

## Course Welcome

This course provides training for Federal workers who will serve on Federal emergency response teams and will use the Incident Command System (ICS).

## Why Use ICS?

As you learned in the ICS-100 course, the Incident Command System is an effective method for managing incident response activities. All governmental organizations are using ICS to manage the Roaring River Flood response because it:

- **Allows for the efficient delegation of responsibilities.** This is a big incident and is more than one person can manage. It will require all five ICS functions operating to manage effectively. Effective incident management reduces potential chaos, establishes priorities, and helps manage workloads and resources.
- **Establishes a clear chain of command.** All incident personnel know where they fit in the organization, who their supervisors are, and what they are responsible for achieving.
- **Avoids unclear communications.** The use of common terminology allows personnel from different organizations to communicate with each other without being misunderstood.
- **Ensures key functions are covered.** Command staff are assigned key functions such as safety, liaison other organizations, and public information. One voice is used to disseminate clear, accurate information.
- **Establishes a process to develop an Incident Action Plan for the next operational period.**

## Why Use ICS? Effective Management

ICS is a management system, not just an organizational chart. The organization is just one of ICS's major features.

The information that you acquire from this training will help to sharpen your management skills, and better equip you to be a fully effective member of the incident or event management team. In the upcoming lessons, you will learn how the ICS management tool is used to address the challenges facing the Roaring River Valley.

## Lesson Overview

The **ICS Features and Principles** lesson describes the principles that constitute the Incident Command System. Collectively, these define the unique features of ICS as an incident or event management system.

## Establishment of Command

The first arriving authority at the scene, who has jurisdiction for the incident, establishes incident command and identifies the initial Incident Command Post (ICP). The initial Incident Commander will also:

- **Establish needed authorization and delegations of authority.** These agreements provide the Incident Commander with the authority needed to manage the incident. Most often, these authorizations or delegations of authority are included in agency operating plans, local mutual aid agreements, Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), and/or interagency operating plans.
- **Begin establishing incident facilities.** The next priority is to establish the incident facilities, beginning with the Incident Command Post.
- **Develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP) for each operational period.**

## Responsibility for Incident Command

Frequently, command does not stay with the initial Incident Commander. A primary principle of ICS is the ability to transfer command to the most experienced and qualified person as the Incident Commander, regardless of that employee's agency.

## Transfer of Command

The process of moving the responsibility for incident command from one Incident Commander to another is called **transfer of command**.

If a transfer of command is to take place, the initial Incident Commander will remain in charge until transfer of command is accomplished. Command may transfer to more qualified or more experienced personnel from the same agency, or be transferred to an employee of another responsible agency.

More qualified persons arriving at an incident may:

- Assume command (according to agency guidelines).
- Maintain command as it is.
- Request a more experienced Incident Commander.

**Transition Meeting**

Transfer of command begins with a transition meeting. The outgoing Incident Commander briefs the new Incident Commander on the extent of damage, probable response needs, and resources on scene and their locations. The briefing may also include safety concerns, political issues, and other concerns the new Incident Commander should be aware of.

Both the outgoing and incoming Incident Commanders will agree on a date and time when the transfer of command will be effective.

**Unified Command**

In ICS, Unified Command is a unified team effort that allows all agencies with responsibility for the incident, either geographical or functional, to assign an Incident Commander to the Unified Command. The Incident Commanders in the Unified Command form an Incident Management Team to establish a common set of incident objectives and strategies.

This type of command structure is accomplished without losing or giving up agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.

**Other Reasons to Transfer Command**

Command also may be transferred when:

- A jurisdiction or agency is legally required to take command.
- Changing command makes good sense.
- The incident complexity changes.
- There is turnover of personnel on long or extended incidents.
- Personal emergencies or other issues require a transfer of command.
- Agency administrators direct a change in command.

**Incident Action Planning Process**

In ICS, considerable emphasis is placed on developing effective Incident Action Plans. A planning process has been developed to assist Incident Managers in the systematic and orderly development of an Incident Action Plan. The determination of the need for written Incident Action Plans is based on the requirements of the incident and the judgment of the Incident Commander.

### Incident Planning Process

Within ICS, the incident planning process covers six essential steps. These steps take place on every incident regardless of size or complexity.

1. Understand agency policy and direction.
2. Assess incident situation.
3. Establish incident objectives.
4. Select appropriate strategy or strategies to achieve objectives.
5. Perform tactical direction (applying tactics appropriate to the strategy, assigning the right resources, and monitoring their performance).
6. Provide necessary followup (changing strategy or tactics, adding or subtracting resources, etc.).

