Course: IS-100 - Incident Command System (ICS) 100 Training

Lesson 1: Welcome/ICS Overview

Lesson Overview

The **Welcome/ICS Overview** lesson introduces you to:

- The background and development of ICS.
- ICS as the standard for emergency management across the country.
- ICS as interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible.
- Applications of ICS.
- ICS as a key feature of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify requirements to use ICS.
- Identify three purposes of ICS.

ICS and the Emergency Operations Center

You may be deployed to an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) rather than serve as an on-scene responder. The EOC is a multiagency coordination entity that provides support and coordination to the on-scene responders.

Although the EOC uses ICS management principles it does not manage on-scene operations. Therefore, not all aspects of ICS taught in this course may apply to EOC operations.

Gaining an understanding of the full spectrum of ICS used by Incident command will help you better support the on-scene responders if you serve in a multiagency coordination function.

The Incident Command System (ICS)

An incident is an occurrence, either caused by humans or a natural phenomenon, which requires response actions to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or the environment.

Examples of incidents include:

- Fire, both structural and wild land.
- 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.

Given the magnitude of these types of events, it's not always possible for any one agency alone to handle the management and resource needs.

Partnerships are often required among local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies. These partners must work together in a smooth, coordinated effort under the same management system.

The Incident Command System, or ICS, is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard 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.

History of the Incident Command System (ICS)

The Incident Command System (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 this disaster studied the case histories and discovered that response problems could rarely be attributed to lack of resources or failure of tactics. What were the lessons learned?

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.

A poorly managed incident response can be devastating to our economy and our health and safety. With so much at stake, we must effectively manage our response efforts. The Incident Command System, or ICS, allows us to do so. ICS is a proven management system based on successful business practices. This course introduces you to basic ICS concepts and terminology.

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

In response to attacks on September 11, President George W. Bush issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5) in February 2003.

HSPD-5 called for a National Incident Management System (NIMS) and identified steps for improved coordination of Federal, State, local, and private industry response to incidents and described the way these agencies will prepare for such a response.

The Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security announced the establishment of NIMS in March 2004. One of the key features of NIMS is the Incident Command System.

ICS Built on Best Practices

ICS is:

- A proven management system based on successful business practices.
- The result of decades of lessons learned in the organization and management of emergency incidents.

ICS has been tested in more than 30 years of emergency and nonemergency applications, by all levels of government and in the private sector. It represents organizational "best practices," and as a component of NIMS has become the standard for emergency management across the country.

NIMS require the use of ICS for all domestic responses. NIMS also requires that all levels of government, including Territories and Tribal Organizations, adopt ICS as a condition of receiving Federal preparedness funding.

What ICS Is Designed To Do

Designers of the system recognized early that ICS must be interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible to meet the following management challenges:

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

ICS consists of procedures for controlling personnel, facilities, equipment, and communications. It is a system designed to be used or applied from the time an incident occurs until the requirement for management and operations no longer exists.

Applications for the Use of ICS

Applications for the use of ICS include:

- Fire, both structural and wild land.
- 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.

ICS may be used for small or large events. It can grow or shrink to meet the changing needs of an incident or event.

Lesson 2: ICS Features and Principles

Lesson Overview

The **ICS Features and Principles** lesson introduces you to:

- ICS management principles.

- ICS core system features.
- Common ICS responsibilities.

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe the basic features of ICS.
- Identify common incident tasks.
- Describe the six basic ICS facilities.
- Identify facilities that may be located together.
- Identify facility map symbols.
- Describe common responsibilities at an incident.
- List individual accountability responsibilities.
- Describe common mobilization responsibilities.
- Describe common demobilization responsibilities.

ICS Features

As you learned in the previous lesson, ICS is based on proven management principles, which contribute to the strength and efficiency of the overall system.

ICS principles are implemented through a wide range of management features including the use of common terminology and clear text, and a modular organizational structure.

ICS emphasizes effective planning, including management by objectives and reliance on an Incident Action Plan.

ICS helps ensure full utilization of all incident resources by:

- Maintaining a manageable span of control.
- Establishing pre-designated incident locations and facilities.
- Implementing resource management practices.
- Ensuring integrated communications.

The ICS features related to command structure include chain of command and unity of command as well as, unified command and transfer of command. Formal transfer of command occurs whenever leadership changes.

Through accountability and mobilization, ICS helps ensure that resources are on hand and ready.

And, finally ICS supports responders and decision makers by providing the data they need through effective information and intelligence management.

This lesson covers each of these ICS features in detail.

Common Terminology and Clear Text

The ability to communicate within the ICS is absolutely critical. An essential method for ensuring the ability to communicate is by using common terminology and clear text.

A critical part of an effective multiagency incident management system is for all communications to be in plain English. That is, **use clear text. Do not use radio codes, agency-specific codes, or jargon.**

ICS establishes common terminology allowing diverse incident management and support entities to work together. Common terminology helps to define:

- **Organizational Functions:** Major functions and functional units with incident management responsibilities are named and defined. Terminology for the organizational elements involved is standard and consistent.
- **Resource Descriptions:** Major resources (personnel, facilities, and equipment/ supply items) are given common names and are "typed" or categorized by their capabilities. This helps to avoid confusion and to enhance interoperability.
- **Incident Facilities:** Common terminology is used to designate incident facilities.
- **Position Titles:** ICS management or supervisory positions are referred to by titles, such as Officer, Chief, Director, Supervisor, or Leader.

