

ICS* and NIMS*

What are they and why should I care?

***If you don't know what those letters stand for, Google them—you've proved you're lagging behind! This is critically important info that you must know about to function well as a disaster responder.**

So you are a Red Cross disaster worker and you drive an ERV or you are in Disaster Health Services. What earthly reason would you ever have to know ICS or NIMS? Picture this:

You are in an ERV with a DHS nurse on board. You are working a tornado. Someone on your route mentioned a neighborhood that they didn't think anyone had been to, so you go to check it out. As you come to the area, it is all blocked off with state police standing guard.

You ask the police officer if there is anyone in the area needing meals or healthcare and can you go in. So far, so good. Until the officer responds with this:

"This area has been declared a Level II hazmat. A Hot zone and a Cold zone are being set up and no one can enter without appropriate Life Safety gear. The IC has set up an ICP down the street and the PL is working with the PIO over at the JIC. You will have to talk with the PL to determine if your services are included in the IP or if you just need to go away. I know you guys are responsible for ESF-6 in the NRF but I don't know what all is being planned for this. You need to talk to the PL or the IC and maybe DSHS. And don't forget to tell them what classification your vehicle falls under. Remember if you need anything, you must fill out a STAR request. Have a good day."

Did that make any sense? If you have taken IS 100, IS 200, IS 700 and IS 800, then you do understand what was said. But if you have not taken the classes, most of that conversation would be gibberish to you.

As any of you who have been out on operations know, one of our biggest downfalls in Red Cross is lack of communication – between each other, between groups and activities, and even more importantly, between Red Cross and its Partners. National headquarters has finally realized that and several Activities now require the disaster worker be trained in the four basic NIMS and ICS courses. But only a few Activities 'require' the training. However, having read the above scenario, you can see that ALL disaster workers need to understand and be able to speak the same 'language' as the people working for the government, other agencies and other partners.

And let me be real honest about it. A lot of these classes are FUN! You will find yourself amazed at how much you have absorbed over the years that you did not even realize you knew. One of the best things about this training is that it is all free, most can be done online at your convenience, and if you decide you are interested in learning more, you will find that your County and or City Emergency Managers, and other like groups that offer many more advanced courses in your areas during the year. You can always get a schedule from your EM or check in with your local chapter. And every class you take will help you in your career as a disaster volunteer.

The Coastal Bend - Texas Chapter will be holding an ICS-300 class at the 2014 ERV Road-E-O in March. You must have completed IS 100, 200, 700, and 800 prior to signing up for the class. I have listed the links below to sign up for the training. Classes should each take you about 2 hours or so to complete. You can stop at any time and go back later.

I hope you will all do so and that we will see you at the Road-E-O, on March 17-21, 2014. Please contact me at Nevada.Linford2@redcross.org, or Larry Paton at mandlpaton@msn.com for further information about the Road-E-O. We're offering an extensive slate of classes—all free—and RV parking is available on site for a low fee. You may register for the classes on SABA now.

FEMA Independent Study Website: <http://training.fema.gov/IS/>

IS-100.b [Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS-100](#)

IS-200.b [ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents](#)

IS-700.a [National Incident Management System \(NIMS\) An Introduction](#)

IS-800.b [National Response Framework, An Introduction](#)

For any other classes you might be interested in, just click on the NIMS Courses link on the home page.

By Nevada Linford: a DOVE and Red Cross worker since Noah and the Ark

February 4, 2014