### ICS Management Functions

Five major management functions are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops.



Organizational chart showing the Incident Command function and four subordinate functions: Operations Section, Planning Section, Logistics Section, and Finance/Administration Section.

### Organizational Flexibility

The ICS organization reflects the principle of management by objectives. Every incident has different requirements. The organizational structure should reflect only what is required to meet and support planned incident objectives.

The size and structure of the current organization is determined by the incident objectives. Each activated element must have a person in charge of it. As objectives are achieved, elements that are no longer needed should be reassigned, or demobilized.

## Unity of Command (Accountability) and Chain of Command

In the Incident Command System:

- **Unity of command** means that every individual is accountable to only one designated supervisor.
- **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.

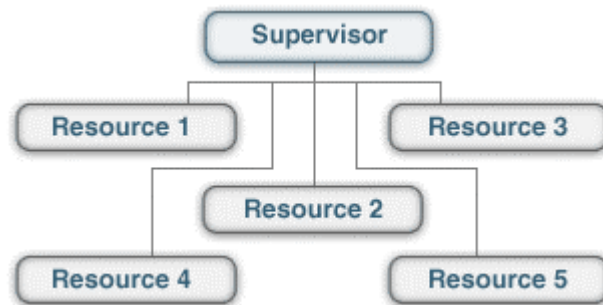
The above ICS principles are used to communicate direction and maintain management control. These principles do not apply to the exchange of information. Although orders must flow through the chain of command, members of the organization may directly communicate with each other to ask for or share information.

ICS team members work within the ICS position descriptions and follow the designated chain of command, regardless of their non-emergency positions or everyday administrative chain of command.

## Span of Control

Span of control pertains to the number of individuals one supervisor can effectively manage. It is especially important to maintain an effective span of control at incidents where safety and accountability have top priority.

Management studies have shown that the span of control for a supervisor falls within a range of three (3) to seven (7), depending upon the skills of the supervisor and the complexity of the task being overseen. If a supervisor has fewer than three (3) or more than seven (7) people reporting, some adjustment to the organization should be considered.



Organizational chart showing five Resources reporting to one Supervisor.

## Incident Action Plan

An Incident Action Plan is developed for each operational period (for example, every 12 hours).

The purpose of the Incident Action Plan is to provide all incident supervisory personnel with appropriate direction for that operational period. The plan may be oral or written.

### **Written Incident Action Plan**

All levels of a growing organization must have a clear understanding of the tactical actions for the next operational period. It is recommended that written plans be used whenever:

- Oral plans could result in the miscommunication of critical information.
- Two or more jurisdictions or disciplines are involved.
- Large changes of personnel occur by operational periods.
- Personnel are working across more than one operational period.
- There is a full activation of the ICS organization.
- The incident has important legal, political, or public ramifications.
- Complex communication issues arise.
- A written record of actions taken is needed for historical or administrative purposes.

In addition, the Incident Commander may direct the organization to develop a written Incident Action Plan at any time.

### **Documenting the Plan**

In ICS, an Incident Briefing Form is used to record initial actions and list assigned and available resources. For example, during initial actions, the outgoing IC would brief the incoming IC using the Initial Briefing Form, ICS Form 201, during the transition meeting. As incidents grow in complexity and/or size, ICS provides a format and a systematic process for the development of a written Incident Action Plan.

### **Developing Incident Objectives**

The initial step in the incident action planning process is to develop the incident objectives. The IC must develop incident objectives within a short timeframe after assuming command. After the incident objectives are clear, strategies and tasks to achieve the objectives can begin to be developed. Some objectives will change over the course of an incident. Some objectives will be achieved and new objectives will be developed. Strategies will also change. The Incident Objectives are documented and displayed in ICS Form 202.

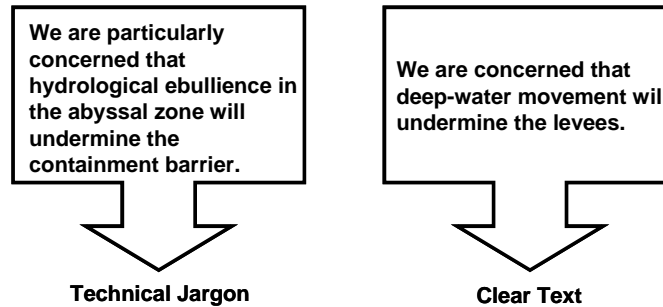
### **Comprehensive Resources Management**

All ICS resources are ordered, received, assigned, and tracked systematically. Resources include personnel, tools, equipment and their operators, and expendable items (e.g., sandbags that are provided to homeowners to protect their properties, etc.).