Each of the above areas will be covered in more detail in this and the remaining lessons.

Modular Organization

The ICS 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. As incident complexity increases, the organization expands from the top down as functional responsibilities are delegated.

The ICS organizational structure is flexible. When needed, separate functional elements can be established and subdivided to enhance internal organizational management and external coordination. As the ICS organizational structure expands, the number of management positions also expands to adequately address the requirements of the incident.

In ICS, only those functions or positions necessary for a particular incident will be filled.

Management by Objectives

All levels of a growing ICS organization must have a clear understanding of the functional actions required to manage the incident. Management by objectives is an approach used to communicate functional actions throughout the entire ICS organization. It can be accomplished through the incident action planning process, which includes the following steps:

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 (applying tactics appropriate to the strategy, assigning the right resources, and monitoring their performance).
Step 6:   Provide necessary follow-up (changing strategy or tactics, adding or subtracting resources, etc.).

Reliance on an Incident Action Plan

In ICS, considerable emphasis is placed on developing effective Incident Action Plans.

An Incident Action Plan (IAP) is an oral or written plan containing general objectives reflecting the overall strategy for managing an incident. An IAP includes the identification of operational resources and assignments and may include attachments that provide additional direction.

Every incident must have a verbal or written Incident Action Plan. The purpose of this plan is to provide all incident supervisory personnel with direction for actions to be implemented during the operational period identified in the plan.

Incident Action Plans include the measurable strategic operations to be achieved and are prepared around a timeframe called an **Operational Period**.

Incident Action Plans provide a coherent means of communicating the overall incident objectives in the context of both operational and support activities. The plan may be oral or written except for hazardous materials incidents, which require a written IAP.

At the simplest level, all Incident Action Plans must have four elements:

- What do we want to do?
- Who is responsible for doing it?
- How do we communicate with each other?
- What is the procedure if someone is injured?

Manageable Span of Control

Another basic ICS feature concerns the supervisory structure of the organization.

Span of control pertains to the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can manage effectively during emergency response incidents or special events. Maintaining an effective span of control is particularly important on incidents where safety and accountability are a top priority.

Span of control is the key to effective and efficient incident management. The type of incident, nature of the task, hazards and safety factors, and distances between personnel and resources all influence span of control considerations.

Maintaining adequate span of control throughout the ICS organization is very important.

Effective span of control on incidents may vary from three (3) to seven (7), and **a ratio of one (1) supervisor to five (5) reporting elements is recommended**.

If the number of reporting elements falls outside of these ranges, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There may be exceptions, usually in lower-risk assignments or where resources work in close proximity to each other.

Predesignated Incident Locations and Facilities

Incident activities may be accomplished from a variety of operational locations and support facilities. Facilities will be identified and established by the Incident Commander depending on the requirements and complexity of the incident or event.

It is important to know and understand the names and functions of the principal ICS facilities.

Incident Facilities Virtual Tour

The **Incident Command Post**, or ICP, is the location from which the Incident Commander oversees all incident operations. There is generally only one ICP for each incident or event, but it may change locations during the event. Every incident or event must have some form of an Incident Command Post. The ICP may be located in a vehicle, trailer, tent, or within a building. The ICP will be positioned outside of the present and potential hazard zone but close enough to the incident to maintain command. The ICP will be designated by the name of the incident, e.g., Trail Creek ICP.

Staging Areas are temporary locations at an incident where personnel and equipment are kept while waiting for tactical assignments. The resources in the Staging Area are always in **available** status. Staging Areas should be located close enough to the incident for a timely response, but far enough away to be out of the immediate impact zone. There may be more than one Staging Area at an incident. Staging Areas can be collocated with the ICP, Bases, Camps, Helibases, or Helispots.

A **Base** is the location from which primary logistics and administrative functions are coordinated and administered. The Base may be collocated with the Incident Command Post. There is only one Base per incident, and it is designated by the incident name. The Base is established and managed by the Logistics Section.

A **Camp** is the location where resources may be kept to support incident operations if a Base is not accessible to all resources. Camps are temporary locations within the general incident area, which are equipped and staffed to provide food, water, sleeping areas, and sanitary services. Camps are designated by geographic location or number. Multiple Camps may be used, but not all incidents will have Camps.

A **Helibase** is the location from which helicopter-centered air operations are conducted. Helibases are generally used on a more long-term basis and include such services as fueling and maintenance. The Helibase is usually designated by the name of the incident, e.g. Trail Creek Helibase.

Helispots are more temporary locations at the incident, where helicopters can safely land and take off. Multiple Helispots may be used.

