# UNIT 4: INCIDENT COMMANDER AND COMMAND STAFF FUNCTIONS

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# Unit 4: Incident Commander and Command Staff Functions

## Unit Objectives

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

- Identify the five major ICS management functions.
- Identify the position titles associated with the Command Staff.
- Describe the role and function of the Incident Commander.
- Describe the role and function of the Command Staff.

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## Scope

- Unit Introduction
- Incident Commander
- Command Staff
- Unit Summary

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## Methodology

The instructors will outline the objectives for this unit. The instructors will overview the management functions that are part of every incident, and will then overview the role of the Incident Commander. Next, the instructors will summarize the Incident Commander's responsibilities. The participants will then answer a question about the responsibilities at an incident scene. The instructors will introduce the role of the Deputy Incident Commander.

Next, the instructors will transition to the Command Staff. The presentation outlines the responsibilities of the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, and Liaison Officer. The participants will watch a video that will provide an overview of the Command Staff Officers. The instructors will then lead an activity in which the participants apply the roles of the Command Staff to a scenario. To summarize the unit, the instructors will review the unit objectives and then transition to Unit 5.

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## Materials

- PowerPoint visuals 4.1 – 4.18
- Instructor Guide
- PowerPoint slides and a computer display system
- Student Manual

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## 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.

| Topic | Time |
|---|---|
| Unit Introduction | 5 minutes |
| Incident Commander | 15 minutes |
| Command Staff | 15 minutes |
| Activity: Command Staff Roles | 15 minutes |
| Unit Summary | 5 minutes |
| **Total Time** | **55 minutes** |

## UNIT INTRODUCTION

**Visual 4.1**

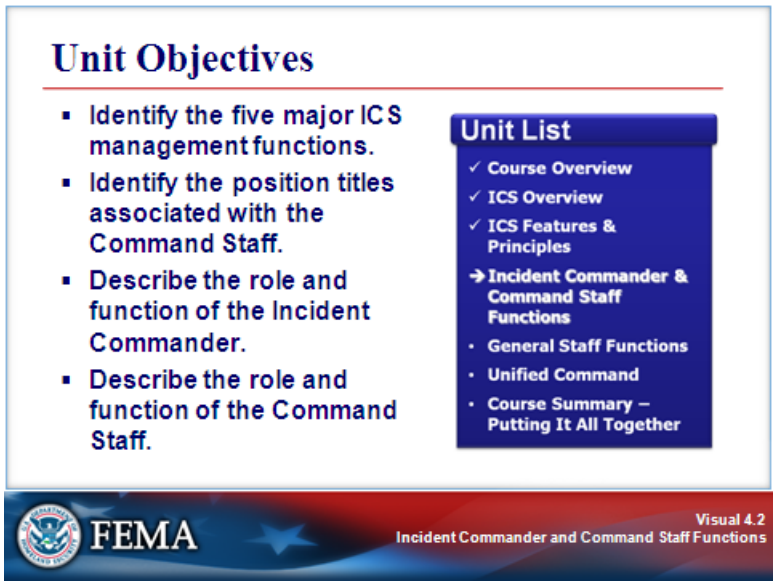
**Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.**

This unit will provide an overview of the role of the Incident Commander and Command Staff, including these topics:

- Five major management functions
- Incident Commander roles and responsibilities
- Command Staff roles and responsibilities

## UNIT INTRODUCTION

### Visual 4.2



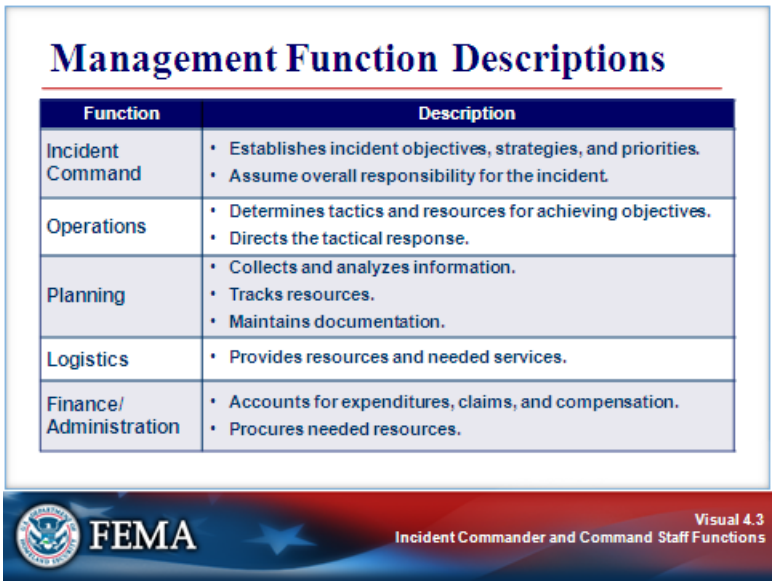

### Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Identify the five major ICS management functions.
- Identify the position titles associated with the Command Staff.
- Describe the role and function of the Incident Commander.
- Describe the role and function of the Command Staff.