The Incident Commander has a variety of resource-tracking and status systems to assist in the management of incident resources.

### 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.**

### Applying Common Terminology

In ICS, common terminology and designations are applied to:

<b>Organizational Elements</b>	Each ICS organizational element (e.g., Sections, Divisions and/or Groups, Branches) has a specified title.
<b>Resources</b>	Some resources have common designations based on their type or kind. Many resources are also classified by type to indicate their capabilities (e.g., types of helicopters, trucks, heavy equipment, etc.).
<b>Facilities</b>	Standard ICS facilities have specific names. Consistent names clarify the activities that take place at a specific facility, and what members of the organization can be found there. (Examples: Command Post, Staging Areas)
<b>Position Titles</b>	ICS management or supervisory positions are referred to by titles such as Officer, Chief, Director, Supervisor, etc.

### Integrated Communications: Elements

Effective ICS communications includes three elements:

- Procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally.
- The "hardware" systems used to transfer information.
- Planning for the use of all available communications frequencies and resources.

### Integrated Communications: Planning

Every incident needs a Communications Plan. The plan can be simple and stated orally, or it can be complex and written. An Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS Form 205) is a component of the written Incident Action Plan.

An awareness of available communications resources, combined with an understanding of incident requirements, will enable the Communications Unit Leader to develop an effective Communications Plan.

### Integrated Communications: Modes

It is not unusual for the communications needs on large incidents to outstrip available radio frequency resources.

Some incidents are conducted entirely without radio support. In such situations, other communications resources—cell phones, alpha pagers, e-mail, secure phone lines, etc.—may be used as the only communication methods for the incident.

### Integrated Communications: Networks

At a minimum, any communication network must:

- Link supervisory personnel within the Operations Section to each other and to the Incident Commander.
- Provide the ability to communicate among resources assigned to tactical elements such as Branches, Divisions/Groups, and ground-to-air and air-to-air assets.
- Provide a link to the rest of the organization for resource status changes, logistical support, etc.

### Resource Management: Procedures

Resource management is a key ICS element. Resource management ensures cost-effective use of resources and improved personal safety. Several procedures within ICS ensure good resource management, including:

<b>Check-In</b>	All personnel must check in upon arrival at an incident. <b>Check in only once!</b>
<b>Accountability (Unity of Command)</b>	Everybody has only one supervisor.
<b>Resources</b>	The Resources Unit maintains status of all incident resources.
<b>Assignment Lists</b>	Division/Group Assignment Lists identify resources with active assignments in the Operations Section.
<b>Unit Logs</b>	Unit Logs record personnel assigned and major events in all ICS organizational elements.



