrorism, and policy priorities shifted from comprehensive emergency management (i.e., mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery) to the prevention of terrorist attacks. Similarly, relationships between emergency management agencies at all levels of government and the nongovernmental organizations on which they depend for support changed as national security concerns reduced the transparency of decision-making processes and the openness to partnerships and other forms of collaboration. Much of the nation's

emergency management capacity was excluded from the DHS effort or relegated to dealing with the consequences of terrorism, rather than helping reduce its impact and prevent attacks through the adoption of anti-terrorism measures.

The post-September 11 changes in the national emergency management system, particularly at the federal level, raise questions concerning the roles and levels of responsibility of state and federal governments in our federal system, the coordination of efforts, and the administrative and political processes whereby state officials request federal assistance. As the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster demonstrated, there was considerable confusion over roles and responsibilities across the many cities, counties, and states affected and federal agencies involved. The scale of the Katrina disaster and the fact that the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Response Plan were not fully implemented and not fully understood also served to confuse officials and emergency responders at all levels. *Leadership was lacking, and cooperation was almost nonexistent. What was needed was a mechanism to encourage collaboration among the local, state, and federal agencies, as well as the hundreds of nongovernmental organizations and thousands of volunteers upon which the nation depends in catastrophic disasters. Collaborative leadership is essential in disasters* (Waugh and Streib 2006), and incident management systems necessarily should encourage collaboration. This analysis focuses on NIMS and the Incident Command System (ICS) upon which it is based, in terms of their utility in encouraging collaboration among the many organizations and individuals involved in disaster operations and other emergency management functions.

The DHS apparatus is a closed system, competing with the Department of Justice and Department of Defense for resources while centralizing authority over its constituent agencies and offices and laboratories. Creating a centralized decision-making process has been a priority. The mandates to adopt ICS, the multiagency coordination system (MACS), unified command, and NIMS have centralized federal authority and reduced the participation of nongovernmental and private organizations in disaster planning, training, operations, and other functions. Because terrorism is considered a threat to national security, the federal government is clearly taking the lead in dealing with terrorist events as managed by NIMS. But, under NIMS, the federal government also takes a more central role in dealing with natural and technological disasters. The result was a failure when quick decision making was needed during the Florida hurricanes in 2004 and hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma in 2005. Indeed, the centralization of decision-making processes was one of the

more serious problems during the poor response to Hurricane Katrina, leading to delays in relief to devastated communities and delays in mobilizing national resources to assist state and local emergency management offices.

Critics of ICS and NIMS frequently question whether the incident command structures can facilitate the intergovernmental, multiorganizational, and intersectoral collaboration necessary in large-scale disasters. Collaborative processes are proving more effective than other approaches in local government (e.g., see Agranoff and McGuire 2003a), and the assumption is that they will be more effective in dealing with disasters on a larger scale. After all, the response to a natural disaster is largely ad hoc and involves loosely organized nongovernmental actors; governmental actors; emergent groups, which often become well organized and long lived; and individual volunteers. *Control is not an option where practical authority is lacking. Nongovernmental organizations will respond with or without government approval. Volunteers will come. First responders will self-deploy when needed. Convergence behavior is inevitable.*

*Integrating the nongovernmental responders into federal, state, and local disaster relief operations is necessary for effective emergency management. This was one of the recommendations in the White House's review of the Katrina response* (White House 2006). Integration might facilitate cooptation (see O'Toole and Meier 2004a), but some differences may be difficult to reconcile. Goals differ and distrust is common. Finding common ground is difficult at best. Thus, collaboration requires a new approach to leadership—one that is less dependent upon authority and control and more sensitive to differences in goals and values (Waugh and Streib 2006).

#### THE COLLABORATIVE EMERGENCY MANAGER

After the command-and-control approach to emergency management proved poorly suited to large-scale disasters in the 1970s and 1980s, emergency managers adopted a collaborative, open approach in the 1990s. This strategy worked much better in coordinating the efforts of public, private, and nonprofit agencies. As standards developed, the profession adopted a comprehensive "all hazards" perspective and began integrating emergency management into the broader functions of government, as well as acquiring the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to design, development, implement, manage, and maintain effective programs.

Programs became "all hazard" to provide flexibility and to make the best use of resources. During the "golden age" of FEMA in the 1990s,

mitigation of hazards, rather than response to disasters, became the focus. As the mantra went, a dollar spent on mitigation saved four dollars in disaster recovery. Creating "disaster-resistant" and "disaster-resilient" communities became the goal.

