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## Unit 6: Unified Command

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## Objectives

At the end of this unit, the participants should be able to:

- Define Unified Command.
  - List the advantages of Unified Command.
  - Identify the primary features of Unified Command.
  - Describe the roles and reporting relationships between campus personnel and emergency responders under a Unified Command.
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## Scope

- Unit Introduction
  - Unit Overview
  - Activity: Optimal Strategy
  - Unified Command Definition and Benefits
  - Unified Command Features
  - Unified Command Organization
  - Unified Command Strategies
  - Case Study: Unified Command
  - Quick Reference Guide: ICS Organization
  - Quick Reference Guide: Position Titles
  - Summary
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## Methodology

The instructors will review the objectives for this unit and then provide an overview of Unified Command. A case study involving a student demonstration will be used to illustrate the benefits of Unified Command.

Next the instructors will present the features and organizational structures related to Unified Command. Participants will work in teams to apply Unified Command principles in a case study exercise. Two quick reference guides are included in this unit—ICS Organization and Position Titles—that participants can use on the job.

The instructors will then transition to the next unit that focuses on putting together the information learned in this course to prepare to implement ICS.

**Time Plan**

A suggested time plan for this unit is shown below. More or less time may be required, based on the experience level of the group.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Time</b>
Unit Introduction and Unit Overview	5 minutes
Activity: Optimal Strategy	5 minutes
Unified Command Definition and Benefits	5 minutes
Unified Command Features	2 minutes
Unified Command Organization	5 minutes
Unified Command Strategies	5 minutes
Case Study: Unified Command	25 minutes
Summary	3 minutes
<b>Total Time</b>	<b>55 minutes</b>



Visual 6.1



**Visual Description:** Unit Introduction

### Instructor Notes

Present the following key content:

- The previous units covered the Incident Command Systems (ICS) fundamentals. This unit introduces you to a more advanced concept, called **Unified Command**.
- Unified Command:
  - Applies ICS in incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies.
  - Enables institutions and agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.



Visual 6.2

### Unit Objectives

- Define Unified Command.
- List the advantages of Unified Command.
- Identify the primary features of Unified Command.
- Describe the roles and reporting relationships between campus personnel and emergency responders under a Unified Command.



Visual 6.2  
Unified Command



**Visual Description:** Unit Objectives

### Instructor Notes

Tell the participants that by the end of this lesson, they should be able to:

- Define Unified Command.
- List the advantages of Unified Command.
- Identify the primary features of Unified Command.
- Describe the roles and reporting relationships between campus personnel and emergency responders under a Unified Command.



Visual 6.3

### Activity: Optimal Strategy

**Instructions:** Read the scenario below and select the optimal strategy in your Student Manual.

**Scenario:** A political protest started on campus and has spread into the surrounding community, with student and nonstudent demonstrators defacing campus, city, and private property, setting fires, and disrupting traffic. Protestors have overturned a vehicle at the entrance to the campus, and taken hostages in a building that contains a bank on the first floor and campus administrative offices on upper floors.



**Visual Description:** Activity: Optimal Strategy

### Instructor Notes

**Instructions:** Read the scenario below and select the optimal strategy that provides the best solution.

**Scenario:** A political protest started on campus and has spread into the surrounding community, with student and nonstudent demonstrators defacing campus, city, and private property, setting fires, and disrupting traffic. Protestors have overturned a vehicle at the entrance to the campus, and have taken hostages in a building that contains a bank on the first floor and campus administrative offices on upper floors.

Select the optimal strategy.

- Divide the incident along geographic and functional lines so that each county, the State, and the institution can establish its own ICS organization with well-defined areas of responsibilities.
- Create a single ICS incident structure that allows for an effective multijurisdictional or multiagency approach.

Allow the participants time to select a strategy. Facilitate a discussion. If not mentioned by the participants, make the following points:

**Unified Command:** The preferred solution is to **create a single ICS incident structure with a built-in process for an effective and responsible multijurisdictional or multiagency approach.** This solution became Unified Command.

