



June 10, 2025

**TONI PRECKWINKLE**  
**President**

**Board of  
Commissioners**

Frank J. Aguilar  
Alma E. Anaya  
Scott R. Britton  
John P. Daley  
Bridget Degnen  
Bridget Gainer  
Bill Lowry  
Dr. Kisha E. McCaskill  
Donna Miller  
Stanley Moore  
Josina Morita  
Kevin B. Morrison  
Sean M. Morrison  
Michael Scott, Jr.  
Tara S. Stamps  
Maggie Trevor  
Jessica Vásquez

**Interim General  
Superintendent**

Eileen Figel

**Chief of Police**

Theresa Odum

To: President Toni Preckwinkle and the Board of Commissioners  
CC: Interim General Superintendent Eileen Figel  
From: Samuel Muñiz, Deputy Chief of Police  
Date: June 10, 2025

Re: Implementation Justification for the National Incident Management System (NIMS) for the Forest Preserves of Cook County Law Enforcement Agency.

## 1. Purpose of NIMS Implementation

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) provides a standardized, nationwide framework for incident management. For the Forest Preserves of Cook County Law Enforcement Department responsible for enforcing laws, protecting natural resources, and ensuring public safety across large, often remote areas. NIMS adoption is essential to ensure effective emergency preparedness and coordinated response to a wide variety of incidents, from natural disasters to search and rescue operations.

## 2. Justification for NIMS Adoption

### A. Coordinated Multi-Agency Response in Remote Environments

- The Forest Preserves of Cook County properties often span multiple jurisdictions and require coordination with fire departments, emergency medical services, conservation officers, local police, and federal agencies.
- NIMS enables structured and effective collaboration during incidents like wildfires, missing persons, severe weather events, or hazardous material spills in remote areas.

### B. Scalable and Flexible Incident Management

- NIMS's Incident Command System (ICS) allows Forest Preserve Law Enforcement to respond effectively to both small-scale and large-scale emergencies, adjusting resources and structure based on incident complexity.
- Useful for events ranging from minor medical calls on trails to major regional disasters impacting the preserve.

### C. Search and Rescue Preparedness

- NIMS supports standardized planning and operations, crucial for coordinated search and rescue (SAR) efforts in wooded or rugged terrain.
- Enhances interagency communication and role clarity during time-sensitive operations.

## D. Eligibility for Federal and State Grant Funding

- NIMS compliance is required for access to key funding streams such as FEMA grants, State Homeland Security Programs (SHSP), and Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI).
- Supports the procurement of emergency response equipment, radios, GIS tools, and protective gear tailored for wilderness operations.

## E. Improved Public Safety and Environmental Protection

- A structured response system helps prevent and mitigate incidents that threaten public safety and natural ecosystems, including illegal dumping, wildfires, and endangered species violations.
- Ensures rapid mobilization and containment strategies that align with environmental protection standards.

## 3. Strategic Benefits for the Forest Preserves Law Enforcement Agency

- **Enhanced Emergency Readiness:** Officers trained in NIMS are better prepared to handle wildlife encounters, lost hikers, floods, storms, and fire outbreaks.
- **Unified Communication:** Promotes a common language across departments and jurisdictions, improving dispatching, scene coordination, and mutual aid integration.
- **Professionalization and Credibility:** Demonstrates a proactive, modern approach to emergency management, building trust with the public, partner agencies, and preserves stakeholders.
- **Resource Tracking and Accountability:** Facilitates the efficient use and documentation of resources during major incidents, which is especially important in large or inaccessible terrain.
- **Environmental Event Management:** Provides a structure for managing special events, controlled burns, and ecological restoration projects with potential public safety implications.

## 4. Implementation Steps

- **Training:** Require personnel to complete core NIMS courses (ICS-100, 200, 700, and 800). Supervisory and command staff should complete advanced ICS courses (300 and 400).
- **Policy Integration:** Update departmental policies and emergency response protocols to reflect NIMS principles and ICS structure.
- **Interagency Exercises:** Conduct joint drills with local emergency services and preserves staff to reinforce command structure, communications, and role responsibilities.
- **Community Engagement:** Educate stakeholders, including visitors, volunteers, and partner agencies on the agency's commitment to NIMS and emergency preparedness.

## Conclusion

The Forest Preserves Law Enforcement Department operate in unique and often challenging environments. Implementing NIMS ensures that our agency is equipped with a standardized and effective system for managing emergencies, protecting public safety, and preserving natural resources. It positions the Forest Preserves of Cook County Law Enforcement Department to respond confidently and collaboratively to incidents while meeting federal requirements and enhancing organizational resilience.