The professionalization process in emergency management shares similarities with processes in other fields. Though many emergency managers are drawn from the military, professional emergency managers are expected to be acclimated to a civilian world in which authority is shared and local officials have primary responsibility. All disasters are local, as the saying goes. Moreover, distrust of government authority is such that officials have to cultivate collaborative working relationships with their counterparts in other agencies and in other parts of government, as well as with the general public, to be effective. Developing trust and respect are the first tasks of the professional emergency manager. In short, it is an environment in which interpersonal skill is more important than technical expertise (Drabek 1987), informal relationships outweigh formal authority (Vaugh 1993), and leadership means working effectively with diverse networks of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, volunteers, and communities to manage hazards, prepare for disasters, respond appropriately, and recover quickly.

In policy terms, emergency managers are no longer the proverbial "cavalry" riding in to save communities from imminent disaster. Rather, they provide support for those trying to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and/or recover from disaster. In operational terms, emergency managers are not first responders. Instead, they are risk managers and facilitators of response and recovery. The term "first responder" has been adopted by many, however, because federal grants are available to first responders (e.g., firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical personnel) but not to second and third responders (e.g., emergency managers and hospital emergency personnel).

At the local level, emergency managers might have broader responsibilities, depending upon their relationship to emergency response agencies, but the role has generally been defined as coordination and integration rather than operations (Vaugh 1993). Those emergency managers housed in fire or police departments tend to focus more on the response mode. But, more and more, emergency managers are focusing on assisting emergency responders and providing overall coordination and integration support. The emergency management agency's emergency operations center (EOC), as distinct from response agency EOCs and incident command posts, is the vehicle for collaboration. It provides communication links and

brings together representatives of the response agencies to share information and to coordinate efforts.

The most obvious artifact of the cultural change wrought by the creation of DHS was the clothing. Emergency managers were those in polo shirts and casual slacks, dressed to staff EOCs for days and to gather information at disaster scenes. The blue jeans, turnouts (i.e., firefighter gear), and uniforms of first responders became less and less common. However, September 11 and the creation of DHS and its state and local counterparts changed all that. The most obvious sign of change was the invasion of suits—the dark suits and dark ties worn by the new managers and executives overseeing emergency operations—and uniforms. The "suits"—that is, law enforcement and national security officials—came dressed for the office rather than the EOC or disaster scene. They were removed from the perspective of the emergency responder and the emergency manager. More important, they were removed from the culture of improvisation, adaptation, and flexibility that had come to characterize emergency management for the past two decades. The suits were more interested in standard operating procedures, unity of command, narrow spans of control, task specialization, divisions of labor, and the other attributes of classic bureaucracy. Of course, the fire services, police, emergency medical services, and emergency managers had had standard operating procedures and clearly defined lines of authority, but most had learned that circumstances often required adjustments in procedures to assure effective responses.

The suits also brought a focus on prevention—namely, preventing terrorist attacks—and an ignorance of the broader functions of emergency management. As a result, there was little investment in programs to reduce the impact of terrorist attacks, to prepare first and second responders to deal with terrorist disasters that cannot be prevented, and to recover from devastating attacks quickly. Attention to hurricanes, earthquakes, and other natural and technological disasters became a low priority. The national security officials also focused on counterterrorism programs (e.g., apprehending known and suspected terrorists) rather than anti-terrorism programs (e.g., securing facilities and other potential targets). The myopic view of the "war on terrorism" left emergency responders and emergency managers to fend for themselves with mandates to prepare for chemical, biological, and radiological attacks, but without the resources to do so. Weapons of mass destruction became "the mother" of all risks. The competition for resources among the counterterrorism agencies also had its effect in terms of priorities on technologies to detect chemical, biological, and radiological agents and the security of civil aviation—rather than responder training, securing

nonaviation sites, and community preparedness. The dominance of "gun-toters" within DHS translated into programmatic priorities, budget allocations, and human resource allocations. FEMA was only a very small part of DHS—roughly 5,000 employees in a department of 170,000—and was taxed to support law enforcement and national security programs. The result of that taxation and the lack of attention to nonterrorist hazards by DHS was the very poor federal response to the Katrina hurricane and flood, as well as poor federal responses to the 2004 hurricanes and Hurricanes Rita and Wilma after Katrina (Waugh 2006).

