
Unit 8: Incident Communications Centers (ICC)

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Objectives

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Identify Communications Unit Leader responsibilities in establishing an Incident Communications Center (ICC) as well as manage all incident communications needs, personnel, and the ICC
- Discuss working relationships within the Communications Unit
- Discuss methods of organizing unit personnel
- Discuss important considerations in laying out the Communications Unit area
- Identify and discuss the interactions between the Communications Unit Leader and key individuals and sub-organizations
- Identify responsibilities of the Communications Unit positions
- Describe Communications Unit Leader responsibilities at the ICC

Methodology

This unit features lecture, discussion based activities, and an exercise.

Knowledge of unit content will be evaluated through the administration of the final exam (to be administered upon completion of the course). Instructors will evaluate students' initial understanding through facilitation of Exercise 8.

Utilizing ICS Form - 217A Communications Resources Availability Worksheet created in Exercise 7, the purpose of Exercise 8 is to design a communications system, taking into consideration the needs of the agencies that students may consider as likely responders. The exercise is scheduled to last approximately 45 minutes, involving the instructor reading from a script from the City of Central City scenario. Based on this information, the students will discuss the significance of the information received and what conclusions to draw as they create a communications system.

The purpose of this unit is to provide students information needed to identify Communications Unit Leader responsibilities in establishing an ICC as well as an idea of how to effectively manage themselves and others in the Communications Unit during an incident, including staffing and supplying of the ICC.

Time Plan

A suggested time plan for this unit is shown below. More or less time may be required, based on the experience level of the group.

Topic	Time
Lesson	1 hour
Exercise 8	45 minutes
Total Time	1 hour, and 45 minutes

Reference Materials

- Projector & other equipment as necessary for PowerPoint presentation
- Easel chart/Easel pad
- Marking pens
- Exercise 8: Creating Incident Communication Systems
- Handout 8-1: Communications Center Protocol
- Handout 8-2: Medical Emergency Procedure Plan
- Handout 8-3: Expanded ICS 206 Medical Plan

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**Explain the Following Key Points**

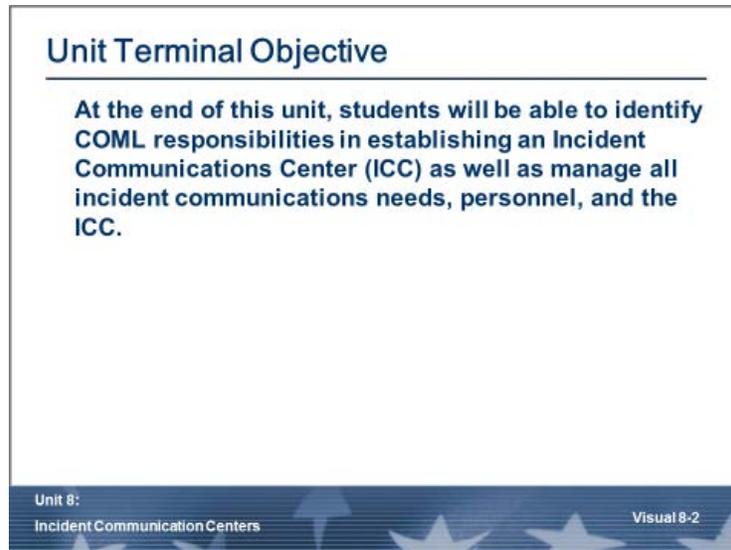
Introduce the unit and move quickly to the next slide.

This unit focuses on identifying Communications Unit Leader responsibilities in establishing an Incident Communications Center (ICC) as well as managing all incident communications needs, personnel, and the ICC.

Scope Statement

This unit is designed to give the students an idea of how to effectively manage themselves and others in the Communications Unit during an incident, as well as describe how to make initial requests and create an ICC.

Topic Unit Terminal Objective

**Explain the Following Key Points**

Introduce the Unit Objectives and explain the Unit Terminal Objective to the class.

