

# ICS-402: ICS Overview for Executives/Senior Officials

## G0402

Instructor Guide  
October 2013





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# ICS-402 Incident Command System (ICS) Overview for Executives/ Senior Officials



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## Instructor Notes

**Purpose:** The purpose of this course is to provide an orientation to the Incident Command System (ICS) for Executives and Senior Officials (including elected officials, city/county managers, agency administrators, etc.).

**Time:** 2 hours

**Content Outline:** This presentation includes the following major topics:

- Part 1: What Is ICS?
- Part 2: ICS Organization & Features
- Part 3: Unified & Area Command
- Part 4: Coordination & Incident Management Assessment
- Part 5: NIMS Preparedness

**Equipment:**

- Computer and projector
- Extension cord and power strip (if needed)

**Materials:**

- Copies of the Briefing Package - Recommend printing 2 slides per page in color. You can use the accompanying PDF file to ensure proper printing.
- Handout: Resource Information and Checklists for Executives/Senior Officials (can be found at the end of this document)
- Handout: Sample Delegation of Authority
- Suggested handout: Local and State laws/policies relevant to incident management (if available)
- Suggested handout: Local and State incident management roles and responsibilities (if available)
- Suggested handout: Emergency Operations Center procedures
- PowerPoint visuals (1 through 72)



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## Objectives (1 of 2)

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- Describe the Incident Command System (ICS).
- Describe the various ways ICS can be applied.
- Define the role of an Executive/Senior Official relative to the ICS.
- Describe the major responsibilities of an Executive/Senior Official as related to an incident.
- Demonstrate basic familiarity with ICS terminology.
- Describe the basic organization of ICS and know the functional responsibilities of the Command and General Staffs.
- Describe issues that influence incident complexity and the tools available to analyze complexity.

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### Instructor Notes

Welcome the participants. Briefly review the objectives of the presentation.

Emphasize that the purpose of this presentation is to familiarize Executives/Senior Officials (elected officials, city/county managers, agency administrators, etc.) with Incident Command System (ICS) principles and their role in supporting incident management. Point out that additional courses are available to learn more about ICS. Courses and experience are required in order to qualify to serve in the Command and General Staff. Resource center links are provided at the end of this course to learn more.

**Clarification Note for the Instructor:** The use of the term Incident Commander in this presentation refers to the position, while the use of the term Incident Command refers to the Incident Commander plus the Command Staff (Deputy Incident Commander, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer, and Public Information Officer).



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## **Objectives (2 of 2)**

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- Describe the differences between on-incident ICS organizations and activities and the activities accomplished by Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), Area Commands, and Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS).
- Explain the administrative, logistical, financial, and reporting implications of large incident operations.
- Describe the sources of information regarding the incident and how to access them.
- Describe types of agency(ies) policies and guidelines that influence management of incident or event activities.

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### **Instructor Notes**

Continue reviewing the objectives of the presentation.



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**Part 1: What Is ICS?**

FEMA  
USDA  
NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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### Instructor Notes

Explain that this presentation is divided into the following parts:

- Part 1: What Is ICS?
- Part 2: ICS Organization & Features
- Part 3: Unified & Area Command
- Part 4: Coordination & Incident Management Assessment
- Part 5: NIMS Preparedness

Note that the first part presents background information on the Incident Command System, or ICS.



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## What Is an Incident?

An incident is . . .

. . . an occurrence, caused by either human or natural phenomena, that requires response actions to prevent or minimize loss of life, or damage to property and/or the environment.



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### Instructor Notes

Explain that an incident is an occurrence, caused by either human or natural phenomena, that requires response actions to prevent or minimize loss of life, or damage to property and/or the environment.

Present examples of recent incidents that have affected your jurisdiction.

Add the following points:

- The vast majority of incidents are handled on a daily basis by a single jurisdiction at the local level. However, there are instances when incident management must involve multiple jurisdictions, functional agencies, and emergency responder disciplines.
- Any incident can have a mix of political, economic, social, environmental, and cost implications with potentially serious long-term effects.
- Large, complex incidents require effective and efficient coordination across this broad spectrum of organizations and activities. As the Executive or Senior Official, you need to be aware of how ICS and interagency (regional) multiagency coordination systems can work to ensure cooperative response efforts.



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## Incident Timeframes

How long will a complex incident last?

How long do we need to be self-sufficient?

How will you know that the incident is over?

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### Instructor Notes

Note that Executives and Senior Officials must understand the timeframes associated with incident management so that they are prepared. During this 2-hour briefing, many minor, everyday incidents (e.g., structural fires, traffic accidents, medical emergencies, robberies, etc.) may occur and be resolved. However, complex incidents require much longer timeframes.

Facilitate a discussion on incident timeframes by asking the following discussion questions:

- **How long will a complex incident last?**

If not mentioned by the participants, add the following key points:

- The emergency period of a complex incident may be resolved in a matter of days or weeks. However, the long-term recovery needs and implications can be long lasting. For example:
  - o Long-term mitigation projects are still underway for the Northridge earthquake.
  - o Many 9/11 responders face potential health and psychological conditions for years to come. Even a small hazmat incident may cause long-lasting health effects in a small community.
  - o The economic recovery from major incidents such as Hurricanes Andrew and Katrina can take a decade or more.
- As an Executive/Senior Official, you must plan for the long-term recovery and not just the initial incident.

- **How long do we need to be self-sufficient?**

If not mentioned by the participants, add the following key points:

- Communities should plan to be self-sufficient for approximately 72 hours.
- It is important for Executives/Senior Officials to ensure that resources (personnel, equipment, and supplies) are available for the initial incident period. During this time period, personnel will need to be relieved. Ensuring readiness may mean creating budgets for the acquisition and maintenance of essential resources.
- Conducting training and exercises can help make sure that sufficient resources will be available.

- **How will you know that the incident is over?**

If not mentioned by the participants, add the following key points:

- The simple answer is that you may not know for sure.
- For example, a worker safety issue may arise years later from exposure. Therefore, it is important to keep records in case long-term worker safety issues arise.



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## What Is ICS?

### The Incident Command System:

- Is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management concept.
- Allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries.



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## Instructor Notes

Elaborate on the points on the visual using the information below:

- **The Incident Command System, or ICS, is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management concept.** ICS allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries.
- **ICS has considerable internal flexibility.** It can grow or shrink to meet different needs. This flexibility makes it a very cost-effective and efficient management approach for both small and large situations.

Briefly cover the development of ICS.

- ICS was developed in the 1970s following a series of catastrophic fires in California's urban/wildland interface. Property damage ran into the millions, and many people died or were injured. The personnel assigned to determine the causes of this disaster studied the case histories and discovered that response problems could rarely be attributed to lack of resources or failure of tactics.
- Surprisingly, studies found that response problems were far more likely to result from inadequate management than from any other single reason. Weaknesses in incident management were often due to:
  - Lack of accountability, including unclear chains of command and supervision.
  - Poor communication due to both inefficient uses of available communications systems and conflicting codes and terminology.
  - Lack of an orderly, systematic planning process.
  - No common, flexible, predesigned management structure that enables commanders to delegate responsibilities and manage workloads efficiently.
  - No predefined methods to integrate interagency requirements into the management structure and planning process effectively.

Point out that a poorly managed incident response can be devastating to our economy and our health and safety.



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## ICS Purposes

Using management best practices, ICS helps to ensure:

- The safety of responders and others.
- The achievement of tactical objectives.
- The efficient use of resources.



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## Instructor Notes

Emphasize that by using management best practices, ICS helps to ensure:

- The safety of responders and others.
- The achievement of tactical objectives.
- The efficient use of resources.

**Review the following best practice or add an example from your jurisdiction:** Southern California Firestorm 2003: Report for the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center reports that the use of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) can help protect responder safety and welfare. A CISD team was ordered on day two of the incident. The team organized at a drop-in center. Twenty to 30 people per hour visited the CISD team members. On another incident, roughly 1,800 people took advantage of the availability of CISD staff to just release stress. Data from similar incidents indicate that CISD services are important for up to 2 years after significant traumatic stress situations.

**What resources and plans do you have for ensuring the safety and welfare of your responders?**



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## Instructor Notes

Transition to this topic by noting that you will now cover incident management mandates. Present the following points that form the legal basis for ICS:

- Complex 21st century threats demand that all Americans share responsibility for homeland security. All levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental agencies must be prepared to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from a wide spectrum of major events that exceed the capabilities of any single entity. These hazards require a unified and coordinated national approach to planning and to domestic incident management.
- To address this need, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5: Management of Domestic Incidents (HSPD-5) and Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8): National Preparedness establish national initiatives that develop a common approach to preparedness and response.
- The National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Planning Frameworks provide the process and structures for meeting these mandates. Together, these related efforts align Federal, State, local, tribal, private-sector, and nongovernmental preparedness, incident management, and emergency response plans into an effective and efficient national structure.



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## National Response Framework (NRF)

- Establishes a comprehensive, national, all-hazards approach to domestic incident response.
- Presents an overview of key response principles, roles, and structures that guide the national response.
- Includes the Core Document, Annexes, and Partner Guides.
- Replaces the National Response Plan.

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### Instructor Notes

Explain that the National Response Framework (NRF):

- Is a guide to how the Nation conducts all-hazards response.
- Builds upon the NIMS coordinating structures to align key roles and responsibilities across the Nation, linking all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

The NRF is comprised of:

- The **Core Document**, which describes the doctrine that guides our national response, roles and responsibilities, response actions, response organizations, and planning requirements to achieve an effective national response to any incident that occurs.
- **Emergency Support Function Annexes** that identify Federal resources and capabilities that are most frequently needed in a national response (e.g., Transportation, Firefighting, Mass Care).
- **Support Annexes** that describe essential supporting aspects that are common to all incidents (e.g., Financial Management, Volunteer and Donations Management, Private-Sector Coordination).
- **Incident Annexes** that address the unique aspects of how we respond to seven broad categories or types of incidents (e.g., Biological, Nuclear/Radiological, Cyber, Mass Evacuation).
- **Partner Guides** that provide ready references describing key roles and actions for local, tribal, State, Federal, and private-sector response partners.



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## Instructor Notes

Ask the participants: **Why it is important that incidents be managed at the lowest level possible?** If not mentioned by participants, add the following key points:

- Local responders have the most knowledge about the needs of their communities.
- Tactical incident command decisions are best made at the incident scene.

Summarize the discussion and review the roles of different levels of Government in response.

- **Local and Tribal Governments.** The responsibility for responding to incidents, both natural and manmade, begins at the local level.
- **States and Territorial Governments.** States and territorial governments have responsibility for the public health and welfare of the people in their jurisdiction. During response, States play a key role coordinating resources and capabilities from across the State and obtaining resources and capabilities from other States.
- **Federal Government.** When an incident occurs that exceeds or is anticipated to exceed State, tribal, or local resources, the Federal Government may provide resources and capabilities to support the State response.

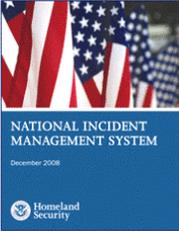
Note that effective response also requires partnerships with:

- **Individuals and Households.** Individuals and households can contribute by reducing hazards in and around their homes, preparing an emergency supply kit and household emergency plan, and monitoring emergency communications carefully.
- **Private Sector.** The private sector plays a key role before, during, and after an incident. First, they must provide for the welfare and protection of their employees in the workplace. Many private-sector organizations are responsible for operating and maintaining portions of the Nation's critical infrastructure.
- **Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs).** NGOs play important roles before, during, and after an incident. For example, NGOs provide sheltering, emergency food supplies, counseling services, and other vital support services to support response and promote the recovery of disaster survivors. These groups often provide specialized services that help individuals with special needs, including those with disabilities.



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## National Incident Management System



- **What? . . .** NIMS provides a consistent nationwide template . . .
- **Who? . . .** to enable Federal, State, tribal, and local governments, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together . . .
- **How? . . .** to prepare for, prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity . . .
- **Why? . . .** in order to reduce the loss of life and property, and harm to the environment.

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### Instructor Notes

Transition to this visual by explaining that the National Response Framework provides the broad response doctrine, while the National Incident Management System includes greater detail on the processes used to manage a response.

Explain that NIMS:

- Defines what needs to be done to prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from a major event, how it needs to be done, and how well it needs to be done.
- Provides a systematic approach for all levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work seamlessly together.
- Applies to all incidents regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity.

Emphasize the following points:

- NIMS integrates existing best practices into a consistent, nationwide approach to domestic incident management.
- NIMS is applicable at all jurisdictional levels and across functional disciplines in an all-hazards context.

Note that the National Planning Frameworks reinforce that incidents should be managed using NIMS principles and structures.



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## NIMS: What It Is/What It's Not

<b>NIMS is . . .</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A flexible framework of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Doctrine</li><li>▪ Concepts</li><li>▪ Principles</li><li>▪ Terminology</li><li>▪ Organizational processes</li></ul></li><li>▪ Applicable to all hazards and jurisdictions</li></ul>	<b>NIMS is <u>not</u> . . .</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ An operational incident management plan</li><li>▪ A resource allocation plan</li><li>▪ A terrorism/WMD-specific plan</li><li>▪ Designed to address international events</li></ul>
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### Instructor Notes

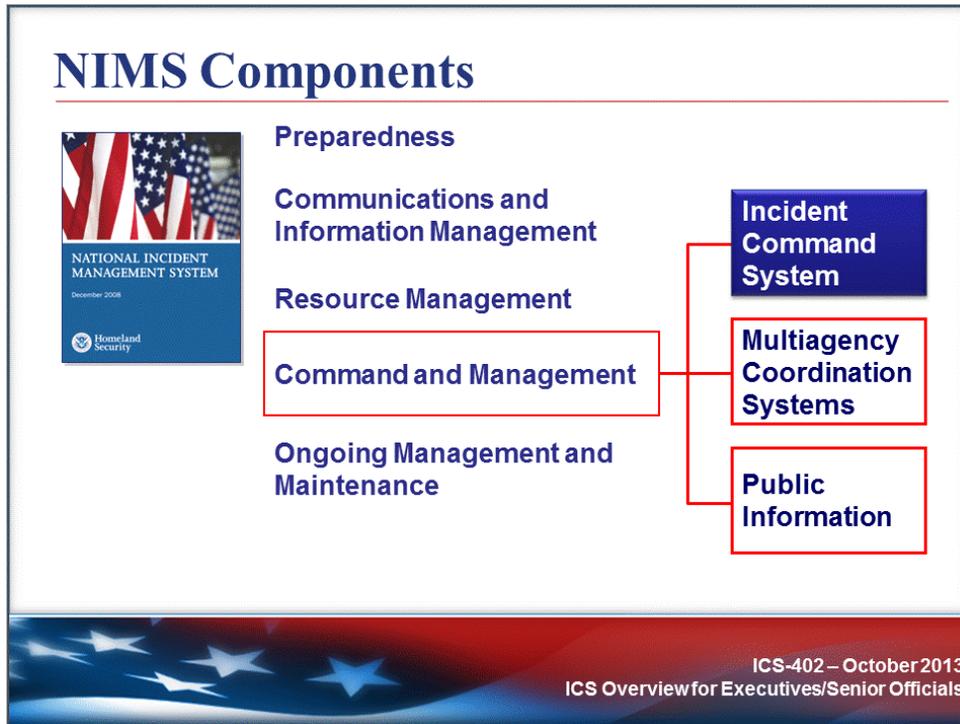
Refer the participant to items on the visual stating “What NIMS Is” and “What NIMS Is Not.”