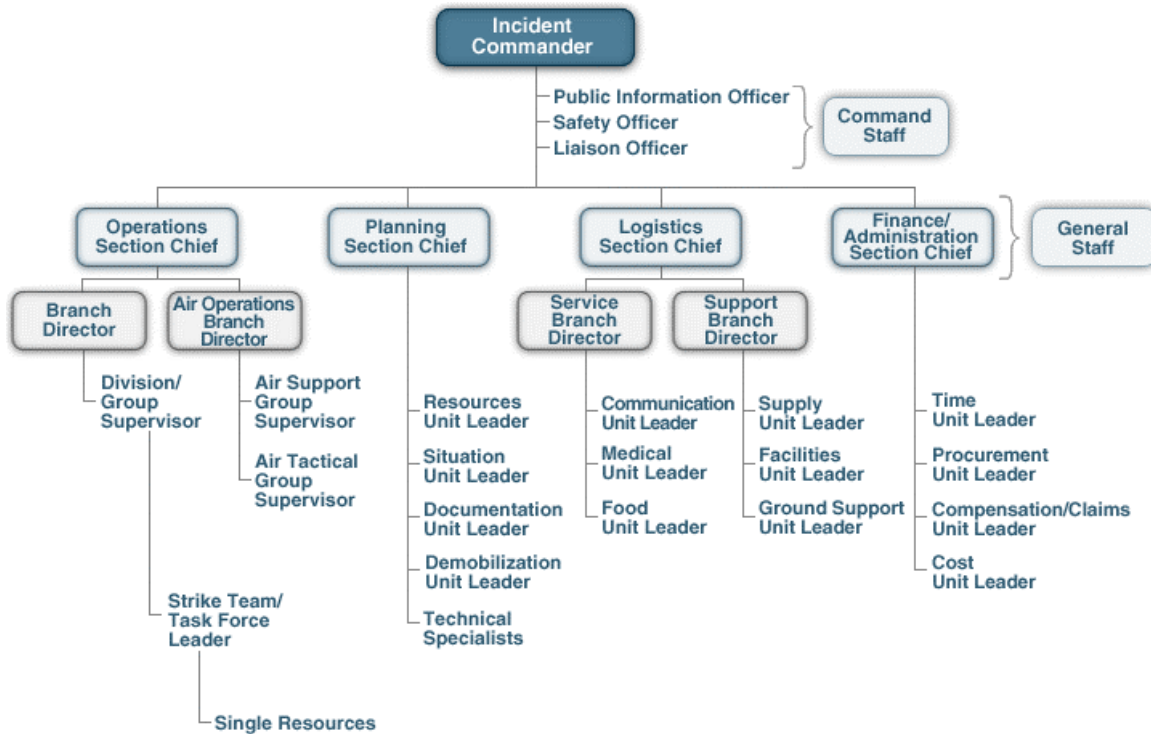
## Lesson Overview

The **ICS Organization** lesson provides information on ICS organizational structure, initial organizational development at an incident, organizational expansion and contraction, the incident action planning process, and transfer of command.

## Organizational Terminology: The ICS Organizational Chart

The graphic below shows a generic organizational chart with associated key terms. Key ICS titles are associated with the person assigned to each managerial level.

The graphic below shows a generic organizational chart with associated key terms. Key ICS titles are associated with the person assigned to each managerial level.



ICS organizational chart, with the Incident Commander at the top. Subordinate to the Incident Commander is the Command Staff, made up of the Information, Safety, and Liaison Officers. Also subordinate to the Incident Commander is the General Staff, made up of the Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Finance/Administration Section Chiefs. The Operations Section is made up of a general branch and an Air Operations Branch.

Subordinate to the general branches are divisions/groups with subordinate strike teams/task forces and single resources. Subordinate to the Air Operations Branch are the Air Support and Air Tactical Groups. The Planning Section is made up of the Resources, Situation, Documentation, and Demobilization Units, as well as Technical Specialists. The Logistics Section is made up of the Service and Support Branches. Subordinate to the Service Branch are the Communication, Medical, and Food Units. Subordinate to the Support Branch are the Supply, Facilities, and Ground Support Units. The Finance/Administration Section is made up of the Time, Procurement, Compensation/Claims, and Cost Units.

**ICS Organizational Chart**

The ICS organizational chart is a graphic representation of the incident, including:

- Positions and functions activated.
- Chain of command.
- Reporting relationships.
- Responsibilities delegated.
- Information flow.

Using a graphical representation is a simple yet valuable information tool. Therefore, it is important to maintain the standard terminology and layout of the organizational chart as you apply ICS on incidents.

**ICS—A Flexible System**

Standardization of the organizational chart and terms does not limit its flexibility. A key principle of ICS is its flexibility. The ICS organization may be expanded easily from a very small operation for routine incidents into a larger organization capable of handling catastrophic events.

There are no hard and fast rules for expanding the ICS organization. Many incidents will never require the activation of the entire General Staff. Others will require some members of the staff, or all of them. Experienced Incident Commanders can predict workloads and potential staffing needs, regardless of the kind of incident.

**Organizing the Incident Command**

As you know, the Incident Commander has the overall responsibility for the management of the incident. Even if other functions are not filled, an Incident Commander will always be designated.

After establishing command, the Incident Commander will consult with Agency Administrators to determine the type of command that is required for the incident. The Incident Commander will then identify the initial organization and staffing for the incident.

## Types of Command

The Incident Commander knows that 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.
- As a **Unified Command** in which responding agencies and/or jurisdictions with responsibility for the incident share incident management.

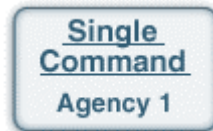


Two types of Incident Command are Single Command and Unified Command.

### Single Command

Under a Single Command, one person—the Incident Commander—has responsibility for managing the entire incident, as directed and delegated by the Agency Administrator.

Although the Incident Commander consults with other authorities as necessary, he or she approves the Incident Action Plan and makes the final decisions on the response.



