

# **Incident Command System (ICS) for Community Responders**

**Tom Kachnowski  
MRC Coordinator, Hunterdon County**

**Based on a presentation by:  
Ana-Marie Jones, Executive Director  
Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disasters (CARD)  
Oakland, CA**



# The Incident Command System

---

- Started in fire services in 1970's
- Management by objectives
- Clear lines of authority
- Consistent terminology
- Flexible (small or large events)
- Adaptable (routine or emergency events)
- How government agencies respond

# Incident Command System Functions

**Command  
and  
Management**

**Operations**

**Planning  
and  
Intelligence**

**Logistics**

**Finance  
and  
Administration**



# ICS Recast

---

## Consider the Incident Command System as a:

- **Thinking Tool:** To help citizen and civilian responders understand how to think through an event
- **Bridge & Lifeline:** To work as **partners** with the government and professional emergency responders
- **Leadership Training Tool:** To instill universal and transferable leadership skills
- **Community Resilience Tool:** To build community capacity to share and leverage every asset & resource



# ICS with One Person

---

The ***Incident Command System***

is strong enough to be the standard for response agencies across the country

- and it is flexible enough to be used by just one person.

You are home alone, cooking dinner for guests.



You are setting up and preparing the food to be cooked.



Then...



You put out the fire.

I win!



But you're not finished yet!

Now you figure out what to do since the fire changed your plans.



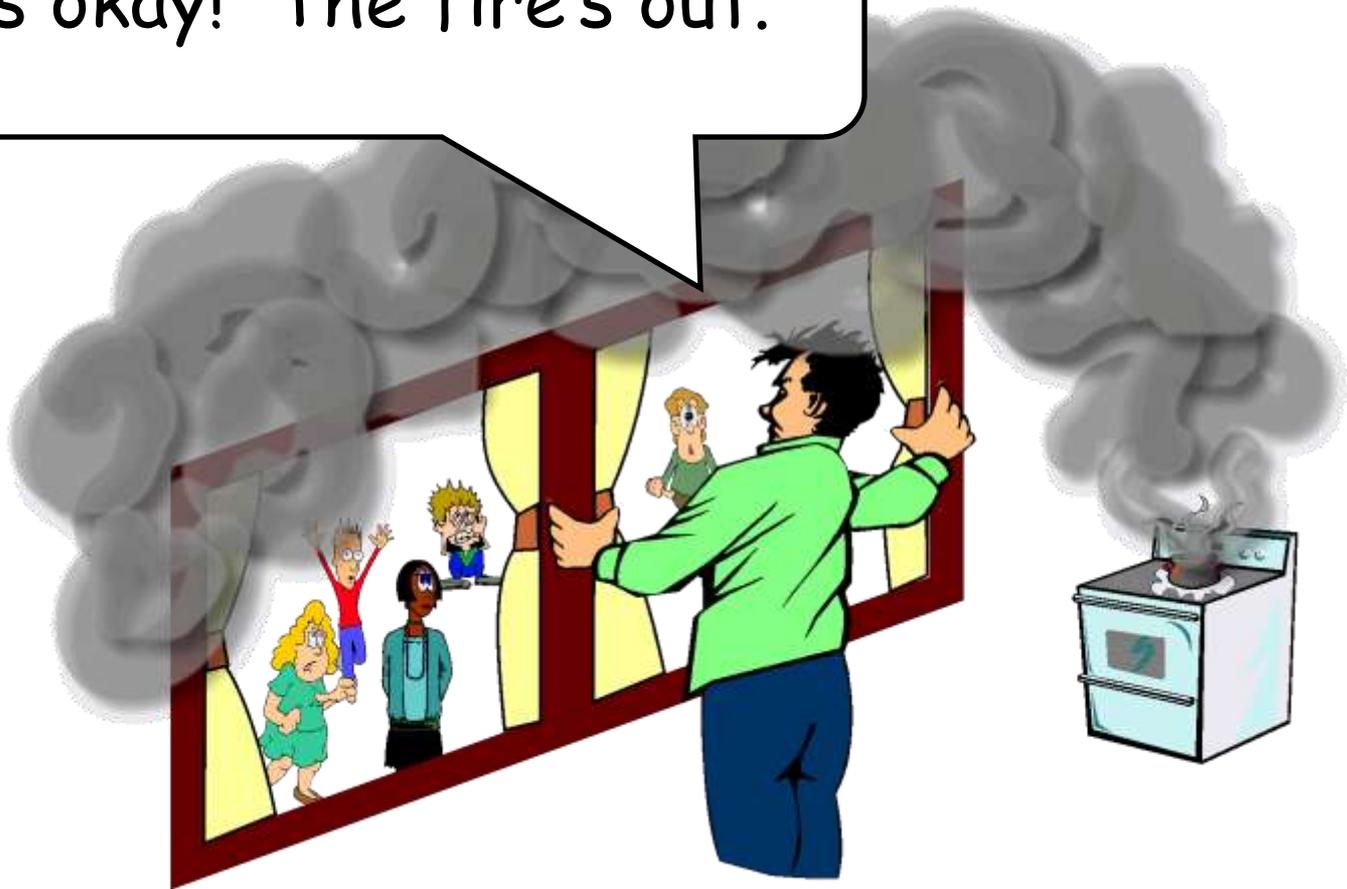
hmm ... dinner is ruined. I must order pizza...