## UNIT INTRODUCTION

### Visual 4.3




### Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

Every incident requires that certain management functions be performed. The problem must be identified and assessed, a plan to deal with it developed and implemented, and the necessary resources procured and paid for. Regardless of the size of the incident, these management functions still will apply.

There are five major management functions that are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops. These functions are:

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

## INCIDENT COMMANDER

### Visual 4.4

### Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

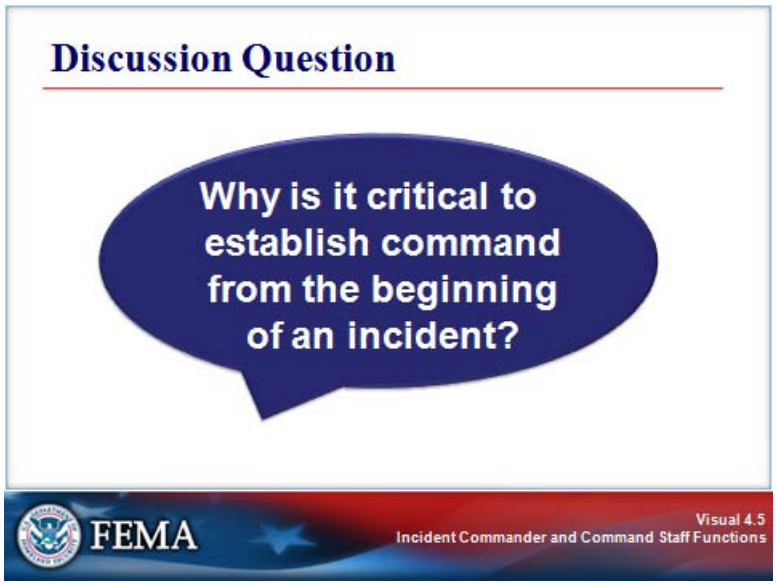
The Incident Commander has overall responsibility for managing the incident by establishing objectives, planning strategies, and implementing tactics.

**The Incident Commander is the only position that is always staffed in ICS applications.** On small incidents and events, one person, the Incident Commander, may accomplish all management functions.

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

## INCIDENT COMMANDER

**Visual 4.5**




**Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.**

**Ask the participants: Why is it critical to establish command from the beginning of an incident?**

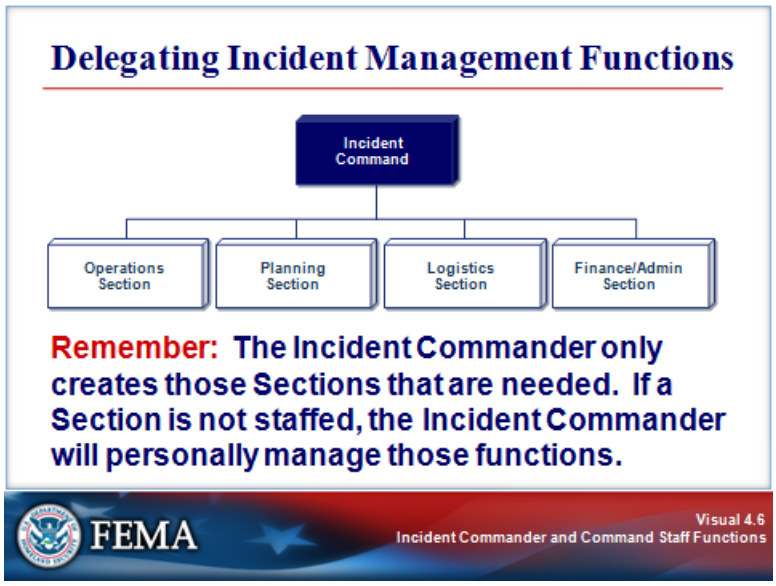
If not mentioned by the participants, add the following key points:

- Lack of command becomes a safety hazard for responders and others.
- Sizeup and decisionmaking are impossible without a command structure.
- It is difficult to expand a disorganized organization if the incident escalates.