Thus far, rebuilding FEMA and the nation's capacity to deal with catastrophic disasters of all sorts has been a slow, contentious process. FEMA and DHS have experienced brain drain as experienced administrators have retired or moved to the private sector or other public agencies. A remarkable aspect of the disaster response effort was the number of new people hired to manage operations. Inexperienced FEMA personnel, who were re-placements for those who have left, are one of the problems inhibiting the recovery effort along the Gulf Coast as well (e.g., see Hsu 2006; Marino 2006).

This is the context within which collaboration is expected to happen in emergency management and DHS. The collaborative nature of emergency management is well documented (Waugh 2003; Wachtendorf 2004; Waugh and Stretz 2006; Patton 2007), and the need for collaboration in DHS is generally accepted (Wise 2002; Waugh and Sylves 2002). The national emergency management system includes nongovernmental organizations, ranging from faith-based disaster relief organizations to private firms that specialize in debris removal, the delivery of critical materials, fire and flood damage clean-up, and managing response operations and recovery processes (to mention but a few), as well as public agencies. Professional associations of engineers do building and infrastructure damage assessments, social scientists do impact assessments of social and psychological effects and provide interventions as needed, and professional emergency managers often do assessments of capabilities to manage response and recovery efforts. In short, disaster management is not just a governmental function. Indeed, nongovernmental organizations will respond whether asked or involved in the "official" operation or not. The title of California's manual on using volunteers is *They Will Come* (Office of Emergency Services 2001) and, in fact, they will come. Tens of thousands of volunteers were used in the World Trade Center response. Dozens of volunteer organizations emerged during the hours, days, and weeks that followed the attacks.

The question of whether DHS can learn to collaborate was addressed in a recent "Point/Counterpoint" commentary in *Homeland Protection*

*Professional* magazine (Bannon 2006). The new department, according to Charles Wise, was simply too new to have established the strong working relationships that are necessary in major disasters. He suggested that as it matures, DHS will get better at adaptive management, responding to the unexpected. Bill Jenkins of the Government Accountability Office, conversely, expressed the view that "creating a culture of adaptability" will be a problem because the Washington bureaucracy is not, by nature, adaptable. However, Wise argues that organizations can be both hierarchical and adaptive, but he notes that the high turnover in personnel presents a challenge to establishing collaboration because relationships have to be continually rebuilt. Given that DHS was created specifically to deal with the threat of terrorism, its lack of attention to natural hazards and its lack of skill in collaborating with local authorities is understandable, albeit shortsighted and lamentable. Both agreed that establishing strong working relationships among federal, state, and local officials is essential.

To that end, FEMA has created a new Federal Incident Response Support Team program that will deploy FEMA personnel to locations when disaster is imminent to act as liaison between local and federal officials. Teams are currently located at the FEMA regional offices in Atlanta and Chicago for quick deployment. Each team will bring communications equipment to assist in linking local and state and federal operations (Wright and Randle 2006) and, thus, are expected to provide the responsiveness to local needs that was lacking in the Katrina response. The teams might also help rebuild the relationships that were established by FEMA regional office personnel in the Witt years.

The necessity of developing long-term, close working relationships among the agencies responsible for responding to natural and unnatural disasters has been noted since the creation of DHS. FEMA had worked hard to develop and maintain those relationships during the Witt years, but they were not maintained by DHS. Indeed, the need to create networks for each of the essential emergency management functions was pointed out as essential for dealing with terrorist incidences. The emergency management system was built from the bottom up with local responders as the foundation (Waugh 2000; Powers 2003). Local officials had ultimate legal and political responsibility for dealing with hazards and disasters.

#### COLLABORATION, IMPROVISATION, AND INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Ad hoc responses are most common as emergency management agencies and nongovernmental organizations mobilize to deal with disaster. Michael

Scardaville (2003) of the Heritage Foundation argues that no jurisdiction can have a completely adequate response plan for a large-scale terrorist incident and that response is most often characterized by ad hoc efforts, major uncertainties, and conflicting priorities. A centralized, command-and-control system, thus, is not possible, because no single incident commander would be able to monitor everything and respond effectively. Therefore, he suggests a "multiuse culture" like FEMA or the U.S. Coast Guard is most effective, and DHS should rely on a "network of high-level regional offices" rather than trying to direct operations from Washington. This model was not implemented, and the slow response to Katrina was in large measure caused by overly centralized decision-making processes. Allocations of resources, mobilization of personnel, and other critical decisions were made in Washington—often well after needs were apparent to officials closer to the Gulf Coast and after conditions had become desperate for those in the storm's path (Waugh 2006).

