

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Q: What is a credential?

A: The terms “credentialed” and “credentialing” mean having provided, or providing, respectively, documentation that identifies personnel, and authenticates and verifies the qualifications of such personnel by ensuring that such personnel possess a minimum common level of training, experience, physical and medical fitness, and capability appropriate for a particular position.

**Q: NIMS Credentialing Guidelines: Who does it apply to?**

A: By law, 6 U.S.C. § 320, NIMS Credentialing Guidelines are mandatory for each Federal Department and Agency with responsibilities under the National Response Framework to ensure incident management personnel, emergency response providers, other personnel (including temporary personnel), and resources likely needed to respond to a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or other manmade disaster are credentialed.

They are voluntary and highly encouraged for Federal Legislative and Judicial Branches, State, local, tribal, private sector partners, and non-governmental organizations.

**Q: Are non-Federal agencies required to comply with the Federal Information Processing Standards?**

A: Non-Federal entities are not required to comply with the Federal Information Processing Standards 201 (FIPS-201), an open technical standard used by Federal officials for uniform credentialing and access control. However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) strongly encourages them to do so, in order to leverage the Federal investment in the FIPS-201 infrastructure and facilitate interoperability for personnel deployed outside their home jurisdiction.

**Q: How do I get more information on the FIPS-201 standards for non-federal entities?**

The following website provides information on the FIPS-201 standard.

[http://www.cio.gov/documents\\_details.cfm/uid/1F4376A0-2170-9AD7-F2D502311E4D26E9/structure/Information%20Technology/category/HSPD-12](http://www.cio.gov/documents_details.cfm/uid/1F4376A0-2170-9AD7-F2D502311E4D26E9/structure/Information%20Technology/category/HSPD-12)

**Q: Why did FEMA publish these Guidelines?**

A: The FEMA Administrator is responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of credentialing of emergency response providers, as specified by Title IV (Section 408) of Public Law 110-53 (6 U.S.C. § 320). Section 320 also calls on the Administrator to “provide standards” and “detailed written guidance.” In addition, Public Law 110-53 (6 U.S.C. § 320) requires the FEMA Administrator to provide expertise and technical assistance.

**Q: What if I am an emergency responder deployed through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)?**

A: Any person credentialed and authorized for deployment through EMAC meets the requirements as specified in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Guideline for the Credentialing of Personnel.

**Q: What alternatives are there for non-Federal entities?**

A: State, local, and tribal jurisdictions and private sector entities are encouraged to use the Federal Chief Information Officer’s Personal Identification Verification Interoperable (PIV-I) guidance to develop credentials similar to the Federal Government’s PIV-I cards to promote consistency. For more information please refer to the following site:

<http://csrc.nist.gov/>

**Q: Are credentials interoperable?**

A: To support issues of “trust” between public and private-sector issued identity credentials, the Federal Government has published PIV-I. The guidance advocates a set of minimum technical and process requirements to support uniform acceptance and trust of non-Federally issued identity cards or documents. If followed, the PIV-I guidance provides a supporting framework for technical interoperability with the nearly 10 million Federally credentialed uniformed and civilian employees and contractors. It supports enhanced integration and reduced costs in day-to-day operations as well as during response and incident management.

To achieve an interoperable and consistent national system, State, local and tribal governments and private sector entities are encouraged, to the maximum degree possible, to follow the Federal standard FIPS 201/Homeland Security Presidential Directive-12 and General Services Administration approved PIV-I. When this is not possible, non PIV-I organizations are asked to issue identification that matches, as closely as possible, the format of PIV-I cards.

**Q: Where else can I find information on credentialing?**

A: NIMS guidance on credentialing, NIMS Guide 0002 (*National Credentialing Definition and Criteria* [http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/ng\\_0002.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/ng_0002.pdf)), and this guideline refer to the identification and qualification information. NIMS guidance on credentialing does not confer the authority or privilege to practice any profession. The receiving department, agency, or jurisdiction responsible for access control can extend privilege or authorization to response personnel if they have not been deployed through EMAC.

**Q: Is there a representative I can speak to about these guidelines if I still have questions?**

A: Each FEMA Region has a NIMS Coordinator that may be contacted at each region per the following link: <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/NIMScoordinators.shtm>