



Just how standard is the NIMS standard?:

Findings from implementation research

Jessica Jensen

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ja.jensen@ndsu.edu



NDSU and EMGT

- Degrees
 - Levels
 - Face-to-face
- Center for Disaster Studies and Emergency Management

Purpose of NIMS

- 9/11 and investigations
- Improve response
- Standardization





Underlying Assumptions

- When NIMS was mandated, the federal government was operating on several assumptions:
 - NIMS would work as designed.
 - Everyone would buy-in.
 - Everyone would use the system (and in a standardized way).
 - The system is equally applicable to all places and situations.

Pre-existing NIMS Research



Structural Barriers to Using the National Incident Management System

David M. Neal

Oklahoma State University

Gary R. Webb

Oklahoma State University

Abstract

The National Incident Management System (NIMS), based generally upon the Incident Command System (ICS), is the required approach for federal, state, and local disaster response. We found that at the federal and local levels, different organizations used varying degrees of NIMS. A number of organizational factors inhibited a broader use of NIMS during the response to Hurricane Katrina. These factors include a lack of training, a lack of understanding about using NIMS or ICS, a lack of "buy-in" to the use of NIMS, and a perception that other systems could work better. In addition, we show how many assumptions within NIMS ignore the great wealth of research related to organizational effectiveness and disaster research.

Keywords: disaster response, National Incident Management System, Incident Command System



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NIMS in Rural America

Jessica Jensen
North Dakota State University

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QUICK RESPONSE REPORT

NIMS in Action: A Case Study of the System's Use and Utility

Jessica Jensen

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Emergency Management
North Dakota State University
Fargo, North Dakota

The views expressed in the report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Natural Hazards Center or the University of Colorado.

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Article 14

**Volunteer Fire Department Perceptions of ICS
and NIMS**

Jessica A. Jensen, *North Dakota State University - Main
Campus*

D.K. Yoon, *North Dakota State University - Main Campus*

Summary of Key Findings

- Concentration on the local level
- Focus on behavior
- Substantial variation in NIMS implementation
 - Intent
 - Actual implementation
- Limitations