The capacity to improvise, as well as adapt to changing circumstances, is also critical. Wachtendorf's (2004, 30–32) study of the September 11 response summarizes the improvisation literature and concludes that the capacity to be creative is essential in catastrophic disasters. In lesser disasters, *reproductive improvisation* can rebuild damaged or lost capacities and *adaptive improvisation* can lead to organizational and operational innovation to address unanticipated circumstances. *Creative improvisation* is necessary to adjust the organization, decision-making processes, and priorities to new demands. Wachtendorf concludes that "creative improvisation occurs when an organization or collectivity of organizations, determines that a structure, activity, resource, or task element is needed in order to respond to an event, but where no prior plan or model exists, resulting in the enactment of novel strategies under time constraints to produce that element. Creative improvisation [was] . . . possible because the [organization] was able to accurately read and integrate the cues of constituent organizations and members were able to draw upon repertoires of both specialized and shared knowledge to produce novel arrangements." A shared vision of the objectives is critical, and organizations need strong sense-making skills to understand and respond to new demands, as well as to address the needs of constituent organizations. In other words, a participatory, open decision-making process is necessary.

Therefore, given the nature of disaster responses and the role of emergency management within the nation's DHS apparatus, the organization of emergency management and DHS programs is critical. Following September 11, a series of Executive Orders and Homeland Security Presidential Directives (HSPDs) created structures to oversee programs and to deal

with specific kinds of threats (e.g., to critical infrastructure). HSPD 5 in February 2003 dealt with the management of domestic incidents and required state and local compliance with the provisions of NIMS. NIMS Guidance was issued in March 2004, and the use of NIMS was mandated when the National Response Plan (NRP) was adopted in April 2005. NIMS was in the implementation stage, and the NRP was very new and not widely understood by many federal, state, and local officials when Katrina came ashore a few months later (Waugh 2006). NIMS remains a central feature of the new National Response Framework that is slated to supersede the NRP in 2007 or 2008.

The NIMS Incident Management organization is outlined in table 9.1. The foundation is ICS, and there is acknowledgment that coordination is necessary as events get larger. The expectation is that a MACS organization will be established to coordinate larger-scale responses. As incidents get larger and more jurisdictions are involved, a unified command should be implemented. In theory, the mechanisms for coordination and, perhaps, collaboration should be in place. This analysis explores the degree to which they really are. The figures that follow illustrate the ICS organization, the unified command organization, the MACS organization, and the regional, state, and national NIMS organizations.

Now, local and state responders are required to adopt ICS and to be compliant with NIMS to qualify for federal funds and to receive federal disaster assistance. The implementation of ICS has not been without critics, but NIMS has drawn far more criticism. Critics have tried to draw attention to the shortcomings of such hierarchical, command-focused systems, the problem of command when no one has (or many have) legal and political authority, and the resources and response capacities that are not accommodated by closed administrative systems. The ICS and NIMS structures are not flexible, adaptive, or creative enough to deal with major disasters of any sort, and many components of the national emergency management system will not be conversant with ICS or compliant with NIMS when officials attempt to direct disaster operations. Also, ICS and NIMS are designed for emergency response operations and not for mitigation, preparedness, and recovery operations.

#### INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

ICS is a sacred cow among fire service personnel. However, because it does not fit current management and decision-making theory, it has received a great deal of academic attention and criticism. ICS is based upon a traditional military command structure, that is, the classic Weberian



bureaucratic model. Though ICS has some elements of management by objectives and the development and communication of objectives is a central tenet, it is essentially a command-and-control system. Generally, the effectiveness of ICS in the fire ground and as a tool for responding in a disciplined manner to structural fires and wildfires is not questioned. Indeed, these are the very purposes for which it was developed. Milward and Provan (2006) argue that such fires are relatively routine for firefighters and a bureaucratic approach works well for them because they share common values and a common language. Buck, Trainor, and Aguirre (2006) come to essentially the same conclusion, citing the importance of the fire community's shared values (figure 9.1).

