

Incident Management System (IMS)

The Key to Preparedness & Response

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Date: 23 Oct 2025



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Learning objectives (15 minutes)

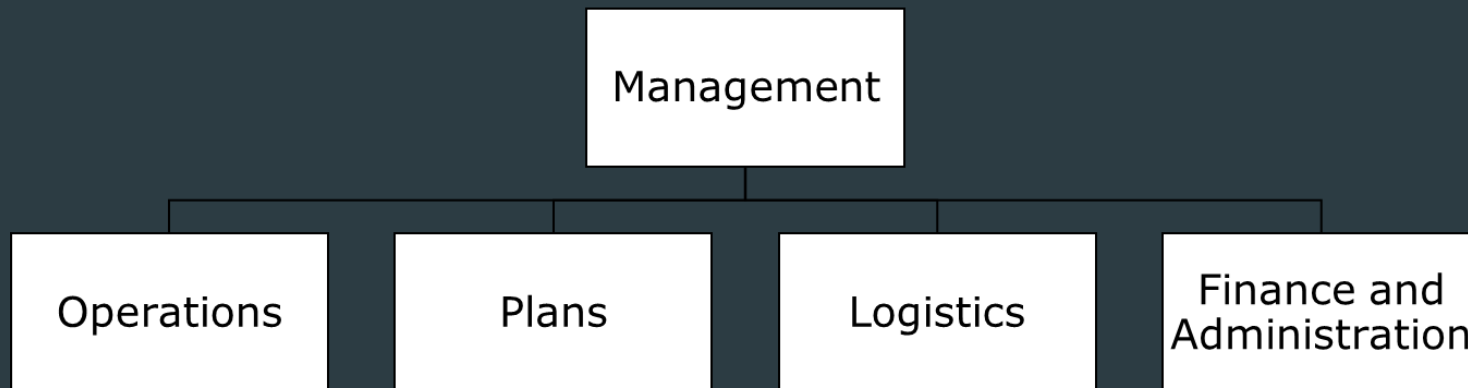
- ▶ Understand the IMS concept and core functions (Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Admin)
- ▶ See how IMS strengthens preparedness and response (WHO & Africa CDC guidance)
- ▶ Review South African examples and practical steps to implement/operationalize IMS

What is an Incident Management System (IMS)?

- ▶ A standardized, scalable structure to manage emergencies and coordinate actions
- ▶ Clarifies roles, responsibilities, chains of command, and information flow
- ▶ Applies to preparedness and response across hazards (all-hazards approach)

Core IMS functions

- ▶ Incident/Response Leadership (Incident Manager)
- ▶ Operations (tactical response and interventions)
- ▶ Planning (situation analysis, strategy, documentation)
- ▶ Logistics (resources, supply chain, infrastructure)
- ▶ Finance & Administration (budgets, contracts, staff management)



Why IMS is key to preparedness

- ▶ Enables routine drills, SOPs, and resource pre-positioning
- ▶ Supports multisector coordination (One Health, cross-border)
- ▶ Reduces decision delays and duplicate actions during crisis

IMS within the WHO HEPR Framework

- ▶ WHO's Health Emergency Preparedness, Response and Resilience (HEPR) Framework (2024) defines five strategic priorities:
 - ▶ 1. Collaborative surveillance
 - ▶ 2. Community protection
 - ▶ 3. Safe and scalable clinical care
 - ▶ 4. Access to countermeasures
 - ▶ 5. Emergency coordination and readiness
- ▶ IMS operationalizes Priority 5 - Emergency Coordination and Readiness, ensuring command, control, communication and coordination (C4).
- ▶ HEPR aligns IMS with preparedness cycles (JEE, NAPHS, subnational EOCs).
- ▶ South Africa's NAPHS 2025-2029 integrates HEPR through NICD and NDoH structures for national coordination.

IMS across the response cycle

- Preparedness: assign roles, train staff, test SOPs
- Activation: rapid establishment of command and information flow
- Sustained response: daily operations, resource tracking, adaptive planning
- Recovery & After Action: demobilize, AAR, update plans and SOPs



South African example: National COVID-19 plan & IMS use

- ▶ National Plan for COVID-19 Health Response established structure for whole-of-government actions (May 2020)
 - ▶ <https://scielo.org.za/pdf/samj/v112n5b/01.pdf>
- ▶ IMS/EOC-style coordination used for national supply chains, surveillance reporting and vaccine logistics

South African example: NICD EOC & Provincial AARs

- ▶ NICD's Division of Public Health Surveillance & Response operates an EOC using IMS principles
 - ▶ Incident Management
 - ▶ Epidemiology
 - ▶ IPC/Case Management
 - ▶ Social mobilization
 - ▶ Laboratory services
 - ▶ Ports of Entry
- ▶ Provincial After-Action Reviews of COVID-19 highlighted strengths and gaps in IMS activation, PPE, training and SOPs

Common implementation challenges

- ▶ Insufficient trained IMS personnel and surge rosters
- ▶ Weak information-sharing across sectors and borders
- ▶ Logistics bottlenecks and unclear funding lines



Practical checklist to operationalize IMS

- ▶ 1. Establish an IMS framework and clear Terms of Reference (ToRs) for each cell
- ▶ 2. Maintain a trained surge roster and conduct regular IMS trainings/drills
- ▶ 3. Pre-define SOPs for activation, information sharing, data and specimen flows
- ▶ 4. Run multisector tabletop and full-scale exercises (include animal health, ports, labs)
- ▶ 5. Maintain logistics dashboards and pre-authorized procurement pathways

Sample 2-hour IMS activation drill (agenda)

- ▶ 00:00-00:10 — Briefing & objectives
- ▶ 00:10-00:40 — IMS roles & scenario briefing
- ▶ 00:40-01:20 — Live play: Operations & Logistics injects
- ▶ 01:20-01:50 — Planning cell prepares 24-hr strategy
- ▶ 01:50-02:00 — Hotwash & immediate actions

Recommendations

- ▶ Invest in EOC/IMS staffing, training and sustained exercises
- ▶ Fund interoperable information systems (surveillance, lab, logistics)
- ▶ Institutionalize AARs and update SOPs regularly; support cross-border coordination

Key references (selected)

- ▶ WHO Emergency Response Framework (ERF) – 2024
- ▶ WHO: WHO uses an Incident Management System (IMS) for emergencies
- ▶ Africa CDC: Strengthening Cross-Border Surveillance & Strategic frameworks (2024)
- ▶ South Africa: National Plan for COVID-19 Health Response (May 2020); NICD EOC pages; Provincial AARs
- ▶ WHO (2024). Health Emergency Preparedness, Response and Resilience (HEPR) Framework: Accelerating country readiness for all-hazards emergencies.