**Separate Commands:** The other option of dividing the incident into separate command structures may be the simplest political solution but is often not effective. If separate commands were used, there is a danger of:

- Critical life-safety incident objectives being missed because each command assumed that another one was taking responsibility.
- Duplication of efforts and competing for the same scarce resources.
- Inconsistent messages being reported to the media and parents.



Visual 6.4

### Unified Command

The Unified Command organization consists of the Incident Commanders from the various jurisdictions or organizations operating together to form a single command structure.

Fire & Rescue Incident Commander      Local Law Enforcement Incident Commander      Campus Incident Commander

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Visual 6.4  
Unified Command

**Visual Description:** Unified Command

### Instructor Notes

Unified Command:

- Applies ICS in incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or organizations.
- Enables institutions and agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.

The Incident Commanders within the Unified Command make joint decisions and speak as one voice. Any differences are worked out within the Unified Command.

Unity of command is maintained. Each responder reports to a single supervisor within his or her area of expertise. Within a Unified Command the police officer would not tell the firefighters how to do their job nor would the police tell campus personnel how to notify students of a campus incident.



Visual 6.5

### Unified Command Benefits

- A shared understanding of priorities and restrictions.
- A single set of incident objectives.
- Collaborative strategies.
- Improved internal and external information flow.
- Less duplication of efforts.
- Better resource utilization.



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Visual 6.5  
Unified Command

**Visual Description:** Unified Command Benefits

### Instructor Notes

Explain that in a Unified Command, institutions and responding agencies blend into an integrated, unified team. A unified approach results in:

- A shared understanding of priorities and restrictions.
- A single set of incident objectives.
- Collaborative strategies.
- Improved internal and external information flow.
- Less duplication of efforts
- Better resource utilization.



Visual 6.6

### Unified Command Features



- A single integrated incident organization
- Collocated (shared) facilities
- One set of incident objectives, single planning process, and Incident Action Plan
- Integrated General Staff – Only one Operations Section
- Coordinated process for resource ordering



Visual 6.6  
Unified Command

**Visual Description:** Unified Command Features

### Instructor Notes

Review the following features of Unified Command:

- **A Single Integrated Incident Organization:** As a team effort, Unified Command overcomes much of the inefficiency and duplication of effort that can occur when agencies from different functional and geographic jurisdictions, or agencies at different levels of government, operate without a common system or organizational framework.
- **Collocated (Shared) Facilities:** In a Unified Command incident facilities are collocated or shared. There is one single Incident Command Post.
- **One Set of Incident Objectives, Single Planning Process, and Incident Action Plan:** Unified Command uses one set of incident objectives and a single planning process, and produces one Incident Action Plan (IAP). The planning process for Unified Command is similar to the process used on single jurisdiction incidents.

Continue reviewing the following features of Unified Command:

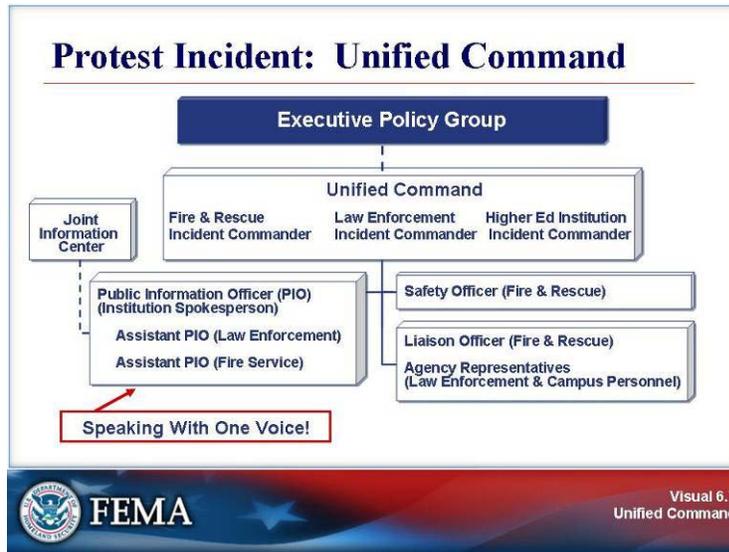
- **Integrated General Staff:** Integrating multijurisdictional and/or multiagency personnel into various other functional areas may be beneficial. For example:
  - In Operations and Planning, Deputy Section Chiefs can be designated from an adjacent jurisdiction.
  - In Logistics, a Deputy Logistics Section Chief from another agency or jurisdiction can help to coordinate incident support.