Read aloud the following situations (or other examples that would be relevant to the audience). Tell the participants to indicate if they are consistent or inconsistent with NIMS:

- Local officials are using the Incident Command System (ICS) to plan for the upcoming Fourth of July celebration.  
 Consistent With NIMS             Not Consistent With NIMS  
NIMS encourages the use of ICS for both planned events and incidents.
- A jurisdiction/agency follows NIMS only when incidents are complex enough to involve other jurisdictions.  
 Consistent With NIMS             Not Consistent With NIMS  
NIMS applies to all hazards independent of size or complexity.
- An agency is replacing its operational plan for responding to incidents with the guidance provided in NIMS.  
 Consistent With NIMS             Not Consistent With NIMS  
NIMS provides overall response principles and structures but does not provide specific plans.
- An organization is reorganizing and using NIMS/ICS titles for day-to-day routine activities.  
 Consistent With NIMS             Not Consistent With NIMS  
NIMS is designed to manage incidents rather than day-to-day business operations.



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## Instructor Notes

ICS is only one facet of NIMS. Following is a synopsis of each major component of NIMS:

- **Preparedness.** Effective incident management and incident response activities begin with a host of preparedness activities conducted on an ongoing basis, in advance of any potential incident. Preparedness involves an integrated combination of planning, procedures and protocols, training and exercises, personnel qualification and certification, and equipment certification.
- **Communications and Information Management.** Emergency management and incident response activities rely on communications and information systems that provide a common operating picture to all command and coordination sites. NIMS describes the requirements necessary for a standardized framework for communications and emphasizes the need for a common operating picture. NIMS is based on the concepts of interoperability, reliability, scalability, portability, and the resiliency and redundancy of communications and information systems.
- **Resource Management.** Resources (such as personnel, equipment, and/or supplies) are needed to support critical incident objectives. The flow of resources must be fluid and adaptable to the requirements of the incident. NIMS defines standardized mechanisms and establishes the resource management process to: identify requirements for, order and acquire, mobilize, track and report, recover and demobilize, reimburse for, and inventory resources.
- **Command and Management.** The Command and Management component within NIMS is designed to enable effective and efficient incident management and coordination by providing flexible, standardized incident management structures. The structure is based on three key organizational constructs: the **Incident Command System**, **Multiagency Coordination Systems**, and **Public Information**.
- **Ongoing Management and Maintenance.** DHS/FEMA manages the development and maintenance of NIMS. This includes developing NIMS programs and processes as well as keeping the NIMS document current.



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## NIMS & Institutionalizing ICS

### Governmental officials must:

- Adopt the ICS through executive order, proclamation, or legislation as the agency's/jurisdiction's official incident response system.
- Direct that incident managers and response organizations train, exercise, and use the ICS.
- Integrate ICS into functional and system-wide emergency operations policies, plans, and procedures.
- Conduct ICS training for responders, supervisors, and command-level officers.
- Conduct coordinating ICS-oriented exercises that involve responders from multiple disciplines and jurisdictions.

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### Instructor Notes

Summarize the additional information about the NIMS requirement regarding "Institutionalizing the Use of ICS":

- According to the FEMA National Integration Center, "institutionalizing the use of ICS" means that government officials, incident managers, and emergency response organizations at all jurisdictional levels must adopt the Incident Command System. Actions to institutionalize the use of ICS take place at two levels: policy and organizational/operational.
- At the policy level, institutionalizing the ICS means government officials (i.e., agency administrators, governors, mayors, county and city managers, tribal leaders, and others) must:
- Adopt the ICS through executive order, proclamation, or legislation as the agency's/jurisdiction's official incident response system; and
- Direct that incident managers and response organizations in their jurisdictions train, exercise, and use the ICS in their response operations.
- At the organizational/operational level, evidence that incident managers and emergency response organizations are institutionalizing the ICS would include the following:
- ICS is being integrated into functional and system-wide emergency operations policies, plans, and procedures.
- ICS training is planned or underway for responders, supervisors, and command-level officers.
- Responders at all levels are participating in and/or coordinating ICS-oriented exercises that involve responders from multiple disciplines and jurisdictions.

Additional information about NIMS can be found online at [www.fema.gov/nims](http://www.fema.gov/nims).



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## Other ICS Mandates

- Hazardous Materials Incidents
  - Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) – 1986
  - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Rule 29 CFR 1910.120
- State and Local Regulations



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## Instructor Notes

Explain that in addition to the NIMS mandate, the following laws require the use of ICS:

- The **Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA)** of 1986 established Federal regulations for handling hazardous materials. SARA directed the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to establish rules for operations at hazardous materials incidents.
- **OSHA Rule 29 CFR 1910.120**, effective March 6, 1990, requires all organizations that handle hazardous materials to use ICS. The regulation states: “The Incident Command System shall be established by those employers for the incidents that will be under their control and shall interface with other organizations or agencies who may respond to such an incident.”

Note that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires States to use ICS at hazardous materials incidents.

**IMPORTANT INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Add any State, tribal, local, or agency regulations governing the use of ICS.**



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## Examples of Incidents Managed Using ICS



- Fire, both structural and wildland
- Natural disasters, such as tornadoes, floods, ice storms, or earthquakes
- Human and animal disease outbreaks
- Search and rescue missions
- Hazardous materials incidents
- Criminal acts and crime scene investigations
- Terrorist incidents, including the use of weapons of mass destruction
- National Special Security Events, such as Presidential visits or the Super Bowl
- Other planned events, such as parades or demonstrations

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## Instructor Notes

Refer to the following examples of the types of incidents that have been managed using ICS:

- Fire, both structural and wildland
- Natural disasters, such as tornadoes, floods, ice storms, or earthquakes
- Human and animal disease outbreaks
- Search and rescue missions
- Hazardous materials incidents
- Criminal acts and crime scene investigations
- Terrorist incidents, including the use of weapons of mass destruction
- National Special Security Events, such as Presidential visits or the Super Bowl
- Other planned events, such as parades or demonstrations

Review the following best practice or add an example from your jurisdiction/agency:

The greater Boston area conducts special events as “planned disasters” by employing ICS and integrating portions of the region’s disaster plans into the event’s operations plans. This approach improves coordination during event planning and operations, strengthens relationships between the many agencies and organizations involved in disaster operations, and facilitates the enhancement of regional disaster plans. The Boston area uses ICS to conduct its three regularly occurring events (First Night festivities, the Boston Marathon, and Fourth of July celebrations) and one to two special events (e.g., Super Bowl rallies and Sail Boston) as “planned disasters.” Many of these events can attract crowds of one million or more participants and spectators, providing an optimal environment to test and improve disaster plans.



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## ICS Benefits



- Meets the needs of incidents of any kind or size.
- Allows personnel from a variety of agencies to meld rapidly into a common management structure.
- Provides logistical and administrative support to operational staff.
- Is cost effective by avoiding duplication of efforts.

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## Instructor Notes

Explain that ICS is designed to be interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible.

Point out that ICS:

- Meets the needs of incidents of any kind or size.
- Allows personnel from a variety of agencies to meld rapidly into a common management structure.
- Provides logistical and administrative support to operational staff.
- Is cost effective by avoiding duplication of efforts.

Ask the participants if they can add any benefits to those listed on the visual. Add a personal experience that illustrates the benefits of using ICS.

Summarize by noting that any incident can have a mix of political, economic, social, environmental, and cost implications with potentially serious long-term effects. ICS, as a management system, helps to mitigate the risks by providing accurate information, strict accountability, and planning for any incident.

**Emphasize that it is critical that Executives and Senior Officials support ICS planning, preparedness, and training activities.**



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## Part 2: ICS Organization & Features



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### Instructor Notes

Use this visual to transition to the next section of the presentation, which covers the ICS organization and features. Explain that this part of the briefing will discuss the relationship between the ICS organizational structure and the role of the Executive/Senior Official.

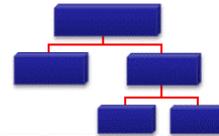


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## ICS Organization

Differs from the day-to-day, administrative organizational structures and positions.

- **Unique ICS position titles and organizational structures are designed to avoid confusion during response.**
- **Rank may change during deployment. A “chief” may not hold that title when deployed under an ICS structure.**



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### Instructor Notes

Explain that the ICS organization differs from the day-to-day, administrative organizational structures and positions.

- **Unique ICS position title and organizational structures are used.** There is no correlation with the administrative structure of any other agency or jurisdiction. This organization’s uniqueness helps to avoid confusion over different position titles and organizational structures.
- **Rank may change.** Someone who serves as a chief every day may not hold that title when deployed under an ICS structure. ICS positions depend on a combination of training and experience.



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## Common Terminology

ICS requires the use of common terminology.  
Common terminology helps to define:

- Organizational functions.
- Incident facilities.
- Resource descriptions.
- Position titles.



This is Unit 1,  
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10-37,  
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### Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- It is important to use plain English during an incident response because often there is more than one agency involved in an incident.
- Ambiguous codes and acronyms have proven to be major obstacles in communications. Often agencies have a variety of codes and acronyms that they use routinely during normal operations. Not every “10” code is the same nor does every acronym have the same meaning. **When codes and acronyms are used on an incident, confusion is often the result.**
- **NIMS requires that all responders use “plain English,” referred to as “clear text.”**

Explain that ICS establishes common terminology that allows diverse incident management and support entities to work together across a wide variety of incident management functions and hazard scenarios. This common terminology covers the following:

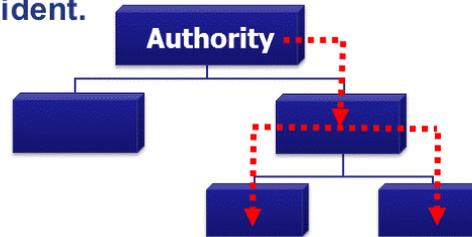
- **Organizational Functions.** Major functions and functional units with domestic incident management responsibilities are named and defined. Terminology for the organizational elements involved is standard and consistent.
- **Incident Facilities.** Common terminology is used to designate the facilities in the vicinity of the incident area that will be used in the course of incident management activities.
- **Resource Descriptions.** Major resources—including personnel, facilities, and major equipment and supply items—used to support incident management activities are given common names and are “typed” with respect to their capabilities, to help avoid confusion and to enhance interoperability.
- **Position Titles.** At each level within the ICS organization, individuals with primary responsibility have distinct titles. Titles provide a common standard for all users, and also make it easier to fill ICS positions with qualified personnel. ICS titles often do **not** correspond to the titles used on a daily basis.



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## Chain of Command

- **Chain of command** is an orderly line of authority within the ranks of the incident management organization.
- **Unity of command** means that every individual has a designated supervisor to whom he or she reports at the scene of the incident.



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## Instructor Notes

Explain that within the ICS organization, chain of command and unity of command are maintained. Review the following definitions:

- **Chain of command** refers to the orderly line of authority within the ranks of the incident management organization.
- **Unity of command** means that every individual has a designated supervisor to whom he or she reports at the scene of the incident.

These principles clarify reporting relationships and eliminate the confusion caused by multiple, conflicting directives. Incident managers at all levels must be able to control the actions of all personnel under their supervision.

**Emphasize that chain of command must be followed at the incident site and by those not deployed to the incident.** After being deployed and receiving an incident assignment, personnel may be assigned by someone who is not their day-to-day supervisor. In this situation, the responders must take direction from their on-scene ICS supervisors only. In addition, someone who is a day-to-day supervisor may not be assigned or qualified to serve as an on-scene supervisor.

Ask the participants: **What can Executives and Senior Officials do to ensure that chain of command is maintained?** If not mentioned by the participants, add the following key points:

- Ensure that only qualified supervisors are assigned.
- Follow the chain of command by working through the Incident Commander rather than calling personnel within the ranks.



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## Incident Commander

Upon arriving at an incident, the higher ranking person will either assume command, maintain command as is, or transfer command to a third party.



The **most qualified** person at the scene is designated as the Incident Commander.

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### Instructor Notes

Emphasize that all incident responses begin by establishing command. Explain that upon arriving at an incident, the higher ranking person will either assume command, maintain command as is, or transfer command to a third party. Point out that in some situations, a lower ranking person may be the Incident Commander if he or she is the most qualified person.

Ask the participants the following question: **Why is it critical to establish command from the beginning of incident operations?** If not mentioned by the participants, add the following key points:

- Lack of command becomes a safety hazard for responders.
- Size-up and decisionmaking are impossible without a command structure.
- It is difficult to expand a disorganized organization if the incident escalates.

Tell the participants that the process of moving responsibility for incident command from one Incident Commander to another is called transfer of command. Explain that a transfer of command occurs when:

- A more qualified person assumes command.
- The incident situation changes over time, resulting in a legal requirement to change command.
- There is normal turnover of personnel on extended incidents.
- The incident response is concluded and responsibility is transferred to the responsible agency.

Explain that transfer of command must include a transfer of command briefing – which may be oral, written, or a combination of both.



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## Incident Commander's Role



### The Incident Commander:

- Provides overall leadership for incident response.
- Takes policy direction from the Executive/Senior Official.
- Delegates authority to others.
- Ensures incident safety.
- Provides information to internal and external stakeholders.
- Establishes and maintains liaison with other agencies participating in the incident.
- Establishes incident objectives.
- Directs the development of the Incident Action Plan.

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## Instructor Notes

Explain that the Incident Commander:

- Provides the overall leadership for incident response. The Incident Commander is in charge of overall management of the incident and must be fully qualified to manage the incident.
- Takes policy direction from the Executive/Senior Official.
- Delegates authority to others to manage the ICS organization.
- Ensures the safety of incident responders and the public.
- Provides information to internal and external stakeholders.
- Establishes and maintains liaison with other agencies participating in the incident.
- Establishes incident objectives.
- Directs the development of the Incident Action Plan.

Note that the Incident Command will size up the incident and assess resource needs. If the incident is complex and/or long term, more staff may be needed. In addition, a Deputy Incident Commander may be assigned. Note that if a Deputy is assigned, he or she must be fully qualified to assume the Incident Commander's position.