Single Command with one agency.

### Unified Command

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.

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.



Unified Command with two or more agencies.

**Deputies**

The Incident Commander may have one or more deputies. An individual assuming a deputy role must be equally capable of assuming the primary role. Therefore, a Deputy Incident Commander must be able to assume the Incident Commander's role.

Three reasons to designate deputies are to:

- Perform specific tasks as requested by the Incident Commander.
- Perform the Incident Command function in a relief capacity (e.g., to take over the next operational period).
- Represent an assisting agency that may share jurisdiction or have jurisdiction in the future.

**Planning Section**

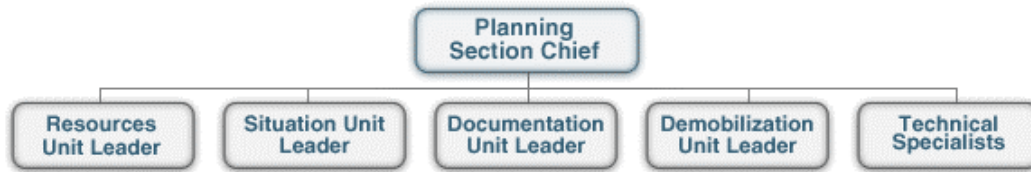
The Planning Section is responsible for:

- Collecting and evaluating incident situation information.
- Preparing situation status reports.
- Displaying situation information.
- Maintaining status of resources.
- Preparing and documenting the Incident Action Plan.
- Preparing and archiving incident-related documentation.
- Demobilizing incident resources.

Each of these responsibilities will be assigned to a unit under the Planning Section. In addition, information and intelligence functions are traditionally located in the Planning Section.

## Planning Section Units

The following organizational chart shows the Planning Section units.



Organizational chart with the Planning Section Chief at the top. Subordinate to the Planning Section Chief are the Resources Unit Leader, the Situation Unit Leader, the Documentation Unit Leader, the Demobilization Unit Leader, and the Technical Specialists.

- **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.
- **Technical Specialists** (Individuals with skills or knowledge that may be of use to the Incident Management Team) may also be assigned to the Planning Section.

## Logistics Section

The Logistics Section is responsible for providing services and support to meet the needs of the incident or event organization. This Section:

- Handles everything from setting up and maintaining the on-site computer network, to providing hotel rooms and food for response personnel, to providing security at the incident facilities.
- Supports personnel and resources directly assigned to the incident. For example, the Medical Unit would care only for incident personnel and would not care for community members injured in the flood.

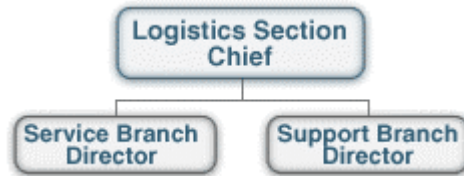
Early recognition of the need for a Logistics Section can reduce time and money spent on an incident.

### Logistics Section Branches

Logistics personnel may be organized into the following Branches:

- Service Branch.
- Support Branch.

A Director manages each Branch. Each Branch may have up to three Units assigned to it based upon need. Unit Leaders report to their Branch Director.



Logistics Section organizational chart with Logistics Section Chief and Subordinate Service and Support Branch Directors.

### Logistics Service Branch

The Logistics Service Branch can be staffed to include a:

- **Communications Unit:** Develops the Communication Plan, distributes and maintains communications equipment, and manages the Incident Communications Center.
- **Medical Unit:** Develops the Medical Plan, and provides first aid and light medical treatment for personnel assigned to the incident.
- **Food Unit:** Supplies the food and potable water for all incident personnel.



Logistics Section organizational chart with Service Branch Director. Subordinate to the Service Branch Director are the Communication, Medical, and Food Unit Leaders.

## Logistics Support Branch

The Logistics Support Branch can be staffed to include a:

- **Supply Unit:** Orders personnel, equipment, and supplies for the Incident Management Team. The Unit stores and distributes supplies, and services nonexpendable equipment. All resource orders are placed through the Supply Unit.
- **Facilities Unit:** Sets up and maintains required facilities to support the incident. Provides managers for the Incident Base and Camps. Also responsible for facility security.
- **Ground Support Unit:** Provides transportation and maintains and fuels vehicles assigned to the incident to support internal operations. (Transportation resources for external (tactical) assignments are located under the Operations Section.)



Logistics Section organizational chart with Support Branch Director. Subordinate to the Support Branch Director are the Supply, Facilities, and Ground Support Unit Leaders.