Incident Commanders within the Unified Command must concur on the selection of the General Staff Section Chiefs. The Operations Section Chief must have full authority to implement the tactics within the Incident Action Plan.

- **Coordinated Process for Resource Ordering:** The Incident Commanders within the Unified Command work together to establish resource ordering procedures that allow for:
  - Deployment of scarce resources to meet high-priority objectives.
  - Potential cost savings through agreements on cost sharing for essential services.



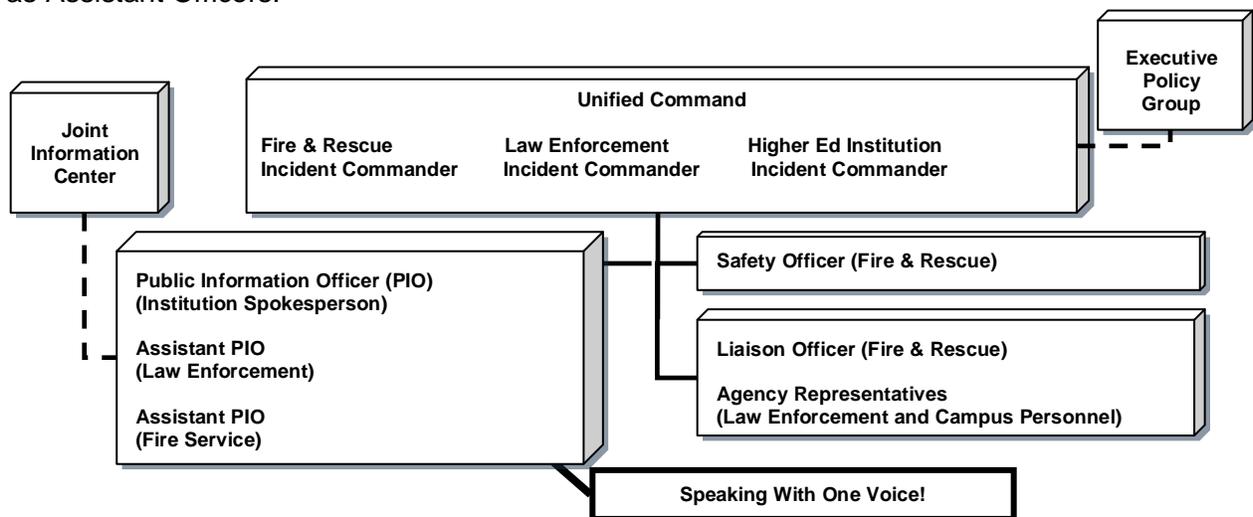
Visual 6.7



Visual Description: Protest Incident: Unified Command

Instructor Notes

Unified Command results in a single integrated incident organization. Below is a sample Command Staff organizational chart for a political protest that started on campus and spread to the surrounding community, with demonstrations quickly developing into widespread destruction. Notice that the Unified Command is composed of the agencies involved: Fire & Rescue, Law Enforcement, and Institution, and that personnel from the different agencies often are assigned as Assistant Officers.



The combined Public Information approach ensures that the responders will speak with one voice.