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## Executives'/Senior Officials' Role & Responsibilities

### Executives/Senior Officials:

- Provide policy guidance on priorities and objectives based on situational needs and the Emergency Plan.
- Oversee resource coordination and support to the on-scene command from the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or through dispatch.



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## Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- The Executive/Senior Official (elected official, city/county manager, agency administrator, etc.) is responsible for the incident. In most jurisdictions, responsibility for the protection of the citizens rests with the chief elected official. Along with this responsibility, by virtue of their office, these people have the authority to make decisions, commit resources, obligate funds, and command the resources necessary to protect the population, stop the spread of damage, and protect the environment.
- Having the responsibility does not mean that the Executive/Senior Official assumes a command role over the on-scene incident operation. Rather, the Executive/Senior Official:
  - Provides policy guidance on priorities and objectives based on situational needs and the Emergency Plan.
  - Oversees resource coordination and support to the on-scene command from the Emergency Operations Center or through dispatch.
- Typically, the Executive/Senior Official is **not** at the scene of the incident, but must have the ability to communicate and meet with the Incident Commander as necessary.

Ask the participants to identify reasons why an Executive's/Senior Official's presence at the incident scene may be detrimental. If not mentioned by the participants, add the following key points:

- A visit from leadership personnel could draw more media and bystanders into a hazardous area.
- Response resources may be diverted away from critical tactical operations to attend to a visiting Executive/Senior Official.
- The presence of the Executive/Senior Official could cause confusion about the chain of command (who's in charge of on-scene operations).

Acknowledge that visits to the scene by an Executive/Senior Official may be beneficial to the operation.

Tell the participants that those visits must be coordinated with the Incident Commander and not jeopardize the response efforts.



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**Command vs. Coordination**

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**What is the difference between command and coordination?**

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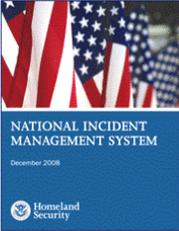
### Instructor Notes

Ask the participants: **What is the difference between command and coordination?** If possible, record the participants' responses on chart paper.



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## NIMS: Command



**Command:** The act of directing, ordering, or controlling by virtue of **explicit** statutory, regulatory, or delegated authority.

Who has the explicit authority for the management of all incident operations?

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### Instructor Notes

Compare the participants' response to the following definition:

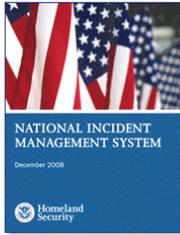
**Command:** The act of directing, ordering, or controlling by virtue of explicit statutory, regulatory, or delegated authority. In NIMS, responsibility for this process is delegated to the on-scene Incident Commander by the Executive/Senior Official. Examples of command activities include:

- Determining incident objectives.
- Establishing operational periods.
- Assigning and supervising field resources.



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## NIMS: Coordination



**Multiagency coordination** is a process that allows all levels of government and all disciplines to work together more efficiently and effectively.

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### Instructor Notes

Compare the participants' response to the following definition:

**Coordinate:** To advance systematically an analysis and exchange of information among principals who have or may have a need to know certain information to carry out specific incident management responsibilities. Coordination includes the activities that ensure that the ICS organization(s) receive the resources and support they need when they need them. Coordination takes place in a number of entities and at all levels of government. Examples of coordination activities include:

- Adjusting agency budgets, policies, and work priorities to make funds and resources available.
- Facilitating interagency decisionmaking.
- Coordinating interagency public information.
- Dispatching additional resources.



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### Executives/Senior Officials Delegate Command Authority

- Executives/Senior Officials delegate authority to the designated Incident Commander for on-scene operations.
- The Incident Commander has direct tactical and operational responsibility for conducting incident management activities.



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### Instructor Notes

Explain that Executives/Senior Officials **delegate** authority to the designated Incident Commander for on-scene operations. The Incident Commander is accountable to the Executive/Senior Official but has the complete authority to direct the operation.

Emphasize that direct tactical and operational responsibility for conducting incident management activities rests with the Incident Commander, while the Executive/Senior Official plays a vital coordination role.

Facilitate a discussion of the importance of keeping command and coordination roles clear by asking the following discussion question: **Why is it important to keep the command role solely with the Incident Command?**

Acknowledge the participants' input and add any personal experiences that illustrate the teaching points.

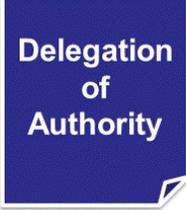


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## Delegation of Authority

Delegation of authority may be in writing (established in advance) or verbal, and include:

- Legal authorities and restrictions.
- Financial authorities and restrictions.
- Reporting requirements.
- Demographic issues.
- Political implications.
- Agency or jurisdictional priorities.
- Plan for public information management.
- Process for communications.
- Plan for ongoing incident evaluation.



Delegation  
of  
Authority

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## Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- An Incident Commander's scope of authority is derived:
  - From existing laws and agency policies and procedures, and/or
  - Through a delegation of authority from the agency administrator or elected official.
- A delegation of authority:
  - Grants authority to carry out specific functions.
  - Is issued by the chief elected official, chief executive officer, or agency administrator in writing or verbally.
  - Allows the Incident Commander to assume command.
  - Does NOT relieve the granting authority of the ultimate responsibility for the incident.
- Whether it is granted in writing or verbally, the authorities granted remain with the Incident Commander until such time as the incident is terminated, or a relief shift Incident Commander is appointed, or the Incident Commander is relieved of his or her duties for just cause.

Explain that a delegation of authority may not be required if the Incident Commander is acting within his or her existing authorities or under a preestablished delegation in the Emergency Plan. Present the following examples:

- Example 1: An emergency manager may already have the authority to deploy response resources to a small flash flood.
- Example 2: A fire chief probably has the authority (as part of the job description) to serve as an Incident Commander at a structure fire.

Refer to the visual and review the elements that should be included in a delegation of authority. Note that the delegation should also specify when the authority ends and conditions for demobilization (e.g., the teams will not be released until the following conditions have been met). Tell the participants that a sample delegation of authority can be found at the end of this briefing package.



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## Summary: Incident Management Roles

### Incident Commander's Role

The Incident Commander:

- Manages the incident at the scene.
- Keeps the EOC informed on all important matters pertaining to the incident.

### Agency Executives'/Senior Officials' Role

These officials provide the following to the Incident Commander:

- Policy
- Mission
- Strategic direction
- Authority

To maintain unity of command and safety of responders, the chain of command must NOT be bypassed.

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## Instructor Notes

Use the visual to summarize the different roles assumed by the Executive/Senior Official and Incident Commander. Add the following key points:

- The Executive's/Senior Official's task is to ensure that you are informed and that your Incident Commander is functioning in a responsible manner. You set policy, establish the mission to be accomplished, shape the overall direction, and give the trained responders the authority to accomplish the incident objectives.
- The Incident Commander is the primary person in charge at the incident. In addition to managing the incident scene, he or she is trained to keep you informed and up to date on all important matters pertaining to the incident.

Present the following example or add one from your jurisdiction: The Washington area sniper case was one of the most infamous crimes in recent law enforcement history, instilling fear in thousands of people. According to the after-action report, communication was clearly the most compelling concern in the sniper case. Investigations of this kind succeed or fail based on executives' ability to effectively manage and communicate information in a timely manner. Incident Commanders must balance the incident needs with the obligations of local executives to be responsive to their citizens. In the words of one police chief, "You cannot expect leaders to stop leading."

The final responsibility for the resolution of the incident remains with the chief elected official, chief executive officer, or agency administrator. It is imperative then that the chief elected official, chief executive officer, or agency administrator remain an active participant, supporter, supervisor, and evaluator of the Incident Commander.

Summarize the discussion by noting that the **ICS hierarchy of command must be maintained**. After you have clearly articulated the policy you wish followed and delegated certain authorities, the Incident Commander who reports to you will have the necessary authority and guidance to manage the incident.



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## Command Staff

The Incident Commander may designate a Command Staff who:

- Provide information, liaison, and safety services for the entire organization.
- Report directly to the Incident Commander.



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## Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- The Command Staff is assigned to carry out staff functions needed to support the Incident Commander. These functions include interagency liaison, incident safety, and public information.
- Incident Command comprises the Incident Commander and Command Staff. Command Staff positions are established to assign responsibility for key activities not specifically identified in the General Staff functional elements.
- The Command Staff includes the following positions:
  - **Public Information Officer**
    - Advises the Incident Commander on information dissemination and media relations.
    - Obtains information from and provides information to the Planning Section.
    - Obtains information from and provides information to the community and media.
  - **Liaison Officer**
    - Assists the Incident Commander by serving as a point of contact for agency representatives who are helping to support the operation.
    - Provides briefings to and answers questions from supporting agencies.
  - **Safety Officer**
    - Advises the Incident Commander on issues regarding incident safety.
    - Works with the Operations Section to ensure the safety of field personnel.

Ask the participants to identify types of incidents where it would be critical to assign a Safety Officer.
- The Command Staff may include additional positions as required and assigned by the Incident Commander.



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## Instructor Notes

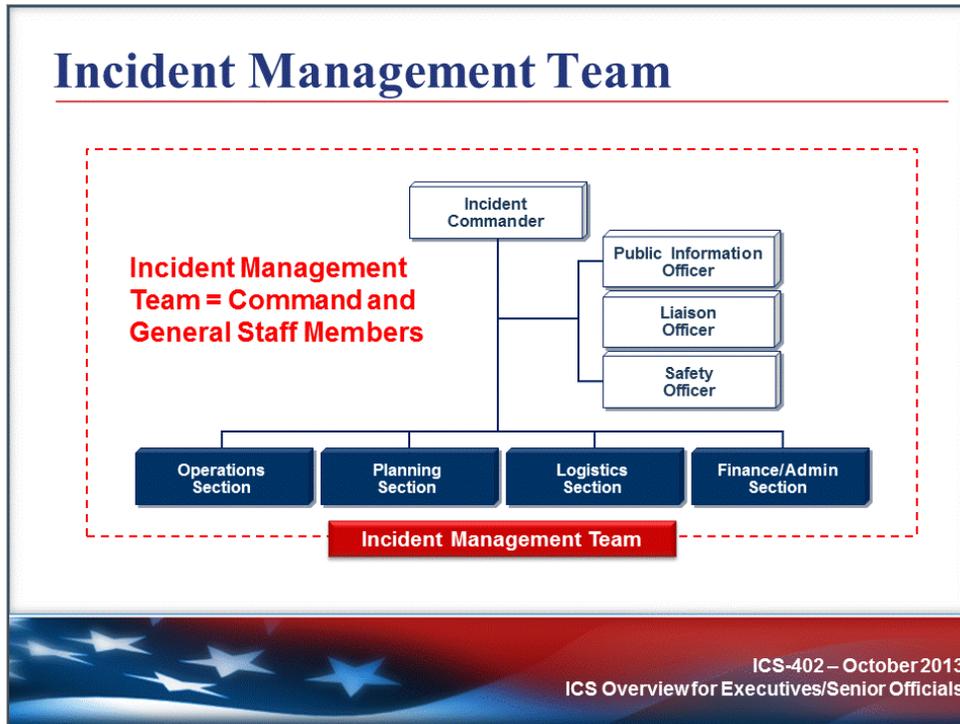
Present the following key points:

- The General Staff represents and is responsible for the functional aspects of the Incident Command structure.
- The General Staff typically consists of the Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Sections.
- As the number of operational responders (tactical resources) increases, the need for support resources (e.g., food, communications equipment, or supplies) increases.
- General guidelines related to General Staff positions include the following:
- Only one person will be designated to lead each General Staff position.
- General Staff positions may be filled by qualified persons from any agency or jurisdiction.
- Members of the General Staff report directly to the Incident Commander. If a General Staff position is not activated, the Incident Commander will have responsibility for that functional activity.
- Deputy positions may be established for each of the General Staff Section Chiefs and Operations Section Branch Directors. Deputies are individuals fully qualified to fill the primary position. Deputies can be designated from other jurisdictions or agencies, as appropriate. This strategy allows for greater interagency coordination.
- **General Staff members may exchange information with any person within the organization. Direction takes place through the chain of command.** This is an important concept in ICS.
- General Staff positions should not be combined. For example, to establish a "Planning and Logistics Section," it is better to initially create the two separate functions, and if necessary for a short time place one person in charge of both. That way, the transfer of responsibility can be made easier.

Refer the participants to the handout, found at the end of the briefing package, that includes a description of all the Command and General Staff positions.



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## Instructor Notes

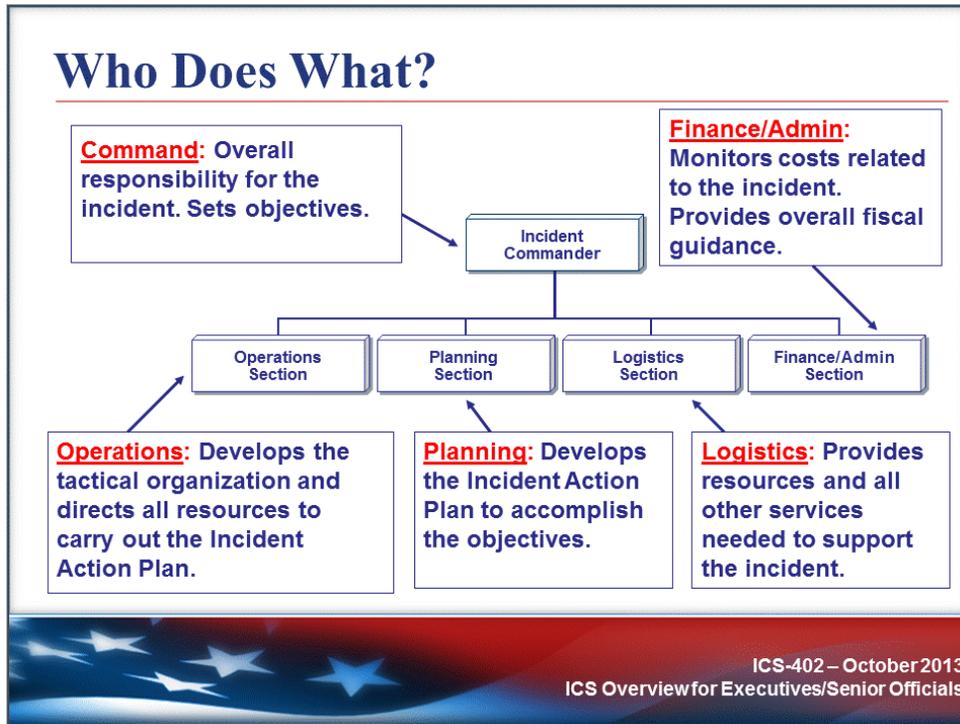
Present the following key points:

- An Incident Management Team (IMT) is an incident command organization made up of the Command and General Staff members and other appropriate personnel in an ICS organization.
- The level of training and experience of the IMT members, coupled with the identified formal response requirements and responsibilities of the IMT, are factors in determining the “type,” or level, of IMT.
- IMTs may be designated prior to an incident in order to train and exercise together to become qualified to respond to different types of incidents.