Incident Facility Map Symbols

In ICS, it is important to be able to identify the map symbols associated with the basic incident facilities. The map symbols used to represent each of the six basic ICS facilities are:
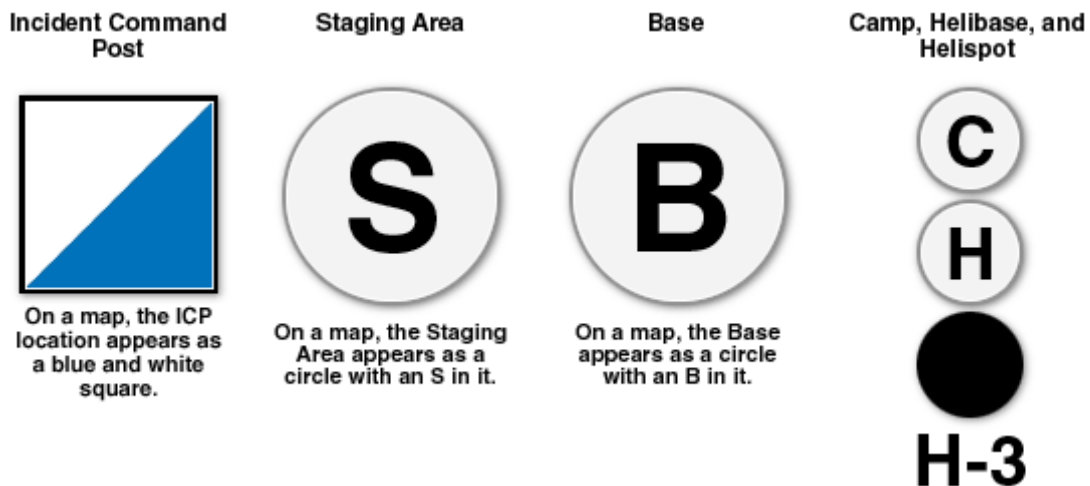
Resource Management

ICS resources can be factored into two categories:

- **Tactical Resources:** Personnel and major items of equipment that are available or potentially available to the Operations function on assignment to incidents are called tactical resources.
- **Support Resources:** All other resources required to support the incident. Food, communications equipment, tents, supplies, and fleet vehicles are examples of support resources.

Tactical resources are always classified as one of the following:

- **Assigned:** Assigned resources are working on an assignment under the direction of a Supervisor.
- **Available:** Available resources are assembled, have been issued their equipment, and are ready for immediate assignment.
- **Out-Of-Service:** Out-of-service resources are not ready for available or assigned status.

Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date picture of resource utilization is a critical component of 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.

Integrated Communications

The use of a common communications plan is essential for ensuring that responders can communicate with one another during an incident. Communication equipment, procedures, and systems must operate across jurisdictions (interoperably).

Developing an integrated voice and data communications system, including equipment, systems, and protocols, must occur prior to an incident.

Effective ICS communications include three elements:

- **Modes:** The "hardware" systems that transfer information.
- **Planning:** Planning for the use of all available communications resources.
- **Networks:** The procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally.

Chain of Command and Unity of Command

In the Incident Command System:

- **Chain of command** means that there is an orderly line of authority within the ranks of the organization, with lower levels subordinate to, and connected to, higher levels.
- **Unity of command** means that every individual is accountable to only one designated supervisor to whom they report at the scene of an incident.

The 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. These principles do not apply to the exchange of information. Although orders must flow through the chain of command, members of the organization may directly communicate with each other to ask for or share information.

The command function may be carried out in two ways:

- As a **Single Command** in which the Incident Commander will have complete responsibility for incident management. A Single Command may be simple, involving an Incident Commander and single resources, or it may be a complex organizational structure with an Incident Management Team.
- As a **Unified Command** in which responding agencies and/or jurisdictions with responsibility for the incident share incident management.

Unified Command

A Unified Command may be needed for incidents involving:

- Multiple jurisdictions.
- A single jurisdiction with multiple agencies sharing responsibility.
- Multiple jurisdictions with multi-agency involvement.

If a Unified Command is needed, Incident Commanders representing agencies or jurisdictions that share responsibility for the incident manage the response from a single Incident Command Post.

A 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.

Under a Unified Command, a single, coordinated Incident Action Plan will direct all activities. The Incident Commanders will supervise a single Command and General Staff organization and speak with one voice.

Transfer of Command

The process of moving the responsibility for incident command from one Incident Commander to another is called **transfer of command**. Transfer of command may take place when:

- A more qualified person assumes command.
- The incident situation changes over time, resulting in a legal requirement to change command.
- Changing command makes good sense, e.g., an Incident Management Team takes command of an incident from a local jurisdictional unit due to increased incident complexity.
- There is normal turnover of personnel on long or extended incidents, i.e., to accomodate work/rest requirements.
- The incident response is concluded and incident responsibility is transferred back to the home agency.

The transfer of command process always includes a transfer of command briefing, which may be oral, written, or a combination of both.

Accountability

Effective accountability during incident operations is essential at all jurisdictional levels and within individual functional areas. Individuals must abide by their agency policies and guidelines and any applicable local, tribal, State, or Federal rules and regulations. The following guidelines 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.

Mobilization

At any incident or event, the situation must be assessed and response planned. Resources must be organized, assigned and directed to accomplish the incident objectives. As they work, resources must be managed to adjust to changing conditions.

Managing resources safely and effectively is the most important consideration at an incident. Therefore, personnel and equipment should respond only when requested or when dispatched by an appropriate authority.

Information and Intelligence Management

The analysis and sharing of information and intelligence is an important component of ICS. The incident management organization must establish a process for gathering, sharing, and managing incident-related information and intelligence.

Intelligence includes not only national security or other types of classified information but also other operational information that may come from a variety of different sources, such as:

- Risk assessments.
- Medical intelligence (i.e., surveillance).
- Weather information.
- Geospatial data.
- Structural designs.
- Toxic contaminant levels.
- Utilities and public works data.