Unit Terminal Objective

At the end of this unit, students will be able to identify Communications Unit Leader responsibilities in establishing an Incident Communications Center (ICC) as well as manage all incident communications needs, personnel, and the ICC.

Unit Enabling Objectives

- Discuss working relationships within the Communications Unit
- Discuss methods of organizing unit personnel
- Discuss important considerations in laying out the Communications Unit area
- Identify and discuss the interactions between the Communications Unit Leader and key individuals and sub-organizations
- Identify responsibilities of the Communications Unit positions

Topic Location of an ICC

Location of an ICC

Urban considerations:

- Manage the incident from the dispatch center or an ICC?
- Locate away from high traffic areas and noise
- Locate away from radio frequency and electronic noise
- Locate close to Incident Command Post



Unit 8:
Incident Communication Centers

Visual 8-3

Explain the Following Key Points

Present considerations the Communications Unit Leader should be aware of when determining the location of an ICC in an urban environment.

There are a number of considerations and concerns when establishing an ICC, including the following:

- The location must be safe, first of all, so as not to distract resources from the actual incident response in the event of an emergency
- The site must be large enough that individual workstations do not interfere with one another, and can accommodate the potential growth of the incident
- The area must be located away from radio frequency and electronic noise, such as communication towers, refrigeration trucks, and electrical generators
- The ICC should also be close to the ICP and the Medical Unit to relay orders such as Medevac requests quickly
- The Incident Command Post (ICP) will have significant electrical power requirements, of course, and should be located close to a source for this

Suggested Discussion

Do you manage communications for a large incident from the dispatch center or from an Incident Communications Center (ICC)?

Suggested Discussion

Do you co-locate with the Incident Commander?

Consider safe and proper environment for staff.

Topic ICC Facilities**Explain the Following Key Points**

Describe the types of ICC facilities available to a Communications Unit Leader.

There are a number of physical forms an ICC can take.

- A Mobile Communications Center is a large, RV-like vehicle with a variety of communications equipment already installed, and capable of numerous other connections, depending on the specific vehicle, such as data links, cell reception, and satellite feeds
- In wilderness situations, a tent may be the most a Communications Unit Leader can expect, though these have the advantage of being relatively cheap and mobile
- For urban and suburban environments, a school or commercial building may be considered, though the architecture of the building may obstruct long-range, low-penetration frequencies such as VHF low band
- A mobile command vehicle is similar to a mobile communications vehicle, though specifically designed to support command functions
 - Mobile command vehicles often have a dedicated communications area; however, that may be perfectly suitable for a Communications Unit Leader's needs

Within the Communications Center, the Communications Unit Leader must make sure that workstations are created to accommodate the various technologies utilized on the incident.

There will need to be workstations for radios, telephones, and computers, although some technologies will incorporate several of these workstation types. To supply these

workstations, the Communications Unit Leader must also ensure that the ICC has an adequate supply of ICS forms, copies of the IAP, and maps of the incident area.

Topic Mobile Communications Centers**Explain the Following Key Points**

Show different types of units available: Type 1, most capable, to Type 4, least capable.

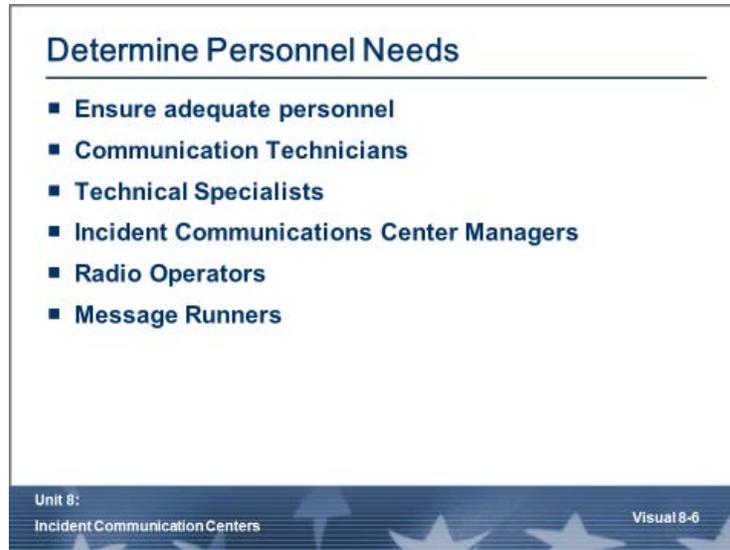
ICCs do not need a large vehicle, virtually any room that meets your needs is also acceptable. But try to find vehicles or facilities that are reasonably comfortable. People may be performing long shifts and need some basic comforts.

