

NIMS STEP

NIMS Supporting Technology Evaluation Program (STEP)



The National Preparedness Directorate (NPD) has developed a program to assist the emergency management/response community identify products that adhere to standards and the concepts and principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The program, called the NIMS Supporting Technology Evaluation Program (NIMS STEP), provides objective evaluations of supporting technologies.

Evaluation activities are designed to help expand technology solutions, and provide the emergency management/response community with a comprehensive process to assist in the purchasing of incident management products. The program has five primary objectives:

- To evaluate products for their incorporation of NIMS concepts and principles.
- To determine products' adherence to the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) 1.1 standard.
- To determine products' adherence to the OASIS Emergency Data eXchange Language-Distribution Element (EDXL-DE) 1.0 standard.
- To determine products' adherence to the OASIS EDXL-Hospital Availability Exchange (EDXL-HAVE) 1.0 standard.
- To determine products' adherence to the OASIS EDXL-Resource Messaging (EDXL-RM) 1.0 standard.

Products that implement one or more of these standards (CAP or EDXL-DE, EDXL-HAVE or EDXL-RM) will be given priority. According to NIMS, systems operating in an incident management environment must be able to interact smoothly across disciplines and jurisdictions. Interoperability and compatibility are achieved through the use of tools such as common communications and data standards, digital data formats, equipment standards and design standards.

Recognized experts in the field of emergency management/response assess products in a realistic environment and provide feedback based on guidelines as determined by NIMS (FEMA 501). Test engineers evaluate products' adherence to NIMS recommended standards. Additionally, NIMS STEP assessments provide vendors with an independent process for identifying gaps and making improvements to their products.

NIMS STEP evaluation activities are conducted at the NIMS Support Center (NIMS SC) in Somerset, Kentucky. The NIMS SC is equipped to evaluate products that support emergency managers/responders in decision-making prior to and during an incident, such as alert and warning, command and control, and resource management applications.

The following NIMS criteria are applied during each evaluation:

- Emergency Support
- Scalability
- Hazards
- Resource Management
- Communication and Information Management
- Command and Management

The NIMS SC also evaluates each product against implementation criteria, including the time and training impacts on governmental entities.

NIMS STEP National Incident Management System Supporting Technology Evaluation Program

NIMS STEP Overview

The National Incident Management System Supporting Technology Evaluation Program (NIMS STEP) provides an independent, objective evaluation of commercial and government software and hardware products to assist in the implementation of NIMS. Evaluation activities are designed to expand technology solutions and provide the emergency response community with an objective process to evaluate their purchases. Evaluation activities are sponsored by the National Preparedness Directorate (NPD), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The NIMS Support Center (NIMS SC) manages the day-to-day functions of the program under the direction of the NPD's Incident Management Systems Integration (IMSI) Division.

NIMS STEP supports practitioners in their decision making during the purchasing and procurement process. The primary benefits to Emergency Management/Response Personnel include access to reports based on results from an objective evaluation. Practitioners can also utilize NIMS technical standards and criteria for reference when purchasing hardware and software off the shelf or in Requests For Proposals (RFPs) when developing new products.

The results from each evaluation will be posted on the Responder Knowledge Base (RKB) (<https://www.rkb.us/>) and System Assessment and Validation for Emergency Responders (SAVER) (<https://saver.fema.gov/>) websites. These sites provide government officials and other end-users with access to evaluated products and results.

Evaluation Activities

NIMS STEP has been designed to evaluate incident management related software and hardware against NIMS criteria and NIMS technical standards. The NIMS criteria assessment is conducted by Subject Matter Experts (SME) and is qualitative in nature. SMEs use criteria derived from the NIMS document (Publication FEMA 501) and assess a product's incorporation of NIMS concepts and principles. Refer to Appendix D of the NIMS STEP Guide for a description of the assessment criteria. All vendor products in NIMS STEP will be evaluated against NIMS criteria.

NIMS technical standard evaluations are objective in nature and based upon adopted standards. NIMS STEP evaluates vendor product's adherence to the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) and the Emergency Data eXchange Language (EDXL) suite of standards (<http://www.oasis-open.org>). If a product does not implement either the CAP or Emergency Data eXchange Language Distribution Element (EDXL-DE) standards, evaluators will review the product solely for NIMS concepts and principles. If evaluation demand exceeds capacity, priority will be given to products that implement one or more of the NIMS technical standards. Additional standards may be included in the program as they are approved by the IMSI Division.

"Systems operating in an incident management environment must be able to work together across disciplines and jurisdictions) and not interfere with one another. Interoperability and compatibility are achieved through the use of tools such as common communications and data standards, digital data formats, equipment standards, and design standards."
- National Incident Management System

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For more information and to apply for an evaluation, please visit: www.nimsstep.org
Results from each evaluation may be accessed on the following website:
<https://www.rkb.us>

