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# N I M C A S T

## National Incident Management System Capability Assessment Support Tool

NIMCAST User's Guide

September 2004



DRAFT



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## NIMCAST USER'S GUIDE

### PURPOSE OF THE NIMCAST

The National Incident Management System Capability Assessment Support Tool (NIMCAST) is a self-assessment instrument for State, local, tribal, and private-sector and nongovernmental organizations to evaluate their jurisdiction's ability to effectively prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) and, by extension, the NIMCAST are designed to enhance the ability of the United States to manage domestic incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive system for incident management.

### BACKGROUND ON NIMS

In Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*, the President directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop and administer a unified, national system for managing incidents. The NIMS provides a consistent Nationwide approach for Federal, State, local, and tribal governments to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity.

The NIMS incorporates the best practices currently in use by incident managers at all levels and represents a core set of doctrine, concepts, principles, terminology, and organizational processes to enable effective, efficient, and collaborative incident management at all levels. HSPD-5 requires all Federal Departments and agencies to adopt the NIMS and to use it in their individual domestic incident management and emergency prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation programs and activities, as well as in support of those actions taken to assist State, local, or tribal entities.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate developed the NIMCAST to contribute to the establishment of a national baseline for compliance by all State, local, and tribal jurisdictions with the NIMS. It will also include readiness metrics and elements that support the national preparedness goal, including standards for preparedness assessments and strategies and a system for assessing the Nation's overall preparedness to respond to major events, especially those involving acts of terrorism.

HSPD-8, *National Preparedness*, provides that the primary mechanism for delivery of Federal preparedness assistance will be awards to the States. Federal preparedness assistance will support State and local entities' efforts, including planning, training, exercises, interoperability, and equipment acquisition for major events as well as building capacity for prevention activities such as information gathering, detection, deterrence, and collaboration related to terrorist attacks.



## **AUTHORITIES**

- Homeland Security Act of 2002.
- HSPD-5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*.
- HSPD-8, *National Preparedness*.
- DHS, *National Incident Management System*, March 1, 2004.

## **WHY DO WE NEED A SELF-ASSESSMENT?**

Jurisdictions at all levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations must implement the requirements established in the NIMS in order to apply this comprehensive national approach. The NIMCAST assists in that compliance by allowing incident and resource managers to assess their current capabilities and determine what additional actions and resources are needed to effectively participate in the NIMS.

Additionally, HSPD-5 requires Federal Departments and agencies to make adoption of the NIMS by State and local organizations a condition for Federal preparedness assistance. The NIMCAST will facilitate the adoption of the NIMS by Federal, State, local, and tribal governments in order to meet the requirement established in HSPD-5.

## **USES OF THE NIMCAST**

This instrument provides a great benefit to incident managers at all levels of government by conducting a NIMS capabilities assessment. The instrument is designed for use as an automated assessment that provides instant feedback, such as tabulated results, reports, and graphic displays of results. The NIMCAST assessment process provides jurisdictions with additional management tools necessary to strengthen their incident management programs, including:

1. An assessment tool to measure compliance with incident management standards.
2. Establishment of a baseline (initial survey of capabilities) for strategic planning.
3. Assistance in the development of plans to achieve the prescribed capabilities and correct deficiencies.
4. A comprehensive incident management program review.
5. Justification of budget, staff, and resources.
6. Program orientation for new staff members or leadership.



## COMPLETING THE NIMCAST

### 1. Distribution Process

The NIMCAST is rolled out through a permission-based system. All users will be invited by the next higher level to complete the assessment. This roll out will initially reach down to the county and independent city level. County and independent city incident managers distribute invitations to join the system to representatives of disciplines covered by the NIMS. This distribution includes appropriate private-sector and nongovernmental organization representatives. Discipline-specific representatives may also be invited by the county or city incident manager to view the NIMCAST online as “read-only” users (meaning they can view the instrument and all of its functions online, but not fill out the assessment).

### 2. Accessing the NIMCAST

To access the NIMCAST, go to <http://www.beta.fema.gov/nimcast>. Registered users should log in using the login box on the right side of the page, which prompts users to enter their e-mail address and password to access the system.

First-time users will be prompted to enter their temporary password and change it to a permanent password. Note that when changing the password, new passwords must be at least 8 characters long and contain at least one number or special character.

### 3. Submitting the NIMCAST

**Step 1.** The incident manager should submit a completed version of the NIMCAST by using the “Submit for Rollup” link on the left side of the NIMCAST Web page. The instrument will roll up for review using the same channel by which it was rolled out. Users roll up to the next highest level. For instance, counties and independent cities roll up to States, and States then roll up to the Federal Government.

**Step 2.** At each level of the roll-up process, the NIMCAST must be filled in, until a Statewide incident management capability and NIMS compliance can be accurately reflected. The State incident management administrator will submit the State’s finalized NIMCAST to the NIMS Integration Center for review.

## NAVIGATING THE NIMCAST

The following guide provides detailed instructions on using each feature of the NIMCAST, ordered according to how the functions appear in the Navigation window once the user has logged in to the tool. Each help topic is indicated by the red highlighted section of the depicted Navigation toolbar. The user’s guide will maximize the benefit of the NIMCAST as both a capability assessment and a resource tool.

