



Why does CIMS exist?

CIMS is the New Zealand government's framework for giving structure in a response to any incident, at any scale. It was designed and introduced to provide effective management of a wide range of incidents spanning storm events, tsunamis, earthquakes, terrorism, pandemics, volcanic activity, infrastructure failure, major transport incidents, biosecurity incursion, fire events, maritime incidents (and others). A workforce of emergency managers and staff exists across government agencies, organisations and private entities who respond using CIMS. This reduces the need for ad hoc structures to be set up and therefore reduces duplication, training demands, communication breakdowns, and unclear role and responsibilities, which can slow down a response and put lives and livelihoods at risk. CIMS is the equivalent of AIIMS in Australia, and NIMS¹ in the United States, and has been customised for use in New Zealand.

From 1 July 2020, the CIMS 3rd edition replaces all previous versions of CIMS. It includes improvements from the 2nd edition and gives effect, where relevant, to Government recommendations to the August 2018 Technical Advisory Group's report, 'Better Responses to Natural Disasters and other Emergencies' ('TAG report'). This updated version is being supported by an increased system focus on embedding CIMS across agencies through upskilling staff, improved and innovative training methods and documentation, and interagency testing and exercising by the all of government system, particularly for agencies with mandated responsibility to lead particular hazard planning and responses.

How is it helpful?

CIMS applies to all hazards and risks and is modular, consistent, and interoperable. A **lead agency** is the agency mandated through legislation or sector expertise for managing a particular hazard that results in an incident. While some hazards or risks are managed by the lead agency alone, many require the support and expertise of other agencies or organisations. All government agencies and departments should be familiar with CIMS to ensure they can support a response effectively at all levels.

The CIMS framework is guided by principles and characteristics that allow it to be adapted to any type of response, while providing consistency and managing expectations of roles and responsibilities.

Some of these include:

- Flexibility – the CIMS framework is scalable and modular to work for any event, any scale, and any responders.
- Common structures, roles, and responsibilities – enables trained staff to 'slot' in/'hit the ground running', thus supporting efficiencies, effectiveness, staff mobility and interagency interoperability.
- Common terminology – ensures common understanding, role and process clarity, reduces confusion and duplication.
- Interoperability – ensures speed of sharing of information, personnel, taskings, and response objectives.
- Management by objectives - response objectives are set by the lead agency controller. All agencies work in unity to achieve these.
- Consolidated planning – joint planning to reduce gaps and duplications; all sectors and contingencies are considered.
- Integrated information management and communications – supports common operating pictures and situational awareness.

Command, control, coordination and networked hierarchy

Organisations operate either as a hierarchy, which is a set structure that relies on command and control, or as a network, which is more flexible and based on relationships between roles. CIMS operates as a combination of the two – a networked hierarchy. This approach allows for both cooperation among response elements and focused decision-making, direction and action.

Under a system of **Unified Control**, two or more Controllers from different agencies can be integrated into one Control function. This is particularly useful when more than one agency has a significant mandate to manage the event, or when a joint approach

¹ AIIMS - Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System.

NIMS – National Incident Management System.

will be more effective. The Controllers become Unified Controllers and collaboratively establish overall objectives and priorities and a consolidated Action Plan to which all agencies align.