The Present Study

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Article 20

The Current NIMS Implementation Behavior
of United States Counties

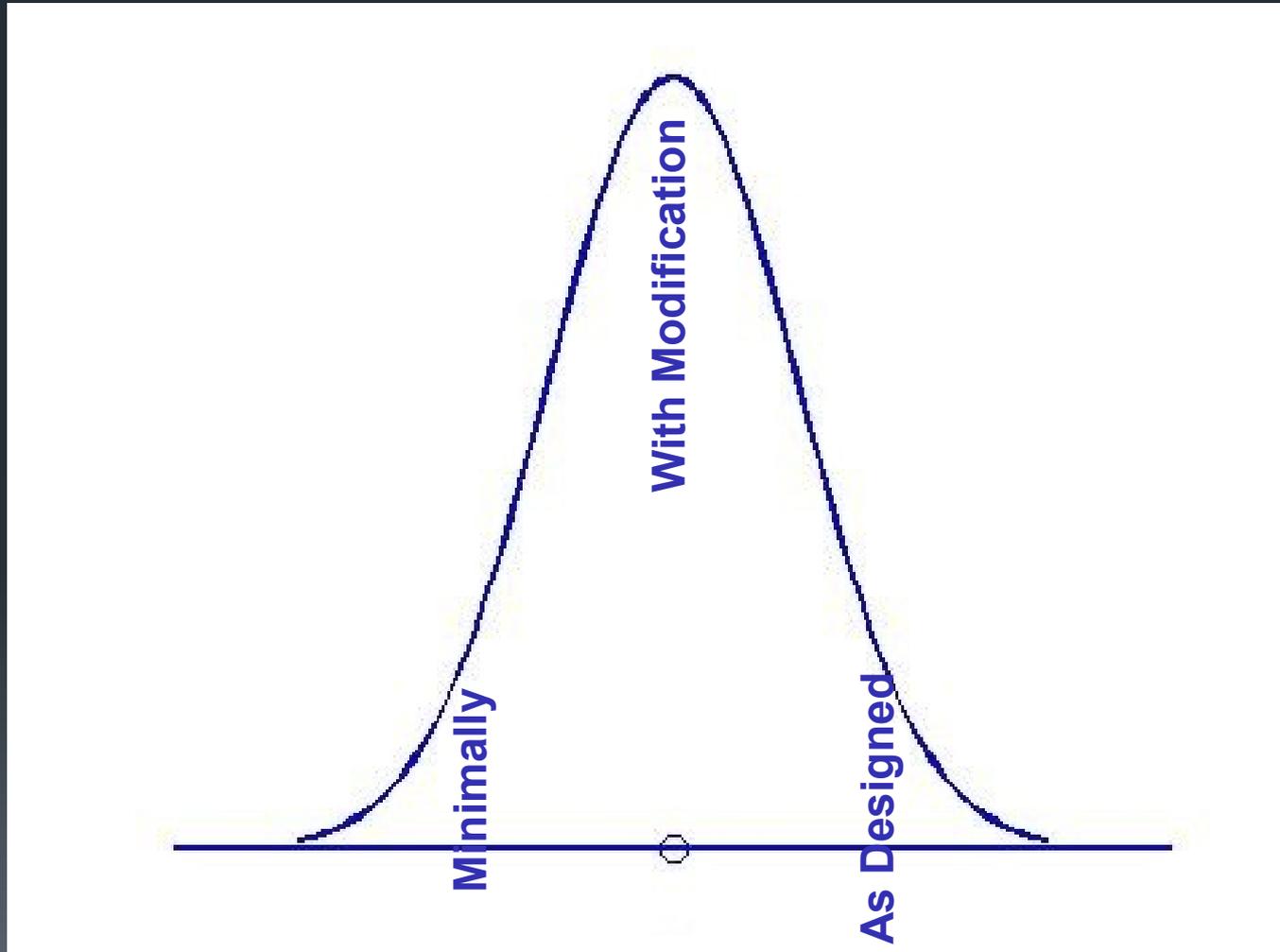
Jessica Jensen, *North Dakota State University - Main
Campus*



Behavioral Intent

- Not at all, minimally, modest modification, as designed
- Intent to Implement
 - Daily basis
 - Small-scale events
 - Preparedness
 - Resource management
 - Communication and information
 - Command and management
 - Index

Substantial Variation in Behavioral Intent



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- Would have expected that, at the very least, counties would intend to implement the system as designed even if just to be compliant.
 - Counties *intend to implement* NIMS at different points along a continuum of behavior.