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 Manage Versions  
 Reports  
 Submit for Rollup

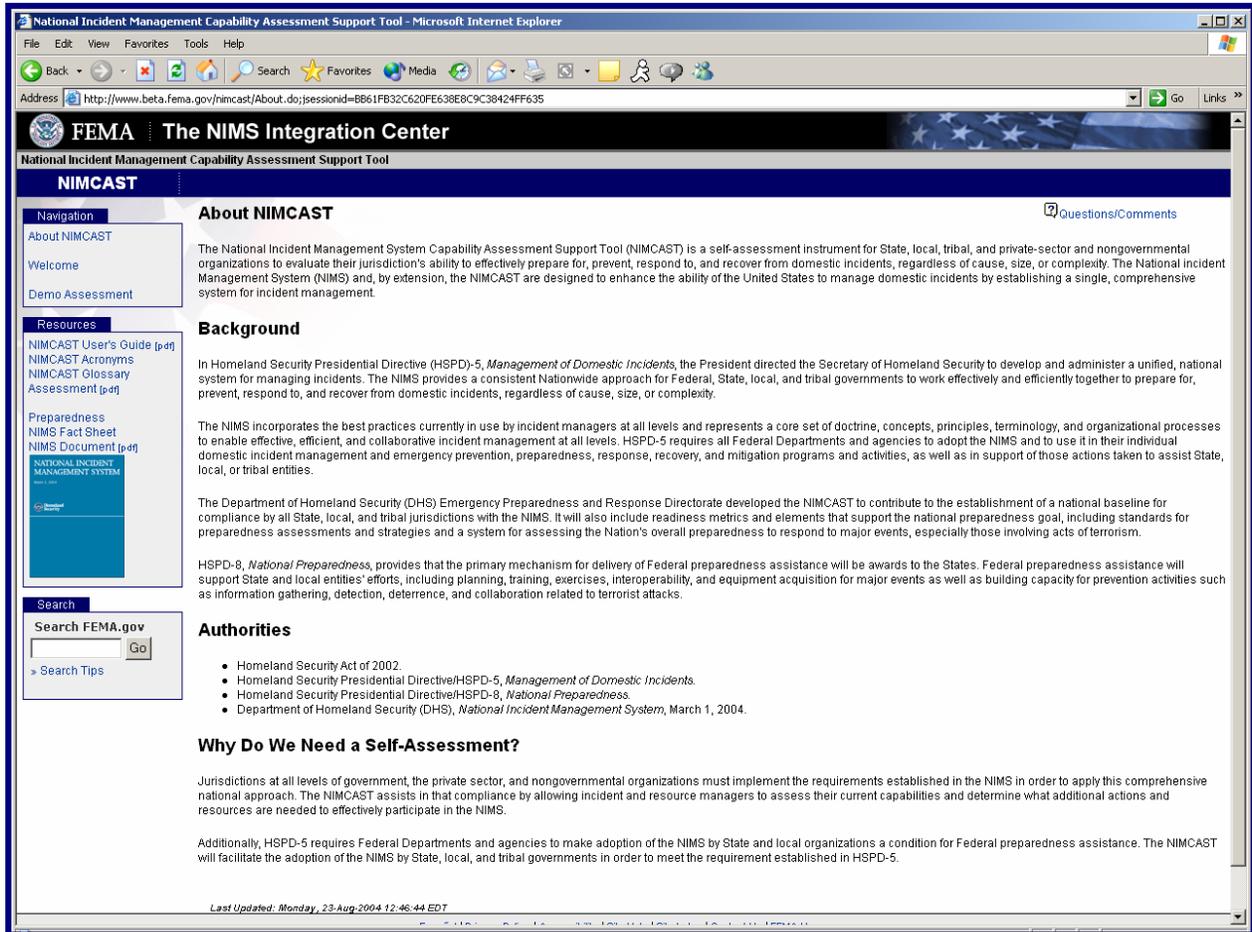
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# About NIMCAST

This page provides an overview of the tool, background on its development, a list of governing authorities, and the purpose of the NIMCAST. This page can be accessed prior to logging in or once you have entered the site as a user.