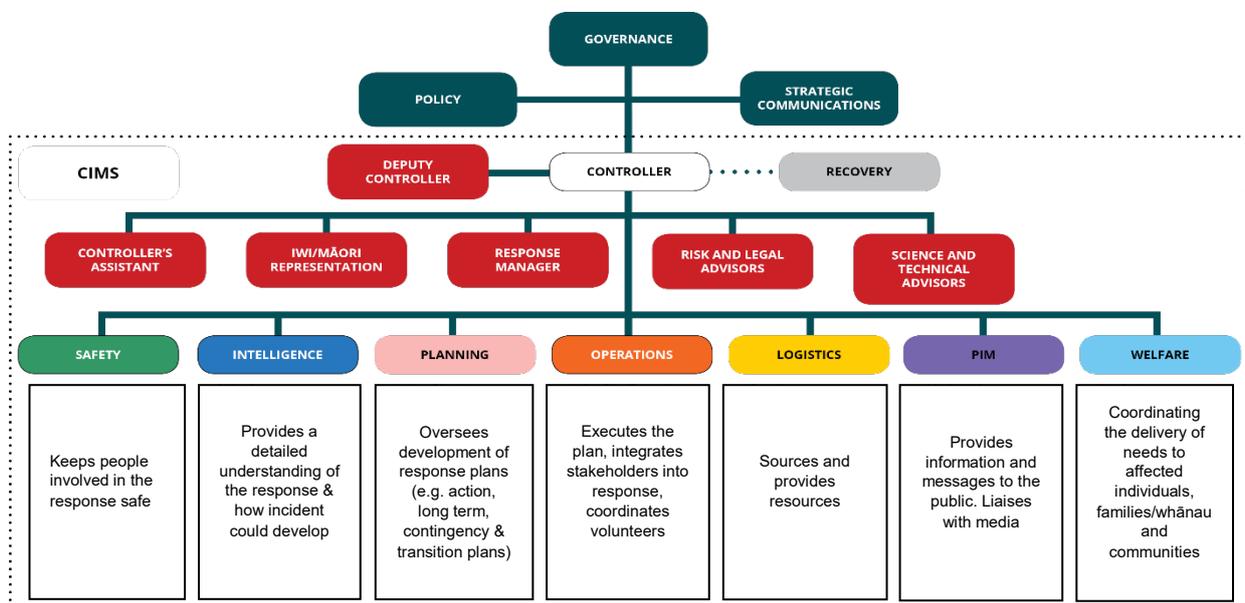
Governance

Every response ought to have executive oversight and strategic governance. Governance arrangements can be complex and dynamic but Governance does not manage a response (responsibility to manage the response falls to the Controller. In a large response or for a complex incident, the National Security System may be activated to provide the highest level of governance through the Officials' Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination (ODESC) and Watch Groups. This is a standard and practiced process for providing strategic direction and coordinating the all-of-government response. These structures facilitate information flows and therefore increased clarity on roles and responsibilities.

Governance can be supported by Strategic Communications and Policy functions, particularly in larger or complex events (see figure below). The decision to activate these roles will be made by either Governance or the Controller.

What can I expect to see?

The CIMS framework is scalable and modular and works at any level of response and at any scale. It allows for flexibility and adaption, while providing consistency and common systems, and can be mirrored at local, regional, and national levels. The figure below shows a response structure where CIMS is used in its entirety in a large or complex incident while a full Governance arrangement is also in place. In smaller incidents some of the CIMS functions may not be required, or some functions may be combined.



Role of Chief Executives/Governance and Controllers:

It is not good practice for the **Chief Executive** of an agency to act as the Controller. A Chief Executive's energies during a response are best focused on strategic issues for their agency and wider CE-level engagement (e.g. ODESC, media and reputation management).

During a response, the Chief Executive should be concerned with:

- Strategy setting
- Fundamental decision making that affects the whole organisation
- Their agency's performance – directly empowered by legislation

The **Controller** provides operational leadership of the response (with support from the Incident Management Team, that is made up of the CIMS function managers and other key agency representatives), through:

- Having overall responsibility for all activities and personnel involved in the CIMS structure (above); and
- Coordinating and managing the response objectives with organisations, communities, and people responding to, or affected by, the incident.

The Controller requires the formal delegation and/or endorsement for the role in accordance with statutory provisions or internal arrangements and requisite expertise in emergency responses.

For more detail and/or support on CIMS and its applicability, engage with your agency's Emergency Management team or advisors or access [CIMS 3rd edition](#) which can be found at www.civildefence.govt.nz