

NFPA®

1561

Standard on
Emergency Services
Incident Management System
and Command Safety

2020



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NFPA® 1561**Standard on****Emergency Services Incident Management System and Command Safety****2020 Edition**

This edition of NFPA 1561, *Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System and Command Safety*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health. It was issued by the Standards Council on November 4, 2019, with an effective date of November 24, 2019, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 1561 was approved as an American National Standard on November 24, 2019.

Origin and Development of NFPA 1561

The first edition of NFPA 1561 was issued in 1990 to support requirements in NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, that fire departments conduct emergency operations within an effective incident management system. The committee realized that the safety aspects of a functional command structure were as important as the operational coordination and effectiveness of the system. In developing the document, the committee examined several incident management systems that were in use and determined that, in addition to requiring the use of an incident management system, there should be performance criteria for the components of a system that contribute directly toward safety and health objectives.

The 1995 edition expanded the areas of accountability, use of rapid intervention crews for rescue of members, and interagency cooperation and recognized that incident management includes more than fireground operations.

The 2000 edition expanded the document to reflect the mainstream utilization of incident management systems. The title of the document was changed to *Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System*, to reflect the fact that all emergency service organizations should use an incident management system.

In the 2002 edition, the committee focused on areas of risk management, communications, roles and responsibilities of the incident safety officer (ISO), and rapid intervention crews and defined command structures. In addition, new annex material was added to assist the users of the standard.

The 2005 edition addressed specifics of incident management teams, unified command, and the roles and responsibilities of the incident commander (IC) and the command and general staff. That edition coincided with the development of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), a new National Response Plan (NRP), and Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5 on management of domestic incidents.

The 2008 edition was a complete revision that provided additional emphasis in areas of incident management to improve the safety, health, and survival of responders. Language and terminology in the document was revised to ensure that users of the document are in compliance with NIMS. Definitions were also revised for standardization between the health and safety standards the committee is responsible for.

Material throughout the document was reorganized to present the material in a manner that makes the standard easier to use and to recognize an incident management system as an organizational tool that should be compliant with national standards and directives.

New requirements for a system qualification process and a requirement for communication capability with responders when they are working in an immediately dangerous to life and health area were added. Substantial annex material was also added, including two new annexes. One provided information on emergency operations centers, and the other provided information on area

command, including organization charts to illustrate both a unified command organizational structure and an area command organizational structure.

For the 2014 edition, there were some significant changes to the document, many of which centered on simple reorganization and for consistency with the Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health (FSOSH) project. Some chapters and annexes were moved, and many new requirements were included in this edition. The primary focus of this revision was to develop requirements directly aimed at reducing and eliminating fire ground injuries and deaths of fire department members.

The most obvious addition to the 2014 edition was the change of the document title to include “Command Safety” and the creation of a new chapter, Command Safety. This chapter was intended to provide the foundation for the IC on how to use, follow, and incorporate the incident management system at all emergency scenes. The purpose of this chapter was to ensure the highest level of safety for fire department members at emergency incident scenes. This included the establishment of clearly defined requirements that the IC must meet, determining how and when a command post must be established, ensuring that an incident safety officer is appointed at the command post to respond to all incidents that the IC deems necessary, and ensuring that the expectations and authorities of the incident safety officer are clearly defined. The new chapter also clearly outlined the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of a safety officer and the appointment of an assistant safety officer, if deemed necessary.

In addition to developing this new chapter, the committee also included requirements for the use of *Mayday* and *emergency traffic* at emergency incidents, to bring the document in line with the 2013 edition of NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*. The committee also clarified the use of plain text when transmitting emergency traffic over the radio.

In recognizing that fire department members can and do get injured at emergency incidents, the committee included additional requirements pertaining to the use of emergency medical services (EMS) at all emergency incidents, including requirements addressing when EMS shall be used and what minimum level of EMS shall be provided.

The committee would also like to thank all members of the public who participated in the revision of this document in working to increase fire department member safety at emergency incidents.

For the 2020 edition, the standard has mostly been refined to reflect the latest information and best practices in incident management. New requirements for positional best colors have been added to the mandatory section of the standard. This will make incident management team members universally identifiable based on the color of vest they don for their assigned role. Language was added to prevent the “incident within an incident” practice of managing emergencies or Maydays at large-scale incidents. It is imperative that the incident commander stay in control of the entire incident and not become overly committed to the emergency. This can be accomplished by assigning a supervisor or rapid intervention group to the emergency. Annex C has been completely revised to reflect the latest “Planning P” diagram and the best practices for creating an incident action plan.

The technical committee would like to dedicate this edition of the standard to the late Chief Alan Brunacini. Chief “Bruno” was the original chair of the technical committee when NFPA 1561 was first released, and he was a leader and innovator in the creation and propagation of the incident command system.

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Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for documents on occupational safety and health in the working environment of the fire service. The Committee shall also have responsibility for documents related to medical requirements for fire fighters, and the professional qualifications for Fire Department Safety Officer.

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