

**Concept Paper to Provide Information and Suggestions
for the Creation of Incident Management Assistance Team(s)**

Illinois Fire Service Institute

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What is the Incident Management Assistance Team.

The Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) is a multidisciplinary group assembled for the purpose of completing and/or enhancing the incident command system at the local or State response level. The team can also be used for large-scale events that require pre-planning. Members of the team volunteers that may be drawn from local response agencies, specialized teams, State (ITTF) sponsored teams, state agencies or in some cases, even the private sector

What is the purpose of the IMAT Team and What Role Would They Fill

The purpose of creating IMAT is to provide a valuable resource for state and local Incident Command /Unified Command staff at the scene of an emergency or disaster. IMAT would provide support to the IC/UC in the implementation of the incident command system and specifically in the formation and implementation of the Incident Action Plan (IAP). The purpose of IMAT is to support the incident commander, not assume or divide command authority.

What has already been done to support the creation of IMAT.

34 responders from local jurisdictions and State of Illinois agencies representing of fire, law enforcement and emergency management disciplines attended the national Fire Academy (NFA) seven day All Hazards Incident Management Training (AHIMT). The class was held at the Illinois Fire Service Institute from June 20-26, 2005. The class was sponsored by the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) and the Illinois Fire Service Institute. The class was endorsed by the Illinois Terrorism Task Force. The class provided the first opportunity for participants to view materials that covered topics such as:

- 1) Detailed discussions of ICS positions
- 2) The concept of team work in the ICS structure
- 3) The identification of the various tasks that each of the designated ICS positions would be responsible for
- 4) The implementation of necessary meetings and “brainstorming sessions” to develop the IAP and the development and implementation of the IAP.

The class was broken into four distinct groups. Each group had all the components of a basic ICS structure included in the group. The last two days of the class were dedicated to practical exercises that allowed each of the four groups to practice their skills, which had been introduced in a series of lectures. Special emphasis was placed on IAP development. The appropriate use of standard forms was also stressed in the class.

The class was well received by the participants and several were quick to emphasize that the class was the beginning of an ongoing process that they wanted to stay involved with. Many of the participants have also offered their talents in the development of IMAT.

Historical Basis For Consideration of the Format of IMAT .

Past events that have occurred within the geographical boundaries of the State have shown the need for the IMAT process to enhance efficiency and effectiveness throughout the response and recovery process. Many historical events that have occurred within the State of Illinois have demonstrated the need for a system such as IMAT. Such events include:

- The Great Flood of 1993
- The response to the September 11 terrorist attacks
- Responses to hazardous materials events such as the Formosa Plastics Plant explosion and fire
- The many tornadoes that have impacted the entire length of the State from Plainfield and Utica through South Pekin all the way to Massac County

In addition to the response component, the many festivals and large-scale events that occur routinely within Illinois also point out the need for effective pre-planning and management of the events.

How can the IMAT be Formally Created in Illinois

To formalize the creation of the IMAT process, it is important for the Illinois Terrorism Task force to recognize IMAT as a functional group (just as HAZMAT teams and technical rescue teams are recognized) and foster team development through additional training and associated funding to support the process. In addition to the acknowledgement and support of IMAT, the ITTF may choose to form a multi-disciplinary team, which could serve as a “steering committee” to oversee the IMAT development. This group should consist of members from fire, law enforcement, emergency management, public health, emergency medical services, and public works groups. Another suggestion might be to incorporate State Agencies input (IEMA, OSFM, EPA, IDoAg, IDOT and IDPH) into the committee so that their concerns can be met as well. Associations that have already been instrumental in the development of IMAT process include MABAS, ILEAS, IEMA, IDPH, IESMA, the Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI), and the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board (ILETSB). The challenge for the ITTF is to make the committee large enough to have all concerns addressed, but small enough to be able to function quickly and effectively in the formation of criteria to establish the IMAT process.

It is clear that to be effective IMAT must become part of the State’s emergency and disaster response process. This may include regional deployment of an IMAT through the MABAS and /or ILEAS response organizations or IMAT deployment may be done as a part of the State Mobile Support Teams through activation of the State Emergency

The process to select the first group of students that attended the June 20-26 AHIMT class was **carefully** thought out and the process assured both geographical dispersion and functional diversity. It is clear from the response to the class that a high degree of professionalism was also exhibited by those that attended the first class. The challenges to select additional students that would participate in additional training sessions are not dissimilar.

Selection of Additional IMAT Members

Not every responder in the State of Illinois will want or be able to participate in the IMAT process and it is entirely possible that a screening process may have to be developed to select individuals who exhibit the high degree of motivation, commitment and have the necessary problem-solving skills required for IMAT operations. The number of additional IMAT team members is also something that the ITTF committee will have to resolve. A key factor to consider is how IMAT will function as a regional response team versus as part of the State Emergency Operations Plan approved teams. No matter what process emerges, future AHIMT classes need to include not only members from fire, EMA and law enforcement but representatives from the public health, public works, transportation and agriculture communities, as well.

How Will Members Be Assigned Job Positions in the IMAT

Members that attended the June 20-26 class have indicated a preference for the positions that they would like to fill in IMAT. Most members have chosen two positions such as planning and/or logistics or liaison and/or information, very few members felt that they could be trained in two or more areas that would compose IMAT because of the intensity and complexity of the training required.

