



OFFICE FOR DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS

UNIVERSAL TASK LIST MANUAL
Version 1.0

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
OFFICE FOR DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS**

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Introduction

The dramatic and far-reaching impact of terrorism over the past decade has resulted in a re-ordering of priorities and a new commitment to enhanced security at all levels of government across the nation. In the aftermath of these unprecedented events within the United States and across the globe, the nation must continue to enhance its national all-hazards preparedness.

National preparedness involves a unified effort among federal, state, and local¹ governments and the private sector to strengthen capabilities to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond to, and recover from domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. It involves all stakeholders, consistent with their respective roles and missions, in a continuous cycle to analyze and manage risk in a changing threat environment. This means planning and training, as well as testing protocols, procedures, and policies. This manual is designed to help all members of the homeland security community—elected officials, managers, planners, trainers, and responders—facilitate *capability-based* planning, management, and response.

Capabilities-based planning means planning, under uncertainty, to provide capabilities suitable for a wide range of modern-day challenges while working within an economic framework that necessitates prioritization and choice. The approach targets development of agile, flexible, and robust capabilities that prepare individuals and organizations to cope with diverse homeland security scenarios and execute the wide range of their assigned missions with speed and effectiveness.

A Suite of Common Scenarios was developed under the leadership of the Homeland Security Council to define the diverse range of events for which the nation must prepare. The 15 scenarios address a range of probable threats from terrorists, natural disasters, and other emergencies. Although they do not address every threat, jurisdictions and agencies that have the capacity to respond to these scenarios should have the skills and flexibility to respond to any emergency.

Another building block of the capabilities-based planning approach is the Universal Task List (UTL). The UTL defines what tasks are to be performed by federal, state and local governments and the private sector to prevent, respond to, and recover from events defined by the scenarios as well as other strategy and planning documents. To build the right mix of capabilities, we must

¹ HSPD-8 provides that "local government," when used in a geographical sense, has the same meaning given in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101), which defines local government as (A) a county, municipality, city, town, township, local public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments (regardless of whether the council of governments is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law), regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government; (B) an Indian tribe or authorized tribal organization, or in Alaska a Native village or Alaska Regional Native Corporation; and (C) a rural community, unincorporated town or village, or other public entity.

understand the sum total of our assigned homeland security tasks, and their sequencing, essentiality, interdependencies and interrelationships. Homeland security is a new enterprise, and requires us to build a common, task-based language and reference system. This will help us optimize management decisions at all levels of government based on satisfying critical task performance. In addition, it provides the means to link resource allocations directly to required mission performance.

The development of the UTL is one of the major steps in the implementation of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 (HSPD-8) on National Preparedness that was issued by President Bush on December 17, 2003. This directive establishes policies to strengthen the preparedness of the United States to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. This is accomplished by requiring a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal, establishing mechanisms for improved delivery of federal preparedness assistance to state, local, territorial, and tribal governments, and outlining actions to strengthen preparedness capabilities at all levels.

The UTL serves three important functions to help achieve the goals of HSPD-8:

- *Improve preparedness doctrine and practice* by encouraging a systematic approach to planning and training.
- *Reorient preparedness programs and activities within homeland security*, with the aim of presenting a single unified and integrated approach to planning, training, and operations.
- *Develop a national, all-hazards preparedness system* by encouraging greater integration of existing assets, and allowing them to work together more effectively.

Purpose

The Universal Task List provides a common language and common reference for homeland security professionals at all levels of government and the private sector. It describes what tasks are to be performed in terms common to incident management agencies across the country. When the UTL is fully developed, it will contain common language on conditions (physical, environmental, political) that may affect task performance as well as measures to assess performance. Its primary use is to communicate mission requirements and capabilities. It is the basic language for development of a Mission Essential Task List that identifies the capabilities required for mission success.

The UTL is a comprehensive integrated menu of functional tasks, supporting all levels of government in executing the *National Response Plan* and the *National Incident Management System*. It is a key element of a requirements-based training system, including planning, training, and performance. The UTL facilitates requirements analysis by providing a template and a list of possible tasks that serve as a starting point for assessing what is required to respond to an event. The training community can use it to assist in exercise design, to aid in prioritizing training needs, and to serve as a template for evaluation. During a response, the UTL serves as a tool a manager can use to help organize the effort.

The list will be used to help plan prevention activities and incident response. The UTL is used to identify specified and implied tasks, describe these tasks, determine tasks essential to the mission, select conditions that affect performance of the tasks, and select measures and criteria that form the basis for standards of performance.

The UTL identifies *what* is to be performed in terms common to all levels of government and all professional communities. The UTL task description does not address *how* a task is performed; this decision is left to the managers in charge of prevention activities or a response, or to the professional communities who set the state-of-the-art in their professional guidelines and training. The UTL does not specify *who* performs the task either; different jurisdictions will make different decisions about the most efficient way to achieve different capabilities.