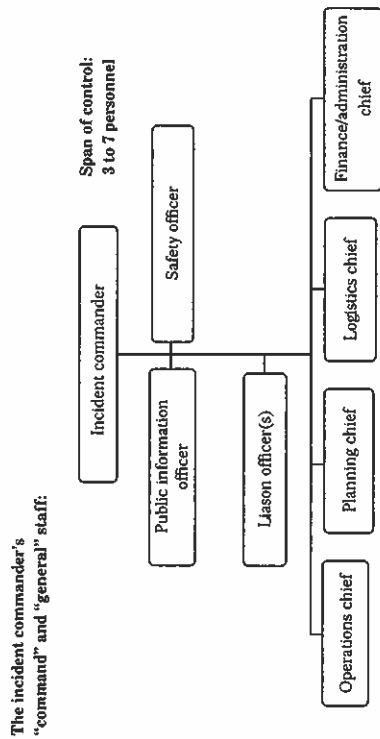
ICS was originally created in the early 1970s to coordinate wildfire responses in California. Coordination problems became evident when large wildfires required the involvement of many fire departments and other emergency response agencies and when firefighting operations extended across jurisdictional boundaries. The system was designed by the FIRE-SCOPE project (Firefighting Resources of Southern California Organized for Potential Emergencies, changed to Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies in 1987; see [www.firescope.org](http://www.firescope.org)), which was chartered by Congress in 1972 to assist the U.S. Forest Service in helping Southern California fire agencies. Training for ICS and MACS began in 1977, and it was successfully applied to wildfire responses in 1978. FEMA developed a similar ICS system in the 1980s. The system evolved from the old Civil Defense system under the Department of Defense (hence the frequent reference to the military nature of ICS) (Kerr 2004). The use of ICS is also mandated by federal law for responses to hazardous materials accidents and, thus, has become a familiar tool for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and its state counterparts.

Over the past thirty years, ICS has been widely adopted for wildfire and structural fire responses in the United States, but there are still some differences in ICS structures and processes that can affect joint operations. The brand of ICS practiced depended upon where it was taught, and increasing numbers of firefighters learned it at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. ICS was used during the responses to the Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City, the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, and the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks in 2001. A recent study of the use of ICS in the response to the Murrah Federal Building bombing concluded that ICS was very effective (Cook 2006). Alethia Cook interviewed those involved in the response, particularly those from the Oklahoma City Fire Department who managed the search-and-rescue operation, and the consensus was that ICS worked

Table 9.1 National Incident Management System

<i>Incident Command System</i>	<p>Commander directs operations at disaster scene from Incident Command Post.</p> <p>Agency or government representatives coordinate resources and support operations. Often regional coordination.</p> <p>Area Command links incident commands to coordinate operations.</p>
<i>Unified Command</i>	<p>Provides mechanism for multiple jurisdictions to coordinate support. Emergency operations center supports collaborative decision processes.</p>

Figure 9.1 Incident Command System Organization



the effort. The commander is supported by a command staff (information officer, liaison officer, safety officer, and others as needed), and the organization is divided into sections for finance/administration, logistics, operations, and planning (e.g., see Irwin 1989). The DHS NIMS manual describes the "typical" incident command structure as having the four sections or components, but it suggests that more components may be needed, such as intelligence/information gathering (DHS 2004). In the fire services, low- to high-technology devices (from blackboards to laptops) are available to facilitate communication so that the incident commander can turn over command to another and have records of decisions made, resources deployed, and so on, to provide a comprehensive situational map for the new commander. It is taken as a matter of faith in the fire services that ICS assures the necessary unity of command for a disciplined response. In practice, however, there are some differences in ICS training and, therefore, the functions may vary from agency to agency. Moreover, some fire departments do not use ICS (figure 9.2).

A MACS organization is adopted when more jurisdictions become involved. The MACS structure utilizes the EOC as a locus of coordination. The MAC group consists of agency representatives and is responsible for establishing priorities, allocating resources, integrating communications systems, sharing information, coordinating decisions, and developing geographic strategies and contingency plans. There may also be local area, operational area, regional, geographic area, and statewide MACS to coordinate efforts, as well as a national, multiagency coordinating group (FIRESCOPE 2006).