Provide examples of IMTs from within the participants’ agency or jurisdiction.



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## Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

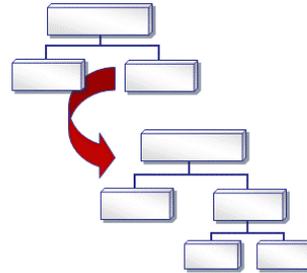
- The **Incident Commander** is responsible for establishing incident objectives.
- The **Operations Section Chief** is responsible for managing all tactical operations at an incident. The Incident Action Plan provides the necessary guidance. The need to expand the Operations Section is generally dictated by the number of tactical resources involved and is influenced by span of control considerations.
- The **Planning Section Chief** is responsible for providing planning services for the incident.
- Under the direction of the Planning Section Chief, the Planning Section collects situation and resources status information, evaluates it, and processes the information for use in developing action plans. Dissemination of information can be in the form of the Incident Action Plan, in formal briefings, or through map and status board displays.
- The **Logistics Section Chief** provides all incident support needs with the exception of logistics support to air operations.
- The **Finance/Administration Section Chief** is responsible for managing all financial aspects of an incident. Not all incidents will require a Finance/Administration Section. Only when the involved agencies have a specific need for finance services will the Section be activated.



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## Modular Organization (1 of 2)

- Develops in a top-down, modular fashion.
- Is based on the size and complexity of the incident.
- Is based on the hazard environment created by the incident.



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### Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- The ICS organization adheres to a “form follows function” philosophy. The size of the current organization and that of the next operational period are determined through the incident planning process.
- An ICS organization is a modular organization, which means that it:
  - Develops in a top-down, modular fashion.
  - Is based on the size and complexity of the incident.
  - Is based on the hazard environment created by the incident.

Emphasize that the ICS organization is expanded and contracted to maintain an optimal span of control. With an ICS organization, span of control for any supervisor:

- Is between 3 and 7 subordinates.
- Optimally does not exceed 5 subordinates.

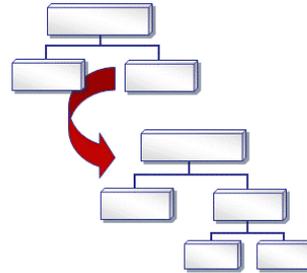
Ask the participants what factors might affect the span of control at an incident. If not mentioned, explain that safety is the single most important factor. More hazardous incidents require the smallest span of control to mitigate against risks.



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## Modular Organization (2 of 2)

- Incident objectives determine the organizational size.
- Only functions/positions that are necessary will be filled.
- Each element must have a person in charge.



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### Instructor Notes

Explain that employing a modular organization means that:

- Incident objectives determine the organizational size.
- Only functions/positions that are necessary will be filled.
- Each element must have a person in charge.

**Optional:** Distribute examples of organizational charts from recent incidents that demonstrate how the ICS organization adjusts to fit the requirements of the incident.



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### Example: Expanding Incident (1 of 3)

**Scenario:** On a chilly autumn day, a parent calls 911 to report a missing 7-year-old child in a wooded area adjacent to a coastal area.

```
graph TD; IC[Incident Commander] --- SO[Safety Officer]; IC --- PIO[Public Information Officer]; IC --- LO[Liaison Officer]; PIO --- EMS[EMS Group]; PIO --- SG[Search Group]; LO --- IG[Investigation Group];
```

Initially, the Incident Commander manages the General Staff resources.

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## Instructor Notes

Tell the participants to review the scenario described on the visual.

### Scenario

- At 4:30 p.m. on a chilly autumn day, a parent calls 911 to report a missing 7-year-old child. The child was outside playing and may have wandered off into a vast wooded area adjacent to a coastal area.
- The initial ICS organization includes:
  - Safety Officer to ensure the well-being of all responders and volunteers.
  - Liaison Officer to coordinate the different response groups.
  - Public Information Officer to handle the increasing numbers of media arriving at the scene.
- The Incident Command is managing the following tactical resources: Emergency Medical Services Group, Search Group, and Investigation Group. The Search Group and Investigation Group each have a Supervisor who reports to the Incident Commander.

**Instructor Note:** Use the next series of visuals to demonstrate how the ICS organizational structure expands and contracts through the life-cycle of an incident. If time permits, ask the participants to identify the Executive's/Senior Official's priorities and actions.



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## Example: Expanding Incident (2 of 3)

**Scenario:** As additional resource personnel arrive, the Incident Commander assigns an Operations Section Chief to maintain span of control.

As the incident expands, an Operations Section Chief is assigned.



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### Instructor Notes

Explain that as resources continue to expand, the Incident Commander assigns an Operations Section Chief to manage the tactical operations and resources.

The initial Operations Section includes a Staging Area where available resources wait for assignments. Three Groups have been established: the EMS Group, Search Group, and Investigation Group. Within the Search Group, resources are being organized into teams.

If the incident expands more, then the Operations Section Chief may add:

- Divisions, which are used to divide an incident geographically.
- Branches, which are used when the number of Divisions or Groups exceeds the span of control, and which can be either geographical or functional.

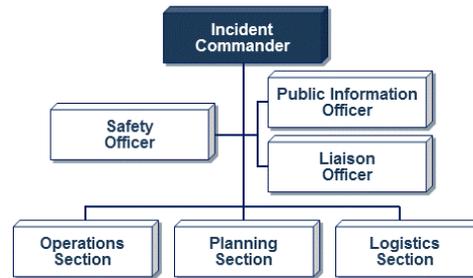


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## Example: Expanding Incident (3 of 3)

**Scenario:** With hundreds of responders and volunteers arriving, there is a need for on-scene support of the planning and logistics functions.

The Incident Commander adds a Planning Section Chief and Logistics Section Chief.



Remember . . . Not all Sections need to be activated.

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### Instructor Notes

Tell the participants to review the next part of the scenario. After the first hour, the Incident Commander establishes the following additional Sections to support the operation:

- Planning Section to develop the Incident Action Plan and track the status of resources on the scene.
- Logistics Section to provide resources and all other services needed to support the incident. The Logistics Section will order needed resources, set up communications systems, and establish feeding areas for searchers.

Note that in this incident the Finance and Administration functions were not needed. Sections are only established if needed.

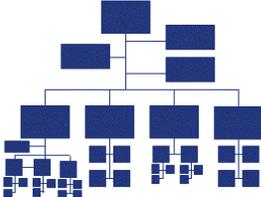
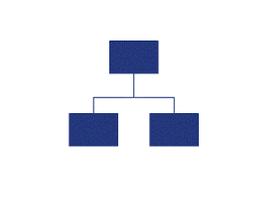
Explain that although there are no hard-and-fast rules, it is important to remember that:

- Only functions/positions that are necessary are filled.
- Each activated element must have a person in charge.
- An effective span of control must be maintained.



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### Incident Complexity and Resource Needs

	Incident Complexity	Resource Needs	ICS Structure
↑ Complexity			
			

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### Instructor Notes

Refer the participants to the visual. Note that as demonstrated in the lost child scenario, as complexity increases, resources must increase, requiring an organization with additional levels of supervision.



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## Complexity Analysis Factors

In your agency or jurisdiction,  
what factors may affect the  
complexity of an incident?

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### Instructor Notes

Ask the participants to identify the factors that may affect the complexity of an incident. If not mentioned, add any of the following relevant factors:

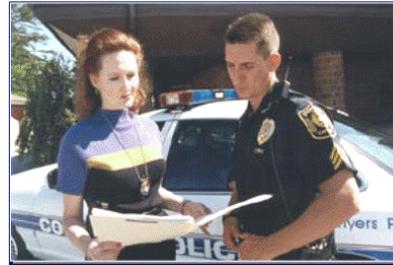
- Impacts to life, property, and the economy
- Community and responder safety
- Potential hazardous materials
- Weather and other environmental influences
- Likelihood of cascading events (events that trigger other events)
- Potential crime scene (including terrorism)
- Political sensitivity, external influences, and media relations
- Area involved, jurisdictional boundaries
- Availability of resources



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## Management by Objectives

- ICS is managed by objectives.
- Objectives are communicated throughout the entire ICS organization.



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### Instructor Notes

Tell the group that management by objectives is another key ICS feature. Emphasize these key points:

- ICS is managed by objectives.
- Objectives are communicated throughout the entire ICS organization.

Tell participants that the steps for establishing incident objectives include:

- Step 1: Understand agency policy and direction.
- Step 2: Assess incident situation.
- Step 3: Establish incident objectives.
- Step 4: Select appropriate strategy or strategies to achieve objectives.
- Step 5: Perform tactical direction.
- Step 6: Provide necessary followup.



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## Overall Priorities

Initial decisions and objectives are established based on the following priorities:

- #1: Life Safety**
- #2: Incident Stabilization**
- #3: Property/Environmental Conservation**



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## Instructor Notes

Explain that the Incident Commander develops incident objectives—the statement of what is to be accomplished on the incident. Not all incident objectives have the same importance.

Incident objectives can be prioritized using the following simple “LIP” mnemonic:

- **Life Safety:** Objectives that deal with immediate threats to the safety of the public and responders are the first priority.
- **Incident Stabilization:** Objectives that contain the incident to keep it from expanding and objectives that control the incident to eliminate or mitigate the cause are the second priority.
- **Property/Environmental Conservation:** Objectives that deal with issues of protecting public and private property and the environment are the third priority.

Explain that incident objectives are not necessarily completed in sequence determined by priority. It may be necessary to complete an objective related to incident stabilization before a life safety objective can be completed. Using the LIP mnemonic helps prioritize incident objectives. This device can also be used to prioritize multiple incidents, with those incidents with significant life safety issues being given a higher priority than those with lesser or no life safety issues.

Ask the participants for examples of each type of priority. Present examples based on your experience.



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## Reliance on an Incident Action Plan

The Incident Commander creates an Incident Action Plan (IAP) that:

- Specifies the incident objectives.
- States the activities to be completed.
- Covers a specified timeframe, called an operational period.
- May be oral or written—except for hazardous materials incidents, which require a written IAP.
- Takes into account legal and policy considerations and direction.



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### Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- Every incident, large or small, requires some form of an Incident Action Plan (IAP). For most incidents that are small, the IAP is developed by the Incident Commander and verbally passed on to subordinates and assigned resources.
- The operational period is the period of time scheduled for completion of a given set of actions called for in the IAP. The length of the period is determined by the Incident Commander and may be as short as 1 hour or as long as 24 hours, or even multiple days.
- As incidents grow in size or complexity and/or as other agencies and resources are added, it is important to document vital information pertaining to the plan of action for the incident.
- On large incidents, preparation of a written IAP is accomplished within the Planning Section. The Incident Commander establishes the objectives and strategy, based on needs of the incident and policy and guidance from the Executive/Senior Official.
- The Incident Commander will hold a planning meeting involving, at a minimum, the General and Command Staffs. The planning meeting is key to developing an effective Incident Action Plan.

Note that an IAP covers an operational period and includes:

- What must be done.
- Who is responsible.
- How information will be communicated.
- What should be done if someone is injured.



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## Resource Management

Resource management includes processes for:

- Categorizing resources.
- Ordering resources.
- Dispatching resources.
- Tracking resources.
- Recovering resources.



It also includes processes for reimbursement for resources, as appropriate.

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### Instructor Notes

Explain that in ICS, resources are defined as personnel, teams, equipment, supplies, and facilities. Explain that ICS identifies resources as tactical or support resources. Provide the following definitions:

- Tactical Resources: Personnel and major items of equipment used in the operation.
- Support Resources: All other resources required to support the incident (e.g., food, communications equipment, supplies).

Present the following key points:

- Resources at an incident must be managed effectively. Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date picture of resource utilization is a critical component of incident management.
- Resource management includes processes for:
  - Categorizing resources.
  - Ordering resources.
  - Dispatching resources.
  - Tracking resources. Resources are tracked as follows:
    - **Assigned** - Currently working on an assignment under the direction of a supervisor
    - **Available** - Ready for immediate assignment and has been issued all required equipment
    - **Out of Service** - Not available or ready to be assigned (e.g., maintenance issues, rest periods)
- Recovering resources.

Point out that resource management also includes processes for reimbursement for resources, as appropriate.



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## Integrated Communications

Incident communications are facilitated through:

- The development and use of a common communications plan.
- The interoperability of communication equipment, procedures, and systems.

Before an incident, it is critical to develop an integrated voice and data communications system (equipment, systems, and protocols).



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### Instructor Notes

Explain to the group that another important feature of ICS is the use of integrated communications.

Summarize the following key points:

- Effective emergency management and incident response activities rely upon flexible communications and information systems that provide a common operating picture to emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations.
- Establishing and maintaining a common operating picture and ensuring accessibility and interoperability are the principal goals of the Communications and Information Management component of NIMS.
- Properly planned, established, and utilized communications enable the dissemination of information among and between command and support elements and, as appropriate, cooperating agencies and organizations.

Explain that incident communications are facilitated through the development and use of common communications plans and interoperable communications equipment, processes, standards, and architectures. This integrated approach links the operational and support units of the various organizations involved during an incident, which is necessary to maintain communications connectivity and situational awareness. Planning for communications and information management must address the incident-related policies and equipment, systems, standards, and training necessary to achieve integrated communications.



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## Interoperability Saves Lives

Jan. 13, 1982: 70 people lost their lives when Air Florida Flight 90 crashed in Washington, DC. Police, fire, and EMS crews responded quickly but couldn't coordinate their efforts because they couldn't talk to each other by radio.

Sept. 11, 2001: When American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon, 900 users from 50 different agencies were able to communicate with one another. Response agencies had learned an invaluable lesson from the Air Florida tragedy.

**Interoperability makes sense. It's a cost-saver,  
a resource-saver, and a lifesaver.**

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## Instructor Notes

Review the following incidents in order to point out the importance of interoperability:

- January 13, 1982: Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the 14th Street Bridge in Washington, DC, during a snowstorm. More than 70 people lost their lives. Police, fire, and EMS crews responded quickly to the scene but discovered that they couldn't coordinate their efforts because they couldn't talk to each other by radio.
- September 11, 2001: When American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon, 900 users from 50 different agencies were able to communicate with one another. Response agencies had learned an invaluable lesson from the Air Florida tragedy. Washington-area agencies had instituted a formal Incident Command System for large emergencies before the attack, so the chain of command was clear.

The Public Safety Wireless Network Program, a joint effort sponsored by the U.S. Departments of Justice and the Treasury, issued a report titled, "Answering the Call: Communications Lessons Learned from the Pentagon Attack." The report noted that:

"During the initial response, the majority of local public safety responders experienced no difficulty in establishing interoperable communications on the scene. This was because of the high level of regional coordination and agreements previously established. However, as the number of State and Federal agencies (secondary responders) increased at the site, interoperability presented new challenges. No means of direct interoperability was immediately available to these secondary response agencies."