The tasks listed in the UTL are not all-inclusive. The UTL is not intended to replace or reiterate the standards and training documents of the professionals in the various response communities. Specific training, equipment, and best practices are covered in the community doctrine and standards documents, such as those promulgated by the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) for the fire community and where appropriate these will be addressed in the performance metrics.

The UTL includes tasks required to prevent an incident from occurring, plan a response, prepare and train to respond effectively, and execute a response. The UTL embodies four basic tenets as guiding principles:

- Focus on the preparedness/readiness mission.
- Train the way you intend to perform during a real event. Training events, particularly exercise training events, must reflect realistic conditions.
- Develop and apply doctrine, which establishes a “best practice” baseline for how to prevent or respond to an event and provides guidance on how to effectively incorporate personnel across functions and jurisdictions to achieve assigned objectives.
- Centralize planning; decentralize execution of training, just as would be done in real emergency planning/response operations.

Benefits

Enhance Communication

The UTL provides a common language and reference system for users from jurisdictions across the country, from multiple disciplines, different levels of government, and the private sector. For example, planners and analysts can use it to translate missions into common language tasks that trainers, in coordination with planners, use to derive training requirements. This mission-to-task-to-training connectivity assists the various response entities in making training more closely resemble the way they intend to act in an emergency response.

Facilitate Planning and Needs Assessment

Assessments can be indexed to the UTL to identify long-term, systemic issues that can be addressed in terms of doctrinal, organizational, training, material, leadership development, personnel, or facility improvements.

Sharing Lessons Learned and Best Practices

After-action reports and exercise experience can be indexed to the task list. This information can provide a body of knowledge useful for identifying the most effective practices and procedures.

Rationalize Training

The UTL serves as a foundation for deriving training objectives for training events. It provides the linkage between the mission-based capability requirements and required training events. Institutions providing professional education may cross-reference learning objectives with the UTL tasks to better align the training and education with operational needs.

Assess and Enhance Preparedness

By defining the tasks that need to be performed to effectively prevent and respond to all-hazards events, the UTL provides a valuable tool for assessing and enhancing preparedness. It is used to define target capabilities that jurisdictions/agencies should develop, which provides a basis for self assessment of preparedness. The UTL, with associated metrics, are used to evaluate performance during exercises and real world events.

The Spiral Development Process

The UTL is being built using a spiral development process that allows for substantial review and input from stakeholders at all levels throughout the development process. Spiral development provides a methodology for the rapid and iterative development of complex systems or programs. It involves concurrent rather than sequential development of key elements; input from key stakeholders at each critical step; and managing commitments within tight timelines. The process relies on subject matter experts and practitioners to help develop drafts. Stakeholder meetings and broad distribution of the drafts are used to enhance and refine the documents. Because we operate in a dynamic environment of changing threats, technology, doctrine, and resources, it is important that the UTL be updated periodically. Updates will draw heavily from experienced users in the field.

Development of the UTL started with 15 scenarios developed by a federal inter-agency group for the Homeland Security Council. The objective was to develop a minimum number of credible scenarios that covered the range of response requirements. While it is unlikely that any of these specific scenarios would unfold as described, a nation prepared for these scenarios would be prepared for almost all likely eventualities.

Analysts and subject matter experts reviewed each scenario and developed a list of tasks that are required to effectively prevent and respond to the incident. These task lists were vetted through federal, state, and local officials and practitioners. Many other documents informed the task development process to include the following:

- *The National Response Plan*
- *The National Incident Management System*
- *Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program Volume II: Exercise Evaluation and Improvement*, Office for Domestic Preparedness, October 2003
- State and local Emergency Operations Plans
- *Draft Interim Evidence-Based Performance Goals for Public Health Disaster Preparedness*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 2004
- *EMAP Standard*, Emergency Management Accreditation Program, September 2003
- *Guidelines for Homeland Security Prevention and Deterrence*, Office for Domestic Preparedness, June 2003

Tasks in the UTL were written from a variety of perspectives, for a variety of different purposes. The collected tasks were edited to a common linguistic format and consolidated into a single list. Language keyed to scenario-specific threats was edited to a more general perspective where possible. Duplicate tasks were removed. Functionally related tasks were grouped into tasks and subtasks.

Framework

Mission, Operation, Task

Understanding the relationship of mission, operation, and task is important to the successful use of the UTL for homeland security planning, defining training requirements, and designing and evaluating exercises. The UTL identifies operations and tasks that must be performed for mission success. These terms and their relationships may be described as follows:

- A mission is an assignment with a purpose and consists of operations.
- An operation is an action that supports a mission and consists of tasks.
- A task is a discrete event/action based on doctrine, techniques, and standard operating procedures. It is executed to accomplish a mission or operation. Tasks are generated from mission analysis.

The mission establishes the requirement to perform tasks and provides the context for task performance (including the conditions under which a task must be performed). It determines where and when a task must be performed (one or more locations). Finally, it determines the degree to which a task must be performed and provides a way to understand how the performance of a task contributes to mission success.

