

NHICS ACTIVATION GUIDANCE

WHAT IS THE NURSING HOME INCIDENT HOME COMMAND SYSTEM?

The Nursing Home Incident Command System (NHICS) is a framework for response that can be easily integrated into a long-term care facility's existing emergency operation plan (EOP). NHICS is based on incident command principles that are utilized across the nation by hospitals, clinics, fire fighters, law enforcement, emergency medical authorities and other response partners in accordance with concepts promoted by the National Incident Management System (NIMS). These principles include:

- Command Structure (activated with whomever is in the facility when the incident occurs)
- Common Terminology
- Modular Span of Control
- Modular Organization (that can expand and contract depending on resources and needs)
- Incident Action Planning
- Systems for Resource and Information Management

Following the NHICS structure will guide a facility team to manage a situation, either emergent or non-emergent, in an efficient way that divides duties and identifies a clear chain of command. Utilization of NHICS will not only make the facility response to emergencies more organized and efficient, it will also to help promote "interoperability" with the community's emergency responders (fire, police, EMS, etc.) who also utilize incident command.

WHEN TO USE NHICS?

Activation and utilization of NHICS should be clearly defined in a facility's EOP. Regardless of the specific nature of the emergent or non-emergency event, it is recommended that the system be activated in the early stages of incident management to help ensure that a consistent process is utilized as the event either escalates or de-escalates in size, complexity and scope. Incident command principles should be considered an essential component of a facility's EOP and once it is incorporated, facilities should provide all staff with comprehensive training and exercise of the system.

Regular utilization of NHICS on non-emergency situations that require a coordinated response can help develop a consistent and disciplined approach to incident management. By practicing the various roles, processes and paperwork included in the NHICS guidebook, facility staff will become comfortable with the language and procedures and use them immediately when a serious crisis occurs. Routine or common events that are opportunities to utilize NHICS include but are not limited to:

EMERGENCY EVENTS

- Fire alarm system activation
- Confirmed fire or smoke condition
- Power failure
- Severe weather of all types
- Prolonged weather: excessive heat and extreme cold
- Flooding- internal and external
- Mechanical systems failure
- Elopement / missing resident(s)
- Adverse event occurring outside of facility (police activity, hazmat, etc.)
- Other threats consistent with the facility's Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (HVA)

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WHEN TO USE NHICS?

NON-EMERGENCY EVENTS

- VIP Visits
- Large parties / celebrations
- Fire Protection or Life Safety Systems disruptions
- Training exercises / drills

WHERE TO GET NHICS MATERIALS

The NHICS materials are available for download for any interested parties at: www.cahfdisasterprep.com. Many of these documents are available in "Word" so they can be customized and pre-filled for use by a specific facility. The materials include:

- ☑ **NHICS Guidebook:** A complete overview of the NHICS and the Incident Command System.
- ☑ **NHICS Job Action Sheets:** Identified positions and general responsibilities for that position during the initial and extended stages of an incident.
- ☑ **NHICS Forms:** A variety of forms that have been adapted from the Hospital Incident Command System for use in a nursing home setting.
- ☑ **NHICS Training Materials:** A series of PowerPoint presentations for use when teaching facility staff about the NHICS.
- ☑ **Incident Specific Planning and Response Guides:** Helpful quick reference sheets to guide long term care facilities through the planning and response elements related to fire, flood, earthquake, power outage, severe weather, and pandemic.

WHERE TO GET NHICS TRAINING

The California Association of Health Facilities has information about available NHICS training sessions for long-term care. Contact us at info@cahf.org.