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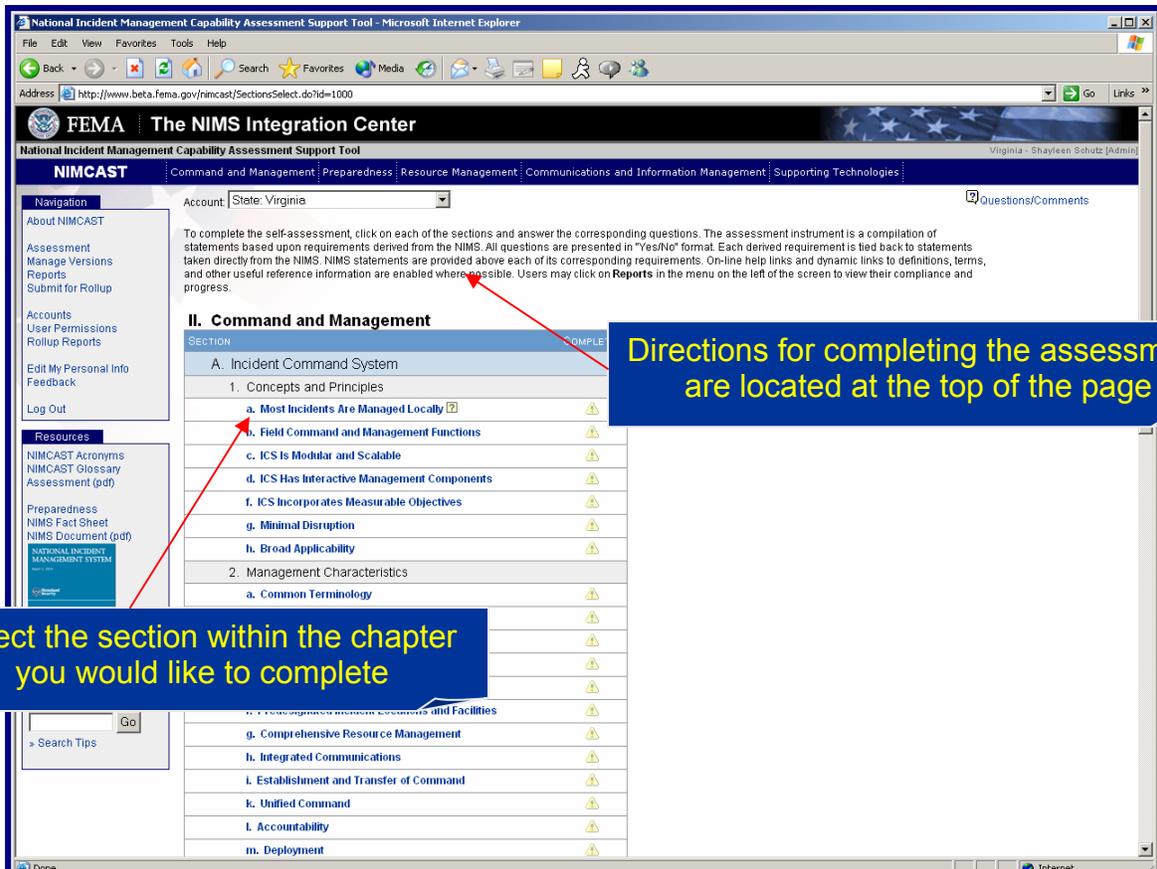
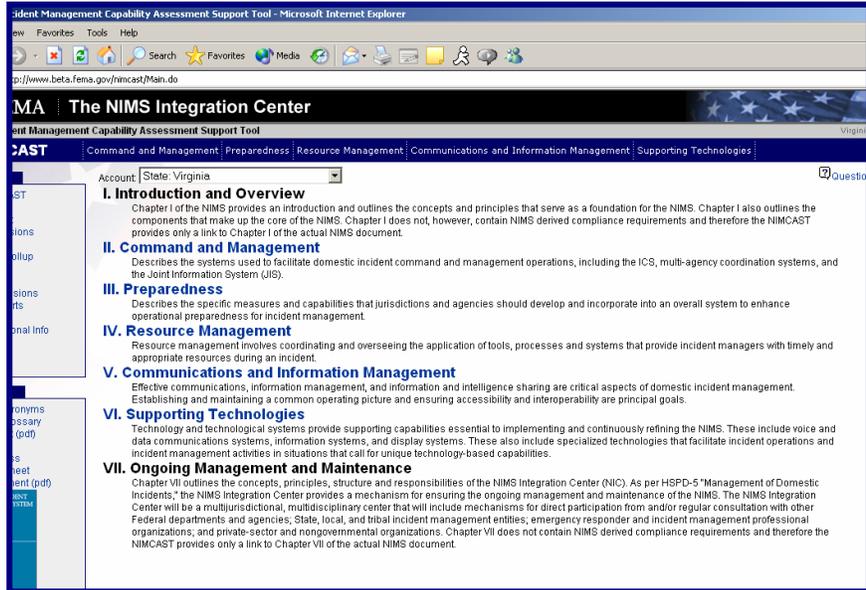
# Assessment

The incident manager is responsible for collecting all feedback from those personnel tasked to provide input on the jurisdiction's incident management capabilities. Once all necessary information is gathered, the emergency manager must complete the online tool and submit the assessment for rollup.

Once you have logged in, you will see the assessment page:

The assessment currently encompasses Chapters II through VI of the NIMS document.

Click on the chapter you would like to complete.



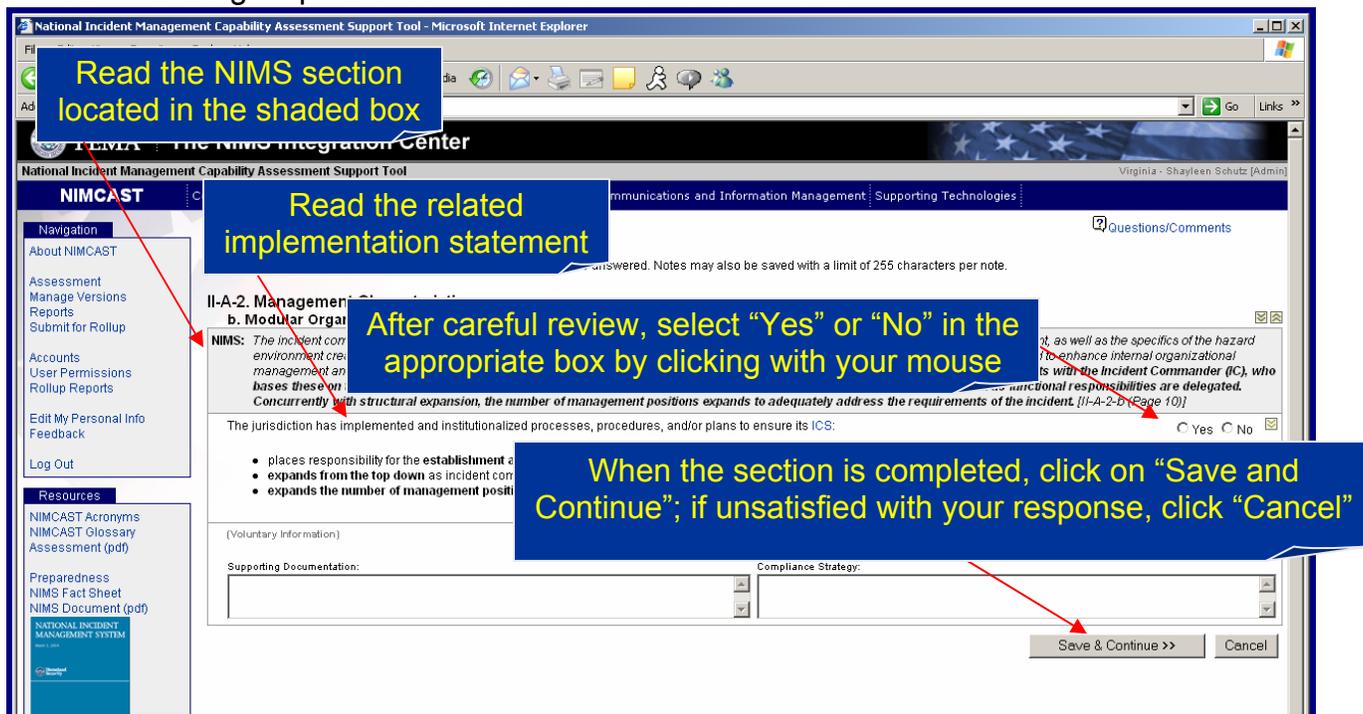
Directions for completing the assessment are located at the top of the page