... call my guests ...

... and clean this up.

You let people know what's happening.

It's okay! The fire's out.



You get the supplies you need.



You protect yourself.



... and others.



You figure out what it all cost.





# “One Person” ICS Roles

---

Taking responsibility = **Incident Commander**

Keeping everyone safe = **Safety & Security**

Sharing info with the public = **Public Info. Officer**

Putting out the fire & cleaning up = **Operations**

Getting the fire extinguisher & mop = **Logistics**

Choosing a new dinner & telling people = **Planning**

Paying for take-out & figuring the cost = **Finance / Admin**



# ICS on The Titanic

---

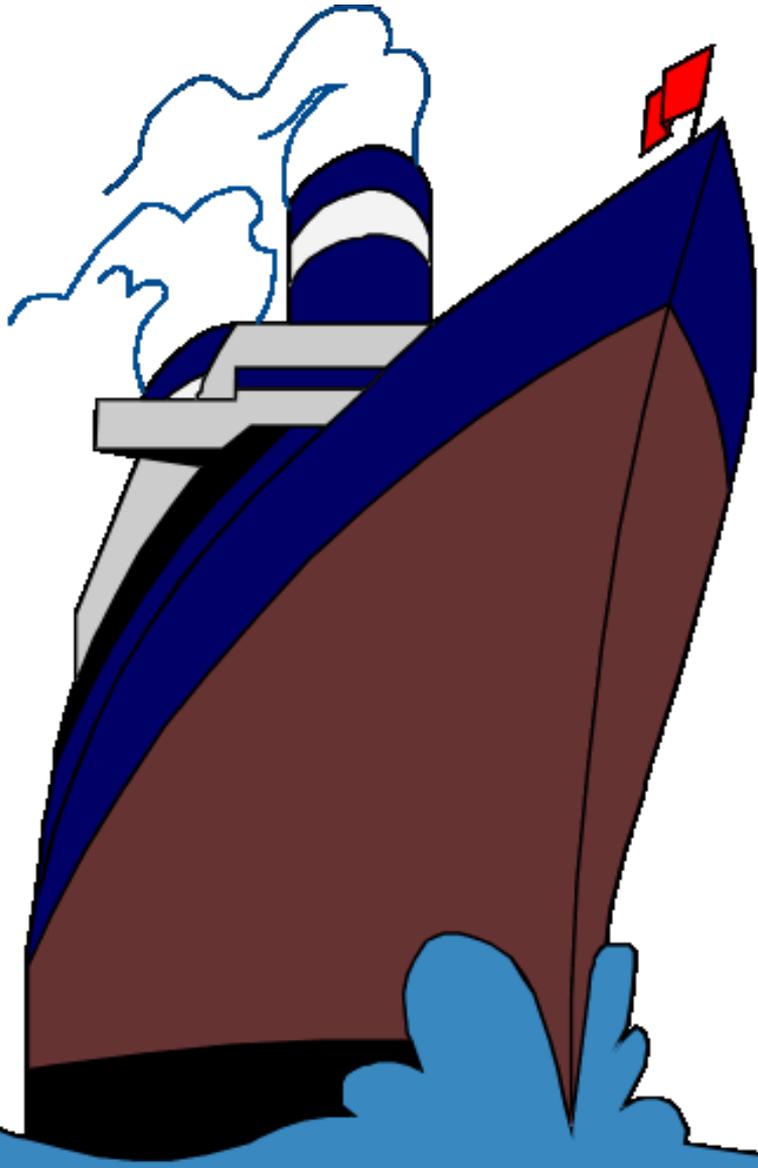
**Imagine you were on the Titanic when it hit the iceberg.**