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## Mobilization

At any incident:

- The situation must be assessed and the response planned.
- Managing resources safely and effectively is the most important consideration.
- Personnel and equipment should not be dispatched unless requested by the on-scene Incident Command.



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## Instructor Notes

Point out that another key feature of ICS is the importance of managing resources to adjust to changing conditions.

Emphasize that at any incident:

- The situation must be assessed and the response planned.
- Managing resources safely and effectively is the most important consideration.
- Personnel and equipment should not be dispatched unless requested by the on-scene Incident Command.

Ask the participants the following discussion question: **What's the issue with having personnel arrive at an incident without being requested or dispatched?** If not mentioned by the participants, add the following points:

- Uncontrolled and uncoordinated arrival of resources at emergencies causes significant accountability issues.
- Self-dispatched or freelancing resources cause safety risks to responders, civilians, and others who are operating within the parameters of the Incident Action Plan.
- Chaos at the scene occurs, creating additional risks.
- Emergency access routes can be blocked, preventing trained responders from gaining access to the site or not allowing critically injured personnel to be transported from the scene.

In the World Trade Center 9/11 response, many private and volunteer ambulance units self-dispatched, undermining command and control at the scene and clogging the streets so that other responders assigned to the WTC had difficulty getting through.

The bottom line is that when resources show up that have not been requested, the management of the incident can be compromised.



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## Part 3: Unified & Area Command



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### Instructor Notes

Transition to the next part of the briefing by explaining that ICS has additional organizational structures to address incidents that affect multiple jurisdictions or responsible agencies.



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## Unified Command

**As a team effort, Unified Command allows all agencies with jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility for an incident to jointly provide management direction to the incident.**

**In Unified Command, no agency's legal authorities will be compromised or neglected.**



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### Instructor Notes

Introduce this topic by telling participants that:

- Early in the development of ICS, it was recognized that many incidents crossed jurisdictional boundaries or the limits of individual agency functional responsibility.
- As a team effort, Unified Command allows all agencies with jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility for an incident to jointly provide management direction to the incident.

Emphasize that NIMS encourages the use of Unified Command when appropriate.

Reinforce the points you just covered on Unified Command by referring to the excerpt on the visual. This excerpt is from the following longer quote from the NIMS document:

“Unified Command is an important element in multijurisdictional or multiagency incident management. It provides guidelines to enable agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively. As a team effort, Unified Command allows all agencies with jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility for the incident to jointly provide management direction to an incident through a common set of incident objectives and strategies and a single Incident Action Plan. Each participating agency maintains its authority, responsibility, and accountability.”



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## Unified Command

- Establishes a common set of incident objectives and strategies.
- Allows Incident Commanders to make joint decisions by establishing a single command structure.
- Maintains unity of command. Each employee reports to only one supervisor.



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## Instructor Notes

Explain that Unified Command:

- Enables all responsible agencies to manage an incident together by establishing a common set of incident objectives and strategies.
- Allows Incident Commanders to make joint decisions by establishing a single command structure.
- Maintains unity of command. Each employee only reports to one supervisor.

Summarize the following key points about Unified Command:

- Unified Command is an important element in multijurisdictional or multiagency domestic incident management. It provides guidelines to enable agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.
- As a team effort, Unified Command overcomes much of the inefficiency and duplication of effort that can occur when agencies from different functional and geographic jurisdictions, or agencies at different levels of government, operate without a common system or organizational framework.
- All agencies with jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility for any or all aspects of an incident and those able to provide specific resource support participate in the Unified Command structure and contribute to the process of determining overall incident strategies, selecting objectives, and ensuring that joint tactical planning occurs.
- No agency's legal authorities will be compromised or neglected.

Note: Agency is used to describe organizations that have a legal and functional responsibility at an incident. The graphic depicts three Incident Commanders (Incident Commander #1 for firefighting, Incident Commander #2 for the law enforcement investigation, and Incident Commander #3 for search and rescue operations). This graphic is simply a representation of how multiple commanders may be assigned. In another situation, the Incident Commanders could be from different jurisdictions rather than from different departments within the same jurisdiction.



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## Example: Unified Command

A football team is returning home from a State tournament. Their bus is involved in an accident on the bridge that marks the county line.

- Most of the bus is in Franklin County.
- A small part of the bus is in Revere County (their home county).

Why might a Unified Command be used to manage this incident?

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### Instructor Notes

Review the following example with the group: A football team is returning home from a State tournament. Their bus is involved in an accident on the bridge that marks the county line.

- Most of the bus is in Franklin County.
- A small part of the bus is in Revere County (their home county).

Ask the group the following question: **Why might a Unified Command be used to manage this incident?**

Allow the participants time to respond. Facilitate a discussion with the group about why Unified Command might be used to manage this type of incident. If not mentioned by the participants, stress these key points:

- Because this accident covers two counties, there will be at least two responsible agencies involved in responding to the incident.
- Using Unified Command allows all responsible agencies to manage the incident together by establishing a common set of incident objectives and strategies.



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## Definition of Area Command

Area Command is used to oversee the management of:

- Multiple incidents that are each being handled by an Incident Command System organization; or
- A very large incident that has multiple incident management teams assigned to it.



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## Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- Area Command is used when there are a number of incidents generally in the same area and often of the same kind. Examples include two or more hazardous materials spills, fires, etc. Often these kinds of incidents will vie for the same resources.
- When an incident expands to a large geographic area, the agency officials may choose to divide the incident into smaller pieces, called zones, each of which will be managed by an Incident Management Team (IMT).
- When incidents are of different kinds and/or do not have similar resource demands, they will usually be handled as separate incidents or will be coordinated through an Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Explain that the use of an Area Command makes the jobs of Incident Commanders and agency officials easier for the following reasons:

- Much of the cross-incident coordination typically performed by each Incident Commander is accomplished at the Area Command level. Using an Area Command allows the Incident Commanders and their IMTs to focus attention on their incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.
- Area Command sets priorities between incidents and ensures efficient resource use. Critical resources are allocated by the overall priorities established by the agency officials. Competition among incidents for critical resources is avoided. Often, agency dispatchers will recognize cross-incident coordination problems first.
- Area Command ensures that agency policies, priorities, constraints, and guidance are being made known to the Incident Commanders and implemented consistently across incidents.
- Area Command also reduces the workload of Executives/Senior Officials, especially if there are multiple incidents going on at the same time.



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## Area Command: Primary Functions

- Provide agency or jurisdictional authority for assigned incidents.
- Ensure a clear understanding of agency expectations, intentions, and constraints.
- Establish critical resource use priorities between various incidents.
- Ensure that Incident Management Team personnel assignments and organizations are appropriate.
- Maintain contact with officials in charge, and other agencies and groups.
- Coordinate the demobilization or reassignment of resources between assigned incidents.



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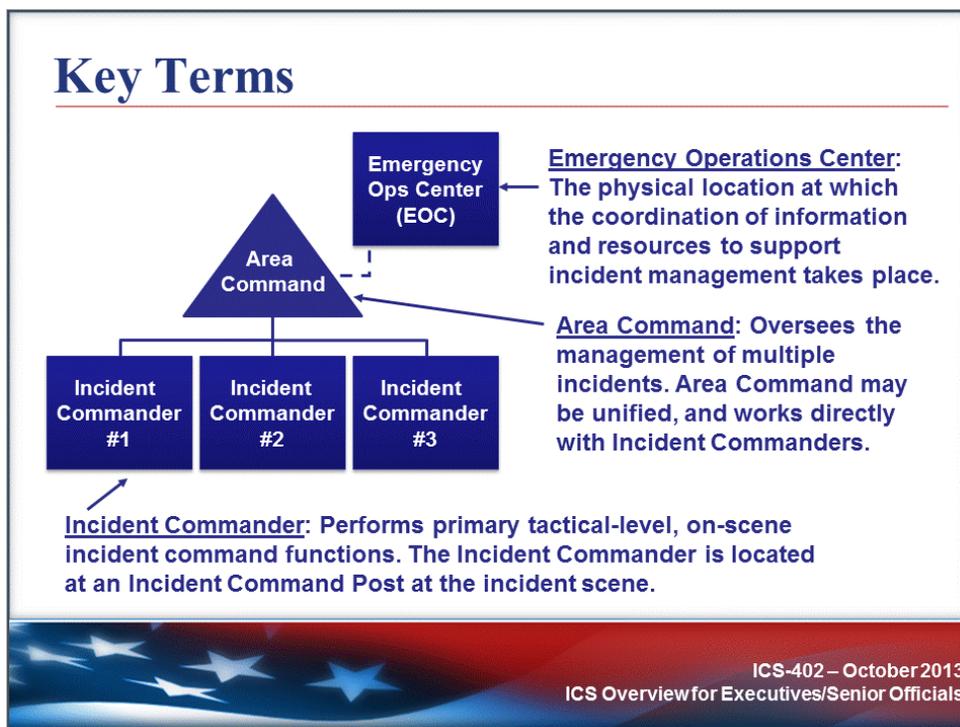
### Instructor Notes

Explain that the Area Command is designed to ensure the effective management of assigned incidents. To do this, the Area Commander has the authority and responsibility to do the following for incidents within the Area Command:

- Provide agency or jurisdictional authority for assigned incidents.
- Ensure a clear understanding of agency expectations, intentions, and constraints.
- Establish critical resource use priorities between various incidents.
- Ensure that Incident Management Team personnel assignments and organizations are appropriate.
- Maintain contact with officials in charge, and other agencies and groups.
- Coordinate the demobilization or reassignment of resources between assigned incidents.



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## Instructor Notes

Remind the participants that command structures direct on-scene emergency management. Review the following command structures:

- **Incident Commander:** Performs primary tactical-level, on-scene incident command functions. The Incident Commander is located at an Incident Command Post at the incident scene.
- **Area Command:** An organization established to oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being handled by a separate Incident Command System organization, or to oversee the management of a very large or evolving incident that has multiple Incident Management Teams engaged. Area Command may be unified, and works directly with Incident Commanders. An agency administrator/executive or other public official with jurisdictional responsibility for the incident usually makes the decision to establish an Area Command. An Area Command is activated only if necessary, depending on the complexity of the incident and incident management span-of-control considerations.
- **Emergency Operations Center (EOC):** Coordinates information and resources to support local incident management activities. The EOC is the physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support incident management (on-scene operations) activities normally takes place. An EOC may be a temporary facility or may be located in a more central or permanently established facility, perhaps at a higher level of organization within a jurisdiction. EOCs may be organized by major functional disciplines (e.g., fire, law enforcement, and medical services), by jurisdiction (e.g., Federal, State, regional, tribal, city, county), or some combination thereof.



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## Part 4: Coordination & Incident Management Assessment



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### Instructor Notes

Explain that the next part of the presentation focuses on coordination and incident management assessment.



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## Multiagency Support and Coordination

Provide support and coordination to incident command by:

- Making policy decisions.
- Establishing priorities.
- Resolving critical resource issues.
- Facilitating logistics support and resource tracking.
- Collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information.

```
graph TD; LEOC[Local Emergency Ops Center (EOC)]; SEOC[State Emergency Ops Center (EOC)]; FEOC[Federal Emergency Ops Center (EOC)]; IC[Incident Command]; LEOC -.- IC; SEOC -.- IC; FEOC -.- IC;
```

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### Instructor Notes

Explain that the role of multiagency coordination centers/EOCs is often related to the size or complexity of the jurisdiction involved. The most common roles include:

- Making policy decisions.
- Establishing priorities.
- Resolving critical resource issues.
- Facilitating logistics support and resource tracking.
- Collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information.

Written agreements allow agencies within a Multiagency Coordination System (MACS) to conduct activities using established rules and are often self-defined by the participating organizations. A fully implemented MACS is critical for seamless multiagency coordination activities and is essential to the success and safety of the response whenever more than one jurisdictional agency responds. Moreover, the use of a MACS is one of the fundamental components of Command and Management within NIMS, as it promotes scalability and flexibility necessary for a coordinated response.



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## Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- In many emergencies, agencies have statutory responsibilities at incidents that extend beyond political jurisdictional boundaries. Many larger emergencies will involve two or more political subdivisions. It may be essential to establish a Multiagency Coordination System to assist the coordination efforts on an area or regional basis.
- NIMS describes MACS as providing “the architecture to support coordination for incident prioritization, critical resource allocation, communications systems integration, and information coordination. MACS assist agencies and organizations responding to an incident. The elements of a MACS include facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications.”
- MACS functions typically include: situation assessment, incident priority determination, critical resource acquisition and allocation, support for relevant incident management policies and interagency activities, coordination with other MACS, and coordination of summary information.
- A Multiagency Coordination System is not a physical location or facility. Rather, a MACS includes all components involved in managing events or incidents. A MACS may include:
  - On-scene command structure and responders.
  - Resource coordination centers.
  - Coordination entities/groups.
  - Emergency Operations Centers.
  - Dispatch.



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## Managing Public Information



### The **Public Information Officer**:

- Represents and advises the Incident Command.
- Manages on-scene media and public inquiries.



### The **Joint Information Center (JIC)** is a physical location used to coordinate:

- Critical emergency information.
- Crisis communications.
- Public affairs functions.

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## Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- **Public information** consists of the processes, procedures, and systems to communicate timely, accurate, and accessible information on an incident's cause, size, and current situation to the public, responders, and additional stakeholders (both directly affected and indirectly affected). Public information must be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions and agencies. Well developed public information, education strategies, and communications plans help to ensure that lifesaving measures, evacuation routes, threat and alert systems, and other public safety information is coordinated and communicated to numerous audiences in a timely, consistent manner. Public information includes processes, procedures, and organizational structures required to gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate information.
- The **Public Information Officer** supports the Incident Command structure as a member of the Command staff. The Public Information Officer advises the Incident Commander on all public information matters relating to the management of the incident. The Public Information Officer handles inquiries from the media, the public, and elected officials; emergency public information and warnings; rumor monitoring and response; media monitoring; and other functions required to gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate accurate, accessible, and timely information related to the incident, particularly regarding information on public health, safety, and protection.
- The Public Information Officer coordinates through the **Joint Information Center (JIC)**, an interagency entity established to coordinate and disseminate information for the public and media concerning an incident. JICs may be established locally, regionally, or nationally depending on the size and magnitude of the incident.

Ask the participants: **Why is the JIC a critical component within the Multiagency Coordination System?** Facilitate a discussion based on your experiences and the participants' input.

Source: National Incident Management System



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## Speaking With One Voice



- Executives/Senior Officials must coordinate and integrate messages with on-scene Public Information Officers and other agencies.
- A **Joint Information System** (established procedures and protocols) is used to help ensure coordination of messages.

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### Instructor Notes

Emphasize that Executives/Senior Officials must coordinate and integrate messages with on-scene Public Information Officers and other agencies.

Explain that the **Joint Information System (JIS)**:

- Integrates incident information and public affairs into a cohesive organization designed to provide consistent, coordinated, timely information during crisis or incident operations.
- Provides a structure and system for:
  - Developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages.
  - Developing, recommending, and executing public information plans and strategies on behalf of the Incident Commander.
  - Advising the Incident Commander concerning public affairs issues that could affect a response effort.
  - Controlling rumors and inaccurate information that could undermine public confidence in the emergency response effort.

Emphasize that the JIS is not a single physical location, but rather is a coordination framework that incorporates the on-scene Public Information Officer with other Public Information Officers who may be located at the JIC, EOC, or other coordination center.

Ask the participants if they understand the differences between a JIC and a JIS. Clarify any misunderstandings before proceeding.



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## Coordination Among Agencies

A wide-area search is underway for a child who is missing. The search covers the areas shown on the map.

What agencies may be part of the MACS?

What activities are being coordinated?

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### Instructor Notes

Review the following scenario: A wide-area search is underway for a child who is missing. The search covers the areas shown on the map.

Next ask the following discussion questions:

- **What agencies may be part of the MACS?**

Possible Answers

- National Park Service
- County A - Fire and Rescue
- County B - Sheriff's Search and Rescue
- U.S. Coast Guard
- State Parks Department
- State National Guard Volunteer Groups
- Private landowners and/or industry

- **What activities are being coordinated?**

Possible Answers

- Prioritizing resource requests
- Providing logistics support and tracking
- Coordinating media



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## Incident Management Assessment

Assessment is an important leadership responsibility. Assessment methods include:

- Corrective action report/ after-action review.
- Post-incident analysis.
- Debriefing.
- Post-incident critique.
- Mitigation plans.



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### Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- Management is an important leadership responsibility.
- Assessments should be conducted after a major activity in order to allow employees and leaders to discover what happened and why.
- Common assessment methods include:
  - Corrective action report/after-action review.
  - Post-incident analysis.
  - Debriefing.
  - Post-incident critique.
  - Mitigation plans.



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## After-Action Review

Ensure an after-action review is conducted and answers the following questions:

- What did we set out to do?
- What actually happened?
- Why did it happen?
- What are we going to do different next time?
- Are there lessons learned that should be shared?
- What followup is needed?

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## Instructor Notes

Present the following key points:

- An after-action review (AAR) is conducted to identify what was supposed to happen, what actually happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve weaknesses. An assessment may be conducted at the end of an incident or at the completion of a major milestone.
- The AAR should not be conducted as a critique. An effective AAR:
  - Is not judgmental or punitive, and does not judge success or failure.
  - Focuses on why things happened.
  - Encourages participants to identify and capture important lessons.
- An AAR may be either formal or informal.
  - **Formal AAR.** A formal AAR is more structured, requires planning, and takes longer to conduct. A neutral third party should facilitate a formal AAR.
  - **Informal AAR.** Informal AARs are less structured, require much less preparation and planning, and can be conducted anywhere, anytime, for any incident, by anyone.
- Whether formal or informal, an AAR should seek answers to the following questions:
  - What did we set out to do?
  - What actually happened?
  - Why did it happen?
  - What are we going to do different next time?
  - Are there lessons learned that should be shared?
  - What followup is needed?



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## Part 5: NIMS Preparedness



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### Instructor Notes

Note that the final section of this briefing presents NIMS preparedness actions that Executives/Senior Officials should ensure are taking place in their jurisdictions.

Emphasize that the Executive's/Senior Official's role in NIMS preparedness is significant. When incidents occur, it's too late to build an effective response system. As an Executive/Senior Official, your decision to make preparedness a continued priority may save more lives than any actions you take during the response to an incident. You should consult with your Emergency Manager frequently to be kept abreast of your agency's/jurisdiction's readiness.



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## Check Plans, Policies, and Laws

Do your agency's/jurisdiction's preparedness plans, policies, and laws:

- Comply with NIMS, including ICS?
- Cover all hazards?
- Include delegations of authority (as appropriate)?
- Include up-to-date information?



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### Instructor Notes

Note that preparedness plans may take many forms, but the most common include:

- Federal, State, or local emergency plans. Note: Emergency plans are developed at the Federal, State, and local levels to provide a uniform response to all hazards that a community may face. Preparedness plans must be consistent with the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
- Standard operating guidelines (SOGs).
- Standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- Jurisdictional or agency policies.

Explain that Executives/Senior Officials should ensure that their jurisdiction's preparedness plans, policies, and laws:

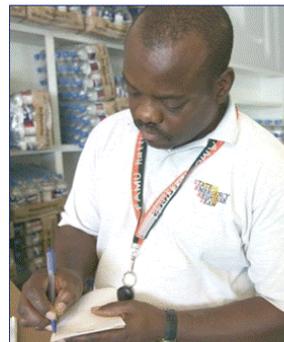
- Comply with NIMS, including ICS.
- Cover all hazards and are based on risk assessments.
- Include delegations of authority (as appropriate).
- Include up-to-date information about:
  - Resources in the area.
  - Contact information for agency administrators and response personnel.



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## Establish Resource Management Systems

- Do you have established systems for:
  - Describing, inventorying, requesting, and tracking resources?
  - Activating and dispatching resources?
  - Managing volunteers?
  - Demobilizing or recalling resources?
  - Financial tracking, reimbursement, and reporting?
- Do you have mutual aid and assistance agreements for obtaining resources, facilities, services, and other required support during an incident?



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### Instructor Notes

Explain that Executives/Senior Officials should ensure that their jurisdiction has established resource management systems for:

- Describing, inventorying, requesting, and tracking resources.
- Activating and dispatching resources.
- Managing volunteer resources (e.g., civil patrols, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), neighborhood patrols, etc.).
- Demobilizing or recalling resources.
- Financial tracking, reimbursement, and reporting.

Present the following key points:

- Mutual aid is the voluntary provision of resources by agencies or organizations to assist each other when existing resources are inadequate.
- When combined with NIMS-oriented resource management, mutual aid and assistance allows jurisdictions to share resources among mutual aid partners.

Explain that Executives/Senior Officials should ensure that mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements are in place for obtaining resources, facilities, services, and other required support from other jurisdictions during an incident.



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### Establish Communications and Information Systems

- Do you have protocols and procedures for:
  - Formulating and disseminating indications and warnings?
  - Formulating, executing, and communicating operational decisions?
  - Preparing for potential requirements and requests supporting incident management activities?
  - Developing and maintaining situation awareness?
- Can responders from different agencies (e.g., fire, police, public works) or mutual aid and assistance partners communicate with one another?
- Do you have a plan/budget for maintaining and replacing your emergency communication systems?

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### **Instructor Notes**

Tell the participants that they should check to see if their jurisdictions have protocols and procedures for:

- Formulating and disseminating indications and warnings.
- Formulating, executing, and communicating operational decisions.
- Preparing for potential requirements and requests supporting incident management activities.
- Developing and maintaining situation awareness.

Explain that Executives/Senior Officials should confirm that responders from different agencies (e.g., fire, police, public works) or mutual aid and assistance partners can communicate with one another. They should also ensure that their jurisdiction has a plan and/or budget for maintaining and replacing emergency communication systems.



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## Training, Credentialing, and Exercising



- Do you have sufficient qualified personnel to assume ICS Command and General Staff positions?
- Can you verify that personnel meet established professional standards for:
  - Training?
  - Experience?
  - Performance?
- When was the last tabletop or functional exercise that practiced command and coordination functions? Did you participate in that exercise?

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### Instructor Notes

Explain that Executives/Senior Officials must ensure that incident responders are well trained and qualified. Tell them they must consider:

- **If there are sufficient qualified personnel to assume ICS Command and General Staff positions.**
  - Explain that Executives/Senior Officials are responsible for ensuring that a qualified Incident Commander has been designated for the incident. Some agencies and jurisdictions maintain a roster of qualified Incident Commanders based on the complexity of the incident.
  - Ask the participants to identify the qualities of an effective Incident Commander. If not mentioned by the participants, add any of the following qualities: skilled/experienced in directing tactical response operations; command presence; understanding of ICS; proven management record; strong decisionmaker; calm but quick-thinking; good communication skills; adaptability and flexibility; realistic about personal limitations; and political awareness.
- **If they can verify that personnel meet established professional standards for:**
  - Training.
  - Experience.
  - Performance.
- **When the last tabletop or functional exercise was conducted to practice command and coordination functions.** Note that Executives/Senior Officials should participate in these exercises.



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## Additional Resources

- **NRF Resource Center:** [www.fema.gov/national-response-framework](http://www.fema.gov/national-response-framework)
- **NIMS Resource Center:** [www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system](http://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system)
- **ICS Resource Center:** [training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/is/ICSResource/](http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/is/ICSResource/)

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## Instructor Notes

Explain that additional resources are available including job aids, checklists, and additional training.

Visit the NRF Resource Center to gain access to:

- National Response Framework information and documents.
- References.
- Briefings and training.

Visit the NIMS Resource Center to gain access to:

- National Incident Management System information and documents.
- References.
- Briefings and training.

Visit the FEMA Emergency Management Institute (EMI)'s ICS Resource Center to gain access to:

- Resources and tools.
- Additional courses.



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## Leadership



**Most importantly, Executives/Senior Officials provide leadership.**

**Leadership means . . .**

- **Motivating and supporting trained, on-scene responders so that they can accomplish difficult tasks under dangerous, stressful circumstances.**
- **Instilling confidence in the public that the incident is being managed effectively.**

ICS-402 – October 2013  
ICS Overview for Executives/Senior Officials



### Instructor Notes

Summarize by noting that Executives/Senior Officials have an important leadership role. This leadership role means providing motivation and support to allow the trained, on-scene responders to accomplish difficult tasks under dangerous, stressful circumstances. It also means instilling confidence in the public that the incident is being managed effectively.

Refer the participants to the handout at the end of the briefing package.

Ask the participants if they have any questions. After addressing any questions, thank the group for their participation.

## Incident Command System (ICS)

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ICS was developed in the 1970s following a series of catastrophic fires in California's urban interface. Property damage ran into the millions, and many people died or were injured. The personnel assigned to determine the causes of these outcomes studied the case histories and discovered that response problems could rarely be attributed to lack of resources or failure of tactics. Surprisingly, studies found that response problems were far more likely to result from inadequate management than from any other single reason.

The Incident Command System:

- Is a standardized management tool for meeting the demands of small or large emergency or nonemergency situations.
- Represents "best practices" and has become the standard for emergency management across the country.
- May be used for planned events, natural disasters, and acts of terrorism.
- Is a key feature of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

As stated in NIMS, "ICS is a widely applicable management system designed to enable effective, efficient incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure. ... ICS is used to organize on-scene operations for a broad spectrum of emergencies from small to complex incidents, both natural and manmade. ... ICS is used by all levels of government—Federal, State, tribal, and local—as well as by many nongovernmental organizations and the private sector. ICS is also applicable across disciplines. It is normally structured to facilitate activities in five major functional areas: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance and Administration."

## ICS and Executives/Senior Officials: Frequently Asked Questions

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Any incident can have a mix of political, economic, social, environmental, and cost implications with potentially serious long-term effects. Also, more and more incidents are multiagency and/or multijurisdictional. As the Executive or Senior Official, you need to be aware of how ICS and interagency (regional) multiagency coordination systems can work to ensure cooperative response efforts.

- **How do I maintain control when an incident occurs?** As the Executive or Senior Official, you establish the overall policy, and provide guidelines on priorities, objectives, and constraints to a qualified Incident Commander. In many agencies, this is done as a matter of policy through a written delegation of authority.
- **Where do I fit in the incident management process?** ICS has a well-defined hierarchy of command. After you have clearly articulated the policy you wish followed and delegated certain authorities, the Incident Commander who reports to you will have the necessary authority and guidance to manage the incident. The Incident Commander is the primary person in charge at the incident. In addition to managing the incident scene, he or she is responsible for keeping you informed and up to date on all important matters pertaining to the incident. Your continuing role is to ensure that you are informed and that your Incident Commander is functioning in a responsible manner.

## ICS Features

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The 14 essential ICS features are listed below:

- **Common Terminology:** Using common terminology helps to define organizational functions, incident facilities, resource descriptions, and position titles.
- **Modular Organization:** The Incident Command organizational structure develops in a top-down, modular fashion that is based on the size and complexity of the incident, as well as the specifics of the hazard environment created by the incident.
- **Management by Objectives:** Includes establishing overarching objectives; developing and issuing assignments, plans, procedures, and protocols; establishing specific, measurable objectives for various incident management functional activities; and directing efforts to attain the established objectives.
- **Reliance on an Incident Action Plan:** Incident Action Plans (IAPs) provide a coherent means of communicating the overall incident objectives in the contexts of both operational and support activities.
- **Chain of Command and Unity of Command:** Chain of command refers to the orderly line of authority within the ranks of the incident management organization. Unity of command means that every individual has a designated supervisor to whom he or she reports at the scene of the incident. These principles clarify reporting relationships and eliminate the confusion caused by multiple, conflicting directives. Incident managers at all levels must be able to control the actions of all personnel under their supervision.
- **Unified Command:** In incidents involving multiple jurisdictions, a single jurisdiction with multiagency involvement, or multiple jurisdictions with multiagency involvement, Unified Command allows agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional authorities and responsibilities to work together effectively without affecting individual agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.
- **Manageable Span of Control:** Span of control is key to effective and efficient incident management. Within ICS, the span of control of any individual with incident management supervisory responsibility should range from three to seven subordinates.
- **Predesignated Incident Locations and Facilities:** Various types of operational locations and support facilities are established in the vicinity of an incident to accomplish a variety of purposes. Typical predesignated facilities include Incident Command Posts, Incident Bases, Camps, Staging Areas, Mass Casualty Triage Areas, and others as required.
- **Resource Management:** Resource management includes processes for categorizing, ordering, dispatching, tracking, and recovering resources. It also includes processes for reimbursement for resources, as appropriate. Resources are defined as personnel, teams, equipment, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment or allocation in support of incident management and emergency response activities.
- **Information and Intelligence Management:** The incident management organization must establish a process for gathering, sharing, and managing incident-related information and intelligence.
- **Integrated Communications:** Incident communications are facilitated through the development and use of a common communications plan and interoperable communications processes and architectures.