General Guidelines—Lengthy Assignments

Many incidents last only a short time, and may not require travel. Other deployments may require a lengthy assignment away from home. Below are general guidelines for incidents requiring extended stays or travel:

- Assemble a travel kit containing any special technical information (e.g., maps, manuals, contact lists, and reference materials).
- Prepare personal items needed for your estimated length of stay, including medications, cash, credit cards, etc.
- Ensure that family members know your destination and how to contact you.
- Determine appropriate travel authorizations.
- Familiarize yourself with travel and transportation arrangements.
- Determine your return mode of transportation (if possible).
- Determine payroll procedures (at incident or through home agency).
- If you are going on a foreign assignment, be sure to take your passport.

General Guidelines—Roles and Authorities

In addition to preparing for your travel arrangements, it is important to understand your role and authorities.

- Review your emergency assignment. Know who you will report to and what your position will be.
- Establish a clear understanding of your decisionmaking authority.
- Determine communications procedures for contacting your headquarters or home office (if necessary).
- Identify purchasing authority and procedures.
- Identify procedures for obtaining food and lodging.

Actions Prior to Departure

Upon receiving an incident assignment, your deployment briefing should include, but may not be limited to, the following information:

- Incident type and name or designation
- Descriptive location and response area
- Incident check-in location
- Specific assignment
- Reporting date and time
- Travel instructions
- Communications instructions, e.g., incident frequencies
- Special support requirements (facilities, equipment transportation and off-loading, etc.)
- Travel authorization for air, rental car, lodging, meals, and incidental expenses

Check-In at the Incident: Activities

Check-in officially logs you in at the incident. The check-in process and information helps to:

- Ensure personnel accountability.
- Track resources.
- Prepare personnel for assignments and reassignments.
- Locate personnel in case of an emergency.
- Establish personnel time records and payroll documentation.
- Plan for releasing personnel.
- Organize the demobilization process.

Check-In at the Incident: Locations

Check in only once. Check-in locations may be found at several incident facilities, including:

- Incident Command Post.
- Base or Camp(s).
- Staging Areas.
- Helibase.
- Division/Group Supervisor (for direct assignment).

Note that these locations may not all be activated at every incident.

Check-in information is usually recorded on ICS Form 211, Check-In List.

Initial Incident Briefing

After check-in, locate your incident supervisor and obtain your initial briefing. The briefing information helps you plan your tasks and communicate with others. Briefings received and given should include:

- Current situation assessment.
- Identification of your specific job responsibilities.
- Identification of coworkers.
- Location of work area.
- Identification of eating and sleeping arrangements, as appropriate.

- Procedural instructions for obtaining additional supplies, services, and personnel.
- Operational periods/work shifts.
- Required safety procedures and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as appropriate.

Incident Recordkeeping

All incidents require some form of recordkeeping. Requirements vary depending upon the agencies involved and the nature of the incident. Detailed information on using ICS forms will be covered in other training sessions, or may be found in the Forms Manual.

Below are general guidelines for incident recordkeeping:

- Print or type all entries.
- Enter dates by month/day/year format.
- Enter date and time on all forms and records. Use local time.
- Fill in all blanks. Use N/A as appropriate.
- Use military 24-hour time.
- Section Chiefs and above assign recordkeeper (scribe).

If you are expected to be a supervisor:

- You must maintain a daily Unit Log (ICS-214), indicating the names of personnel assigned and a listing of the major activities that occured during the operational periods to which you were assigned.
- You are expected to give briefings to your subordinates, adjacent forces, and replacement personnel.

Communications Discipline

Important considerations related to communications include:

- Observing strict radio/telephone procedures.
- Using plain English in all communications. Codes should not be used in radio transmissions. Limit the use of discipline-specific jargon, especially on interdisciplinary incidents.
- Limiting radio and telephone traffic to essential information only. Plan what you are going to say.
- Following procedures for secure communications as required.

Personal Conduct

Sexual harassment or discrimination of any type and the use of illegal drugs and/or alcohol are prohibited on all incidents. Report all such activities to your supervisor.

Often times, incident response can produce high stress situations. As part of your responsibilities, you may be required to interact with people who have been adversely affected by the incident. It is important to be patient and act in a professional manner at all times.

Incident Demobilization

Agency requirements for demobilization may vary considerably. General demobilization guidelines for all personnel are to:

- Complete all work assignments and required forms/reports.
- Brief replacements, subordinates, and supervisor.

- Evaluate the performance of subordinates.
- Follow incident and agency check-out procedures.
- Provide adequate followup contact information.
- Return any incident-issued equipment or other nonexpendable supplies.
- Complete postincident reports, critiques, evaluations, and medical followup.
- Complete all payment and/or payroll issues or obligations.
- Contact the Demobilization Unit to obtain demobilization instructions.
- Upon arrival at home, notify the home unit (i.e., whomever is tracking you) of your arrival and ensure your readiness.

Lesson 3: ICS Organization: Part I

Lesson Overview

The **ICS Organization: Part I** lesson introduces you to the:

- Organizational structure of ICS.
- Five major management functions.
- Use of position titles.
- Roles and responsibilities of the Incident Commander and Command Staff.
- Selection and transfer of the Incident Commanders.

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe the role and function of the Incident Commander.
- Describe the role and function of the Command Staff.

ICS Organization

The ICS organization is unique but easy to understand. There is no correlation between the ICS organization and the administrative structure of any single agency or jurisdiction. This is deliberate, because confusion over different position titles and organizational structures has been a significant stumbling block to effective incident management in the past.

For example, someone who serves as a Chief every day may not hold that title when deployed under an ICS structure.

