

NIBRS COMPLIANCE IS COMING: ARE YOU READY?

By January 1, 2021, all U.S. law enforcement agencies will be required to use the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) for collecting and reporting crime-incident data to the FBI. NIBRS replaces the current Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program protocol. Law enforcement agencies (LEAs) that have already transitioned to NIBRS, or are in the process, have little need to fear this seemingly far-off deadline. Rather, it's the agencies that haven't yet begun the process — or worse, don't even know what NIBRS is — which need to take action today. Educating yourself is key, and this report will help you better understand NIBRS and what to expect on your journey to NIBRS compliance.

LOOKING BACK: THE FBI'S UNIFORM CRIME REPORTING (UCR) PROGRAM

If your agency hasn't already made the switch to NIBRS, you are most likely still using the current method for gathering and submitting crime reports into the FBI's UCR Program. You are not alone. UCR is a nationwide, voluntary reporting program used by more than 18,000 municipal, county, state, university and college, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies to report crime data. Created in 1929 by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the UCR Program has been administered by the FBI since 1930 to gather information regarding the nature and volume of crime throughout the United States. The primary objective of the UCR Program is to gather reliable information regarding common crimes (often referred to as Index offenses), including murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson, for use by law enforcement operations and management.

The UCR Program also gathers data on arrests and case clearances, in addition to attacks on and deaths of law enforcement officers. The data is then used for a variety of purposes, including research and planning, understanding the changing nature of crime, and tracking society's responses.

WHAT IS NIBRS? NIBRS is the acronym for the National Incident-Based Reporting System, a detailed, incident-based crime data collection methodology for law enforcement agencies that replaces the current Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program protocol.

On January 1, 2021, NIBRS will become the mandatory method for collecting and reporting crime-incident data into the UCR Program. Unlike the current UCR Program method, NIBRS enables multiple offenses within a single crime incident to be captured, providing a much more thorough and detailed account of what actually occurred.

NIBRS also allows information to be compiled about victims, known offenders, relationships between victims and offenders, arrestees, weapons, injuries, date, time, location, and property associated with the crimes. In addition to the Crimes against Persons and Crimes against Property incident classifications, NIBRS includes a Crimes against Society category.

Current UCR Reporting vs. NIBRS

	UCR	NIBRS
Collects data on homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, larceny theft, and arson	X	X
Employs a Hierarchy Rule that only recognizes the most extreme crime within a particular incident	X	
Collects data on as many as 10 criminal offenses within a particular incident		X
Collects incident and arrest data on 52 Group A offenses and arrest data on 10 Group B offenses		X
Documents animal cruelty, extortion, and identity theft offenses		X
Has Crime Against Persons and Crime Against Property categories	X	X
Includes a Crime Against Society category		X
Gathers incident-related data, including the relationships between victims and offenders, types and quantities of drugs involved, and types of property that were damaged or stolen		X

THE HIERARCHY RULE While valuable, the current UCR protocol is not all inclusive due to the application of the Hierarchy Rule; this specifies that only the most serious incident are not reported which may obscure the actual number of crimes committed. For example; A criminal breaks into a home, takes the homeowner’s wallet at gunpoint, and ultimately shoots and kills the owner; under the Hierarchy Rule, the agency only reports the most serious offense — murder. This does not, however, provide an accurate depiction of what actually occurred. NIBRS allows a more complete incident report to be generated.

WHY BECOME NIBRS COMPLIANT? If you’re still unsure that NIBRS is a good thing, here a few more compelling reasons for you to move forward with making the switch:

- **IT IS MANDATORY** Perhaps the most important and most persuasive reason to transition to NIBRS: Compliance is mandatory come January 1, 2021. Like it or not, you will have to make the transition. The sooner you begin, the sooner you can achieve compliance.
- **UCR TO BE RETIRED** The FBI’s current UCR Summary Reporting System (SRS) will be retired on January 1, 2021, so the only method you will be able to utilize for submitting data is NIBRS. (FEAR NOT: although SRS will be retired, any SRS data recorded prior to January 1, 2021, will be archived and accessible to the reporting agency.)
- **LOSS OF FUNDING** Failure to comply can result in a loss of federal funding for your agency, including grants available through the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office). Noncompliant agencies may also be ineligible for the Justice Department’s Equitable Sharing Program and the Federal Surplus Equipment Program.
- **IMPROVED ACCURACY NIBRS** will improve the detail and accuracy with which you collect crime-incident data.

Current UCR Reporting vs. NIBRS UCR NIBRS

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- Ensuring safer tomorrows

THE NIBRS COMPLIANCE PROCESS January 1, 2021, may seem like a long way off, but that doesn't mean you should wait to begin the NIBRS compliance process. Under the best of circumstances, the transition will take between 6 to 18 months, and if a new RMS system needs to be procured that timeline can be 24 – 48 months. Even this time frame doesn't take into account any errors, bottlenecks, learning curves, and/or training issues that may significantly delay your progress. The sooner you commit to transitioning to NIBRS, the better off your agency will be. The process begins by choosing a NIBRS-compliant RMSA software and teaching users within your agency how to use it. From there, your agency must adhere to four areas of certification criteria:

- SYSTEM APPROPRIATENESS Your software solution must provide evidence that its NIBRS-reporting system is compatible with the FBI's UCR system and follows NIBRS technical specifications. State UCR programs or LEAs seeking NIBRS certification must submit a description of their incident-based system, including submission structure, crime categories, segment relationships, number of offenses collected per incident, and data values allowed per data element. This document will be reviewed by the FBI for program design and concept.
- UPDATE CAPABILITY & RESPONSIVENESS The program must also demonstrate its ability to update submissions, meet deadlines, respond to FBI queries and requests, and correct errors received from the FBI's UCR Program in a timely manner. State UCR programs or LEAs must, at a minimum, retain and maintain a two-year database of NIBRS submissions and have the capability to update incidents from the previous calendar year.
- ERROR RATE Data submissions must be logical and consistent. The FBI measures logic by the percentage of Group A Incident Report submissions containing errors. The FBI defines the error rate as the number of rejected reports over the number of reports submitted. The FBI requires a sustained error rate of four percent or less for three separate data submissions.
- STATISTICAL REASONABLENESS Data submissions must be statistically reasonable as a whole (in comparison to national trends). While the error rate assesses the existence of logical mechanical flaws in the data, it does not address data in the aggregate. The FBI's UCR Program evaluates aggregate data submissions in terms of percent distribution, data trend, volume, and monthly fluctuations.
- STATE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS it's important to note that the FBI has state specific NIBRS reporting system requirements. To find out what your state is required to use, go to [UCR.FBI.GOV/NIBRS-overview](https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs-overview) or contact your state UCR Program.