Select the section within the chapter you would like to complete

A box at the top of each section contains a specific NIMS reference. Each reference is taken verbatim from the NIMS document and its section and page number in the NIMS is annotated.

Below the reference area, there are capability assessment statements adopted directly from the NIMS reference. Note that some NIMS-derived compliance statements are broken down into several bulleted statements. Additionally, if a NIMS reference has multiple unique parts, each part may be addressed individually in separate statements; however, there is only one “YES/NO” question for each NIMS reference section.

The following steps illustrate how to fill out each section:

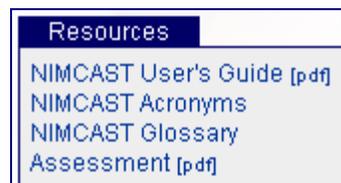


Users may voluntarily provide proof of compliance or a compliance strategy in the boxes at the bottom of the screen.

A boxed question mark: ? indicates a link to a related online resource. Highlighted text provides a link to the NIMCAST list of acronyms or the NIMCAST glossary:

*Its coordination is the responsibility of EOCs and/or multiagency coordination entities, as well as specific elements of the ICS structure.*

Both the acronym list and the glossary can also be accessed through the links in the resources menu that appears on every page of the site:



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## Manage Versions

Managing versions allows the user to save up to six versions of the assessment, including a baseline version. When you first complete the entire assessment, you will be prompted to name the version. You can replace old versions with new ones and delete existing versions. However, this initial baseline version cannot be deleted.

Once you select Manage Versions from the Navigation window, the screen will display all versions of the assessment in your account:

Create New Version			
Title	Fiscal Year	Date	
 Baseline72604	2004	2004-07-26	
 (Current Assessment Data Set)	2004	2004-07-26	

In order to create a new version, a baseline (initial) assessment must be completed. Otherwise, the user will receive the following error message when attempting to create a new version:

• **You must first rate all the questions in the assessment before you may create a baseline version.**

After completing a baseline version, you may wish to create a new version. You may do so by selecting Create New Version, located above the titles of any current versions. The following screen will appear:

**Create a New Version.**  
 Saving different versions of your jurisdiction's data allows you to gauge your program's progress over time in improving emergency preparedness and increasing compliance with the EMAP Standard.

Enter a name for the new version of the data set in the text box below. Then click **CREATE VERSION** to take a snapshot of the history.

versions of your jurisdiction's data, including your baseline.

**Create Version**

Title:

Date: 2004-07-26

You will receive the following message if your new version was successfully saved:

**Version "Version1172604" was successfully saved.**

Once you have created multiple versions, you can utilize the Reports feature to compare them.

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## Reports

Viewing reports allows the user to check the progress on a current version and compare the current version to the baseline and other versions.

In order to view a report, select Reports from the Navigation window.

**Select the type of report desired from the drop down box**

**Report Descriptions**  
You can generate three different kinds of reports using the different versions of data you have saved.

**Table Reports**  
[Summary of Assessment Scores](#): displays the score totals for each subsection in the account's data set  
[Comprehensive Scores](#): displays the scores assigned to each statement in the account's data set, with or without notes written by a user  
[Comprehensive Scores by Section](#): overview of scores in a account's data set by section, with or without notes written by a user

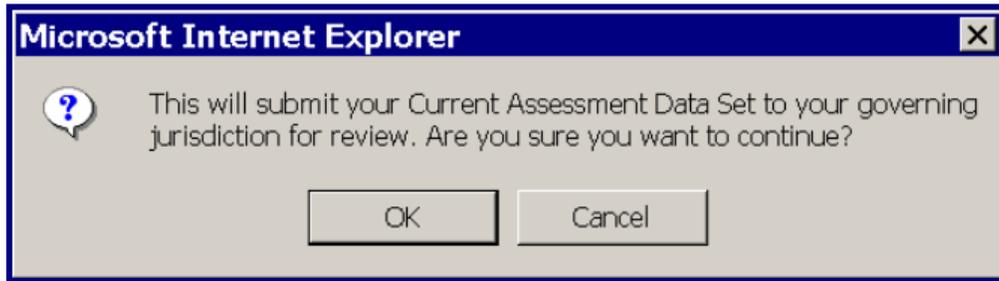
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## Submit for Rollup

The user should submit a completed version of the NIMCAST by using the Submit for Rollup link. Users roll up to the next highest account level. For instance, counties and independent cities roll up to States, and States then roll up to the Federal Government. Submitted versions cannot be changed.