## ICS Features (Continued)

- **Transfer of Command:** The command function must be clearly established from the beginning of an incident. When command is transferred, the process must include a briefing that captures all essential information for continuing safe and effective operations.
- **Accountability:** Effective accountability at all jurisdictional levels and within individual functional areas during incident operations is essential. To that end, the following principles must be adhered to:
  - **Check-In:** All responders, regardless of agency affiliation, must report in to receive an assignment in accordance with the procedures established by the Incident Commander.
  - **Incident Action Plan:** Response operations must be directed and coordinated as outlined in the IAP.
  - **Unity of Command:** Each individual involved in incident operations will be assigned to only one supervisor.
  - **Span of Control:** Supervisors must be able to adequately supervise and control their subordinates, as well as communicate with and manage all resources under their supervision.
  - **Resource Tracking:** Supervisors must record and report resource status changes as they occur.
- **Deployment:** Personnel and equipment should respond only when requested or when dispatched by an appropriate authority.

## Position Titles

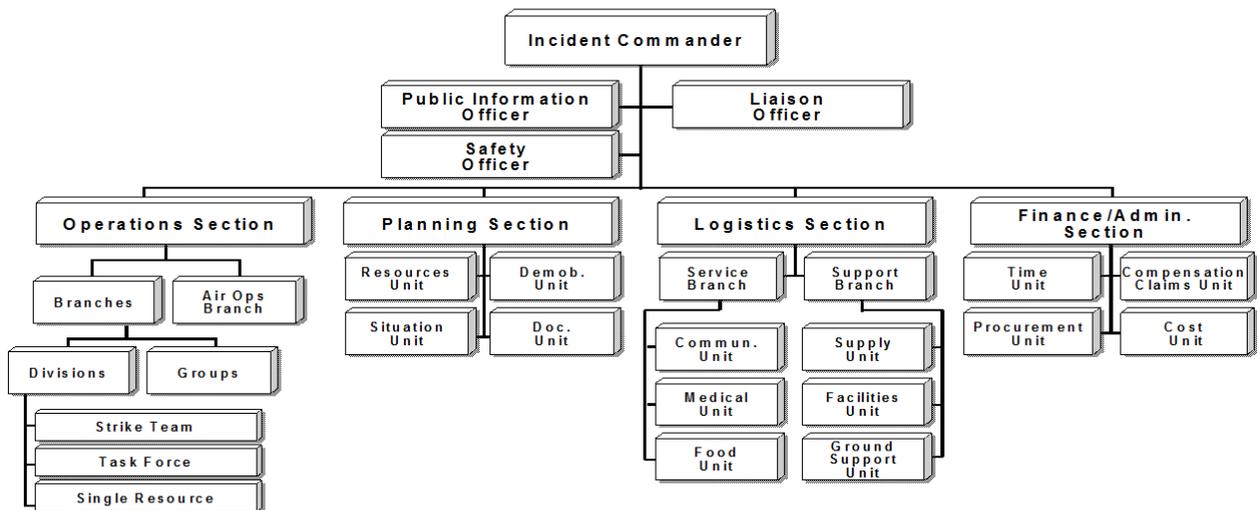
At each level within the ICS organization, individuals with primary responsibility positions have distinct titles. Titles provide a common standard for all users. For example, if one agency uses the title Branch Chief, another Branch Manager, etc., this lack of consistency can cause confusion at the incident.

The use of distinct titles for ICS positions allows for filling ICS positions with the most qualified individuals rather than by seniority. Standardized position titles are useful when requesting qualified personnel. For example, in deploying personnel, it is important to know if the positions needed are Unit Leaders, clerks, etc.

Listed below are the standard ICS titles:

Organizational Level	Title	Support Position
Incident Command	Incident Commander	Deputy
Command Staff	Officer	Assistant
General Staff (Section)	Chief	Deputy
Branch	Director	Deputy
Division/Group	Supervisor	N/A
Unit	Leader	Manager
Strike Team/Task Force	Leader	Single Resource Boss

## ICS Organization



- **Command Staff:** The Command Staff consists of the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, and
- **Liaison Officer.** They report directly to the Incident Commander.
- **General Staff:** The organization level having functional responsibility for primary segments of incident management (Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration). The Section level is organizationally between Branch and Incident Commander.
- **Branch:** That organizational level having functional, geographical, or jurisdictional responsibility for major parts of the incident operations. The Branch level is organizationally between Section and Division/Group in the Operations Section, and between Section and Units in the Logistics Section. Branches are identified by the use of Roman Numerals, by function, or by jurisdictional name.
- **Division:** That organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area. The Division level is organizationally between the Strike Team and the Branch.
- **Group:** Groups are established to divide the incident into functional areas of operation. Groups are located between Branches (when activated) and Resources in the Operations Section.
- **Unit:** That organization element having functional responsibility for a specific incident planning, logistics, or finance/administration activity.
- **Task Force:** A group of resources with common communications and a leader that may be pre-established and sent to an incident, or formed at an incident.
- **Strike Team:** Specified combinations of the same kind and type of resources, with common communications and a leader.
- **Single Resource:** An individual piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or an established crew or team of individuals with an identified work supervisor that can be used on an incident.

## Overall Organizational Functions

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ICS was designed by identifying the primary activities or functions necessary to effectively respond to incidents. Analyses of incident reports and review of military organizations were all used in ICS development. These analyses identified the primary needs of incidents.

As incidents became more complex, difficult, and expensive, the need for an organizational manager became more evident. Thus in ICS, and especially in larger incidents, the Incident Commander manages the organization and not the incident.

In addition to the Command function, other desired functions and activities were:

- To delegate authority and to provide a separate organizational level within the ICS structure with sole responsibility for the tactical direction and control of resources.
- To provide logistical support to the incident organization.
- To provide planning services for both current and future activities.
- To provide cost assessment, time recording, and procurement control necessary to support the incident and the managing of claims.
- To promptly and effectively interact with the media, and provide informational services for the incident, involved agencies, and the public.
- To provide a safe operating environment within all parts of the incident organization.
- To ensure that assisting and cooperating agencies' needs are met, and to see that they are used in an effective manner.

## Incident Commander

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The Incident Commander is technically not a part of either the General or Command staff. The Incident Commander is responsible for overall incident management, including:

- Ensuring clear authority and knowledge of agency policy.
- Ensuring incident safety.
- Establishing an Incident Command Post.
- Obtaining a briefing from the prior Incident Commander and/or assessing the situation.
- Establishing immediate priorities.
- Determining incident objectives and strategy(ies) to be followed.
- Establishing the level of organization needed, and continuously monitoring the operation and effectiveness of that organization.
- Managing planning meetings as required.
- Approving and implementing the Incident Action Plan.
- Coordinating the activities of the Command and General Staffs.
- Approving requests for additional resources or for the release of resources.
- Approving the use of students, volunteers, and auxiliary personnel.
- Authorizing the release of information to the news media.
- Ordering demobilization of the incident when appropriate.
- Ensuring incident after-action reports are complete.

## Command Staff

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The Command Staff is assigned to carry out staff functions needed to support the Incident Commander. These functions include interagency liaison, incident safety, and public information.

Command Staff positions are established to assign responsibility for key activities not specifically identified in the General Staff functional elements. These positions may include the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, and Liaison Officer, in addition to various others, as required and assigned by the Incident Commander.

The table on the following page summarizes the responsibilities of the Command Staff.

## General Staff

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The General Staff represents and is responsible for the functional aspects of the Incident Command structure. The General Staff typically consists of the Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Sections.

General guidelines related to General Staff positions include the following:

- Only one person will be assigned to each General Staff position.
- General Staff positions may be filled by qualified persons from any agency or jurisdiction.
- Members of the General Staff report directly to the Incident Commander. If a General Staff position is not activated, the Incident Commander will have responsibility for that functional activity.
- Deputy positions may be established for each of the General Staff positions. Deputies are individuals fully qualified to fill the primary position. Deputies can be designated from other jurisdictions or agencies, as appropriate. This is a good way to bring about greater interagency coordination.
- General Staff members may exchange information with any person within the organization.
- Direction takes place through the chain of command. This is an important concept in ICS.
- General Staff positions should not be combined. For example, to establish a "Planning and Logistics Section," it is better to initially create the two separate functions, and if necessary for a short time place one person in charge of both. That way, the transfer of responsibility can be made easier.

Following the first table is a table that summarizes the responsibilities of the General Staff.

<b>Command Staff</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Public Information Officer</b>	The Public Information Officer is responsible for interfacing with the public and media and/or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements. The Public Information Officer develops accurate and complete information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest for both internal and external consumption. The Public Information Officer may also perform a key public information-monitoring role. Only one incident Public Information Officer should be designated. Assistants may be assigned from other agencies or departments involved. The Incident Commander must approve the release of all incident-related information.
<b>Safety Officer</b>	The Safety Officer monitors incident operations and advises the Incident Commander on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel. The ultimate responsibility for the safe conduct of incident management operations rests with the Incident Commander or Unified Command and supervisors at all levels of incident management. The Safety Officer is, in turn, responsible to the Incident Commander for the set of systems and procedures necessary to ensure ongoing assessment of hazardous environments, coordination of multiagency safety efforts, and implementation of measures to promote emergency responder safety, as well as the general safety of incident operations. The Safety Officer has emergency authority to stop and/or prevent unsafe acts during incident operations. In a Unified Command structure, a single Safety Officer should be designated, in spite of the fact that multiple jurisdictions and/or functional agencies may be involved. The Safety Officer must also ensure the coordination of safety management functions and issues across jurisdictions, across functional agencies, and with private-sector and nongovernmental organizations.
<b>Liaison Officer</b>	The Liaison Officer is the point of contact for representatives of other governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and/or private entities. In either a single or Unified Command structure, representatives from assisting or cooperating agencies and organizations coordinate through the Liaison Officer. Agency and/or organizational representatives assigned to an incident must have the authority to speak for their parent agencies and/or organizations on all matters, following appropriate consultations with their agency leadership. Assistants and personnel from other agencies or organizations (public or private) involved in incident management activities may be assigned to the Liaison Officer to facilitate coordination.
<b>Assistants</b>	In the context of large or complex incidents, Command Staff members may need one or more assistants to help manage their workloads. Each Command Staff member is responsible for organizing his or her assistants for maximum efficiency.
<b>Additional Command Staff</b>	Additional Command Staff positions may also be necessary depending on the nature and location(s) of the incident, and/or specific requirements established by the Incident Commander. For example, a Legal Counsel may be assigned directly to the Command Staff to advise the Incident Commander on legal matters, such as emergency proclamations, legality of evacuation orders, and legal rights and restrictions pertaining to media access. Similarly, a Medical Advisor may be designated and assigned directly to the Command Staff to provide advice and recommendations to the Incident Commander in the context of incidents involving medical and mental health services, mass casualty, acute care, vector control, epidemiology, and/or mass prophylaxis considerations, particularly in the response to a bioterrorism event.

Source: NIMS

General Staff	Responsibilities
<b>Operations Section Chief</b>	<p>The Operations Section Chief is responsible for managing all tactical operations at an incident. The Incident Action Plan provides the necessary guidance. The need to expand the Operations Section is generally dictated by the number of tactical resources involved and is influenced by span of control considerations.</p> <p>Major responsibilities of the Operations Section Chief are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage tactical operations.</li> <li>• Assist in the development of the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan. This usually requires filling out the ICS 215 Form prior to the Planning Meeting.</li> <li>• Supervise the execution of the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan.</li> <li>• Maintain close contact with subordinate positions.</li> <li>• Ensure safe tactical operations.</li> <li>• Request additional resources to support tactical operations.</li> <li>• Approve release of resources from active assignments (not release from the incident).</li> <li>• Make or approve expedient changes to the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan.</li> <li>• Maintain close communication with the Incident Commander.</li> </ul>
<b>Planning Section Chief</b>	<p>The Planning Section Chief is responsible for providing planning services for the incident. Under the direction of the Planning Section Chief, the Planning Section collects situation and resources status information, evaluates it, and processes the information for use in developing action plans. Dissemination of information can be in the form of the Incident Action Plan, in formal briefings, or through map and status board displays.</p> <p>Major responsibilities of the Planning Section Chief are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and manage all incident-relevant operational data.</li> <li>• Provide input to the Incident Commander and Operations Section Chief for use in preparing the Incident Action Plan.</li> <li>• Supervise preparation of the Incident Action Plan.</li> <li>• Conduct and facilitate planning meetings.</li> <li>• Reassign personnel already on site to ICS organizational positions as needed and appropriate.</li> <li>• Establish information requirements and reporting schedules for Planning Section units.</li> <li>• Determine the need for specialized resources to support the incident.</li> <li>• Assemble and disassemble task forces and strike teams not assigned to Operations.</li> <li>• Establish specialized data collection systems as necessary (e.g., weather).</li> <li>• Assemble information on alternative strategies and contingency plans.</li> <li>• Provide periodic predictions on incident potential.</li> <li>• Report any significant changes in incident status.</li> <li>• Compile and display incident status information.</li> <li>• Oversee preparation of the Demobilization Plan.</li> <li>• Incorporate Traffic, Medical, Communications Plans, and other supporting material into the Incident Action Plan.</li> </ul>

General Staff	Responsibilities
<b>Logistics Section Chief</b>	<p>The Logistics Section Chief provides all incident support needs with the exception of logistics support to air operations. The Logistics Section is responsible for providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities.</li> <li>• Transportation.</li> <li>• Communications.</li> <li>• Supplies.</li> <li>• Equipment maintenance and fueling.</li> <li>• Food services (for responders).</li> <li>• Medical services (for responders).</li> <li>• All off-incident resources.</li> </ul> <p>Major responsibilities of the Logistics Section Chief are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage all incident logistics.</li> <li>• Provide logistical input to the Incident Commander in preparing the Incident Action Plan.</li> <li>• Brief Logistics Branch Directors and Unit Leaders as needed.</li> <li>• Identify anticipated and known incident service and support requirements.</li> <li>• Request additional resources, as needed.</li> <li>• Develop, as required, the Communications, Medical, and Traffic Plans.</li> <li>• Oversee demobilization of the Logistics Section.</li> </ul>
<b>Finance/ Administration Section Chief</b>	<p>The Finance/Administration Section Chief is responsible for managing all financial aspects of an incident. Not all incidents will require a Finance/Administration Section. Only when the involved agencies have a specific need for finance services will the Section be activated.</p> <p>Major responsibilities of the Finance/Administration Section Chief are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage all financial aspects of an incident.</li> <li>• Provide financial and cost analysis information as requested.</li> <li>• Ensure compensation and claims functions are being addressed relative to the incident.</li> <li>• Gather pertinent information from briefings with responsible agencies.</li> <li>• Develop an operating plan for the Finance/Administration Section; fill Section supply and support needs.</li> <li>• Determine need to set up and operate an incident commissary.</li> <li>• Meet with assisting and cooperating agency representatives as needed.</li> <li>• Maintain daily contact with agency(ies) administrative headquarters on finance matters.</li> <li>• Ensure that all personnel and equipment time records are accurately completed and transmitted to home agencies, according to policy.</li> <li>• Provide financial input for demobilization planning.</li> <li>• Ensure that all obligation documents initiated at the incident are properly prepared and completed.</li> <li>• Brief agency administrative personnel on all incident-related financial issues needing attention or followup.</li> </ul>

## Agency Representatives

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An Agency Representative is an individual assigned to an incident from an assisting or cooperating agency. The Agency Representative must be given authority to make decisions on matters affecting that agency's participation at the incident.