## Finance/Administration Section

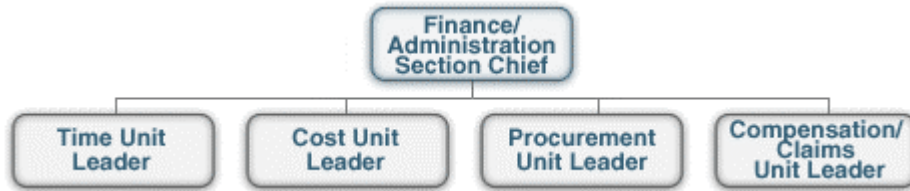
The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for monitoring incident-related costs, and administering any necessary procurement contracts. The following four Units may be established in the Finance/Administration Section:

- Time Unit
- Cost Unit
- Procurement Unit
- Compensation/Claims Unit

A Unit Leader is assigned to manage each Unit.

### Finance/Administration Section Units

The Finance/Administration Section includes the Time, Cost, Procurement, and Compensation/Claims Units. Scroll down to review the responsibilities of each Unit.



Finance/Administration Section organizational chart, with the Finance/Administration Section Chief at the top. Subordinate to the Section Chief are the Time, Cost, Procurement, and Compensation/Claims Unit leaders.

- **Time Unit:** Ensures that all personnel time on the event is recorded.
- **Cost Unit:** Collects all cost information and provides cost estimates and cost savings recommendations.
- **Procurement Unit:** Processes administrative paperwork associated with contract services.
- **Compensation/Claims Unit:** Combines two important functions:
  - **Compensation** is responsible for seeing that all documentation related to workers compensation is correctly completed. Also, Compensation maintains files of injuries and/or illnesses associated with the incident.
  - **Claims** handles the investigation of all claims involving damaged property associated with or involved in the incident.

### Avoid Combining ICS Positions

It is important to avoid combining ICS positions. However, one person may be assigned more than one function on the incident organization chart.

#### Planning & Logistics



On the left side, two units are being combined into one, which is incorrect, and on the right side is the separation of the Planning and Logistics Section, which is correct.

Positions should not be combined within the organization, however, because problems could be created later if the merged positions have to separate.



### **Predicting Incident Workloads**

Incident workload patterns are predictable throughout the life of the incident. For example:

- In the Planning Section, the Resources and Situation Units will be busy in the initial phases of an incident, while the main workload for the Documentation and Demobilization Units will come later.
- In Logistics, the Supply and Communication Units do the bulk of the early work in an incident.

The arrival of the media and agency representatives is always a good indication of increasing complexity for the Command Staff.

### **Transfer of Command Procedures**

One of the main features of ICS are procedures to transfer command with minimal disruption. These procedures may be used anytime personnel in supervisory positions change.

Three key procedures should be followed, whenever possible:

- The transfer should be face to face.
- The transfer should include a complete briefing.
- The effective date and time of the transfer is announced to all affected personnel.

Reasons for transfer of command were presented in a previous lesson.

### **The Transfer-of-Command Briefing**

A transfer-of-command briefing should always take place. The briefing should include the following critical information:

- Situation status
- Incident objectives and priorities (Incident Action Plan)
- Current organization
- Resource assignments
- Resources en route and/or ordered
- Facilities established
- Communications Plan
- Prognosis, concerns, and related issues
- Introduction of Command Staff and General Staff

### **Avoid "Falling Through the Cracks"**

It is critical to keep information from "falling through the cracks" during changes of incident command. One important information tool is ICS Form 201, Incident Briefing Form. Although the intent of the ICS Form 201 is to be used by the initial IC to transfer command to a more qualified IC, the form can be used as an outline for more complex transfer of command situations. Your agency may have other tools for this purpose. Whether your agency uses ICS Form 201 or another form, you should have some mechanism to ensure that important information does not "get lost."

## Lesson Overview

The **Incident Resources** lesson:

- Describes functional roles in resource management.
- Describes the kinds of resources often used in incidents.
- Discusses how resources are procured.
- Provide examples of how resources are typed for various applications.
- Explains why resource status keeping is important to effective incident operations.

## Resource Management Activities

Resource management activities fall into three general areas:

- **Resource Identification:** What resources are needed, and how they are defined or "typed?"
- **Resource Procurement:** Where are the resources located, who owns them, and what are the conditions of procurement and restrictions on use?
- **Resource Supervision:** How are the resources "packaged" for tactical application and tracking?