Task Levels

The UTL is organized using four levels that define the types of tasks performed. The four levels include National Strategic Tasks; Planning, Coordination, and Support Tasks; Incident Management Tasks; and Incident Prevention and Response Tasks. Although, the tasks at each level can be performed by any unit of government, tasks performed by federal agencies are generally found within the first two levels, state agencies within the second and third levels, and local agencies within the second, third and fourth levels. The Incident Management and Incident Prevention and Response task categories correspond to the emergency support functions of the *National Response Plan* and are generally initiated by and implemented under the direction of local agencies. Prevention has been added to encompass intelligence gathering and surveillance – related tasks associated with terrorism-related events. Tasks that private sector organizations and the public would perform will be added at a later date.

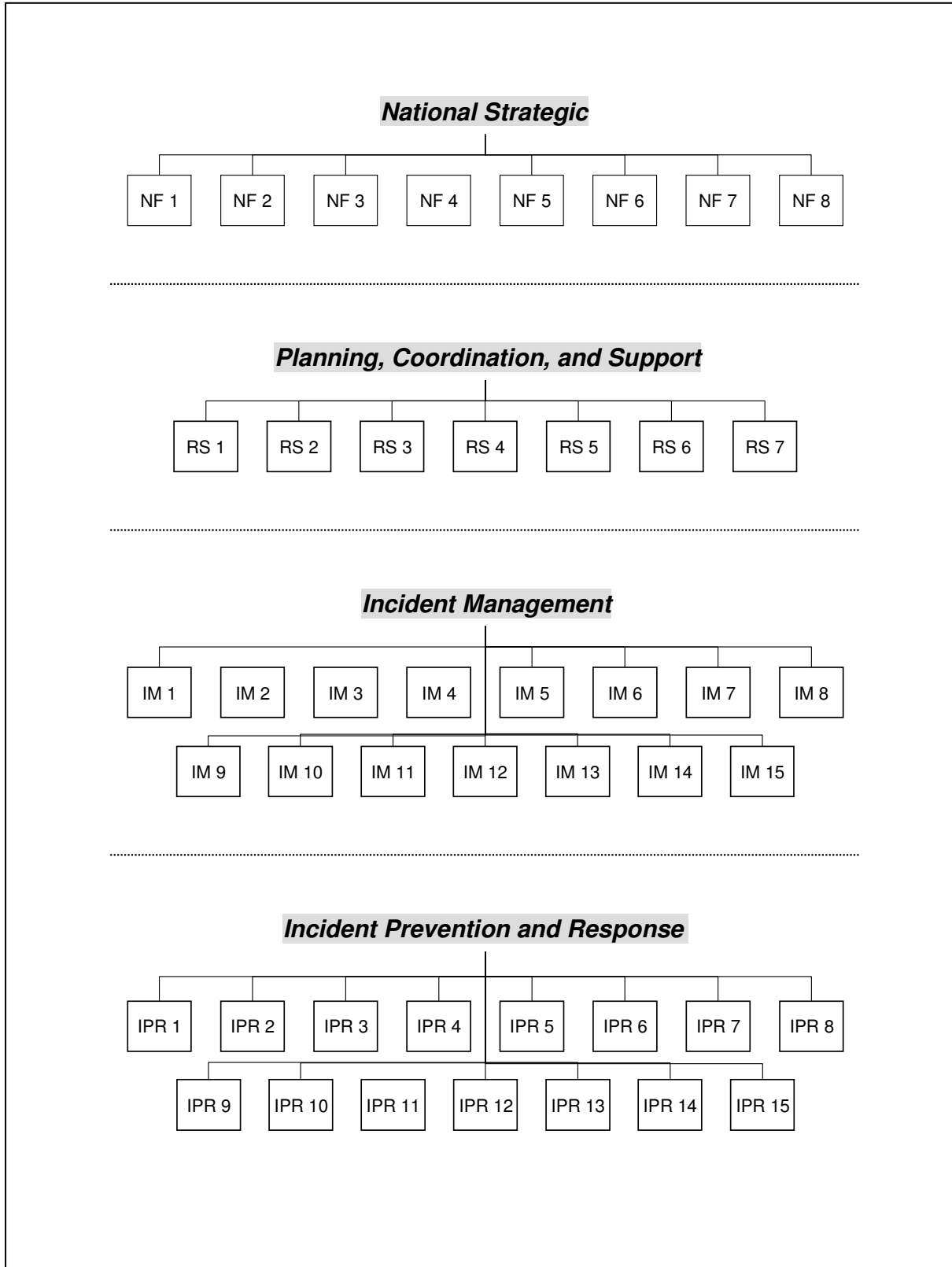
Tasks in the UTL can be linked to other tasks within and across the levels of a response, both vertically and horizontally. Vertical linkages connect related tasks between levels of response, whereas horizontal linkages connect different tasks at the same level of a response. The basis for linking these tasks is that, in the context of conducting an incident response, tasks that are linked must all be performed to standard and in concert with one another for an operation to succeed.

