

Rationale and Models for Transition of Management of Avalanche Rescues from the Three Stage Model to the Incident Command System

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In 2003, US Presidential Homeland Security Directive 5 created the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and required the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) for the management of all domestic incidents managed by federal, state, local government sectors as well as by private and non-governmental sectors. To meet this mandate it is necessary that experienced rescuers be able to apply the traditional avalanche rescue model to ICS; however, many US rescue organizations struggle to meet compliance because of inexperience and/or limited knowledge in both disciplines. The authors' combined experience of more than 50+ years of working in both avalanche rescue and ICS enables them to identify problems and solutions to migrating traditional avalanche rescue management into ICS. This paper explores the evolution of modern avalanche rescue management systems, the evolution of the NIMS Incident Command System, and the business case and rationale for migration of the management of avalanche rescue from the current Three-Stage to a NIMS-based Incident Command System model. The paper presents and discusses a variety of practical ICS management organization designs to support the management of avalanche rescue incidents at various levels of complexity. The implementation of ICS can benefit avalanche rescuers in any country.