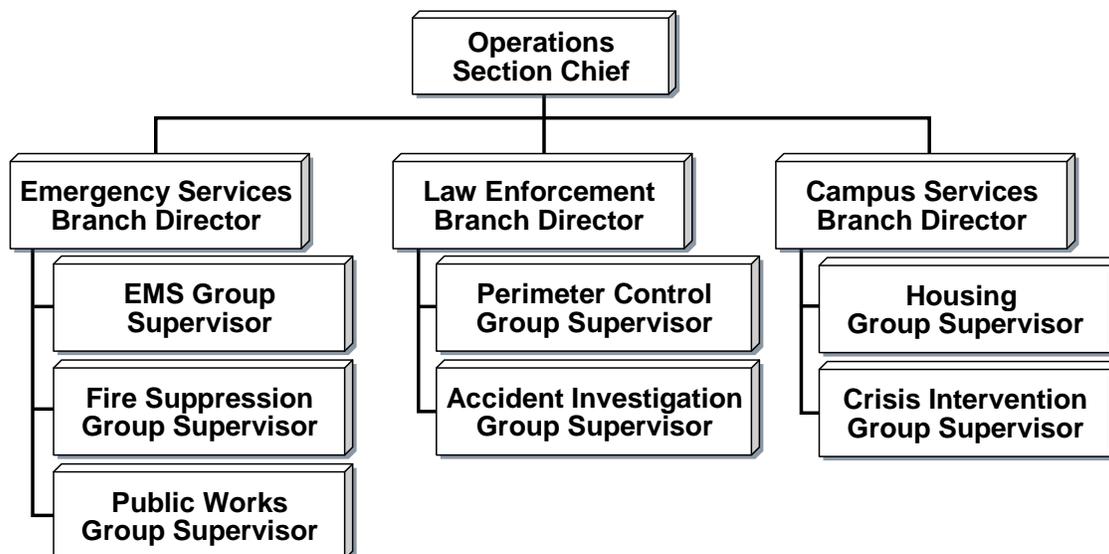
Visual 6.8



**Visual Description:** Protest Incident: Integrated Ops Section

### Instructor Notes

In a Unified Command there is only one Operations Section Chief. The Operations Section Chief should be the most qualified and experienced person available. Below is a sample Operations Section organizational chart for a campus incident.





Visual 6.9



**Visual Description:** Overcoming Barriers to Unified Command

### Instructor Notes

Facilitate a group discussion using the following discussion questions:

**What are the potential barriers to campus personnel being included in the Unified Command?**

**How can you overcome these barriers?**

Proceed to the next slide for a discussion of ways to overcome barriers and make Unified Command work.



Visual 6.10

### Making Unified Command Work

- Include key community response personnel in your institution's emergency planning process.
- Make sure that first responders know what the institution's legal and ethical responsibilities are.
- Learn ICS so that you can blend into the response structure.
- Practice together during exercises and planned events.



Visual 6.10  
Unified Command

**Visual Description:** Making Unified Command Work

### Instructor Notes

For Unified Command to be used successfully, it is important that institutions and agencies prepare by:

- Including key community response personnel in your institution's planning process.
- Making sure that first responders know what the institution's legal and ethical responsibilities are during an event.
- Learning ICS so that they can blend into the response structure.
- Practicing together during exercises and planned events.

Tell the participants to turn to the next page for testimonials from three people who were involved in Unified Command situations at higher education institutions.



Visual 6.11

**Voices of Experience**

**James K. Hamrick**  
Assistant Chief of Police  
University of Maryland

**Brendan McCluskey**  
Executive Director,  
Emergency Management  
University of Medicine and  
Dentistry of New Jersey

**Frank Zebedis**  
Chief of Police  
Winthrop University

Click icons to play audio.

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Visual 6.11  
Unified Command

**Visual Description:** Voices of Experience

### Instructor Notes

Tell the participants they will be hearing “voices of experience” from three campus personnel about the use of Unified Command.

Click on each icon to hear the “voice of experience.”

### Audio Transcripts:

James K. Hamrick  
Assistant Chief of Police  
University of Maryland

I think that communication is a vitally important element of the Incident Command System because if you look at lessons learned from just about every major critical incident that has been debriefed around the country, you are going to find that communication is near the top of the list, some element of breakdown in communication in terms of that incident and so communication becomes an important element of the Incident Command System in being able to talk across different agencies that may be represented in the response of that and being able to manage the flow of information both down and up the incident command structure and then the flow of information to any coordinating agency such as an emergency operations center as well as a policy group, Presidents, Vice Presidents, Provost of the institution who have an interest in continuity of operations for the institution.

**Audio Transcripts: (Continued)**

Brendan McCluskey  
Executive Director, Emergency Management  
University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey

Unified command is somewhat of a difficult concept for people to understand because while no individual Incident Commander is giving up control over their jurisdiction or their assets. They all need to come together to work toward common goals and objectives. While we have this group of people together making decisions, essentially the unified command is acting as a conglomeration and as a single body to make decisions. Essentially they become the Incident Commander and I think that's a very difficult concept for people to understand because if you're a police officer and you traditionally command police, you wouldn't want a firefighter saying what to, what should be done, but in unified command model everybody gets together and collectively makes those important decisions.