Suggested Discussion

What are the issues when multiple Mobile Command Posts or Mobile Communication Centers arrive on the scene?

National typing of these resources is still in development.

Topic Determine Personnel Needs



Explain the Following Key Points

Present information to assist in determining personnel needs.

How many people will I need? Is this a 24 hour operation? Do I have any work rules or union issues that dictate staffing levels and length of time a person can be used?

Don't wait until you need the personnel to determine the need and order for it; the reaction time can be extensive.

Remember the comfort and safety of the Communications Unit personnel are your responsibility.

Ensure all personnel are briefed on the Safety Message -ICS Form 221. Remember that the COMTs are often deployed in areas that contain unusual risks. Briefing RADOs provides them with information that enhances the safety of field personnel such as directions to the ICP and staging in unfamiliar or hazardous areas.

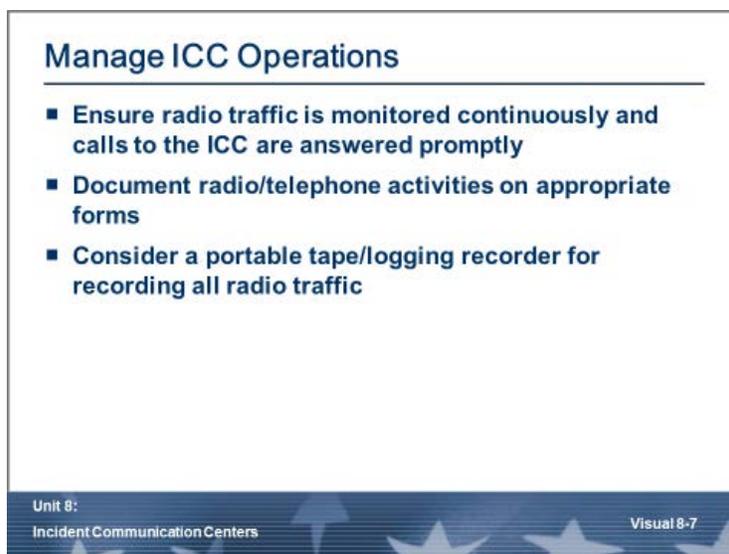
Suggested Discussion

What would you use runners for?

Potential Answers

- Runners can be useful to assist in distributing general messages; they are agents of spectrum efficiency
- Ensure you have adequate personnel to staff the ICC
- Allow for response time of personnel
- Have sufficient communications and Technical Specialists to make the ICC operational

- The ICC Manager will supervise the radio operators and runners

Topic Manage ICC Operations**Explain the Following Key Points**

Describe the documentation processes that are often in place at an ICC.

Managing an ICC involves finding and training the appropriate number of people to staff the ICC. It involves having processes in place for staff, some of whom may be volunteers, to facilitate tracking and documentation of communications traffic.

The Medical Plan is a critical document for the Communications Unit. All Unit personnel must be briefed on the Medical Plan (ICS Form 206).

The Communications Unit is always involved in facilitating effective communications during medical emergencies within an incident. The Medical Plan (ICS Form 206) may also contain frequency data such as MED Channels for hospital coordination.

Both logging recorders and instant playback recorders are recommended for incident management. Consider that these may not be recording every channel. Tactical traffic is very often not recorded. In absence of a logging recorder, a makeshift logger can be created with a personal computer and a scanner. Miniature logging recorders can be created using a scanner and PC. A number of other scanner software vendors can provide this service.