The “steering committee” which is tasked with formalizing IMAT may chose additional methods of selecting IMAT members based on their skills or level of expertise. For example, someone who has 20 years of military experience dealing with logistics may serve as the best candidate to fill the position of logistics section chief instead of the information officer or the finance section chief.

What Training Opportunities Can Enhance The Capabilities of The “Core Group”

There are two distinct avenues available to IMAT members that have completed the AHIMT course. The first is shadowing, a process whereby a team member works alongside a trained individual at a wild-land fire or other major event that is occurring with the United States. Many wild-land fire IMT team members are now shadowing teams in the western and southwestern states as they work to manage large fires that are burning. Shadowing is available through both the National Fire Academy and the United States Forest Service. Individuals who wish to participate in the shadowing process are

placed on alert when the opportunity becomes available and then they must rapidly deploy for a period of up to twelve days once they are notified of the actual position opening. One of the issues to be considered in the shadowing process is that the cost of wages, travel and per diem are borne by the employer of the person selected.

The second training opportunity is position training, which is available through the US Forest Service. IMAT teams in Florida received much of the training that they have through this process. Position training is available to individuals once they have selected a functional area in which they wish to be trained to support IMAT. It may be possible to have this training conducted within Illinois or the Midwestern Region; e.g., within the Shawnee National Forest or in USFS offices in Milwaukee or Southern Missouri.

If another AHIMT class is held in Illinois there may also be a possibility that some students who have completed the June AHIMT class may be able to work with mentors in the class as they assist class teams with the various hands-on activities that are incorporated in the training. The National Fire Academy has indicated that only one AHIMT class can be conducted in a State. This means that any follow-on AHIMT courses would have to be scheduled with the Illinois UASI process.

How can the Cadre of IMAT Members Assist in Additional Training

Is this
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something
else???

The National Fire Academy has offered the Level 4 Training Class *Introduction To Command and General Staff* to the State of Illinois. Once the present cadre of the IMAT members have completed additional training which will enhance their skills they may be used to present the level 4 curriculum. The course could be offered on a regional basis to boost knowledge of the ICS around the State. The course itself could be used as a prerequisite for potential members of the existing or future IMAT(s)

How Will the IMAT Be “Worked Into” Existing Statewide Operations

It is not envisioned that IMAT team(s) will be called upon each week of the year, but there are many activities in the State of Illinois that would benefit from IMAT involvement. Many of the high profile events that have been located in Illinois in the past few years such as the all-star game, opening of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, US Open and many of the large festivals that occur annually in cities all throughout the State could benefit from IMAT involvement. Each time State teams such as State Weapons of Mass Destruction Team (SWMD), Illinois Medical Emergency Response Team (IMERT), Civil Support Team (CST) or any of the technical rescue teams or Hazardous Material Teams are deployed, IMAT team could be of value in the pre-planning and execution phases of the event.

The frequent activation of IMAT team(s) would allow members to practice their skills as individuals and it would also serve to strengthen the team as well. The downside is that these individuals would be frequently drawn away from their regular duties and communities.

The activation of IMAT for any of the aforementioned events would need to be supported financially either through the ITTF or the jurisdiction that would benefit from the activation. Discretionary monies that are used for exercise enhancement or backfill/overtime costs may be an additional source of funding for some activations.

Can IMAT Be Used in the Short Term

A series of exercises that are being sponsored by MABAS from October 21-28 would provide an excellent training opportunity for IMAT members that have completed the June AHIMT class. The 34 individuals that participated in the June class may (depending on their availability) be able to support two or three exercise activities that are identified by the MABAS board during the week.

What About Validation of the IMAT

There may also be a need to validate IMAT teams that are created. This may be done separately or it may be incorporated in the technical rescue team validation that occurs annually at IFSI, future HAZMAT technician team or WMD SRT validations. Validation will be difficult to achieve until the original members of the AHIMT have received additional training so that they can critically evaluate the process that is being demonstrated in the exercise both individually and as a cohesive evaluation team. If validation is to be used for IMAT team(s) it needs to be considered as the team(s) come into existence. The initial validations may have evaluators and controllers from jurisdictions located outside of the State of Illinois that have more familiarity with the IMAT process.

What Needs To Be Done To Train Statewide Responders To Effectively Utilize the IMAT

Members who have completed the AHIMT class should be utilized as “ambassadors” and “mentors” for local responders. There exists a need for a short presentation on the overall IMAT process and the ability of local responders to access IMAT assistance. Consequently, training needs to be provided to local responders as to how to prepare for the arrival of the IMAT team(s). Local responders will need to have established some workable goals and objectives prior to the arrival of IMAT. The local responders will also have to realize that IMAT serves as a resource to them when they arrive. As previously stated, the purpose of IMAT is not to circumvent or detract from the authority of the local IC/UC but rather to give local responders a series of tools and options that might not be available from local resources.

The creation of IMAT will enhance capabilities within the State of Illinois to respond to emergencies, disasters and large scale events. The formation of IMAT also represents another step forward in the overall mission of the Illinois Terrorism Task Force to protect the citizens of the State of Illinois.