- You know the ship will definitely sink
- You know that there are not enough life boats
- You have two and a half hours

**WHAT DO YOU DO?**

***It's the Incident Command System to the Rescue!***

## Building Rafts with ICS:



- Incident Commander would take charge, choose team leaders
- Operations team would be assembling the rafts
- Logistics team would be getting the supplies needed (doors, poles, sheets, anything that floats, etc.)
- Planning team would be creating the timeline and communicating
- Admin/Finance team would be keeping the records



# Incident Command System Roles & Responsibilities

---

**1. Incident Command** – *leads the response.* Appoints and empowers team leaders; sets tone and standards for response. Encourages teamwork and communications. Manages the overall response and recovery to an emergency, and directs the other functions below.

- **Safety and Security:** Focuses on the safety of all people responding to the incident
- **Public Information Officer:** Works with the news media and distributes messages to the public and local community.



# Incident Command System

## Roles & Responsibilities (continued)

---

2. **Operations** – *does the work*. Handles key actions including first aid, search & rescue, fire suppression, and securing the site. Directs the carrying out of initial response functions (below), some of which may be delegated to other staff.
- **First Aid:** Administer first aid to injured persons. (This may require providing first aid training to selected staff.)
  - **Search & Rescue:** If evacuation is needed, assure everyone is evacuated. Quickly search for people who may be trapped or injured. Note & record situation – including names and location – for other first responders
  - **Fire Suppression:** Check for and suppress small fires. Attempt to notify fire department.
  - **Site Security:** Check and turn off gas and/or electricity if there is odor of gas or if other damage is evident. Turn off water if pipes are broken or leaking.



# Incident Command System Roles & Responsibilities (continued)

---

3. **Information/Planning** – *keeps everyone in the know.* Gathers information, thinks ahead and keeps all team members informed and communicating. Projects short term (e.g. next 24 hours) and longer term needs for client & agency recovery.
4. **Logistics** – *gets the resources.* Feeds, distributes and stores all necessary resources (supplies & people) to respond appropriately.
5. **Finance** – *tracks all activities and costs.* Tracks all expenses, claims, and activities, and is the record keeper for the incident. Must also ensure that there are safe backup copies of agency documentation including insurance and financial and legal paperwork.



# When leading a response, remember:

---

Your top priorities are to save & protect:

- 1) life
- 2) environment
- 3) property

Effective communication makes or breaks  
a disaster response.

To make your best decisions, remain calm  
and focused.



## Postscript: ICS Unabridged

---

MRC members are encouraged to take the on-line FEMA course on ICS: IS-100.a

This course can be found at the FEMA Independent Study Program Website:

[www.training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp](http://www.training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp)