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# Unit 3: ICS Features & Principles

STUDENT MANUAL

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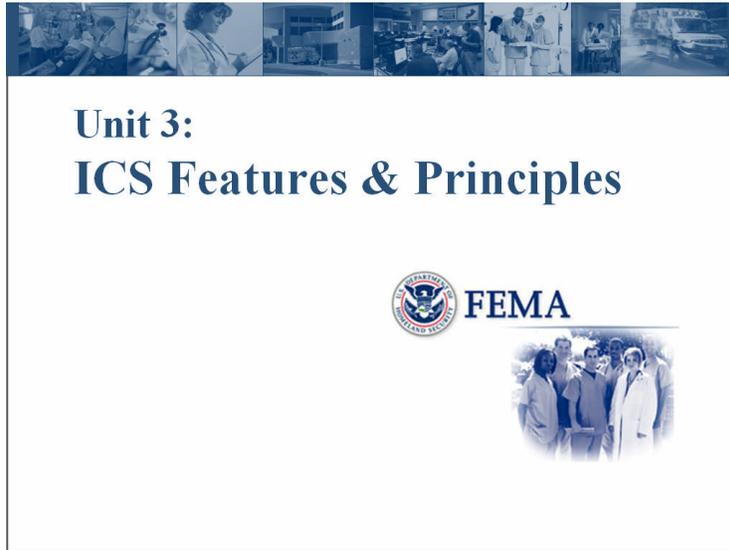








Visual 3.1



**Visual Description:** Unit Introduction

### Key Points

This unit provides an overview of the basic features of the Incident Command System.



Visual 3.2

### Unit Objectives

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

- Describe the basic features of ICS.
- Identify the principal ICS facilities.
- Identify facility map symbols.



**Visual Description:** Unit Objectives

### Key Points

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

- Describe the basic features of ICS
- Identify the principle ICS facilities.
- Identify facility map symbols.



Visual 3.3



**Visual Description:** Video Presentation: ICS Features

### Key Points

This video presentation provides an overview of features of the Incident Command System. A complete transcript of the video appears on the next page.



**Jot down some notes, issues, or questions that you may want to address during the discussion following the video.**

## 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 predesignated 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 management.

This lesson covers each of these ICS features in detail.



Visual 3.4

### ICS Features – Video Key Points

ICS principles are implemented through a wide range of management features, including:

- Common terminology and clear text.
- Modular organizational structure.
- Management by objectives.
- Reliance on an Incident Action Plan.
- Variable command structures.
- Accountability and mobilization.
- Effective information management.



**Visual Description:** ICS Features – Video Key Points

### Key Points

#### Video Key Points:

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.



Visual 3.5

### Use of Plain English

- Communications should be in plain English or clear text.
- Do not use radio codes, organization-specific codes, or jargon.

Even if you use organization-specific codes on a daily basis, why should you use plain English during an incident response?



**Visual Description:** Use of Plain English. Discussion question: Even if you use organization-specific codes on a daily basis, why should you use plain English during an incident response?

### Key Points

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 any effective incident management system is for all communications to be in plain English. That is, **use clear text. Do not use radio codes, organization-specific codes, or jargon.**

Answer the question below:



**Even if you use organization-specific codes on a daily basis, why should you use plain English during an incident response?**



Visual 3.6

### Why Plain English?

EMT = Emergency Medical Treatment  
EMT = Emergency Medical Technician  
EMT = Emergency Management Team  
EMT = Eastern Mediterranean Time (GMT+0200)  
EMT = Effective Methods Team  
EMT = Effects Management Tool  
EMT = El Monte, CA (airport code)  
EMT = Electron Microscope Tomography  
EMT = Email Money Transfer



**Visual Description:** Why Plain English?

### Key Points

The following examples provide different meanings of a common acronym.

EMT = Emergency Medical Treatment  
EMT = Emergency Medical Technician  
EMT = Emergency Management Team  
EMT = Eastern Mediterranean Time (GMT+0200)  
EMT = Effective Methods Team  
EMT = Effects Management Tool  
EMT = El Monte, CA (airport code)  
EMT = Electron Microscope Tomography  
EMT = Email Money Transfer



Visual 3.7

## Common Terminology

Using common terminology helps to define:

- Organizational functions.
- Resource descriptions.
- Incident facilities.
- Position titles.



**Visual Description:** Common Terminology

### Key Points

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.



Visual 3.8

**Common Terminology: Example**

Which is the example of common terminology?

**A.**  
This is Unit 1, we have a 10-37, Code 2.

**B.**  
This is Unit 1, the flood waters are rising and we need additional resources for sandbagging.

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Visual 3.8

**Visual Description:** Which is the example of common terminology? (A) This is Unit 1, we have a 10-37, Code 2. OR (B) This is Unit 1, the flood waters are rising and we need additional resources for sandbagging.

### Key Points



Which example below uses common terminology?

- A. This is Unit 1, we have a 10-37, Code 2.
- B. This is Unit 1, the flood waters are rising and we need additional resources for sandbagging.

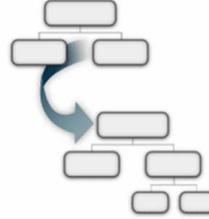


Visual 3.9

### Modular Organization (1 of 2)

The ICS organizational structure:

- Develops in a top-down, modular fashion.
- Is based on the size and complexity of the incident.
- Is based on the hazard environment created by the incident.



**Visual Description:** Modular Organization (1 of 2)

### Key Points

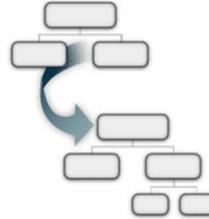
The ICS organizational structure develops in a top-down, modular fashion that is based on the size and complexity of the incident, as well as the specifics of the hazard environment created by the incident. As incident complexity increases, the organization expands from the top down as functional responsibilities are delegated.



Visual 3.10

### Modular Organization (2 of 2)

- Incident organizational structure is flexible and expands to meet requirements.
- Only functions/positions that are necessary will be filled.
- Each element must have a person in charge.



**Visual Description:** Modular Organization (2 of 2)

### Key Points

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.



Visual 3.11

### Management by Objectives

- ICS is implemented through identifying an initial Incident Commander, who identifies objectives to guide response activities.
- Objectives are communicated throughout the entire ICS organization through the incident planning process.



**Visual Description:** Management by Objectives

### Key Points

During the NIMS compliance process, ICS will be incorporated in the organization's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for priority hazards. This guidance is used in the early phases to "start" the response to an event. As part of that initial response phase, ICS is implemented through identifying an initial Incident Commander, who identifies objectives to guide response activities. This is how the incident action planning process begins.



Visual 3.12

### Management by Objectives: Steps

The steps for establishing incident objectives include:

- **Step 1:** Understand organization 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.
- **Step 6:** Provide necessary followup.



**Visual Description:** Management by Objectives: Steps

### Key Points

The process consists of the following steps:

- Step 1: Understand organization 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 followup (changing strategy or tactics, adding or subtracting resources, etc.).

This “management by objectives” approach is used to communicate functional actions throughout the entire ICS organization.



Visual 3.13

### Overall Priorities

Incident objectives are established based on the following priorities:

- #1: Life Saving
- #2: Incident Stabilization
- #3: Property Preservation



**Visual Description:** Overall Priorities

### Key Points

Incident objectives are established based on the following priorities:

- First Priority:** Life Saving
- Second Priority:** Incident Stabilization
- Third Priority:** Property Preservation



Visual 3.14

## Reliance on an Incident Action Plan

Every incident must have an Incident Action Plan (IAP) that:

- Specifies the incident objectives.
- States the activities to be completed.
- Identifies resources and assignments.
- Covers a specified timeframe, called an operational period.
- May be oral or written—except for hazardous materials incidents, which require a written IAP.



**Visual Description:** Reliance on an Incident Action Plan

### Key Points

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

An Incident Action Plan (IAP) can be an oral or written plan. It reflects the overall strategy for managing an incident within a prescribed timeframe called an Operational Period. An IAP includes the identification of operational resources and assignments and may include attachments that provide additional direction.



Visual 3.15

### Elements of an Incident Action Plan

Every IAP must have four elements:

- What do we want to do and how are we going to do it?
- Who is responsible for doing it?
- How do we communicate with each other?
- What is the procedure if incident personnel are injured?



**Visual Description:** Elements of an Incident Action Plan

### Key Points

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

- What do we want to do and how are we going to do it?
- Who is responsible for doing it?
- How do we communicate with each other?
- What is the procedure if incident personnel are injured?

### 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 needs.

Written Incident Action Plans are required for all HazMat incidents. 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 Incident Commander would brief the incoming Incident Commander using the Initial Briefing Form, ICS-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.

Four essential elements of a plan are:

- Incident Objectives (ICS 202)
- Organization Assignment List (ICS 203)
- Division Assignment List(s) (ICS 204)
- Supporting Documents

### Developing Incident Objectives

The initial step in the incident action planning process is to develop the incident objectives. The Incident Commander 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 the 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.



Visual 3.16

### Activity: Incident Action Plan

#### Instructions:

- Working as a team, identify four items you would include in the IAP, based on the incident objectives identified earlier.
- Write these items on chart paper.
- Select a spokesperson. Be prepared to present in 5 minutes.



**Visual Description:** Activity: Incident Action Plan

### Key Points

**Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to illustrate how to develop an IAP.

**Instructions:** Follow the steps below to complete this activity:

1. Working as a team, identify four items to include in the Incident Action Plan, based on the incident objectives identified earlier.
2. Write these items on chart paper.
3. Select a spokesperson for your group and be prepared to present in 5 minutes.



**List the four items that your group determined would be included in the Incident Action Plan. (Write these on chart paper.)**

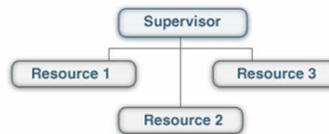


Visual 3.17

## Manageable Span of Control

### Span of control:

- Pertains to the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can manage effectively during incidents or special events.
- Is key to effective and efficient incident management.



**Visual Description:** Manageable Span of Control

## Key Points

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.



Visual 3.18

### Span of Control Considerations

Span of control considerations are influenced by the:

- Type of incident.
- Nature of the task.
- Hazards and safety factors.
- Distances between personnel and resources.



**Visual Description:** Span of Control Considerations

### Key Points

Span of control considerations are influenced by the:

- Type of incident.
- Nature of the task.
- Hazards and safety factors.
- Distances between personnel and resources.

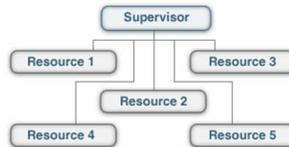


Visual 3.19

### ICS Management: Span of Control

ICS span of control for any supervisor:

- Is between 3 and 7 subordinates.
- Optimally does not exceed 5 subordinates.



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Visual 3.19

**Visual Description:** ICS Management: Span of Control

### Key Points

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.



Visual 3.20

### Knowledge Review (1 of 2)

Discussion Question:

At the simplest level, what are the four elements that all Incident Action Plans must have?



**Visual Description:** Discussion Question: At the simplest level, what are the four elements that all Incident Action Plans must have?

### Key Points

Answer the question below:



**At the simplest level, what are the four elements that all Incident Action Plans must have?**



Visual 3.21

### Knowledge Review (2 of 2)

**Instructions:** Read the situation and question below, then select your answer.

**Scenario:** Heavy rains have caused flash flooding throughout the municipality, and the hospital has stood up its ICS to allow closer coordination with its outpatient facilities and nursing homes. The diagram below shows how eight resources are organized under the Operations Section Chief.



Is the situation consistent with the basic ICS feature of span of control?



**Visual Description:** Determine if the span of control is consistent with ICS guidelines. Scenario: Heavy rains have caused flash flooding throughout the municipality, and the hospital has stood up its ICS to allow closer coordination with its outpatient facilities and nursing homes. The diagram below shows how eight resources are organized under the Operations Section Chief.

### Key Points

Review the situation on the visual and answer the question below.

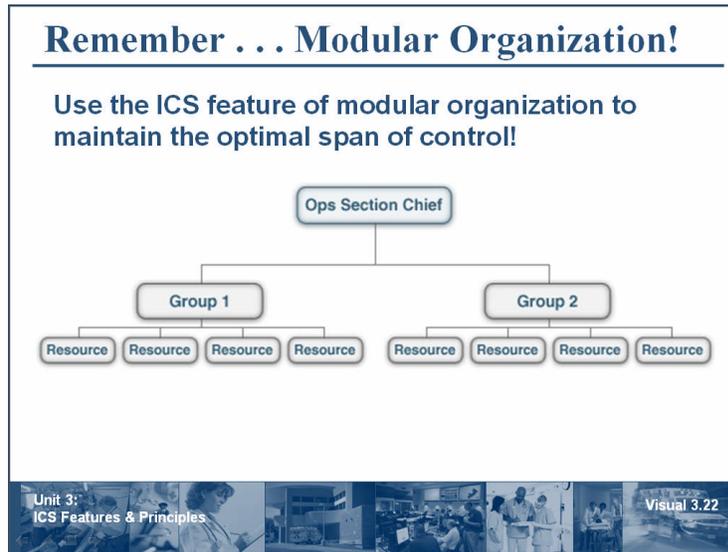
**Scenario:** Heavy rains have caused flash flooding throughout the municipality, and the hospital has stood up its ICS to allow closer coordination with its outpatient facilities and nursing homes. The diagram below shows how eight resources are organized under the Operations Section Chief.



**Is the situation consistent with the basic feature of span of control?**



Visual 3.22



**Visual Description:** Remember...Modular Organization with a visual depicting the Operations Section's eight resources divided into two groups.