Performance of Management Functions

Every incident or event requires that certain management functions be performed. The problem must be identified and assessed, a plan to deal with it developed and implemented, and the necessary resources procured and paid for.

Regardless of the size of the incident, these management functions still will apply.

Five Major Management Functions

There are five major management functions that are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops. These functions apply whether you are handling a routine emergency, organizing for a major non-emergency event, or managing a response to a major disaster. The five major management functions are:

- **Incident Command:** Sets the incident objectives, strategies, and priorities and has overall responsibility for the incident.
- **Operations:** Conducts operations to reach the incident objectives. Establishes the tactics and directs all operational resources.
- **Planning:** Supports the incident action planning process by tracking resources, collecting/analyzing information, and maintaining documentation.
- **Logistics:** Provides resources and needed services to support the achievement of the incident objectives.
- **Finance/Administration:** Monitors costs related to the incident. Provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analyses.

Organizational Structure—Incident Commander

The Incident Commander has overall responsibility for managing the incident by objectives, planning strategies, and implementing tactics. **The Incident Commander is the only position that is always staffed in ICS applications.** On small incidents and events, one person, the Incident Commander, may accomplish all management functions.

The Incident Commander is responsible for all ICS management functions until he or she delegates the function.

Organizational Structure—ICS Sections

Each of the primary ICS Sections may be subdivided as needed. The ICS organization has the capability to expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident.

A basic ICS operating guideline is that the person at the top of the organization is responsible until the authority is delegated to another person. Thus, on smaller incidents when these additional persons are not required, the Incident Commander will personally accomplish or manage all aspects of the incident organization.

ICS Position Titles

To maintain span of control, the ICS organization can be divided into many levels of supervision. At each level, individuals with primary responsibility positions have distinct titles. Using specific ICS position titles serves three important purposes:

- 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.

Supervisory Position 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

Incident Commander's Overall Role

The Incident Commander has overall responsibility for managing the incident by objectives, planning strategies, and implementing tactics. The Incident Commander must be fully briefed and should have a written delegation of authority. Initially, assigning tactical resources and overseeing operations will be under the direct supervision of the Incident Commander.

Personnel assigned by the Incident Commander have the authority of their assigned positions, regardless of the rank they hold within their respective agencies.

Incident Commander Responsibilities

In addition to having overall responsibility for managing the entire incident, the Incident Commander is specifically responsible for:

- Ensuring incident safety.
- Providing information services to internal and external stakeholders.
- Establishing and maintaining liaison with other agencies participating in the incident.

The Incident Commander may appoint one or more Deputies, if applicable, from the same agency or from other agencies or jurisdictions. Deputy Incident Commanders must be as qualified as the Incident Commander.

**Selecting and Changing Incident Commanders**

As incidents expand or contract, change in jurisdiction or discipline, or become more or less complex, command may change to meet the needs of the incident.

Rank, grade, and seniority are not the factors used to select the Incident Commander. The Incident Commander is always a highly qualified individual trained to lead the incident response.

As you learned in Lesson 2, formal transfer of command at an incident always requires a transfer of command briefing for the incoming Incident Commander and notification to all personnel that a change in command is taking place.

Expanding the Organization

As incidents grow, the Incident Commander may delegate authority for performance of certain activities to the Command Staff and the General Staff. The Incident Commander will add positions only as needed.
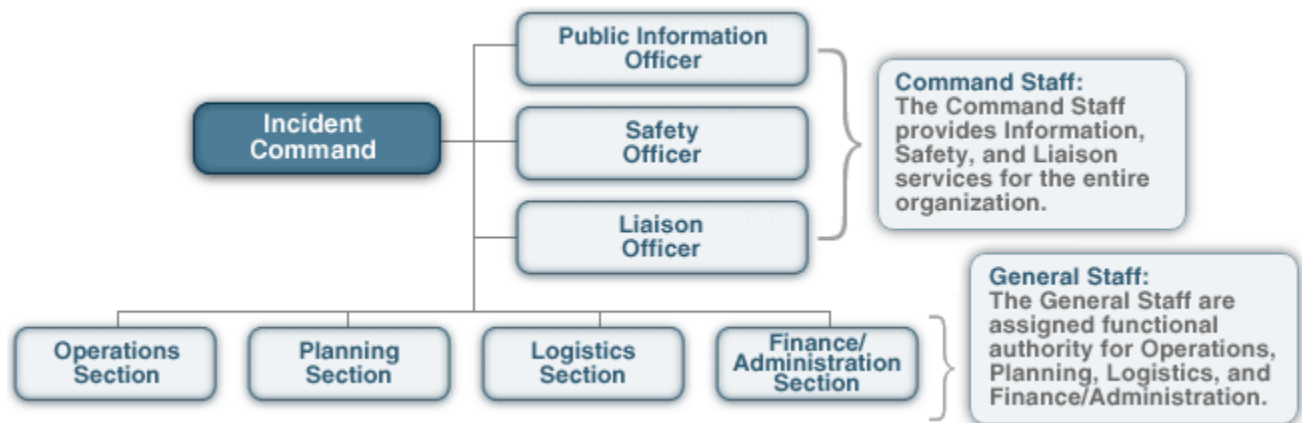
Command Staff

Depending upon the size and type of incident or event, it may be necessary for the Incident Commander to designate personnel to provide information, safety, and liaison services for the entire organization. In ICS, these personnel make up the Command Staff and consist of the:

- **Public Information Officer**, who serves as the conduit for information to internal and external stakeholders, including the media or other organizations seeking information directly from the incident or event.
- **Safety Officer**, who monitors safety conditions and develops measures for assuring the safety of all assigned personnel.
- **Liaison Officer**, who serves as the primary contact for supporting agencies assisting at an incident.

