

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS) FOR USE IN ONTARIO

Question #1: What is IMS?

Answer:

The Incident Management System (IMS) is a standardized approach to emergency management. It provides guidance on how personnel, facilities, equipment, procedures, and communications may be coordinated within a common organizational structure. IMS is based on the understanding that in any and every incident the functions of command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance & administration must be carried out regardless of the number of persons who are available or involved in the emergency response. IMS is based on incident management principles and concepts developed over the past 30 years, and is consistent with industrial and international best practices.

Question #2: What are the main benefits of an IMS?

Answer: The use of the Incident Management System (IMS) during an incident will:

- Provide an efficient, flexible and consistent incident management structure;
- Facilitate a unified approach to incident management when multiple jurisdictions are involved. (e.g. communities, provincial ministries, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, as well as other Canadian and international jurisdictions)

Particularly for multi-organizational coordination, operating under IMS guidelines will result in the adoption of common terminologies, and see all concerned operating in line with the management, command and control structure of IMS.

Within the province of Ontario, many emergency response organizations have begun implementing various aspects of the Incident Command System (ICS), while others use other approaches. This doctrine aims to ensure a standard concept of operations across Ontario.

Question #3: What is the vision for IMS?

Answer: The vision is that Ontario will have a standardized incident management system (IMS) that provides functional interoperability at all levels of emergency management.

Question #4: Don't we already have IMS?

Answer: Generally, many organizations in Ontario have implemented or are implementing aspects of an incident management system. However, there is a variance of approaches within Ontario, as well as a lack of standardized tools to manage incidents. While emergency response organizations function well in carrying out their own mandates, no single service or organizations was designed to conduct all aspects of emergency management, and for multi-organizational responses there is currently no standardized province-wide system to ensure effective coordination. Some organizations

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS) FOR USE IN ONTARIO

within Ontario refer to their system as the 'Incident Command System' (ICS). Also some jurisdictions (e.g., the United States) treat IMS and ICS as separate aspects of a common system. The proposed IMS for Ontario will encompass and build on the ICS as its core platform, but the entire system will simply be referred to as the IMS for Ontario.

Question #5: Why do this? And why now?

Answer:

There is a growing body of 'lessons learned' from previous emergencies. They recommend the adoption of a standardized incident management system (IMS) for application both within Ontario, as well as in cross-border incidents.

To take full advantage of the benefits of what an IMS is designed to provide – interoperability, and efficacy in time, cost, and relief, all Ontario emergency response organizations should adopt a standardized IMS. The publication of the IMS doctrine presents an opportunity to do that.

Question #6: What is the feedback process?

Answer: Stakeholders were given the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the draft doctrine during a period of stakeholder consultation November – December 2007. During this period, the draft doctrine was made available for posting on stakeholders' websites. The IMS Steering Committee reviewed all feedback comments and where necessary, the doctrine has been amended. There are also ongoing opportunities to provide further feedback on IMS, either through your organization or through www.ontario.ca/ims.

Question #7: Where do I go for training/answers?

Answer: A 'Training Working Group' has been established and has developed the training strategy for IMS in order to help organizations understand and successfully implement IMS. Please see the training link on the EMO website at www.ontario.ca/ims.

There will be four levels of training for IMS, in addition to a facilitator's course:

- IMS-100: INTRODUCTION TO IMS - Will prepare first-timers to IMS (all audiences) to work within the Ontario IMS by teaching you the basic functions, concepts and principles of IMS. It is being launched during EP Week in May 2009 as a downloadable reading package, supported by a final, online exam. There is no prerequisite, and it is designed to be a 4-hour, self-directed package. Other formats, such as a web-based program and a classroom resource package are being considered for local offering of this course.
- IMS-200: BASIC IMS – Will prepare participants to initiate IMS structures and concepts for simple incidents or during the early phases of a complex incident. The prerequisite is the IMS-100. This course is proposed to be delivered in a classroom setting by provincially qualified local instructors over a period of 1.5 days.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS) FOR USE IN ONTARIO

- IMS-910: Basic IMS Facilitator – This will be delivered in classroom to prepare facilitators to deliver and administer the IMS-200 course in their jurisdiction/organization. Those completing the program will be registered as IMS-200 instructors within sponsoring jurisdictions/organizations and be eligible to receive course training aides and booklets free of charge through EMO. The pre-requisite is the IMS-200, however, the IMS-910 will be bundled with the IMS-200 during at least the first year of its offering to allow this prerequisite to be easily met.
- IMS-300: INTERMEDIATE IMS - Will prepare participants to perform leadership roles within an expanded IMS structure during a complex incident involving multiple organizations. The prerequisite is the IMS-200, knowledge of the operations of organization represented, and be eligible for possible assignment to a Command and General Staff position during an incident. This course is to be delivered in a classroom setting over a period of 2-4 days.
- IMS-400: ADVANCED IMS – Will prepare participants to command complex incidents. The prerequisite is the IMS-300, and be eligible to be designated to perform command function during a complex incident. This course is to be delivered in a classroom setting over a period of 2-4 days.
- Watch for more information on stakeholder organizations' / associations' web sites as well as EMO's website about upcoming IMS training sessions and registration instructions.

