



**FEMA**



# ICS-402: ICS Overview for Executives/Senior Officials G402

Student Manual

February 2009



**FEMA**

## 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

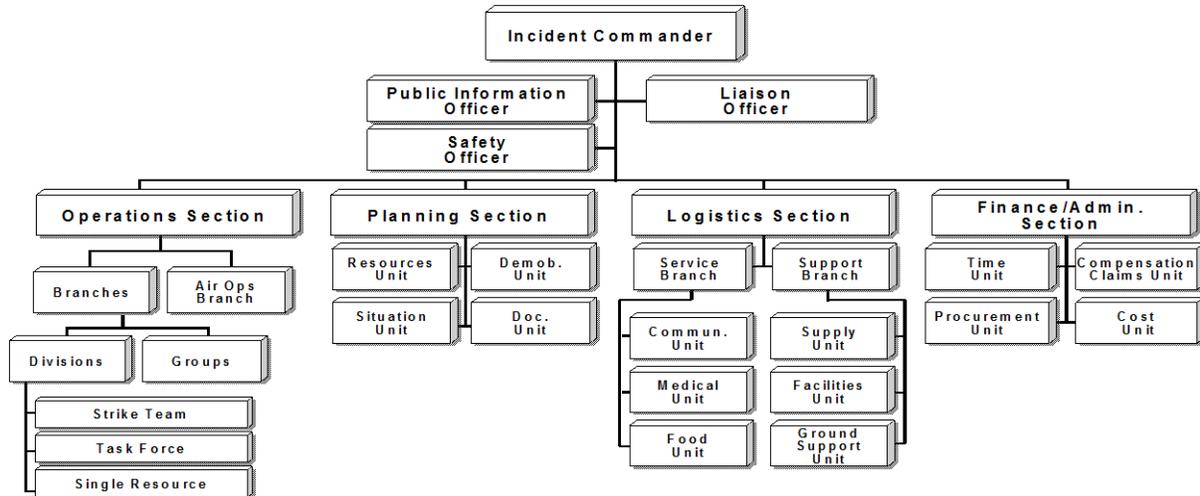
At each level within the ICS organization, individuals with primary responsibility positions have distinct titles. Titles provide a common standard for all users. For example, if one agency uses the title Branch Chief, another Branch Manager, etc., this lack of consistency can cause confusion at the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

Command Staff	Responsibilities
<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 organization(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

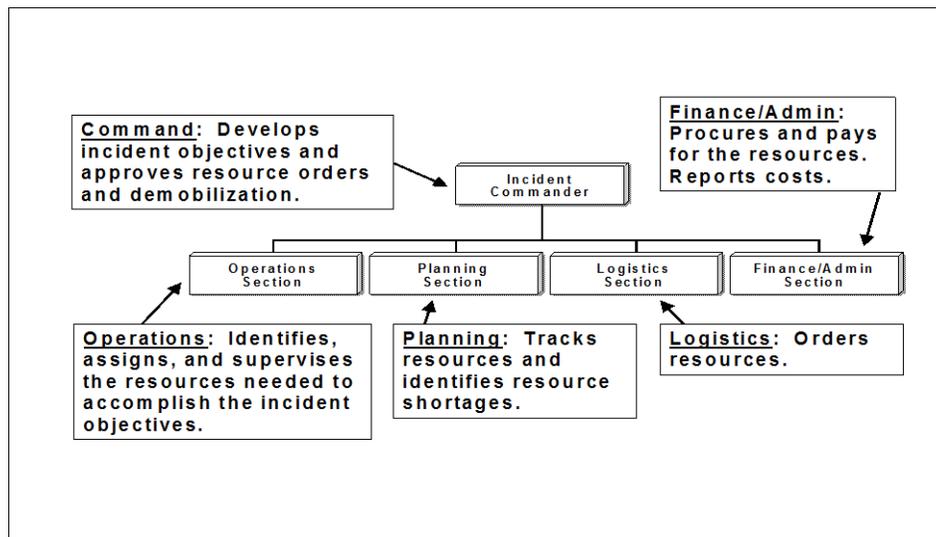
It was recognized early in the development of ICS that the critical factor of adequate planning for incident operations was often overlooked or not given enough emphasis. This resulted in poor use of resources, inappropriate strategies and tactics, safety problems, higher incident costs, and lower effectiveness.

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.

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**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.).

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**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.

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**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.

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**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**

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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.

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**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.

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**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

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**Political**

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

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**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.

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**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.

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### AAR Process Steps

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