The Command Staff reports directly to the Incident Commander.

Lesson 4: ICS Organization: Part II

Lesson Overview

The **ICS Organization: Part II** lesson introduces you to the:

- Roles and responsibilities of the General Staff.
- Expansion and contraction of the ICS organization.

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe the role and function of the Operations Section.
- Describe the role and function of the Planning Section.
- Describe the role and function of the Logistics Section.
- Describe the role and function of the Finance/Administration Section.

General Staff

Expansion of the incident may also require the delegation of authority for the performance of the other management functions. The people who perform the other four management functions are designated as the **General Staff**. The General Staff is made up of four **Sections:** Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.

The General Staff reports directly to the Incident Commander.

ICS Section Chiefs and Deputies

As mentioned previously, the person in charge of each Section is designated as a **Chief**. Section Chiefs have the ability to expand their Section to meet the needs of the situation. Each of the Section Chiefs may have a Deputy, or more than one, if necessary. The Deputy:

- May assume responsibility for a specific portion of the primary position, work as relief, or be assigned other tasks.
- Should always be as proficient as the person for whom he or she works.

In large incidents, especially where multiple disciplines or jurisdictions are involved, the use of Deputies from other organizations can greatly increase interagency coordination.

Operations Section

Until Operations is established as a separate Section, the Incident Commander has direct control of tactical resources. The Incident Commander will determine the need for a separate Operations Section at an incident or event. When the Incident Commander activates an Operations Section, he or she will assign an individual as the Operations Section Chief.
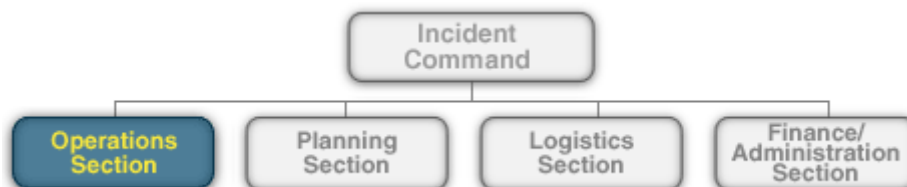
Operations Section Chief

The Operations Section Chief will develop and manage the Operations Section to accomplish the incident objectives set by the Incident Commander. The Operations Section Chief is normally the person with the greatest technical and tactical expertise in dealing with the problem at hand.

Operations Section: Maintaining Span of Control

The Operations function is where the tactical fieldwork is done and the most incident resources are assigned. Often the most hazardous activities are carried out there. The following supervisory levels can be added to help manage span of control:

Divisions are used to divide an incident geographically.

Groups are used to describe functional areas of operation.

Branches are used when the number of Divisions or Groups exceeds the span of control and can be either geographical or functional.

Operations Section: Divisions

Divisions are used to divide an incident **geographically**. The person in charge of each Division is designated as a **Supervisor**. How the area is divided is determined by the needs of the incident.

The most common way to identify Divisions is by using alphabet characters (A, B, C, etc.). Other identifiers may be used as long as Division identifiers are known by assigned responders.

The important thing to remember about ICS Divisions is that they are established to **divide an incident into geographical areas of operation**.
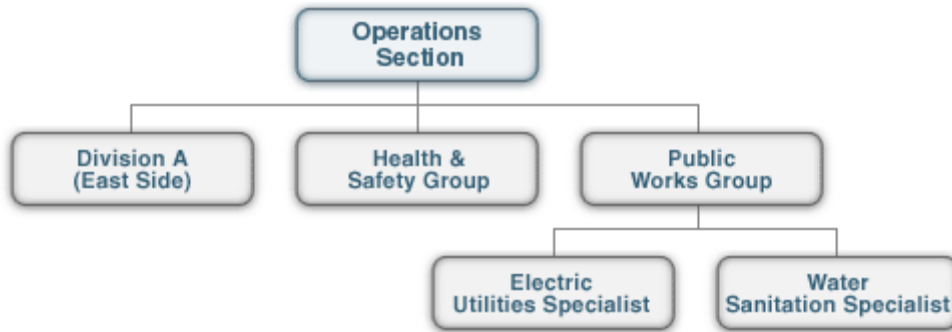
Operations Section: Groups

Groups are used to describe **functional** areas of operation. The person in charge of each Group is designated as a **Supervisor**.

The kind of Group to be established will also be determined by the needs of an incident. Groups are normally labeled according to the job that they are assigned (e.g., Human Services Group, Infrastructure Support Group, etc.). Groups will work wherever their assigned task is needed and are not limited geographically.

Operations Section: Divisions and Groups

Divisions and Groups can be used together on an incident. Divisions and Groups are at an equal level in the organization. One does not supervise the other. When a Group is working within a Division on a special assignment, Division and Group Supervisors must closely coordinate their activities.

Operations Section: Establishing Branches

If the number of Divisions or Groups exceeds the span of control, it may be necessary to establish another level of organization within the Operations Section, called **Branches**. The person in charge of each Branch is designated as a **Director**. Deputies may also be used at the Branch level. Branches can be divided into Groups or Divisions — or can be a combination of both.