Frank Zebedis  
Chief of Police  
Winthrop University

Basically you are dealing with different agencies, different disciplines coming together as the scene unfolds. You're going to have an Incident Commander who is going to be in charge but as other agencies get involved and other special entities are required or needed then that Incident Commander goes into what is called unified command, and at that point the different agencies and entities come together and they work in a very understanding environment to solve the situation or resolve the scene and nobody gives up their authority because if I'm fire, I'm the expert in the fire field. If I'm law enforcement, I'm the expert in the law enforcement field. I don't tell firefighters how to do their job; they don't tell me how to do my job as a police officer; so we look to each other for assistance and the professional in that field do what they need to do.



Visual 6.12

### Case Study: Unified Command

**Instructions:**

1. Working as a team, review the scenario located in your Student Manual.
2. Answer the questions in your Student Manual about the Unified Command structure.
3. Refer to the quick reference guides in your Student Manuals as needed.
4. Select a spokesperson and be prepared to present your work in 20 minutes.

**FEMA**Visual 6.12  
Unified Command

**Visual Description:** Case Study: Unified Command

### Instructor Notes

Introduce the exercise by telling the participants that the scenario involves a political protest that starts on campus and spreads to the surrounding community. Note that the exercise applies the key learning points and the objectives for this unit.

Follow the steps below to conduct this exercise:

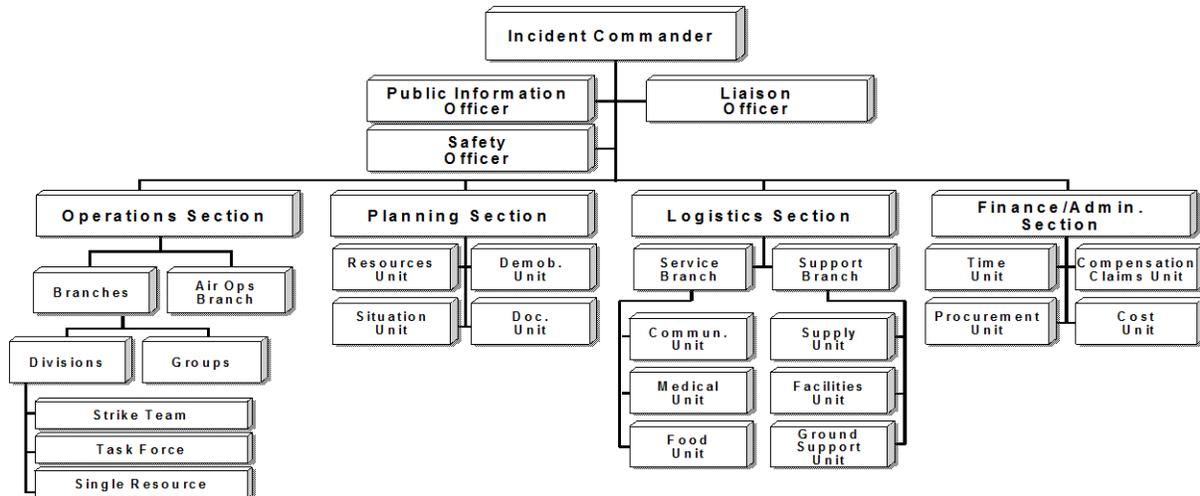
1. Divide the participants into teams.
2. Review the scenario with the participants, referring them to the following pages in their Student Manuals.
3. Tell the participants to select a spokesperson and be prepared to present to the class in 20 minutes.
4. Note that participants may refer to the quick reference guides in their Student Manuals as needed.

**Debrief:** Monitor the time. After 20 minutes, conduct a debrief as follows:

1. Ask one team to present who they would include in the Unified Command structure.
2. Ask the other teams if they had different responses. Compare the similarities and differences among the teams. There is no one correct answer.
3. Next, ask a different team to present their answer to the next question. After the team presents, ask the other teams to comment. Continue with this process until all teams have presented.
4. Summarize the key learning points. Make sure to provide any needed guidance or correct any misunderstandings or inaccurate application of ICS principles and concepts.