**Emphasize that all incident responses begin by establishing command.**

## INCIDENT COMMANDER

### Visual 4.6

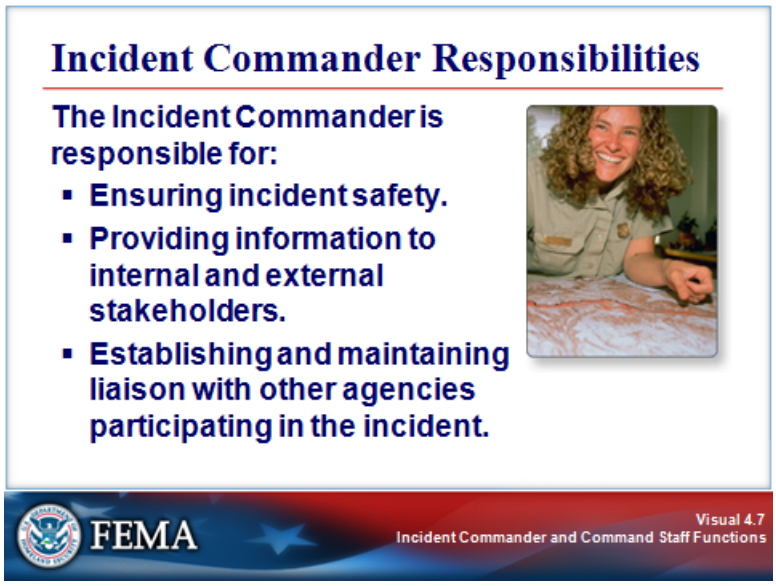



### Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

The ICS organization is modular and has the capability to expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident. On a larger incident, the Incident Commander may create Sections and delegate the Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration functions.

## INCIDENT COMMANDER

**Visual 4.7**




**Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.**

The Incident Commander is specifically responsible for:

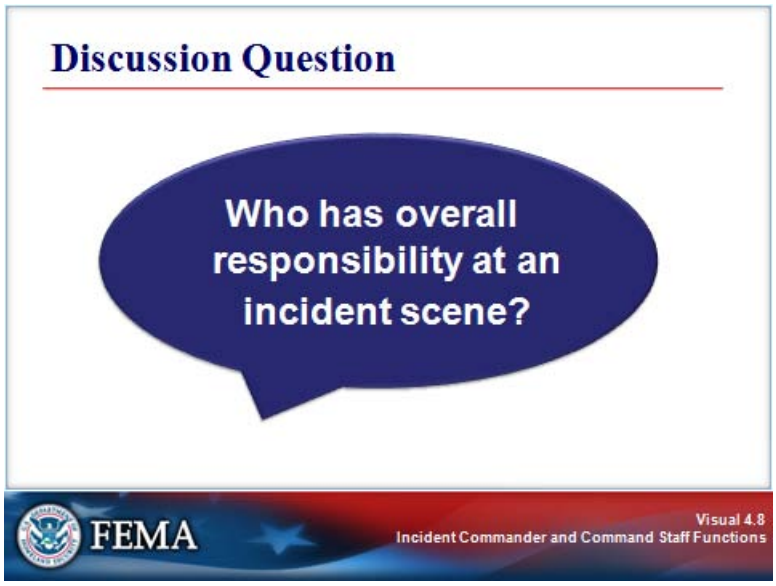
- Ensuring incident safety.
- Providing information to internal and external stakeholders.
- Establishing and maintaining liaison with other agencies participating in the incident.

These are critical functions and, until delegated, are the responsibility of the Incident Commander.

The Incident Commander may appoint one or more Deputies. **Deputy Incident Commanders must be as qualified as the Incident Commander.**

## INCIDENT COMMANDER

**Visual 4.8**




**Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.**

**Ask the participants: Who has overall responsibility at an incident scene?**

Acknowledge the participants' answers. If not mentioned by the participants, explain that the correct answer is that the Incident Commander has overall responsibility at an incident scene.

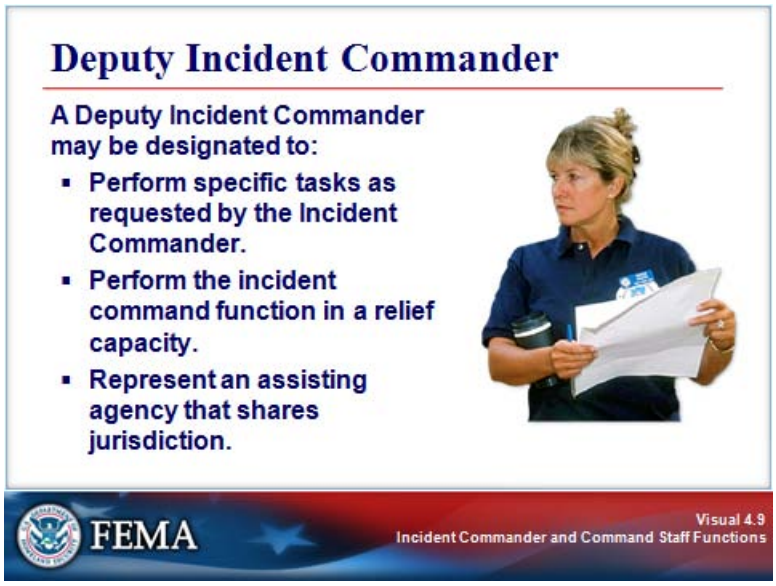
**Then follow up by asking the participants: What is the role of agency executives?**