Operations Section: Branches, Other Factors

While span of control is a common reason to establish Branches, additional considerations may also indicate the need to use these Branches, including:

- **Multidiscipline Incidents.** Some incidents have multiple disciplines involved (e.g., Firefighting, Health & Medical, Hazardous Materials, Public Works & Engineering, Energy, etc.) that may create the need to set up incident operations around a functional Branch structure.
- **Multijurisdiction Incidents.** In some incidents it may be better to organize the incident around jurisdictional lines. In these situations, Branches may be set up to reflect jurisdictional boundaries.
- **Very Large Incidents.** Very large incidents may be organized using geographic or functional Branches.

Managing the Operations Section

While there are any number of ways to organize field responses, Branches and Groups may be used to organize resources and maintain span of control.

**Operations Section: Expanding and Contracting**

The Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief at an incident may work initially with only a few single resources or staff members.

The Operations Section usually develops from the bottom up. The organization will expand to include needed levels of supervision as more and more resources are deployed.

Task Forces are a combination of mixed resources with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Leader. Task Forces can be versatile combinations of resources and their use is encouraged. The combining of resources into Task Forces allows for several resource elements to be managed under one individual's supervision, thus lessening the span of control of the Supervisor.
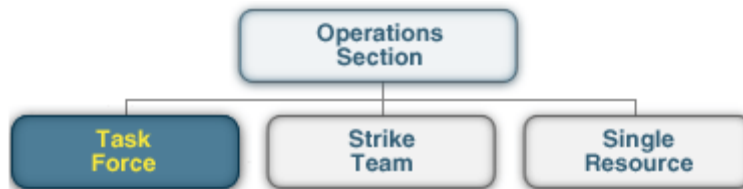

Strike Teams are a set number of resources of the same kind and type with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Strike Team Leader. Strike Teams are highly effective management units. The foreknowledge that all elements have the same capability and the knowledge of how many will be applied allows for better planning, ordering, utilization and management.
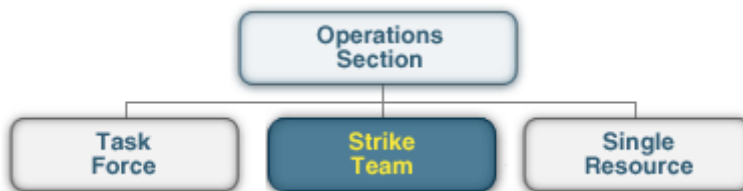
Single Resources may be individuals, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified supervisor that can be used at an incident.

As we covered earlier, it is important to maintain an effective span of control. Maintaining span of control can be done easily by grouping resources into Divisions or Groups.
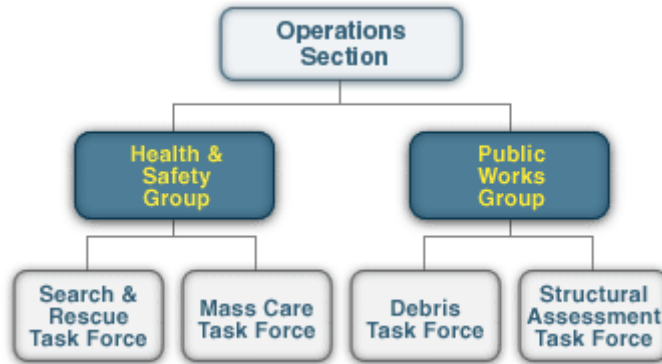
Another way to add supervision levels is to create Branches within the Operations Section.

At some point, the Operations Section and the rest of the ICS organization will contract. The decision to contract will be based on the achievement of tactical objectives. Demobilization planning begins upon activation of the first personnel and continues until the ICS organization ceases operation.
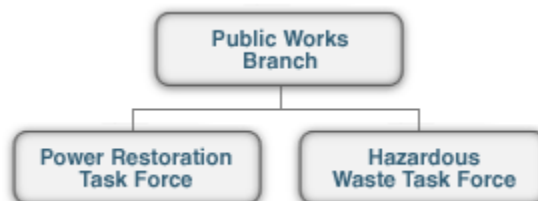
Planning Section

The Incident Commander will determine if there is a need for a Planning Section and designate a Planning Section Chief. If no Planning Section is established, the Incident Commander will perform all planning functions. It is up to the Planning Section Chief to activate any needed additional staffing.

Planning Section: Major Activities

The major activities of the Planning Section may include:

- Collecting, evaluating, and displaying incident intelligence and information.
- Preparing and documenting Incident Action Plans.
- Conducting long-range and/or contingency planning.
- Developing plans for demobilization.
- Maintaining incident documentation.
- Tracking resources assigned to the incident.

Planning Section: Units

The Planning Section can be further staffed with four Units. In addition, Technical Specialists who provide special expertise useful in incident management and response may also be assigned to work in the Planning Section. Depending on the needs, Technical Specialists may also be assigned to other Sections in the organization.

- **Resources Unit:** Conducts all check-in activities and maintains the status of all incident resources. The Resources Unit plays a significant role in preparing the written Incident Action Plan.
- **Situation Unit:** Collects and analyzes information on the current situation, prepares situation displays and situation summaries, and develops maps and projections.
- **Documentation Unit:** Provides duplication services, including the written Incident Action Plan. Maintains and archives all incident-related documentation.
- **Demobilization Unit:** Assists in ensuring that resources are released from the incident in an orderly, safe, and cost-effective manner.