After selecting Submit for Rollup from the Navigation toolbar, a pop-up window will appear:



Select "OK" in the pop-up window if you are ready to continue. Please note that in order to submit an assessment for rollup, it must be completed in its entirety. Otherwise, the following error message will appear:

**• You must first rate all the questions in the assessment before you may submit your assessment for rollup.**

If this message appears, return to the assessment to fill out incomplete sections. If your attempt to submit a report for rollup was successful, the following message will appear:

**Thank you. Your new records were successfully included with others from your governing jurisdiction. In addition, a Version was created that represents the most recent rollup submitted for the current fiscal year.**

The submitted version will be automatically saved as Rollup Submittal:

Create New Version			
Title	Fiscal Year	Date	
Baseline72604	2004	2004-07-26	
VersionII72604	2004	2004-07-26	✗
Rollup Submittal	2004	2004-07-26	
(Current Assessment Data Set)	2004	2004-07-26	

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## Accounts

An account is established for each assessment jurisdiction. All assessment data is tied to the account, not the users. Even if a user is removed or reassigned, the data they entered remains in the system.

Accounts are organized in a hierarchical structure based on existing channels of Federal emergency preparedness funds. The following is an example of an accounts page. Each account under that jurisdictional level is itemized on this page.

Name	Contact Info	Jurisdiction Type	State	Last Rollup Date
Alabama		State	AL	n/a
Alaska		State	AK	n/a
American Samoa		State	AS	n/a
Arizona		State	AZ	n/a
Arkansas		State	AR	n/a
California		State	CA	n/a
Colorado		State	CO	n/a

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## User Permissions

Users are identified by their e-mail address, which ensures there will be no overlap in usernames. Additionally, the e-mail address provides a secure method to communicate with the user for purposes such as resetting their password.

The administrator of an account establishes the relationship of each user to the account; the administrator will assign one of the following permission levels (listed with their capabilities) to each user:

### *Read-only*

- View assessment responses via reporting tools

### *Standard*

- Save/Edit responses to survey questions

### *Administrator*

- Determine (Add, Edit, Delete) users' permissions to access the account
- Create accounts below current level
- Submit the assessment for rollup to the next level
- Manage baselines

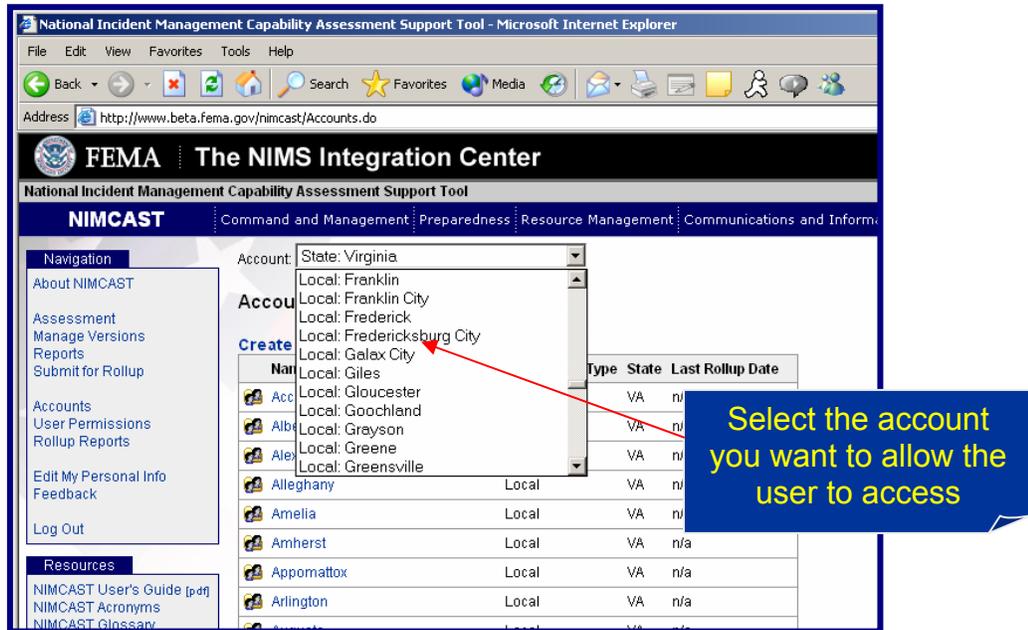
The only exception to this separation of capabilities is when an administrator of a parent account has “inherited” administration permission on sub-accounts. At this time, the administrator can assign, edit, and/or delete users to the new account. However, the administrator cannot fill in the assessment or submit it for rollup.