Question #8: What will be the effort and cost to implement IMS?

Answer:

Implementing IMS will require the allocation of appropriate resources, particularly with regards to training. It will be a relatively unique system and as such will likely require targeted and appropriate training and communications efforts. Efforts should be made to make use of existing resources to the best extent feasible.

The province will assist communities and response organizations in the implementation of the IMS for Ontario. During the initial phase of implementing the training strategy, course training aides and booklets will be provided free of charge through EMO.

Question #9: Who will need to implement IMS?

Answer: Within Ontario, as with most jurisdictions, the emergency management environment is comprised of a diverse mix of emergency management organizations, each with its own mandate for several important aspects of the emergency management matrix. While they function exceptionally well carrying out their own mandate, no single service or organizations was designed to conduct all aspects of emergency management. As the lessons learned from emergencies continue to indicate, there is an ever-pressing need for all organizations to be integrated into a standardized system of emergency management.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS)
FOR USE IN ONTARIO**

Question #10: How is IMS being implemented across the province?

Answer: The implementation of IMS allows for the flexibility required to address the diverse make up of Ontario. The size and severity of an incident will dictate the need for IMS implementation. As allied and outside agencies/resources are required, the incident becomes more complex, and the need for a common IMS will be apparent.

However, to be prepared for IMS implementation all are encouraged to take advantage of the training opportunities that are available.

Question #11: When will we see this fully implemented?

Answer:

IMS is a multi-year project initiated in 2006 with the following benchmarks:

- Project Communications Plan developed – Spring 2007 (Completed)
- Project Communications Plan implemented – Summer 2007 and ongoing
- Training strategy developed - Spring 2007 – Spring 2008 (Completed)
- Stakeholder Consultation on doctrine – Fall 2007 (Completed)
- Draft IMS Doctrine document developed – Spring 2008 (Completed)
- IMS-100: Introduction course developed – Spring 2008 (Completed)
- Training strategy implemented - Summer 2008 and ongoing
- IMS Doctrine approved – Winter 2008/09 (Completed)
- IMS for Ontario implementation Spring 2009 and ongoing
- IMS-200: Basic course developed – Spring 2009
- Supporting materials developed – Summer 2009, and ongoing
- IMS-300: Intermediate, & IMS-400; Advanced courses developed – Fall 2009 – Spring 2010

Question #12: Will IMS be regulated?

Answer: The current plan for IMS does not involve regulated implementation. Implementation is voluntary and the pace is dependent on the needs of each organization or jurisdiction. Generally, there is wide support for IMS across Ontario which has been developed consistent with the following standards:

- Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Z1600 - Standard on Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs;
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1561 - Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System, and
- NFPA 1600 - Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS) FOR USE IN ONTARIO

The vision is that all stakeholders will implement the IMS for Ontario which is based on international best practices.

Question #13: What is the difference between IMS and ICS?

Answer: The incident command system (ICS) is part of a broader Incident Management System (IMS). In fact, ICS is the platform of Ontario's IMS. IMS builds on the incident command system as practiced by most responders in Ontario. IMS provides a single, province-wide system that is capable of ensuring the safe, effective, and coordinated response to incidents by Ontario's wide array of responders, particularly for those incidents that may be large-scale or complex in nature.

Successful incident management requires the application of an effective overall Incident Management System. Within this, an effective command and control system is necessary to achieve specific task-level objectives.

In Ontario the preferred term is IMS.

Question #14: What do I do now?

Answer: Now that the doctrine is available, everyone is encouraged to become familiar with it and to take the training opportunities as they become available. The first course, with a self-directed reading package is also available now through the EMO website at www.ontario.ca/ims

Watch for more information from your own association/organization's and the EMO's website about updates to IMS.

If you have any further information needs, please contact your organization's representative on the IMS Steering Committee, or the Secretariat for the IMS Project through the 'Ask A Question' link on the EMO website www.ontario.ca/ims.