## Identifying and Defining Resources

ICS resources can be factored into two categories:

- Tactical (External) Resources
- Support (Internal) Resources

## Tactical Resources

Personnel and major items of equipment that are available or potentially available to the Operations Section on assignment to incidents are called tactical—or external—resources.

Because tactical resources are deployed in direct response roles, they are the primary concern in resource management. All tactical resources are assigned to the Operations Section.

## Support Resources

In addition to tactical resources, there are support resources.

Support resources include all other resources required to support the incident. Food, communications equipment, tents, supplies, and fleet vehicles are examples of support resources.

### **Describing Resources: Kind**

Resources can be described by both **kind** and **type**. Let's begin by reviewing resource kinds.

The **resource kind** describes what the resource is. For example, a helicopter, medical staff, a portable X-ray machine, a bulldozer, and a plow are all kinds of resources.

Kinds of resources can be as broad as necessary to suit the incident application.

Some kinds of resources may be used by different ICS sections such as Logistics and Operations.

### **Describing Resources: Type**

The **resource type** describes a capability for that kind of resource.

Many tactical resources, such as helicopters, will have a wide variety of capabilities and uses. If the Operations Section Chief simply ordered a helicopter (resource kind), the resource delivered may be inadequate.

For this reason, various kinds of resources used for ICS applications should be "typed" whenever possible.

### **Advantages of Typing Resources**

"Typing" is a system of describing the size, capability, equipment, and staffing characteristics of a specific resource. Following are the advantages of typing resources:

- **In Planning:** Knowing the specific capabilities of the kinds of resources helps planners decide the type and quantity of resources needed.
- **In Ordering:** Ordering resources by type saves time, reduces errors, and reduces nonessential communications.
- **In Monitoring Resource Use:** Type descriptions enable managers to monitor for undercapability or overcapability. Careful monitoring of resource performance can lead to the use of less costly resources, ultimately increasing work performance and reducing cost.

### **Procuring Resources: Sources**

After identifying a needed resource, it is usually easy to figure out where to get it. Typical procurement sources for ICS resources include:

- **In-house sources:** Other locations or agencies within a city.
- **Mutual-aid agencies:** Agencies with which a city has formal agreements covering the use or sharing of resources.
- **Other government entities:** Agencies at any level of government that can be requested to provide the required resources (e.g., USACE).
- **Commercial sources:** Private-sector producers and/or suppliers of the needed resource.

### Processing Orders

Even though processing orders for resources is the responsibility of the Logistics Section, all sections should understand the information needed to implement an efficient ordering process. Make sure that orders:

- Are approved by the chain of command.
- Describe the specific requirements, if the resource is not typed.
- State any other important factors or restrictions.
- Name a suggested source (if known).
- Include a specific timeframe in which the resource is needed.
- Specify a delivery point or contact.

### Payment

Procuring incident resources requires coordination between the Logistics and Finance/Administration Sections. To establish an effective procurement process, personnel assigned to Logistics and Finance/Administration must have the necessary procurement and contract authorities (another benefit of resource typing).

Incident activities may be halted or hampered without onsite procurement and contracting authority.

### Organizing Resources

After resources have arrived at the incident, many will need to be organized to ensure efficient supervision within the limits of effective span of control. There are three ways of organizing resources at an incident:

- Single Resources
- Task Forces
- Strike Teams

Each of these methods of organization will be described on the next pages.

### Single Resources

**Single resources** are individual personnel, single pieces of equipment (with or without operators), or a crew of individuals, with an identified work supervisor. A single resource is often the most common way of using initial resources on an incident.

Single resources can be typed to reflect capability. Unless a single resource is typed, its specific capabilities may not be clear to everyone.

## Task Forces

**Task Forces** are any combination and number of single resources (within span-of-control limits) assembled for a particular tactical need. Task Forces may be:

- A mix of different kinds of resources.
- The same kind but different types of resources.

Organizing resources into Task Forces provides the mix of resources needed for a specific assignment, and reduces span of control. This is both safer and more efficient use of resources.

For example, the graphic depicts a Task Force consisting of three different kinds of earth-moving equipment.

## Strike Teams

Incident resources can also be organized into **Strike Teams**. Strike Teams consist of resources that are of the **same type**.

Strike Teams are a good way to organize multiple single resources that share the same characteristics.

For example, a Strike Team could be made up of three identical handicapped access vans.