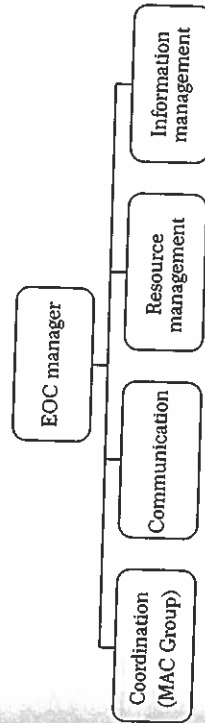
The size and membership of MACS groups can vary. EOCs typically include representatives from nongovernmental organizations, but that frequently means that only the American Red Cross and perhaps the Salvation Army have regular places in the room because local emergency management agencies rely heavily on their resources. Other disaster relief

for them and was effective in managing the incident. Though issues arose concerning jurisdiction over those responses, emergency operational plans or decisions made immediately following the events facilitated the implementation of ICS.

However, jurisdictional conflicts, the involvement of large numbers of nongovernmental response-and-recovery organizations, and even the involvement of a large number of government agencies that cannot share authority may complicate or even preclude the use of ICS to organize and manage an emergency response. In some local governments, authority is shared among two or more officials and emergency plans may not resolve the issue. In essence, no one official may have jurisdiction over an emergency response, and emergency officials may not have the authority to turn resources over to someone else. So-called turf issues are frequently cited as obstacles to effective disaster responses, but officials are accountable for resources and may not be legally able to transfer responsibility—particularly to someone from another jurisdiction. Thus, accountability systems may trump command systems.

In wildfire cases, it is common for several fire departments to respond to large wildfires, and ICS facilitates the integration of resources and the development of a single plan of action. In essence, ICS involves the identification of an incident commander, who is responsible for determining priorities (objectives) and directing the emergency response. In theory, the first responder to arrive at the scene is the commander, and responsibility shifts to more senior responders as more units or departments join

Figure 9.2 Multiagency Coordination System Organization





organizations may be represented by the Red Cross. Private-sector organizations, such as power companies, may or may not have a similar presence.

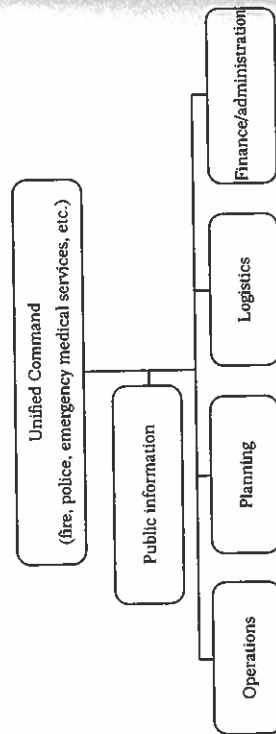
As events become even larger, a unified command organization is adopted. In a unified command group decision, processes are expected to guide action. In theory, no single person or agency is in charge under unified command; representatives of the autonomous participant organizations make decisions by consensus. But in practice, not all agency representatives understand the concept of consensus. In fact, theories may differ as to the existence of a leader. The most common notion is likely that, if no one is in charge, "I am in charge." As the saying goes, one should "lead, follow, or get out of the way" (figure 9.3).

The NIMS organization has more layers, from regional to state to federal levels, to support disaster operations. Figure 9.4 shows the area command structures. The State of California has already developed its own regional coordination and support structures, and there is some question as to how these organizations will function—mostly whether they are collaborative or directive bodies.

