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Aging Infrastructure & the Emergency Services

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) gave an overall grade of a D+ in the [2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure](#) and estimated \$3.6 trillion dollars would need to be invested by 2020 to bring the necessary improvements. While the degraded infrastructure is a safety and welfare hazard to the public, it also is a hazard to those who must respond when something goes wrong.

Major newsmakers like the [gas explosion in Harlem](#) last week, the [bridge collapse in Washington](#) last year, and [Hurricane Sandy's impact to multiple sectors](#) in New York and New Jersey in 2012 only show a small portion of the problem. Every day, there are smaller-scale water or gas main breaches, roads or bridges crumbling, and energy suppliers having to manage blackouts or brownouts.

In many of these cases, first responders are called on to manage the incident scene, evacuate residents, search for missing people, extinguish fires, treat victims, and more. Even though the Emergency Services Sector is not rated in the 2013 Report Card, it is greatly affected by failures within the other sectors.

Over the next few months, we will be looking at how incidents from other infrastructure sectors affected the Emergency Services Sector, what communities and departments can do to manage these hazards, and how first responders can better plan to respond do such incidents.

(Source: [ASCE](#))

LAX Shooting and the NIMS Guide for Airports

This week, [Los Angeles World Airports](#) (LAWA) released its report "[Active Shooter Incident and Resulting Airport Disruption](#)" (PDF, 2.6 Mb) on the response to the November 1 shooting at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). They candidly tell what went well and what didn't, and describe what their emergency plans called for, an analysis of what actually happened, and recommendations for changes.

Some of the key findings:

- Communications were a big problem in terms of radio interoperability, dialog between agencies, and the inability of patrons to contact airport police;

The InfoGram is distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures.

- Consistent situational awareness was not provided to LAX offices and personnel;
- There was loss of continuity of operations at times during the event;
- Multiple command centers were set up, leading to duplication of effort and a delay in coordinated response activities;
- Unified Command didn't have its initial meeting until almost 2 hours after the shooting took place;
- During the event, over 23,000 passengers either self-evacuated or sheltered in place, causing cascading logistical problems.

LAX is the third busiest airport in the United States; the events in November tested its response and plans. The recommendations and lessons learned in the LAWA report are an invaluable resource for airport emergency managers and personnel, as well as first responders who should also be planning and training for such events. They can also be used for other transportation nodes like rail, bus, or boat terminals.

In February, the Transportation Research Board released the [Guidebook for Integrating NIMS for Personnel and Resources at Airports](#). The guide is intended to give airport administrators, staff, and emergency managers an understanding of the value of using National Incident Management System (NIMS) for emergencies.

As the guide's introduction states, "Because airports rely on outside resources during circumstances when an incident or event outstrips their ability to manage it on their own...it is important that airports and their regional disaster response partners share a similar preparedness platform." This can clearly be seen in the report on the LAX incident.

(Source: [Los Angeles World Airports](#) and the [Transportation Research Board](#))

Hazard Mapping from Department of the Interior

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) maintains a geospatial hazard mapping site to provide federal, state and local officials as well as the public an overview of current natural hazards in the United States. The [Interior Geospatial Emergency Management System](#) (IGEMS) is the replacement for the Natural Hazards Support System (NHSS).

The map lists wildfires; earthquakes; wind, gale, flood, red flag, and other weather warnings; hurricanes; and volcanoes. Using the "Layers" menu, you can also choose to view tide monitoring stations, current weather radar, and wind direction and strength. Users can view the map with a choice of topographic, street map, or satellite imagery backgrounds.

Each marked event on the map is clickable, and the map will zoom to the location. It also gives you detailed information about the event. For example, clicking on a specific wildfire will take you to the National Interagency Fire Center's page, while clicking on a flooding event will take you to the National Weather Service's alert for the event.

While the map is primarily for hazards and warnings within the United States, it does show certain international incidents such as earthquakes and volcanoes. IGEMS is supported by the [DOI Office of Emergency Management](#).

(Source: [DOI Office of Emergency Management](#))

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