The user permissions page displays the users, their contact information, organization, and permission type for every user on that particular account:

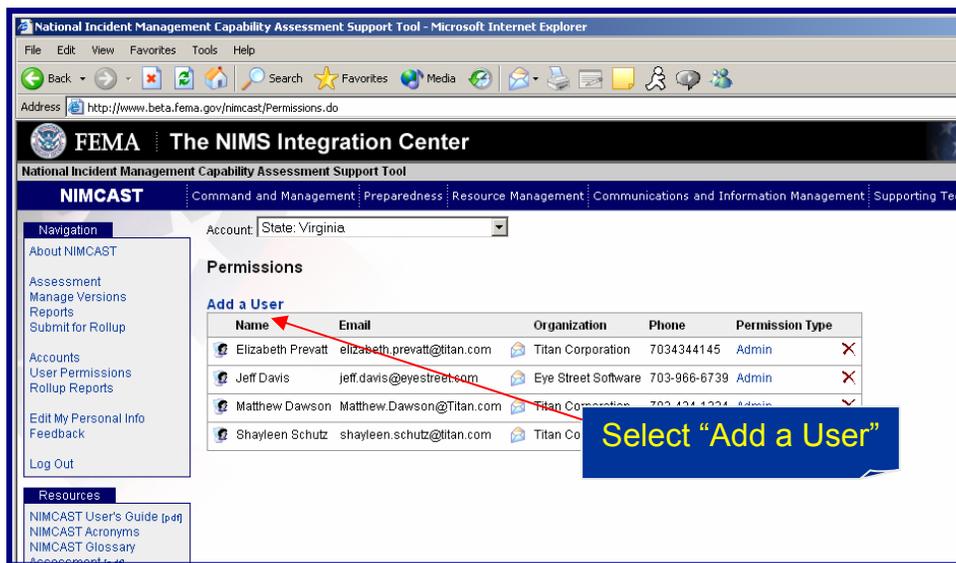
The screenshot shows the 'National Incident Management Capability Assessment Support Tool' interface. The browser address bar shows 'http://www.beta.fema.gov/nimcast/Permissions.do'. The page header includes 'FEMA The NIMS Integration Center' and 'National Incident Management Capability Assessment Support Tool'. The main content area is titled 'Permissions' and includes a dropdown menu for 'Account' set to 'National: States and Territories'. Below this is a table of users:

Name	Email	Organization	Phone	Permission Type
Jason Wood	Jason.Wood@titan.com	Titan	703-434-4597	Admin
Jeff Davis	jeff.davis@eyestreet.com	Eye Street Software	703-966-6739	Admin
Matthew Dawson	Matthew.Dawson@Titan.com	Titan Corporation	703-434-1234	Admin
Ryan McGeary	ryan.mcgeary@eyestreet.com	Eye Street Software	571.212.4185	Admin
Shayleen Schutz	shayleen.schutz@titan.com	Titan Corporation	703-434-4155	Admin

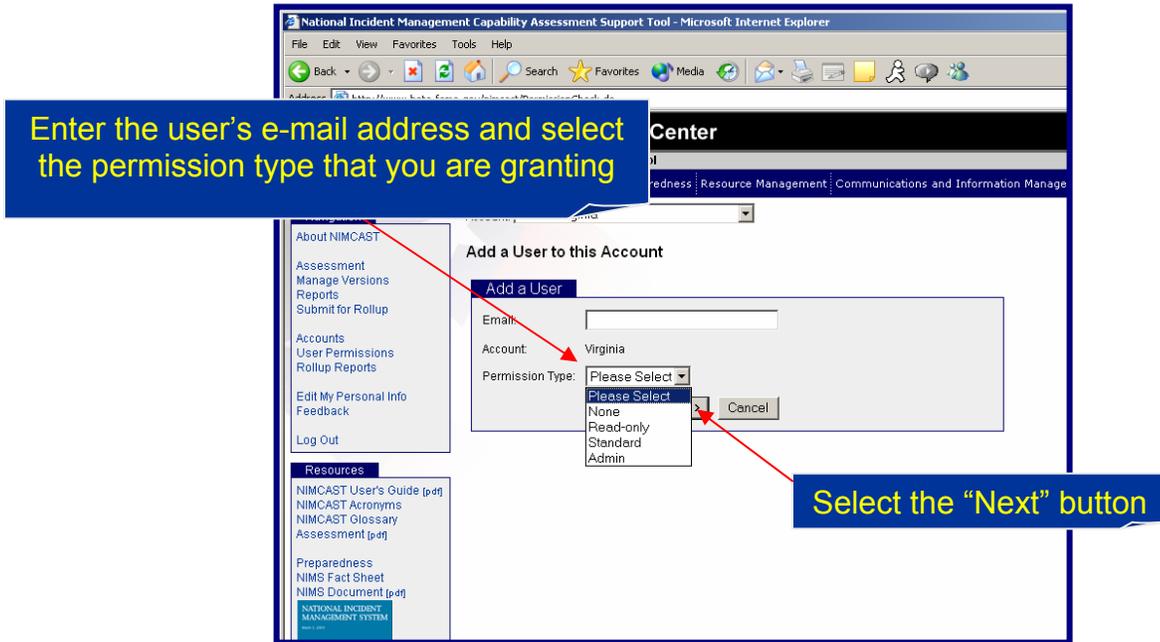
If you are an administrator, perform the following steps to assign permissions to users under your purview:



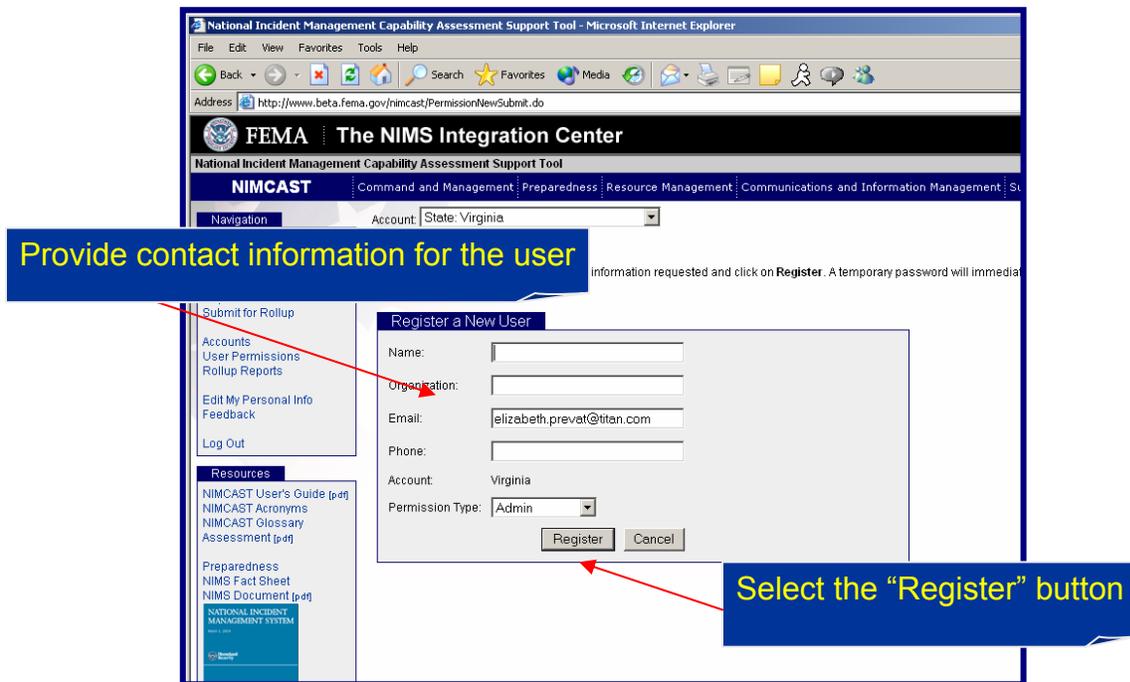
After selecting the appropriate account from the Accounts page, click on User Permissions in the Navigation window.



This selection will take you to the following page:



If the e-mail address entered belongs to a user already in the database, the user will then be assigned an account. If not, you will be asked to enter the user's personal information on this page:



The user will get an e-mail with a temporary password.

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## Rollup Reports

Once one or more users under your jurisdiction have submitted reports for rollup, you can utilize the Rollup Reports feature to view and compare assessments from these sub-accounts.

**National Incident Management Capability Assessment Support Tool - Microsoft Internet Explorer**

Address: <http://www.beta.fema.gov/nimcast/RollupReports.do>

**FEMA The NIMS Integration Center**

National Incident Management Capability Assessment Support Tool

**NIMCAST** Command and Management | Preparedness | Resource Management | Communications and Information Management | Supporting Technologies

Account: National: States and Territories

**Rollup Reports**

Choose the type of report you want to create from the appropriate drop-down menu. Then identify which localities you want to report on. If applicable, choose which section you want to focus on in the report.

Click **VIEW REPORT** to display the report using the information you specify.

**No subaccounts have submitted rollup data to this account yet.**

**Rollup Report Descriptions**

You can generate two different kinds of reports using the different localities beneath this account.

**Table Reports**

- [Rollup Summary of Assessment Scores](#): displays the score totals within the subsections totaled amongst the selected subaccount's most recent rollup submittals
- [Rollup Comprehensive Scores](#): displays the scores totals assigned to each statement for the selected subaccount's most recent rollup submittals
- [Rollup Comprehensive Scores by Section](#): overview of the scores totals assigned to each statement within a given section for the selected subaccount's most recent rollup submittals
- [Rollup Summary by Accounts](#): displays the compliance percentage for each chapter grouped by each selected subaccount in alphabetical order.
- [Rollup Trending by Fiscal Year](#): displays the compliance percentage for each chapter grouped by the available fiscal years for the selected subaccounts.

**Chart Reports**

- [Rollup Overall Score Chart \(Stacked Bar\)](#): displays all scores across the five sections in a stacked bar chart
- [Rollup Overall Score Chart \(Pie\)](#): displays a pie chart showing YES, NO, and unrated scores for all of the sections
- [Rollup Section Score Chart \(Pie\)](#): displays a pie chart showing YES, NO, and unrated scores for one section
- [Rollup Trending by Fiscal Year \(Bar\)](#): displays compliance trending information across fiscal years for the selected subaccounts.

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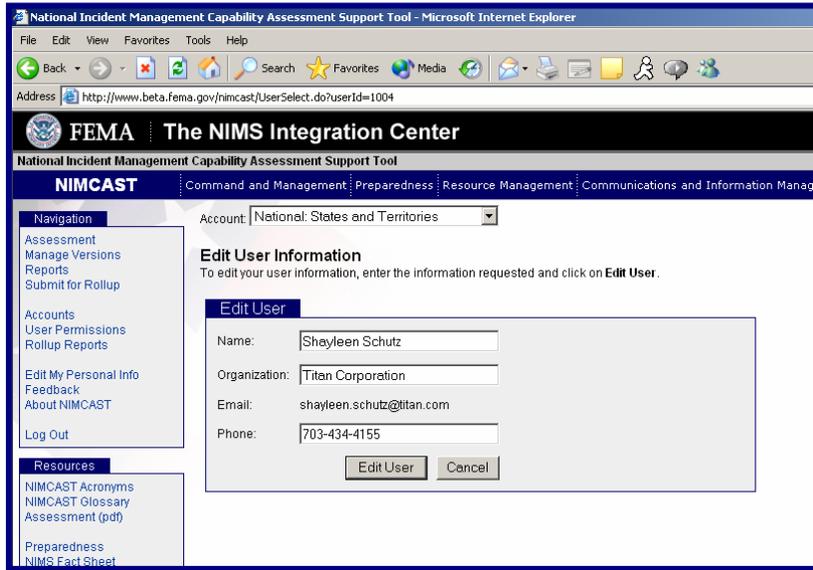
**Edit My Personal Info**

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## Edit My Personal Info

This screen allows the user to ensure the accuracy of their contact information and change it if necessary. It is a good idea to visit this page the first time you enter the site to ensure your administrator entered all of your personal information correctly.