### Key Points

Use the ICS feature of modular organization to maintain the optimal span of control.

The Operations Section Chief has two groups reporting to him or her, and each group has only four resources under it.

Because the ICS organization develops in a top-down modular fashion, you can add positions as the needs of the incident grow and still maintain an optimal span of control.



Visual 3.23



**Visual Description:** Video Presentation: Incident Facilities Virtual Tour

### Key Points

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.

This video presentation provides an overview of standard ICS incident facilities. A complete transcript of the video appears on the next page.



**Jot down some notes, issues, or questions that you may want to address during the discussion following the video.**

**Transcript: 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 ICP. It 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. It will be designated by the name of the incident, e.g., City General ICP.

**Staging Areas** are temporary locations at an incident where personnel and equipment are kept while waiting for tactical assignments. A **Labor Pool** is a specific type of staging area for medical and non-medical personnel within the ICS application for healthcare organizations. The resources in the Staging Area/Labor Pool are **always** in available status. Staging Areas/Labor Pools 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/Labor Pool at an incident. Staging Areas/Labor Pools can be co-located with the ICP, Helibases, or Helispots.

A **Helibase** is the location from which helicopter-centered air operations are conducted, mainly for field operations. 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 relevant to hospitals and healthcare organizations. Helispots may be either fixed, pre-constructed locations (such as a hospital's helipad) or temporary locations adjacent to the healthcare facility, where helicopters can safely land and take off. Multiple helispots may be used.



Visual 3.24

### Incident Facilities – Video Key Points

The standard ICS incident facilities include:

- **Incident Command Post (ICP).** Every incident or event will have an ICP.
- **Staging Areas or Labor Pool**
- **Helibase/Helispot**

For large incidents involving multiple organizations and government agencies, there may also be an Emergency Operations Center (EOC).



**Visual Description:** Incident Facilities – Video Key Points

### Key Points

Video Key Points:

The standard ICS incident facilities include:

- **Incident Command Post (ICP):** Where the Incident Commander oversees the incident. Every incident or event will have an ICP.
- **Staging Areas or Labor Pool:** Where resources are kept while waiting to be assigned. A Labor Pool is a specific type of staging area for medical and non-medical personnel within the ICS application for healthcare.
- **Helibase/Helispot:** The area from which helicopter operations are conducted.

For large incidents involving multiple organizations and government agencies, there may also be an Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The EOC is a multi-agency coordination center that provides support and coordination to the on-scene responders.



Visual 3.25

### Incident Facility Map Symbols

The map symbols used to represent each of the principle ICS facilities are:

<p><b>Incident Command Post</b></p>  <p>On a map, the ICP location appears as a green and white square.</p>	<p><b>Staging Area</b></p>  <p>On a map, the Staging Area appears as a circle with an S in it.</p>	<p><b>Helibase and Helispot</b></p>  <p><b>H-3</b></p>
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Unit 3: ICS Features & Principles
Visual 3.25

**Visual Description:** Incident Facility Map Symbols

### Key Points

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 principle ICS facilities are:

<p><b>Incident Command Post</b></p>  <p>On a map, the ICP location appears as a green and white square.</p>	<p><b>Staging Area</b></p>  <p>On a map, the Staging Area appears as a circle with an S in it.</p>	<p><b>Helibase and Helispot</b></p>  <p><b>H-3</b></p>
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Visual 3.26

### Knowledge Review (1 of 2)

Instructions: Answer the question below.

Where would you find  
Disaster Medical Assistant  
Teams and other medical  
personnel that are awaiting  
tactical assignments?



**Visual Description:** Answer the following question: Where would you find Disaster Medical Assistant Teams and other medical personnel that are awaiting tactical assignments?

### Key Points

Answer the question below:



Where would you find Disaster Medical Assistance Teams and other medical personnel that are awaiting tactical assignments?



Visual 3.27

### Knowledge Review (2 of 2)

Instructions: Answer the question below.

The Incident Commander is operating out of a first floor conference room because it allowed for effective communication and easy access. What incident facility is the conference room?



**Visual Description:** Answer the following question: The Incident Commander is operating out of a first floor conference room because it allowed for effective communication and easy access. What incident facility is the conference room?

### Key Points

Answer the question below:



**The Incident Commander is operating out of a first floor conference room because it allowed for effective communication and easy access. What incident facility is the conference room?**



Visual 3.28

## Objectives Review

You should now be able to:

- Describe the basic features of ICS.
- Identify the principal ICS facilities.
- Identify facility map symbols.



**Visual Description:** Objectives Review

## Key Points

You should now be able to:

- Describe the basic features of ICS.
- Identify the principal ICS facilities.
- Identify facility map symbols.