Horizontal linkages require the synchronization of a variety of tasks in time and space to achieve a mission. For example, providing emergency health care services at the site of an incident requires that many systems act in concert. Absent sufficient transport, available medical personnel and resources cannot be deployed effectively. Absent security assistance, it may not be possible to set up and operate an aid station.

Vertical linkages provide the connecting structure among tasks in the UTL across the levels of a response. Intelligence is an example of a task with vertical linkages: Although the generic elements of national strategic, regional and state, and incident intelligence are similar (i.e., planning and direction, collection, processing and exploitation, analysis and production, dissemination and integration, and evaluation and feedback), the tasks and subtasks associated with each level are distinct in terms of the objective, scope, and type of organization assigned to perform them. At the national level, the intelligence tasks include the collection, analysis, assessment, preparation, and dissemination of intelligence to many users, ranging from senior decision-makers to local law enforcement. Conversely, information and intelligence collected at the local level are used locally and are passed up through the same chain to the national level where they are collated, analyzed, and assessed to form a worldwide intelligence picture. These vertical relationships form an “intelligence system.”

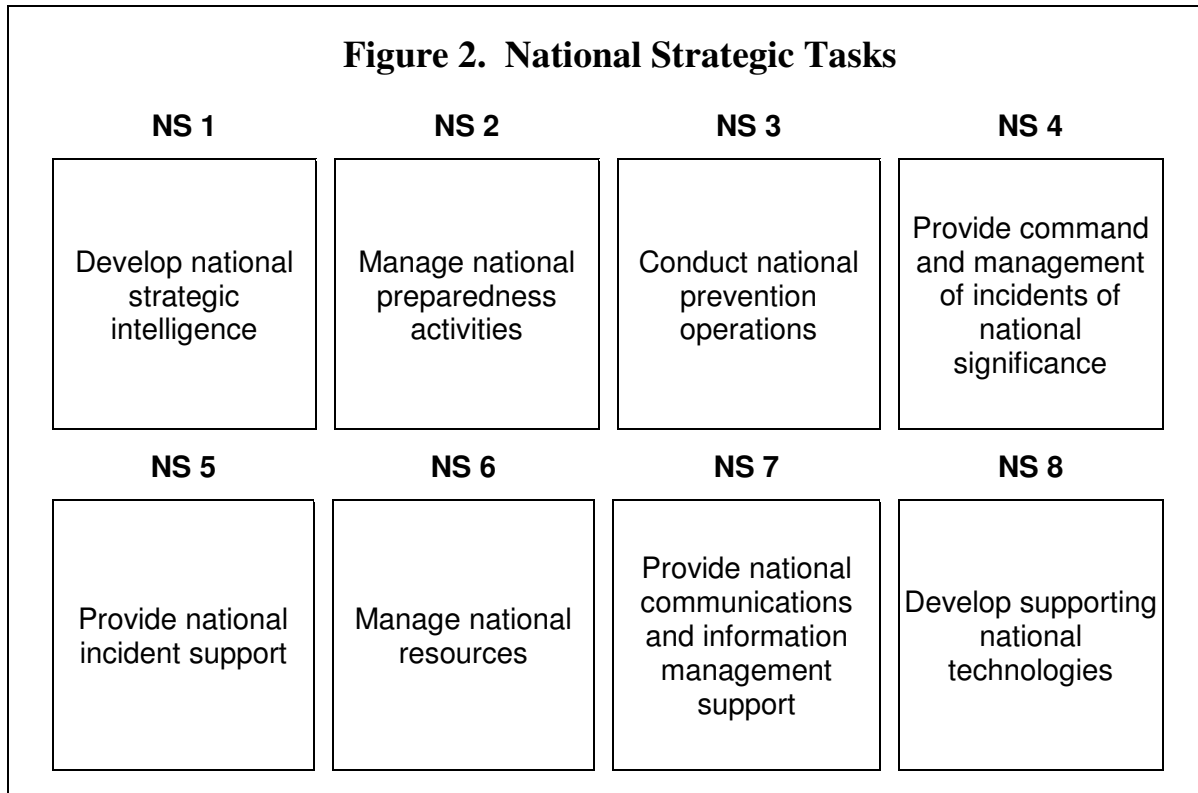
The vertical linking of the tasks across levels of the UTL can be used to make connections between related capabilities at the various levels of a response and to illustrate how an inadequate capability at any level can affect the ability of an entire system to respond. These linkages exist in all general task areas of the UTL.

