

Be Prepared! Free Emergency Response Training Online

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As GIS users, we have access to a wealth of information and sophisticated tools at our fingertips to analyze it. However, GIS skills alone are not enough to make us effective in emergency situations. Emergencies are intense, with no room for error. Emergency responders are well trained and highly disciplined to minimize mistakes and maximize effectiveness. An understanding of some of the foundation topics of emergency response is essential for anyone providing GIS support to responders.

In 2003, the Secretary of Homeland Security was directed to develop and administer a National Incident Management System (NIMS). NIMS provides a consistent nationwide template to enable all government, private-sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together during domestic incidents.

The Incident Command System (ICS) was established by the NIMS as the standardized incident organizational structure for the management of all incidents. The concept of ICS was developed more than thirty years ago, in the aftermath of a devastating wildfire in California.

Both NIMS and ICS are well known in public safety and relied upon to ensure resources are applied without hesitation in an emergency. A thorough knowledge of these topics is a foundation for more specific public safety training.



The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), through its Emergency Management Institute (EMI), provides emergency response training on a variety of topics. They also have many courses available online through their website: <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/>. Registration is required but generally available to anyone who needs it. Most classes include some form of testing and certification.

Two classes should be considered essential:

IS-100 Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS)

IS-700 National Incident Management System (NIMS) an Introduction.

These classes can be found online at: <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/is/is100.asp> and <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/is/is700.asp>.

GIS support for emergency response can only be effectively applied when it is closely integrated with emergency management and response activities. The best way to do that is to become as knowledgeable about the standards and procedures that govern those activities. That knowledge will help you to be in a better position to provide effective GIS support in an emergency, rather than just in the way.

http://www.mngislls.org/newsletter/issue45/Emergency_Response_Training_Online.htm