- www.butelsoftware.com
- www.proscan.org

Ensure all radio traffic is monitored. Document radio/phone activities on the Communications Log (Form 309). Use the General Message (ICS Form 213) to communicate messages to the appropriate party and relay information back to the field.

Maintain contact with the local dispatch center.

Be prepared for the “incident within the incident”:

- Firefighters suffering from heat exhaustion
- SWAT Officer is the victim of a gunshot wound
- The scheduled or unscheduled arrival of visiting dignitaries
- Ensure that Communication staff are briefed on the Medical Plan (ICS Form 206)

Suggested Discussion Question

How would you ensure radio traffic is continuously monitored and calls properly answered?

Suggested Answer

Properly staffing an ICC ensures radio traffic is continuously monitored and calls properly answered.

Topic Form 309: Communications Log

Form 309: Communications Log

COMMUNICATIONS LOG		TASK #	DATE PREPARED:
FOR OPERATIONAL PERIOD #		TIME PREPARED:	
RADIO OPERATOR NAME (LOGISTICS)		TASK NAME	
		STATION I.D.	
LOG			
	STATION I.D.		
TIME	FROM	TO	SUBJECT

Unit 8: Incident Communication Centers Visual 8-8

Explain the Following Key Points

Discuss Form 309 and its purpose.

It is an essential function of the Communications Unit to record telephone and radio traffic. Obviously a logging recorder is the fastest and easiest. However, not every incident will have that luxury, so there is a Form 309 for this purpose, to hand-write the log. On the CD is also a Word template that if installed will perform this function and time stamp the lines to help with record keeping.

Refer to the Communications Log form in the Forms section of the Student Workbook and Student CD.

Who fills out this form?

RADO fills this out.

Why do you use this form?

This may be the most immediate or only record of communication, and it may be the only record of actual tactical actions.

Refer to the Communications Log form in the forms section of the Student Workbook and Student CD.

Local Dispatch Center

- **Maintain contact with the local dispatch center through an interoperability channel or talk group**
 - **Phone Line**
 - **Internet Connection**
 - **Fax**
 - **E-mail/Scan**



Unit 8:
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Visual 8-9

Explain the Following Key Points

Reinforce importance of maintaining contact with local dispatch center.

Topic Incident Within the Incident

Incident Within the Incident

- Prepare incident-within-an-incident response plans prior to their need. Include national medical incident protocol in response plans.
 - Auto accident with injuries involving responders
 - Firefighter suffering heat exhaustion
 - SWAT Officer is a victim of a gunshot wound
 - Dignitaries' (un) scheduled site visit

Handout 8-1: Communications Center Protocol

Handout 8-2: Medical Emergency Procedure Plan

Handout 8-3: Expanded ICS 206 Medical Plan



Unit 8:
Incident Communication Centers

Visual 8-10

Explain the Following Key Points

Provide details on managing an incident-within-the-incident.

Refer to Handout 8-1: Communications Center Protocol, Handout 8-2: Medical Emergency Procedure Plan, and Handout 8-3: Expanded ICS 206 Medical Plan.

The protocol for handling an incident-within-the-incident should be in place before the primary incident occurs. Careful creation of this protocol can have a significant impact on incident personnel.

Prepare incident-within-the-incident response plans prior to their need. Include the newest national medical incident protocol in these plans.

- Communication Center Protocol
- Medical Emergency Procedure Plan
- Expanded ICS 206 Medical Plan

Suggested Discussion Question

What should be included in a protocol for handling an incident-within-the-incident?

Potential Answer

The Communications Unit must have specific protocols in place on dealing with an incident within the incident. The protocol should consider what information should be released over the radio if an incident within the incident occurs.

Dedicate appropriate air time to an incident within an incident, but don't stop the primary incident response. Consider your ability to move this incident to a tactical channel.

Situations may occur where providing care to responders in contrast to the victims of the incident becomes the priority.

Be familiar with the Medical Plan in the Incident Action Plan.