Figure 1. Taxonomy Overview



National Strategic Tasks

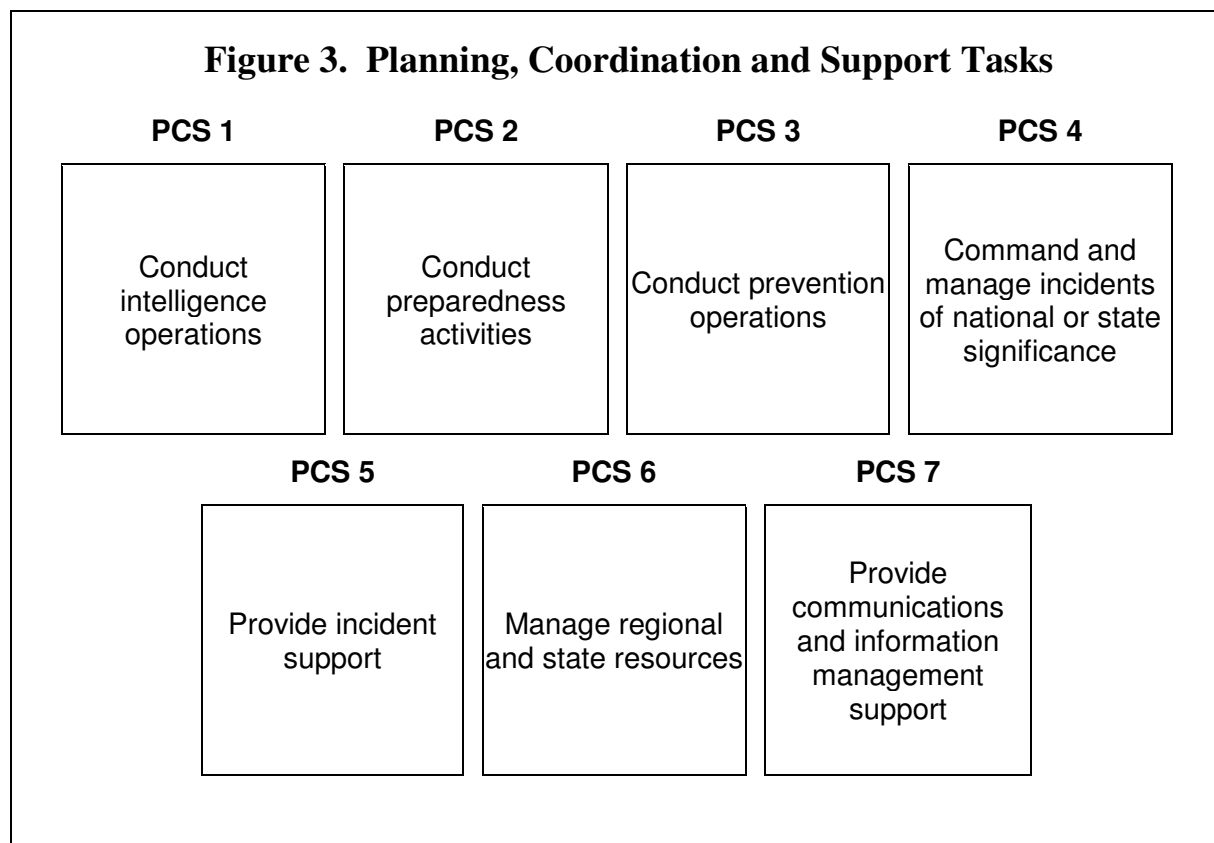
This level includes those tasks and functions that are normally performed by federal departments and agencies, but includes some national strategic tasks that would be performed by multiple levels of government. Examples of tasks at this level include exclusively federal responsibilities, such as execution of international agreements and border control tasks. Also at this level are tasks associated with federal agencies, such as tasks related to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) management of the national stockpile.