- Warehime University is a large, urban campus in the middle of a major metropolitan area, with approximately 20,000 undergraduate students and 10,000 graduate students. About 5,000 students live in campus residence halls, while the rest live in surrounding neighborhoods. Two major roads to the city's downtown area run straight through the campus.
- It is midafternoon on a warm weekday in March. Classes are in session, and tour groups of high-school seniors and their parents are walking through campus before making acceptance decisions for the following fall semester.
- A student political demonstration that started calmly on the lawn in front of the student union is rapidly growing more and more disorderly. Professional protesters and members of anarchist alliances have joined the initial group of students, many of them wearing masks or handkerchiefs to obscure their identity.
- The protest spreads across campus and into the surrounding community, with student and nonstudent demonstrators defacing campus, city, and private property, setting multiple fires, and disrupting traffic.
- In an attempt to restore order, public safety officials disperse tear gas on the crowd, without anticipating that it would be sucked into the ventilation system for a residence hall that houses 800 freshmen students. Students inside have begun complaining of the effects.
- Protestors overturned a vehicle in the middle of one of the roads leading to and from downtown, and then set the vehicle on fire. The vehicle fire has blocked all traffic just as rush hour is beginning.
- A small group of armed protesters has taken hostages in a building that houses a bank on the first floor and campus administrative offices on upper floors. The protestors object to the institution's acceptance of research grants related to the U.S. military and have demanded to speak with university officials.



- **Command Staff:** The Command Staff consists of the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, and Liaison Officer. They report directly to the Incident Commander.
- **Section:** The organization level having functional responsibility for primary segments of incident management (Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration). The Section level is organizationally between Branch and Incident Commander.
- **Branch:** That organizational level having functional, geographical, or jurisdictional responsibility for major parts of the incident operations. The Branch level is organizationally between Section and Division/Group in the Operations Section, and between Section and Units in the Logistics Section. Branches are identified by the use of Roman Numerals, by function, or by jurisdictional name.
- **Division:** That organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area. The Division level is organizationally between the Strike Team and the Branch.
- **Group:** Groups are established to divide the incident into functional areas of operation. Groups are located between Branches (when activated) and Resources in the Operations Section.
- **Unit:** That organization element having functional responsibility for a specific incident planning, logistics, or finance/administration activity.
- **Task Force:** A group of resources with common communications and a leader that may be pre-established and sent to an incident, or formed at an incident.
- **Strike Team:** Specified combinations of the same kind and type of resources, with common communications and a leader.
- **Single Resource:** An individual piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or an established crew or team of individuals with an identified work supervisor that can be used on an incident.

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

The use of distinct titles for ICS positions allows for filling ICS positions with the most qualified individuals rather than by seniority. Standardized position titles are useful when requesting qualified personnel. For example, in deploying personnel, it is important to know if the positions needed are Unit Leaders, clerks, etc.

Listed below are the standard ICS titles:

<b>Organizational Level</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Support Position</b>
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



Visual 6.13

**Summary**

Are you now able to:

- Define Unified Command?
- List the advantages of Unified Command?
- Identify the primary features of Unified Command?
- Describe the roles and reporting relationships between campus personnel and emergency responders under a Unified Command?



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Visual 6.13  
Unified Command

**Visual Description:** Summary

### Instructor Notes

Ask participants if they can now:

- Define Unified Command.
- List the advantages of Unified Command.
- Identify the primary features of Unified Command.
- Describe the roles and reporting relationships between campus personnel and emergency responders under a Unified Command.

Summarize this unit by reminding the group of the following:

The purpose of this lesson was to familiarize you with Unified Command features. Additional ICS training is required to prepare you to implement Unified Command.

Remember that Unified Command:

- Applies ICS in incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies.
- Enables institutions and agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.

**Ask if anyone has any questions about anything covered in this unit.**

The next unit focuses on putting together the information learned in this course to prepare to implement ICS.