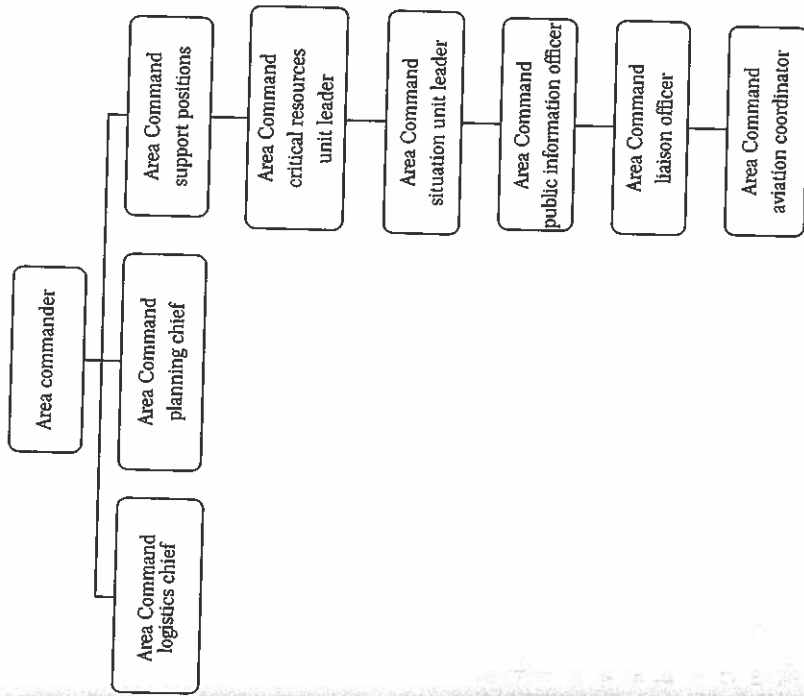
**CONCLUSION**

The requirement to adopt NIMS has raised questions about the structure of emergency response and emergency management agencies. A debate on that very topic took place during the fall of 2004 on the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) listserv, which is made up of mostly local emergency managers. Many local EOCs, for example, are organized around emergency support functions (ESFs), as suggested by

**Figure 9.3** Unified Command



**Figure 9.4** Incident Management under the Area Command Organization of the National Incident Management System



Note: The Area Command becomes the Unified Area Command when an incident becomes multijurisdictional. It operates under the same basic principles as the Incident Command System.

the Federal Response Plan and the NRP. (The NRP was revised to recognize ESFs after outcries from the emergency management community.) The debate was renewed in the summer of 2006 as emergency managers, emergency responders, consultants, trainers, and others were implementing ICS/NIMS to satisfy the federal mandate. The responses varied from complete support for ICS as a scalable incident management tool that should be taught to everyone who might be involved in a disaster response (or any other management situation for some) to qualified support from those who question its utility in large events involving multiple jurisdictions and nongovernmental organizations. There was also some qualified opposition by those who do not feel that ICS is appropriate outside the fire ground. In many respects, the discussion appeared similar to discussions a decade ago of total quality management, which had developed an almost cultlike following. ICS, according to most, is a management tool that should be adapted as needed to circumstances. Indeed, Craig Fugate (2006), director of the State of Florida's Division of Emergency Management, complained of "ICS zealots" who insist on trying to fit circumstances to the technique. Clearly, as the saying goes, "if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." One of those involved in the IAEM listserve debate, in fact, mentioned an incident in which the incident commander set up an ICS structure with only five people involved in the incident and all involved in the operational side of the response. Clearly, personnel may fill more than one ICS staff and command role.

What is the problem with ICS? Perhaps the most frequent focus of management criticism is its highly centralized, hierarchical, "command-and-control" systems; thus, the classic critique of the Weberian model. Such systems, by their very nature, are inflexible, slow, and cumbersome and would be much less adaptable in task environments characterized by uncertainty and rapid change. Certainly the federal response to Hurricane Katrina was plagued by centralized decision-making processes that failed to address problems along the coast. Officials contended that the problem was a lack of "situational awareness" because of poor (or nonexistent) communication between Washington and state and local officials, not to mention among the agencies involved in the search-and-rescue and other operations. But that is precisely the problem with centralized processes: Decisions cannot be made by officials onsite. Instead, information has to be communicated to decision makers far removed from the disaster scene so that they can make decisions and communicate them back downward. In short, the problem was not too little leadership from Washington; rather, it was too much reliance on direction from Washington. It was not a problem common in federal disaster operations conducted through FEMA

regional offices prior to the agency's absorption into DHS. Regional office officials had close working relationships with their state and local counterparts prior to the creation of DHS, but they were eroded both by changes of policy under DHS and by the retirements of many FEMA employees who had cultivated the relationships (Waugh 2006).

There have also been criticisms of ICS in operations involving military personnel, work in the public health context, and among organizations that rely heavily on volunteers. Reports following the deployment of military personnel to deal with wildfires in Colorado in the 1990s concluded that the personnel had some problems dealing with the pace of decision making and action. The wildfire response did not fit the "battle rhythm" in which military personnel typically operate. Public health officials have expressed concern that the single incident commander model violated their notions of consensus building in public health emergencies. Decentralized decision making is the norm when expertise may be scattered among many units of the public health community or among individual medical specialists. No one doctor or official may have the expertise to make decisions. Indeed, nonmedical personnel may also have difficulty finding arriving at a consensus. Finally, there are cultural problems when nonhierarchical organizations, such as volunteer organizations, have to interact with highly hierarchical ones. The most common conflicts are among police and military units and civilian agencies. In disaster operations, critical functions are carried out by ad hoc or emergent organizations that have little inclination either to answer to commanders or to develop their own commanders (Waugh 2002, 2003). And some people simply abhor bureaucracy and will not cooperate. That perspective has been expressed by volunteer organization members (see Waugh and Streib 2006).