Planning, Coordination and Support Tasks

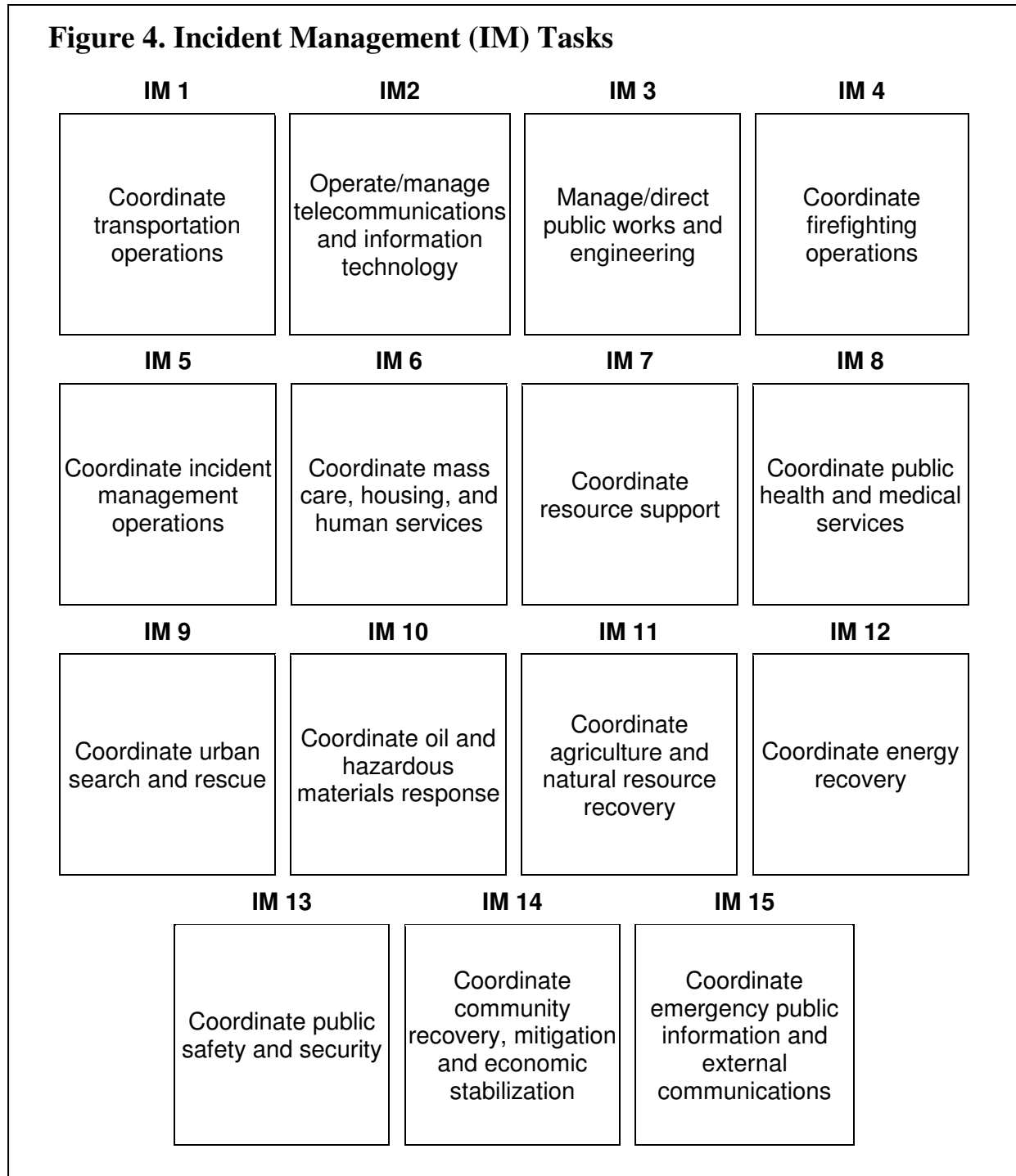
Tasks at this level are generally tasks related to the development of plans to prevent, respond to and recover from significant events, coordination of efforts such as establishment of mutual aid agreement or regional coordination, and tasks related to support for local responders during an event. Many of the tasks can be performed at any level of government. This level also includes many of the tasks that would be performed at the state or regional level. Government agencies that generally perform these tasks include:

- Single states or groups of states acting together, perhaps via interstate compact agreements
- Regions within states, such as counties or cities, acting together, such as the California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Regions
- Combinations of the above—for example, counties and cities across state lines, such as the National Capital Region Council of Governments
- Federal regional offices