## Task Forces and Strike Teams: Requirements

Both Task Forces and Strike Teams are required to:

- Have a Leader.
- Have communications between team members and leaders, and between leaders and the next higher level of supervision.
- Have their own transportation, when required.
- Organize within span-of-control limits.

## Advantages of Task Forces and Strike Teams

Organizing into Task Forces and Strike Teams offers several distinct advantages, including:

- Enabling more effective resource use planning.
- Providing an efficient way of quickly ordering what is necessary.
- A net reduction in the time required to communicate, because critical information is conveyed to Task Force and Strike Team Leaders rather than to single resources.
- Increasing the ability to expand the organization for large incidents while maintaining good span of control.
- Providing close resource control and accountability.

## Maintaining Resource Status

Maintaining status of all resources assigned to the incident is an important aspect of resource management. Knowing where resources are at all times is vital to ensuring safety on the incident.

In addition, not all tactical resources at an incident may be usable at any given time. For a variety of reasons, some resources may be temporarily out-of-service or placed into an available (ready) but not assigned status.

## Resource Status Conditions

All tactical resources at an incident will be assigned to one of the three following status conditions:

- **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 deployment. Available resources are located at one of the staging areas.
- **Out-of-Service:** Out-of-service resources are not ready for available or assigned status.

## Out-of-Service Resources

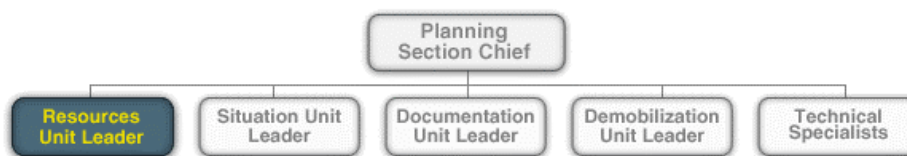
Resources may be out-of-service for a number of reasons, including:

- Routine servicing of vehicles or other equipment.
- To allow for rest/downtime.
- Insufficient personnel to operate available equipment.
- Environmental reasons, such as darkness or weather.
- Financial reasons (e.g., when personnel exceed allowed overtime costs).

Resources that go out-of-service for other than mechanical or staffing reasons will usually be sent to the Incident Base or other designated location as determined by the incident.

## Changing Resource Status

Resource status is maintained and changed by the supervisor who has the resources under assignment. On larger incidents, a Resources Unit, if established, will also maintain status on all resources assigned to the incident.



Organizational chart with the Planning Section Chief at the top. Subordinate to the Section Chief are the Resources Unit Leader, the Situation Unit Leader, the Documentation Unit Leader, the Demobilization Unit Leader, and Technical Specialists. The Resources Unit Leader is highlighted.

**Who Can Change Resource Status?**

Depending on the overall incident organization, the persons who supervise the resource either directly or indirectly can change its status. This can include:

- The person in charge of the single resource.
- A Task Force or Strike Team Leader.
- A Division or Group Supervisor.
- A Branch Director.
- The Operations Section Chief or Incident Commander.

The Resources Unit will not, on its own authority, change the status of resources assigned to Operations.

**Communicating Resource Status Changes**

All status changes that last for more than a few minutes must be communicated to the appropriate organizational elements. The individual who makes the status change is responsible for making sure that the change is communicated up the chain of command and to the person or unit responsible for maintaining overall resource status at the incident.

For routine changes of status that do not impact the Incident Action Plan (end of shift, lunch breaks, etc.), the information may not need to go beyond the next level Supervisor. If the change of status is the result of mechanical break down, lack of supplies, or similar problems, the IAP could be impacted, and the information will be shared more widely among the Operations Staff and with the Incident Commander.

Information about the status change will be passed to the Resources Unit.

**Resource Status Keeping Systems**

There are several resource status keeping systems that can be used to track resources at incidents.

**Magnetic Symbols or Icons on Maps or Status Boards**

Magnetic symbols or icons are sometimes used to track resources. Symbols are prepared in different shapes, sizes, and colors, with space to pencil in the resource designator. Then, the symbols are placed on maps or boards to indicate the location of assignment.

**Computer System**

A laptop computer can be used with a simple file management or spreadsheet program to maintain resource information. This system can be used to compile check-in information and then be maintained to reflect current resource status.

**Card System**

Several versions of card systems are available to track resource status. One of these systems uses different-colored, T-shaped cards for each kind of resource. The cards are used to record information about the resource and filed in racks by assignment location. The T-shaped cards are used primarily by the Fire Service and are used infrequently by other response agencies.