Topic Determine Supply Needs



Determine Supply Needs

- Maintain quantities of supplies at a level to prevent shortage of any basic needed items
- Maintain supplies according to:
 - Current resource orders
 - Projected growth of the incident
 - Projected number of personnel in the ICC
- General Guideline: When placing initial supply order, plan for approximately three days

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Visual 8-11

Explain the Following Key Points

Provide information to assist the Communications Unit Leader in determining supply needs.

- Take inventory
 - In the urban environment, portable battery chargers and a reliable power source are critical
- Maintain supplies according to:
 - Current resource orders
 - Projected growth of the incident
 - Projected number of personnel in the ICC
- Make sure that you have ordered well in advance and in sufficient quantities

Topic

Maintain Quantity

Maintain Quantity

- Take inventory
- Determine battery needs
- Portable battery chargers in an urban environment
- Consider the need for cell phone chargers and other portable electronic devices
- General Guideline: Order 2 changes of batteries per radio, per operational period

Unit 8:
Incident Communication Centers

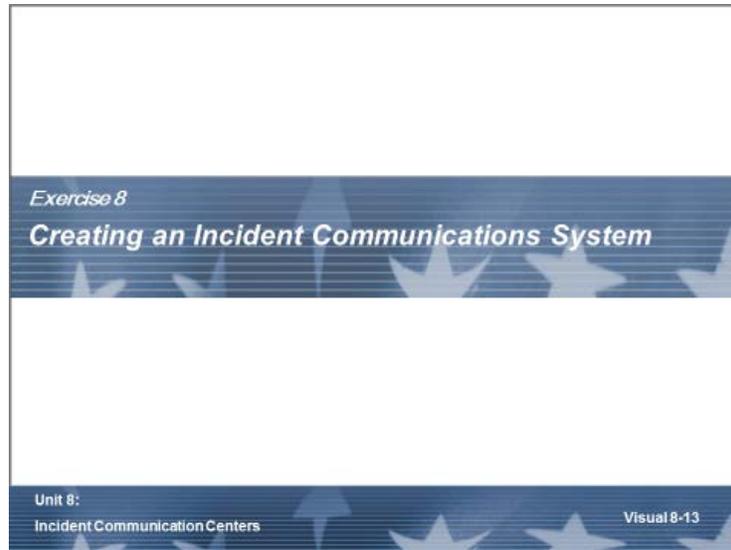
Visual 8-12

Explain the Following Key Points

Present information to assist in maintaining quantity of supplies. Spend some time explaining and discussing battery issues.

Suggested Discussion Question

How does your agency charge batteries? If you are using disposable batteries, what process do you have in place for collecting dead batteries?

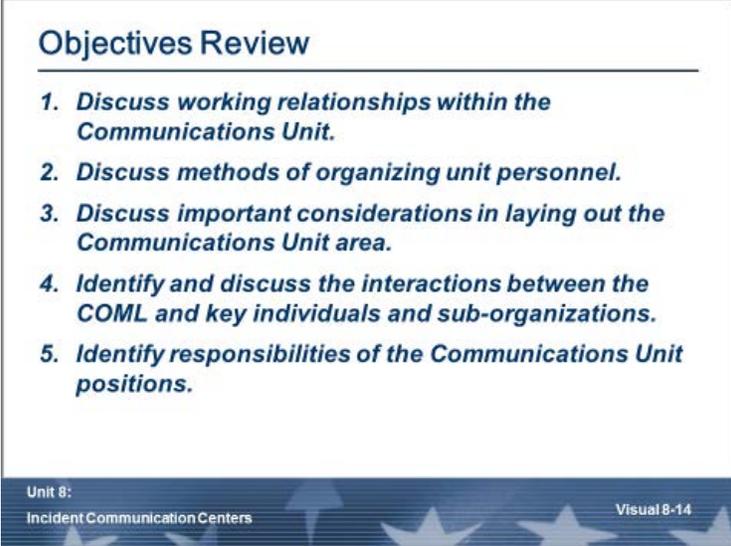


Explain the Following Key Points

Retrieve Exercise 8 from the Instructor Guide located in the Unit 8 exercise tab before proceeding.