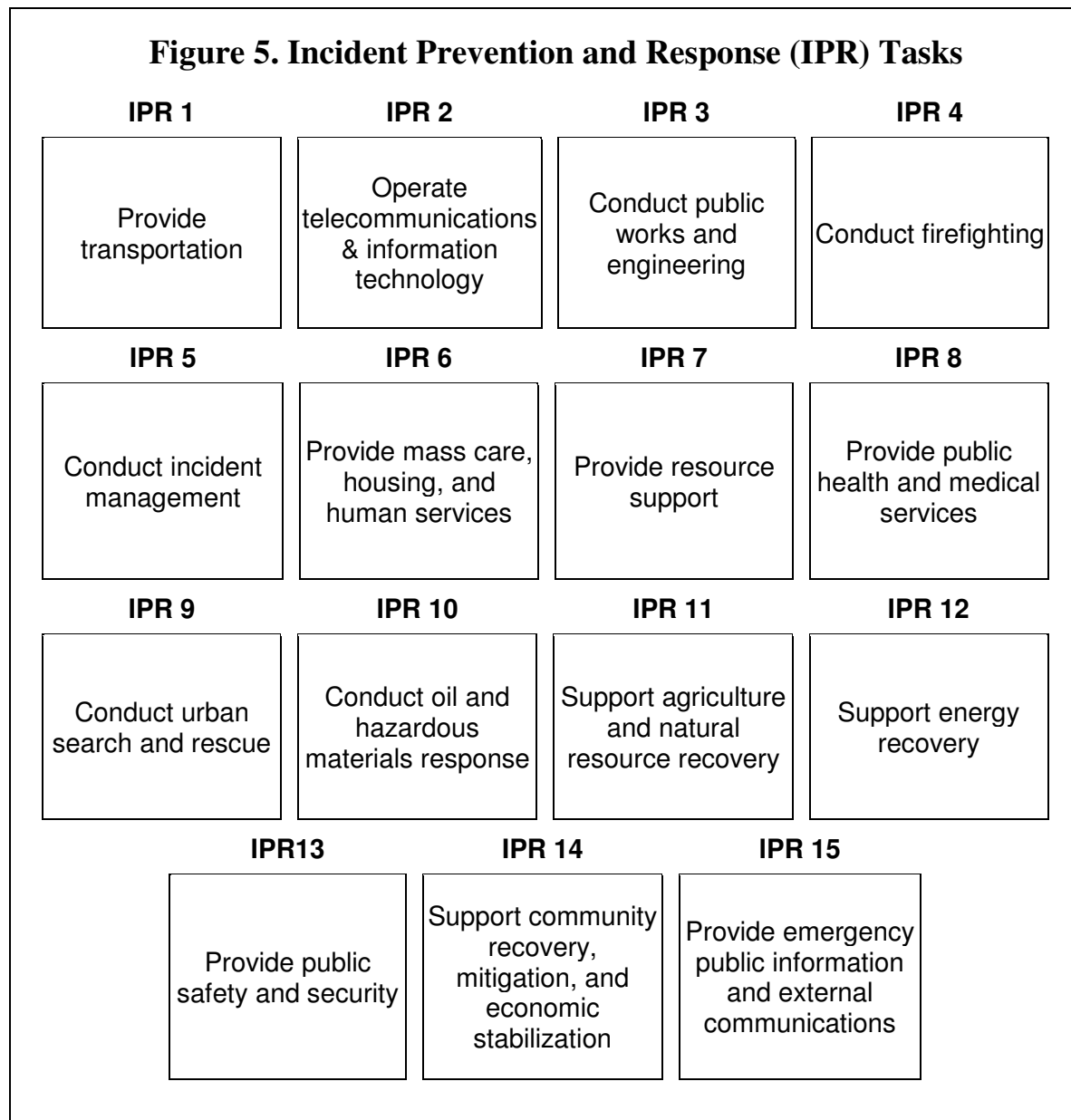
Incident Management Tasks

This level includes resource management and support tasks. Tasks may be performed prior to the incident, such as preparation and prevention tasks, or during and after the incident. These tasks are typically performed by a mayor, a city manager, a county executive, or an emergency operations center (EOC). This level includes the support systems that facilitate prevention and response. The activities include the support of incident management policies and priorities, facilitation of logistic support and resource tracking, resource allocation decisions, and coordination of incident-related information.



Incident Prevention and Response Tasks

This level includes tasks performed by personnel involved in the execution of prevention or response activities, including protection, mitigation, and recovery, at the incident site or close to it. The incident commander coordinates the performance of these tasks through the operational staff. These tasks include activities generally performed by personnel from large metropolitan areas, as well as midsize or small jurisdictions. Local conditions and the incident itself will determine the scale of the response, but the basic framework applies to communities of varying sizes. The categories at this level are based on the emergency support functions of the *National Response Plan*.



Using the UTL

The UTL is the foundation for developing training and exercise programs that enhance preparedness by building and assessing the capacity to perform critical homeland security tasks. Training and exercises should be based on mission and task requirements to ensure that individuals, agencies, and jurisdictions are prepared to prevent or respond to a range of possible threats. To do this, we must train the way we intend to perform. The mission to task analysis approach provides a means for specifying, acquiring, developing, operating, and managing training and exercise systems that directly achieve mission and task performance requirements. This approach also supports doctrine development, personnel requirements analysis, logistics support analysis, interagency/interjurisdictional coordination, and organizational development. This section describes a four step process for using the UTL to enhance preparedness through training and exercises

Step 1 - Requirements Definition: *Translate strategy to missions, operations, and tasks*

This step answers the question, “what must my agency/jurisdiction/state be able to do?” The purpose here is to define mission requirements in terms of tasks that must be performed and the responsible organizations at all levels that play a role in performing those tasks. Sources from which missions and ultimately tasks are derived include such documents as the *National Homeland Security Strategy*, *State and Local Homeland Security Strategies*, and the *National Response Plan*. The UTL outlines those tasks that are essential to the ability to perform assigned missions. This listing results from the mission analysis conducted during this phase, and provides the supporting documentation from which training requirements are derived.

To accommodate the constraints on training resources, managers and planners identify the tasks essential to their assigned or anticipated prevention or response missions. This list of essential tasks is referred to as mission essential task list (METL). It is derived from doctrine, plans and standard operating procedures and represents the agency's/jurisdiction's priority requirements.

Step 2 - Planning: *Develop training plans and exercise schedules*

This step asks the questions, “what training is needed to enable my agency, jurisdiction, or state to perform the essential tasks?” “who must be trained?” and “what are my priorities?” The answers to these questions provide the basis for building a training plan, which leads to training and exercise schedules. It is important during this phase to consider required resources, such as time, personnel, organizations, etc. The training plan should specify the training audience, identify training objectives, and identify training and exercise events. Interoperability training and exercises (agencies/jurisdictions that need to work together, provide services to others or accept services from others) should also be considered in the training plans.