Agency Representatives report to the Liaison Officer or to the Incident Commander in the absence of a Liaison Officer.

Major responsibilities of the Agency Representative are to:

- Ensure that all of their agency resources have completed check-in at the incident.
- Obtain briefing from the Liaison Officer or Incident Commander.
- Inform their agency personnel on the incident that the Agency Representative position has been filled.
- Attend planning meetings as required.
- Provide input to the planning process on the use of agency resources unless resource technical specialists are assigned from the agency.
- Cooperate fully with the Incident Commander and the Command and General Staffs on the agency's involvement at the incident.
- Oversee the well-being and safety of agency personnel assigned to the incident.
- Advise the Liaison Officer of any special agency needs, requirements, or agency restrictions.
- Report to agency dispatch or headquarters on a prearranged schedule.
- Ensure that all agency personnel and equipment are properly accounted for and released prior to departure.
- Ensure that all required agency forms, reports, and documents are complete prior to departure.
- Have a debriefing session with the Liaison Officer or Incident Commander prior to departure.

## Technical Specialists

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Certain incidents or events may require the use of Technical Specialists who have specialized knowledge and expertise. Technical Specialists may function within the Planning Section, or be assigned wherever their services are required.

While each incident dictates the need for Technical Specialists, some examples of the more commonly used specialists are:

- Meteorologists.
- Environmental Impact Specialists.
- Flood Control Specialists.
- Water Use Specialists.
- Fuels and Flammable Specialists.
- Hazardous Substance Specialists.
- Fire Behavior Specialists.
- Structural Engineers.
- Training Specialists.

## Unified Command

The Unified Command organization consists of the Incident Commanders from the various jurisdictions or agencies operating together to form a single command structure.

### Overview

Unified Command is an important element in multijurisdictional or multiagency incident management. It provides guidelines to enable agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.

As a team effort, Unified Command allows all agencies with jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility for the incident to jointly provide management direction through a common set of incident objectives and strategies and a single Incident Action Plan. Each participating agency maintains its authority, responsibility, and accountability.

All agencies with jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility for any or all aspects of an incident and those able to provide specific resource support participate in the Unified Command structure and contribute to the process of selecting objectives; determining overall incident strategies; ensuring that joint planning for tactical activities is accomplished in accordance with approved incident objectives; ensuring the integration of tactical operations; and approving, committing, and making optimum use of all assigned resources.

The exact composition of the Unified Command structure will depend on the location(s) of the incident (i.e., which geographical jurisdictions or organizations are involved) and the type of incident (i.e., which functional agencies of the involved jurisdiction(s) or organizations(s) are required). The designation of a single Incident Commander for some multijurisdictional incidents, if planned for in advance, may be considered in order to promote greater unity of effort and efficiency.

Source: NIMS

### Authority

Authority and responsibility for an Incident Commander to manage an incident or event comes in the form of a delegation of authority from the agency executive or administrator of the jurisdiction of occurrence or inherent in existing agency policies and procedures. When an incident/event spans multiple jurisdictions this responsibility belongs to the various jurisdictional and agency executives or administrators who set policy and are accountable to their jurisdictions or agencies. They must appropriately delegate to the Unified Commanders the authority to manage the incident. Given this authority, the Unified Commanders will then collectively develop one comprehensive set of incident objectives, and use them to develop strategies.

### Advantages of Using Unified Command

The advantages of using Unified Command include:

- A single set of objectives is developed for the entire incident.
- A collective approach is used to develop strategies to achieve incident objectives.
- Information flow and coordination is improved between all jurisdictions and agencies involved in the incident.
- All agencies with responsibility for the incident have an understanding of joint priorities and restrictions.
- No agency's legal authorities will be compromised or neglected.
- The combined efforts of all agencies are optimized as they perform their respective assignments under a single Incident Action Plan.

## Planning Process

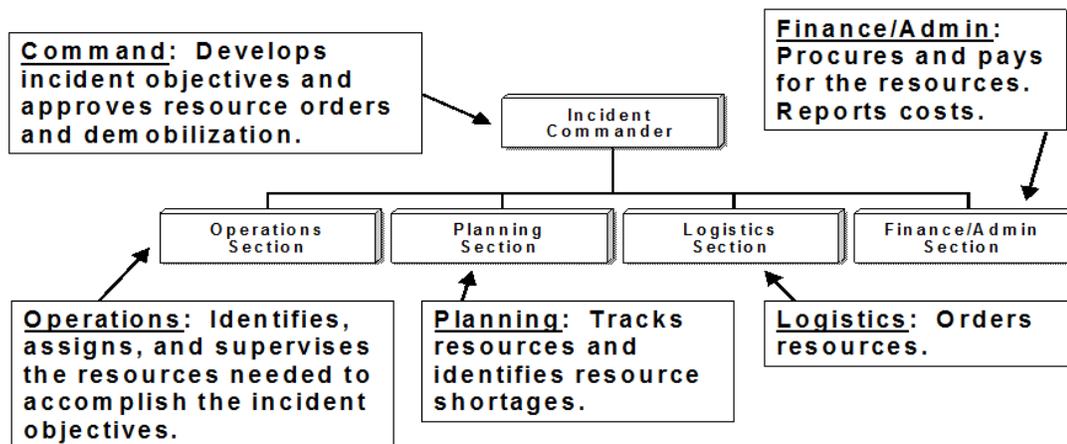
It was recognized early in the development of ICS that the critical factor of adequate planning for incident operations was often overlooked or not given enough emphasis. This resulted in poor use of resources, inappropriate strategies and tactics, safety problems, higher incident costs, and lower effectiveness.

Those involved in the original ICS development felt that there was a need to develop a simple but thorough process for planning that could be utilized for both smaller, short-term incidents and events, and for longer, more complex incident planning. The planning process may begin with the scheduling of a planned event, the identification of a credible threat, or the initial response to an actual or impending event. The process continues with the implementation of the formalized steps and staffing required to develop a written Incident Action Plan (IAP).

The primary phases of the planning process are essentially the same for the Incident Commander who develops the initial plan, for the Incident Commander and Operations Section Chief revising the initial plan for extended operations, and for the incident management team developing a formal IAP, each following a similar process. During the initial stages of incident management, planners must develop a simple plan that can be communicated through concise oral briefings. Frequently, this plan must be developed very quickly and with incomplete situation information. As the incident management effort evolves over time, additional lead time, staff, information systems, and technologies enable more detailed planning and cataloging of events and "lessons learned."

Planning involves:

- Evaluating the situation.
- Developing incident objectives.
- Selecting a strategy.
- Deciding which resources should be used to achieve the objectives in the safest, most efficient and cost-effective manner.



Caption: Organizational chart showing that Command develops the objectives and approves resource orders and demobilization. Operations identifies, assigns, and supervises the resources needed to accomplish the incident objectives. Planning tracks resources and identifies shortages. Logistics orders resources, and Finance/Administration procures and pays for the resources.

## Demobilization

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Demobilization planning helps to:

- Eliminate waste.
- Eliminate potential fiscal and legal impacts.
- Ensure a controlled, safe, efficient, and cost-effective release process.

Demobilization policies and procedures depend on the size of the incident and may involve:

- Fiscal/legal policies and procedures.
- Work rules.
- Special license requirements.
- Other requirements.

## Incident Complexity

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“Incident complexity” is the combination of involved factors that affect the probability of control of an incident. Many factors determine the complexity of an incident, including, but not limited to, area involved, threat to life and property, political sensitivity, organizational complexity, jurisdictional boundaries, values at risk, weather, strategy and tactics, and agency policy.

Incident complexity is considered when making incident management level, staffing, and safety decisions.

Various analysis tools have been developed to assist consideration of important factors involved in incident complexity. Listed below are the factors that may be considered in analyzing incident complexity:

- Impacts to life, property, and the economy
- Community and responder safety
- Potential hazardous materials
- Weather and other environmental influences
- Likelihood of cascading events
- Potential crime scene (including terrorism)
- Political sensitivity, external influences, and media relations
- Area involved, jurisdictional boundaries
- Availability of resources

**ICS Readiness Checklist**

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**NIMS and ICS Compliance**

- Adopt the ICS through executive order, proclamation, or legislation as the jurisdiction's official incident response system.
  - Determine if ICS is integrated into functional and system-wide emergency operations policies, plans, and procedures.
  - Provide ICS training so all responders, supervisors, and command-level officers receive ICS training.
  - Schedule periodic exercises that require the application of ICS management features.
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**Emergency Operations Plans**

- Conduct a review and update the jurisdiction Emergency Operations Plans based on a current hazard analysis and risks.
  - Clarify roles and establish delegations of authority (as appropriate).
  - Check contact information to ensure it is up to date.
  - Update plans based on lessons learned from exercises and incidents.
- 

**Legal and Financial**

- Check procedures and authorities for emergency purchasing and contracting.
  - Ensure that mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements have been negotiated.
  - Clarify coordination procedures among different levels of government (tribes, counties, State, Federal, etc.).
- 

**Resource Management Systems**

- Identify potential resources across agencies/department, other levels of government, and the private sector.
  - Check your jurisdiction's procedures and systems for:
    - Describing, inventorying, requesting, and tracking resources.
    - Activating and dispatching resources.
    - Managing volunteers.
    - Demobilization or recalling resources.
    - Financial tracking, reimbursement, and reporting.
- 

**Communications and Information Management**

- Check your jurisdiction's protocols and procedures for:
    - Formulating and disseminating indications and warnings.
    - Formulating, executing, and communicating operational decisions.
    - Preparing for potential requirements and requests supporting incident management activities.
    - Developing and maintaining situation awareness.
  - Check for interoperability. Can responders from different agencies (e.g., fire, police, public works) or mutual aid and assistance partners communicate with one another?
  - Create a plan/budget for maintaining and replacing your emergency communication systems.
- 

**Training, Credentialing, and Exercising**

- Make sure you have sufficient qualified personnel to assume ICS Command and General Staff positions.
- Predesignate qualified incident management teams based on incident complexity.
- Check when the last tabletop or functional exercise that practiced command and coordination functions was conducted. Did you participate in that exercise?

**ICS Incident Checklist**

The following checklist is designed to assist Executives and Senior Officials in supporting an emergency response. The checklist is divided into Immediate Actions, Legal, Political, Operational, and Public Information.

**Immediate Actions**

- Begin personal log. The log should include all information and orders given, will document the amount of information you had when making decisions, and will assist in protecting you if liability issues are raised concerning your role in the incident.
- Assign and brief/establish contact with the Incident Commander.
- Assign staff to assist in the incident as requested by the Incident Commander or Logistics.
- Determine when the initial planning meeting is scheduled.
- Confirm which parts of the Emergency Operations Plan are in effect.
- Contact and brief higher level authorities/stakeholders.

**Legal**

- Review and activate legal authorities:
  - Emergency declarations
  - Evacuation orders
  - Lines of succession
  - Mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements
  - Price controls
  - Procurement processes
  - Other restrictions/requirements

**Political**

- Provide leadership oversight of incident management policies and objectives.
- Assist in coordinating activities with elected officials and other levels of government.

**Operational**

- Assess the impact of the incident on the continuity of your jurisdiction's day-to-day activities.
- Reassign personnel to support incident activities and cover essential services.

**Public Information**

- Assign Public Information Officer to assist in incident information management.
- Direct requests for incident information to incident Public Information Officer using the Joint Information System.
- Coordinate messages through the Joint Information Center/Joint Information System.

## After-Action Review Tips

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### Overall Tips

- Schedule an After-Action Review (AAR) as soon after the incident as possible.
- Keep it short and focused.
- Focus on WHAT, not WHO.
- Establish clear ground rules: encourage candor and openness (this is dialog—not lecture or debate); focus on items that can be fixed; keep all discussions confidential.
- Use a skilled facilitator to conduct the AAR.

### AAR Process Steps

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Use the following questions to facilitate the AAR process:

#### 1. What did we set out to do?

- Establish the facts.
- Determine purpose of the mission and definition of success:
  - Identify key tasks involved.
  - Specify conditions under which each task may need to be performed (weather, topography, time restrictions, etc.).
  - Define acceptable standards for success (explain what “Right” looks like).

#### 2. What actually happened?

- Continue to establish the facts.
  - Participants should come to agreement on what actually happened.
  - Pool multiple perspectives to build a shared picture of what happened.

#### 3. Why did it happen?

- Analyze cause and effect.
  - Focus on WHAT, not WHO.
  - Provide progressive refinement for drawing out explanations of what occurred. This will lead into developing possible solutions.

#### 4. What are we going to do better next time?

- Solutions will arise naturally once problems are identified and understood.
  - Focus on items you can fix, rather than external forces outside of your control.
  - Identify areas where groups are performing well and that should be sustained. This will help repeat success and create a balanced approach to the AAR.

Areas To Sustain/Maintain Strengths:

Areas To Improve Weaknesses:

#### 5. Are there lessons learned that should be shared immediately?

- Identify the process for sharing lessons learned.
  - Option 1: Document the Issue, Discussion, Recommendation
  - Option 2: Document the Concept of the Operation, Results, Trends, Recommendation
- Determine and describe the most notable successes from the incident.
  - Determine and describe the most difficult challenges faced and how they were overcome.

#### 6. What followup is needed?

- Be specific about actions, timelines, and responsibilities.
  - What changes, additions, or deletions are recommended to SOPs, plans, or training?
  - What issues were not resolved to your satisfaction and need further review?

## Delegation of Authority

As of \_\_\_\_\_ hrs, \_\_\_\_\_, I have delegated the authority and responsibility for the complete management of the \_\_\_\_\_ incident to the Incident Commander, \_\_\_\_\_.

As Incident Commander, you are accountable to me for the overall management of this incident including control and return to local forces. I expect you to adhere to relevant and applicable laws, policies, and professional standards.

My considerations for management of the incident are:

1. Provide for responder and public safety.
2. Incident stability.
3. Preservation of property.
4. Manage the incident cost-effectively for the values at risk.
5. Provide training opportunities for less experienced responders. This will strengthen organizational capabilities of local agency personnel.
6. Provide for minimal disruption of access to critical community services and commerce. Access must be consistent with the safety of the public.
7. Coordinate with \_\_\_\_\_ and the State for use of their resources, as needed, and incorporate them into the overall incident plan.
8. The media will be escorted whenever possible. Media cards will identify members of the media.
9. Incident objectives, strategies, and tactics will be the responsibility of the Incident Management Team within a 10-mile radius of the incident.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Agency Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date