Refer to Exercise 8: Creating Incident Communications Systems.

The purpose of Exercise 8 is to design a communications system, taking into consideration the needs of the agencies that students may consider as likely responders. The exercise is scheduled to last approximately 45 minutes, involving the instructor reading updates regarding Central City. Based on this information, the students will discuss the significance of the information received and what conclusions to draw as they create a communications system.

Topic Objectives ReviewA presentation slide titled "Objectives Review" with a blue header and footer. The slide contains five numbered objectives in blue text. The footer includes the text "Unit 8: Incident Communication Centers" and "Visual 8-14" on a blue background with white stars.

Objectives Review

1. *Discuss working relationships within the Communications Unit.*
2. *Discuss methods of organizing unit personnel.*
3. *Discuss important considerations in laying out the Communications Unit area.*
4. *Identify and discuss the interactions between the COML and key individuals and sub-organizations.*
5. *Identify responsibilities of the Communications Unit positions.*

Unit 8:
Incident Communication Centers

Visual 8-14

Explain the Following Key Points

Review the Enabling Objectives for this unit to ensure that the class has obtained the knowledge necessary to successfully meet the Unit Terminal Objective.

Pose the Unit Enabling Objectives as questions. Ask the group to give a brief example/short explanation to answer each question. Try to call on a different student for each objective.

This is not intended to be an inclusive discussion of all material covered in Unit 8, but rather a quick and engaging way to wrap up the unit, and reconnect the students to the material before moving on to Unit 9.

Ask the students to write down the top three to five things they learned in this unit on their ICS Form 214.

Leave the Objectives Review slide up so that students can think about what they learned in relation to the objectives.

At the end of the day, collect their ICS Form 214s. This will help identify what the students have learned and what areas may be especially important to highlight throughout the rest of the course.

This activity should be done at the end of each unit.

Unit Terminal Objective

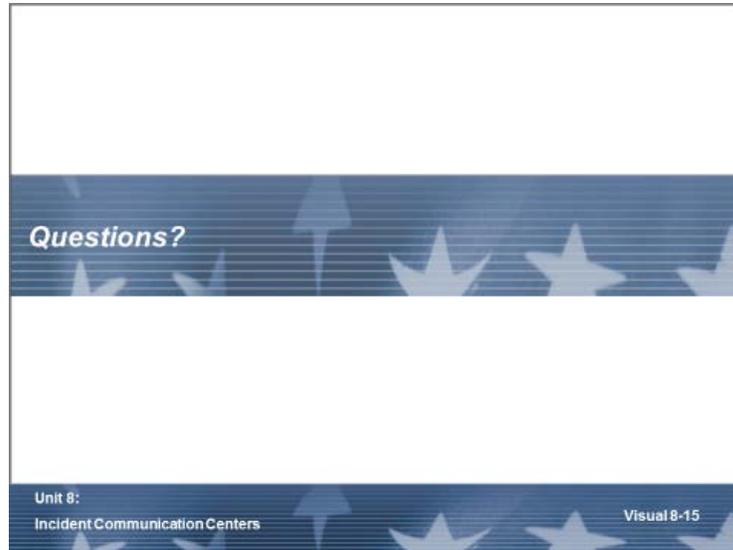
At the end of this unit, students will be able to identify Communications Unit Leader responsibilities in establishing an Incident Communications Center (ICC) as well as manage all incident communications needs, personnel, and the ICC.

Unit Enabling Objectives

- Discuss working relationships within the Communications Unit
- Discuss methods of organizing unit personnel
- Discuss important considerations in laying out the Communications Unit area
- Identify and discuss the interactions between the Communications Unit Leader and key individuals and sub-organizations
- Identify responsibilities of the Communications Unit positions

Topic

Questions?

**Explain the Following Key Points**

Provide students an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on presented material in this unit.