Step 3 - Execution: *Conduct and evaluate training events*

In this step, the focus is on executing and evaluating the event which may take the form of academic training sessions or exercises. Training is designed to provide the participants with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the homeland security tasks defined by the UTL and essential to the mission. Exercises are designed to test the performance of those tasks required to achieve the jurisdiction's/agency's mission outcomes. There are five stages within the execution

phase: design, planning, preparation, execution, and evaluation/analysis. Taken together, they help frame the training or exercise and assist in its proper completion. Evaluation/analysis is particularly significant, because it identifies issues that need to be addressed and provides input to guide development of the next training cycle.

Step 4 - Evaluation: *Assess mission capabilities*

The final step is to assess mission capabilities from the training and exercise viewpoint. The evaluation of the effectiveness of training should focus on improved knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform critical homeland security tasks. Exercise evaluation should be designed to assess the actual performance of tasks and the achievement of mission outcomes. The assessment should also identify lessons and issues that need to be addressed as well as innovative or best practices that should be replicated. The training/exercise cycle is not complete until the findings and recommendations have been addressed and have been exercised to demonstrate performance.

Future Development

UTL Refinement and Maintenance

The UTL will be a living document. It will be updated and refined as threats change and approaches to prevention and response are modified and enhanced. Procedures and mechanisms are being developed to revise and add to the UTL on a regular basis. Guidelines are being developed on the comment process, participation, and frequency of review.

Conditions

Conditions will be developed for each task. Conditions are variables of the environment that affect the performance of a task. Some conditions describe the environment in which a response occurs—for example, weather or austere conditions. Others describe the scope of the response—for example, the number of casualties or describe the type of response—for example, responding to an infectious biological agent. When linked to specific tasks, conditions help frame the differences or similarities between assigned missions. Subject matter experts, including state and local homeland security professionals, will be used to develop and vet conditions to accompany each task. These conditions will be made available in future editions.

Measures and Criteria of Performance

Measures and criteria of performance will be developed to describe how well a task must be performed (the performance standard) under a specific set of conditions. Measures and criteria, when linked to conditions, provide a basis for planning, conducting, and evaluating prevention and response operations as well as training and exercise events. Measures provide the basis for describing varying levels of task performance and are directly related to tasks. For example, take the task, *Communicate Operational Information*, which refers to the sending and receiving of information from one unit or organization to another by any means. Measures of performance for this task include the speed with which information is transmitted (queuing time for message

transmission) and the accuracy of communications (percent of messages sent to the right addresses with the right content). Criteria define acceptable levels of performance. They are often expressed as a minimum acceptable level of performance. The combination of the measure and the criteria comprises the performance standard for a task. Performance measures will be developed by subject matter experts, including state and local homeland security professionals, in reference to and consistent with existing expert opinion, standards, guidelines, and community best practices.

Capabilities

The UTL will be used as one basis for defining the capabilities (i.e., policies, procedures, personnel, training, equipment, mutual aid agreements, etc.) needed to perform tasks required to prevent or respond to incidents of the nature and scope of those defined by the Common Suite of Scenarios. A Target Capabilities List will be developed with input from subject matter experts and practitioners at all levels. The scenarios and UTL, with associated capabilities and metrics, will provide officials at all levels with a framework for assessing their level of preparedness and targeting resources to address greatest needs.

Glossary of Terms

Capability. Resource package, consisting of plans, organization units, and properly equipped, trained, and exercised personnel that provide the means to perform essential tasks to achieve mission outcomes, under specified conditions and to national performance standards.

Conditions. The variables that may affect the performance of an organization, system, or individual.

Criteria. The minimum acceptable level of performance associated with a particular measure of task performance. It is often expressed as hours, days, percent, occurrences, minutes, miles, or some other command stated measure.

Essential Task. Tasks that are absolutely necessary, indispensable, or critical to the success of a mission or response.

Implied Task. A task that is not stated but necessary to do the mission.

Interoperability. The ability of systems, organizations, or individuals to provide services to and accept services from other systems, organizations, or individuals and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together.

Mission. An assignment with a purpose that clearly indicates the action to be taken and the reason therefore.

Mission Essential Task (MET). A mission task deemed essential to mission accomplishment. The task is defined using the common language of the Universal Task List in terms of a task.

Mission Essential Task List (METL). A list of METs required to accomplish an assigned or anticipated mission. It includes associated tasks, conditions, and standards, and requires the identification of mutual-aid and supporting tasks.

Mission-Level Outcomes. Those things that citizens expect from their elected officials and public agencies in addressing threatened and actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.

Mutual-Aid Tasks. Discrete actions that are performed during a response by organizations and agencies from outside the jurisdiction.

Operation. An action or the carrying out of a mission; the process of carrying out a response.

Performance Measures. Define the minimum acceptable proficiency required in task performance.

Specified Task. A task explicitly stated and assigned.

Standard. The minimum acceptable proficiency required in the performance of a task. For mission essential tasks, each task standard consists of a measure and criterion.

Supporting Task. Specific activities that contribute to the accomplishment of a mission essential task.

Task. A discrete action that enables a mission or function to be accomplished by individuals or organizations. Tasks are based on techniques and standard operating procedures and are generated by mission analysis.