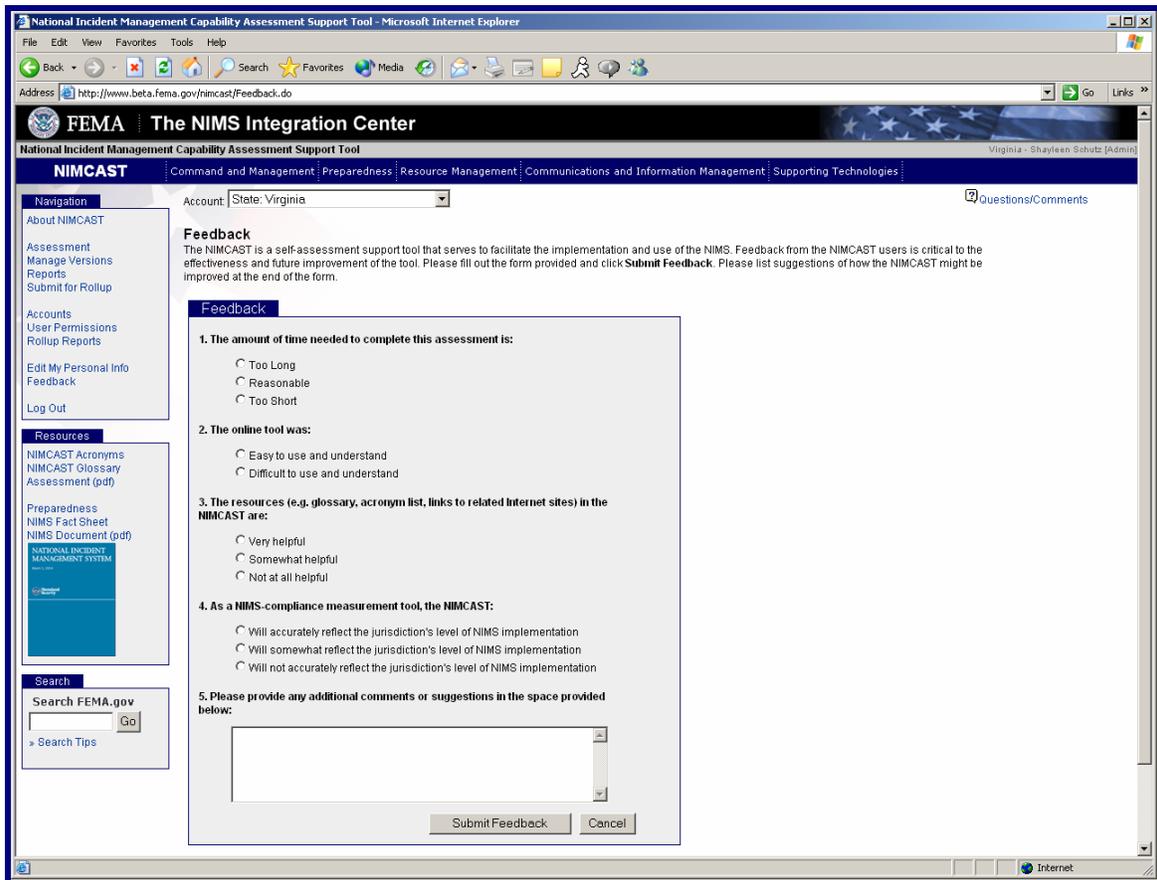
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## Feedback

After completing the NIMCAST, users are encouraged to fill out the feedback form accessible from the Navigation toolbar. Please note the form includes space for additional comment. Users are encouraged to share any relevant feedback not covered in the existing form.

Once submitted, the form is sent to the NIMS Integration Center. Providing feedback gives users the opportunity to participate in the continual improvement of the NIMCAST. Feedback will be reviewed frequently and incorporated into the regularly scheduled revisions of the NIMCAST.



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## Log Out

It is important to log out after each session to ensure the security of your account. To log out, click the Log Out button in the Navigation window. You will be automatically transferred to the NIMCAST introduction screen. A yellow box at the top of the page will indicate that your log out was successful.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the NIMCAST web application. The address bar shows the URL: [a.fema.gov/nimcast/Logout.do](http://a.fema.gov/nimcast/Logout.do). The page title is "The NIMS Integration Center" and the subtitle is "NIMCAST Capability Assessment Support Tool". A yellow notification box at the top of the page displays the message "Log out successful.". The main content area features a large heading "Welcome to the NIMCAST!" followed by the question "What is the NIMCAST?". Below this, a paragraph explains that NIMCAST stands for National Incident Management System Capability Assessment Support Tool and is a web-based self-assessment tool designed to aid Federal, State, local, and tribal organizations and jurisdictions in determining their capabilities and compliance against the requirements established in the recently released National Incident Management System (NIMS). Another section titled "What does the NIMCAST do?" describes the tool's purpose for incident and resource managers. On the right side of the page, there is a "Log In" form with fields for "Email:" and "Password:", a "Log In" button, and links for "Would you like password?" and "Did you forget?".

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**National Incident  
Management System  
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