Logistics Section

The Incident Commander will determine if there is a need for a Logistics Section at the incident, and designate an individual to fill the position of the Logistics Section Chief. If no Logistics Section is established, the Incident Commander will perform all logistical functions. The size of the incident, complexity of support needs, and the incident length will determine whether a separate Logistics Section is established. Additional staffing is the responsibility of the Logistics Section Chief.

Logistics Section: Major Activities

The Logistics Section is responsible for all of the services and support needs, including:

- Ordering, obtaining, maintaining, and accounting for essential personnel, equipment, and supplies.

- Providing communication planning and resources.
- Setting up food services.
- Setting up and maintaining incident facilities.
- Providing support transportation.
- Providing medical services to incident personnel.

Logistics Section: Branches and Units

The Logistics Section can be further staffed by two Branches and six Units.

Not all of the Units may be required; they will be established based on need. The titles of the Units are descriptive of their responsibilities.
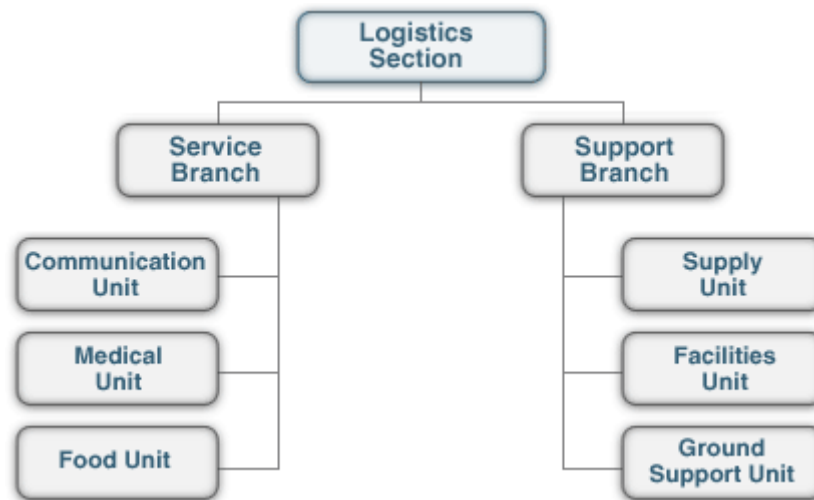
The Logistics Service Branch can be staffed to include a:

- **Communication Unit:** Prepares and implements the Incident Communication Plan (ICS-205), distributes and maintains communications equipment, supervises the Incident Communications Center, and establishes adequate communications over the incident.
- **Medical Unit:** Develops the Medical Plan (ICS-206), provides first aid and light medical treatment for personnel assigned to the incident, and prepares procedures for a major medical emergency.
- **Food Unit:** Responsible for providing meals and drinking water for incident personnel, and obtains the necessary equipment and supplies to operate food service facilities at Bases and Camps.
- **Supply Unit:** Determines the type and amount of supplies needed to support the incident. The Unit orders, receives, stores, and distributes supplies, and services nonexpendable equipment. All resource orders are placed through the Supply Unit. The Unit maintains inventory and accountability of supplies and equipment.
- **Facilities Unit:** Sets up and maintains incident facilities. Provides managers for the Incident Base and Camps. Also responsible for facility security and facility maintenance services: sanitation, lighting, cleanup.
- **Ground Support Unit:** Prepares the Transportation Plan. Arranges for, activates, and documents the fueling and maintenance of assigned ground transportation. Arranges for the transportation of personnel, supplies, food, and equipment.

Finance/Administration Section

The Incident Commander will determine if there is a need for a Finance/Administration Section at the incident and designate an individual to fill the position of the Finance/Administration Section Chief.

If no Finance/Administration Section is established, the Incident Commander will perform all finance functions.

Finance/Administration Section: Major Activities

The Finance/Administration Section is set up for any incident that requires incident-specific financial management. The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for:

- Contract negotiation and monitoring.
- Timekeeping.
- Cost analysis.
- Compensation for injury or damage to property.

Finance/Administration Section: Increasing Use

More and more larger incidents are using a Finance/Administration Section to monitor costs. Smaller incidents may also require certain Finance/Administration support.

For example, the Incident Commander may establish one or more Units of the Finance/Administration Section for such things as procuring special equipment, contracting with a vendor, or making cost estimates for alternative response strategies.

Finance/Administration Section: Units

The Finance/Administration Section may staff four Units. Not all Units may be required; they will be established based on need.
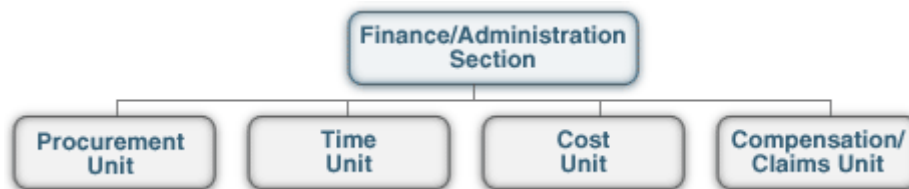
- **Procurement Unit:** Responsible for administering all financial matters pertaining to vendor contracts, leases, and fiscal agreements.
- **Time Unit:** Responsible for incident personnel time recording.
- **Cost Unit:** Collects all cost data, performs cost effectiveness analyses, provides cost estimates, and makes cost savings recommendations.
- **Compensation/Claims Unit:** Responsible for the overall management and direction of all administrative matters pertaining to compensation for injury and claims related activities kept for the incident.