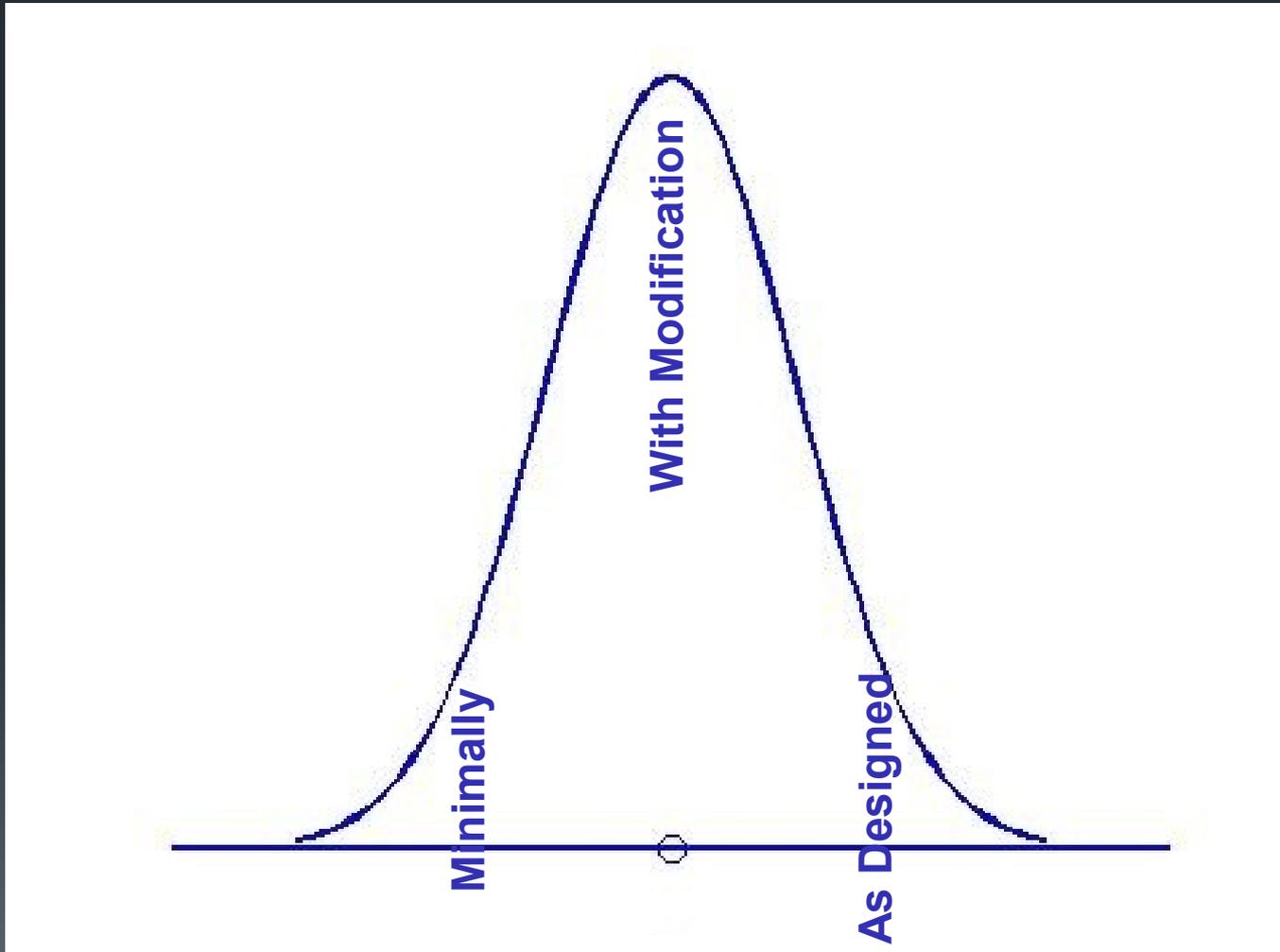
- 
- Prior to looking at actual behavior can conclude:
 - A significant number of counties intended to differ from NIMS's design; and,
 - Because counties intended to modify the system, emergency management potentially varies from county to county.
 - Could undermine the potential success of NIMS as an organizing mechanism.



Actual Behavior

- Not at all, minimally, modest modification, as designed
- Actual implementation behavior
 - Daily basis
 - Small-scale events
 - Preparedness component
 - Resource management component
 - Communication and information component
 - Command and management component
 - Index

Substantial Variation in Actual Behavior



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- Again, found variation along a continuum of behavior.
 - Problematic for a system that is intended to bring about standardization and foster predictability and coordination.
 - Standardization presumed to be critical to the system's success.

Continuing Research





Preview of Coming Articles

- *Explaining the Current Implementation Behaviors of United States Counties*
- Emergency management specific variables did not explain
- What does explain intent and actual
 - Policy characteristics
 - Implementer views
 - Local capacity (enough personnel)
- **EXTRA KEY VARIABLE FOR ACTUAL:**
Inter-organizational characteristics

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- *Comparing County Emergency Manager Assessments of NIMS Implementation with that of their Counties*
 - NOTE: **Exploratory, small sample**
 - Initial Finding: County emergency managers consistently overestimated their counties implementation intent and actual implementation.

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- Public health and fire highest perceptions
 - Elected officials and school administrators had perceptions in the middle
 - Law enforcement and public works lowest perceptions
 - Thus, the intent and actual implementation of counties reported by county emergency managers in the Current Implementation Behavior study may have been overestimated (i.e., lower than reported).



Question for Discussion

- What are your thoughts on the implications of the findings from these studies?