Clearly, ICS works in smaller, noncatastrophic events. ICS works when the responders are part of a community with a shared language, shared objectives, and a shared vision of how operations should work. ICS works in firefighting. The fire community understands the system, and the tasks are largely routine, even if there is some uncertainty in dealing with structural fires and wildfires (e.g., see Milward and Provan 2006). But ICS and NIMS may not work in catastrophic events when there is not a shared vision and they become difficult to maintain when the response involves intergovernmental, intersectoral, and volunteer participants (see Buck, Trainor, and Aguirre 2006). "ICS zealots" may be a problem even in smaller events when they do not understand the need to adapt, to improvise, and to learn. Indeed, the personality and training of the incident commander may be the critical variable. By contrast, Randy Hansen (2006), a Seattle

Fire Department battalion chief, has argued that those experienced with ICS can “flex” the organization to make it more flexible and inclusive, but this may not be useful for all phases of emergency management. Adequate training and experience are necessary for ICS to work, and that is a significant problem when many agencies do not use ICS and those that do may not use it often, even to maintain a trained cadre.

Questions do need to be answered to assure that the nation is ready for another September 11 or Katrina-type disaster. First, at what point, in terms of the size of the operation, does the centralized decision making become problematic? Second, does ICS work in all contexts, from the fire services to medical institutions? Third, if not NIMS, then what? Management theory does suggest particular organizational structures and processes if the need is for them to be highly adaptable and innovative, able to coordinate multi-organizational operations, able to communicate effectively and quickly within and among organizations, and able to cultivate and manage networks so that they can be focused on common goals. In general, theory suggests that such organizations be flat, nonhierarchical or minimally so, and not overly compartmentalized (specialized as to task). Communication, coordination, and collaboration become more difficult as the differentiation of the organization increases. They should avoid compartmentalization because it inhibits communication and coordination.

Speeches following Hurricane Katrina frequently mentioned the need for “nimble” organizations. However, these calls were usually followed by prescriptions for greater centralization of decision making in Washington (i.e., less nimble structures). How can first, second, and third responders be taught to see NIMS as a tool rather than a rule? They need to understand how to adapt, improvise, and work in a world where authority is shared, resources are scattered, and tasks require the participation of many disciplines. Community participation in disaster operations is critical. Capacity building and “disaster resilience”—the ability to recover quickly and to deal more effectively with future disasters—is cultivated when communities and their residents have a role in disaster response and recovery (Comfort 1999).

How should we organize emergency management and homeland security? Donald Kettl argues that the organization is less important than the leadership (2005b). Goldsmith and Eggers (2004), conversely, offer alternative models for managing networks. Though they describe disaster management as utilizing an ad hoc model, their “civic switchboard” model may be more appropriate (Goldsmith and Eggers 2004, 69–71). In this switchboard model, government agencies provide a broad perspective and serve to connect the players. In the case of nongovernmental disaster relief

organizations, many are connected via the National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD), which is mentioned in the NRP. Some states also utilize their state VOADs to organize nongovernmental participants. Anticipating volunteers, receiving and training them, inventorying and certifying capabilities, and fitting them into the disaster operation is a complex switchboard-like function. Communities use community emergency response teams because they are organized and trained to fill predetermined roles, usually assisting fire and police departments. Organizing spontaneous volunteers and integrating emergent groups into disaster operations are much more problematic in the chaos of disaster—even when personnel are trained to do so and commanders and policymakers are willing to accept their assistance. Milward and Provan (2006, 15) warn that ICS may be used against “unknown unknowns”—problems that are neither understood nor predictable. It may also be used in circumstances that require wide participation by nongovernmental organizations that do not understand how it works and may well react negatively to any attempt to impose authority.

There are several implications for emergency management leadership. Organizational structure needs to be functional given the circumstances. Flexibility—from adaptation to improvisation—is critical. Leaders need to be able to “flex” the organization, as Chief Hansen called it. However, the bigger issues may be whether NIMS is based upon assumptions that do not hold in a federal system of shared authority and shared responsibilities. Direction from state capitals and/or Washington did not work during the Katrina disaster. More collaborative approaches at the operational and policymaking levels would greatly facilitate the disaster response, as well as the mitigation, preparedness, and recovery processes.