Acknowledge the participants' responses. If not mentioned, explain that agency executives provide the following to the Incident Commander:

- Policy
- Mission
- Direction
- Authority

## INCIDENT COMMANDER

**Visual 4.9**




**Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.**

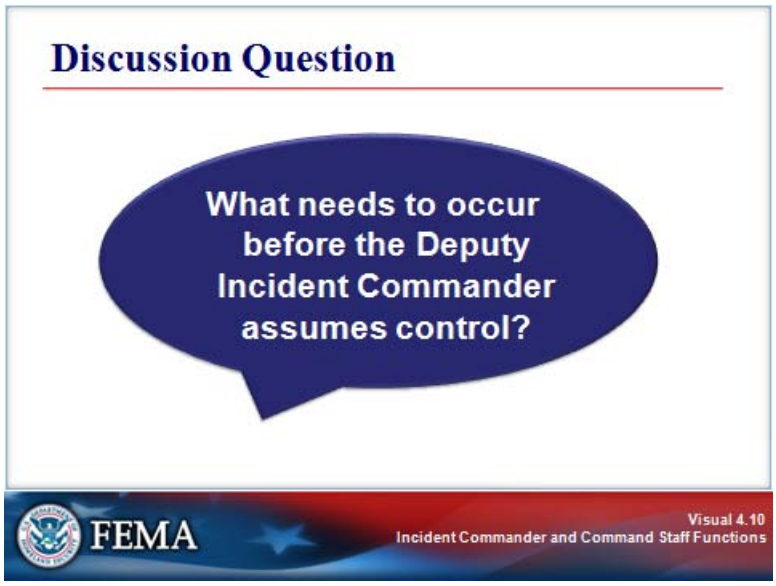
A Deputy Incident Commander may be designated to:

- Perform specific tasks as requested by the Incident Commander.
- Perform the incident command function in a relief capacity.
- Represent an assisting agency that shares jurisdiction.

If a Deputy is assigned, he or she must be fully qualified to assume the Incident Commander's position.

**INCIDENT COMMANDER**

**Visual 4.10**



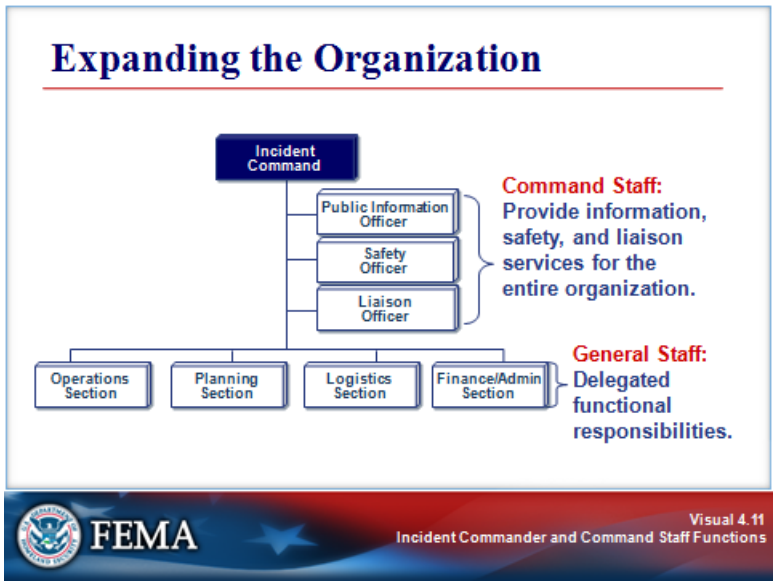

**Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.**

**Ask the participants: What needs to occur before the Deputy Commander can assume control for the next operational period?**

Acknowledge the participants' responses. If not mentioned, tell the participants that the correct answer is that before the Deputy Incident Commander can assume control for the next operational period, there must be a transfer of command briefing and notification to all personnel that a change in command is taking place.

## COMMAND STAFF

### Visual 4.11




### Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

As incidents grow, the Incident Commander may delegate authority for performance of certain activities to the Command Staff and the General Staff.

The Incident Commander should add positions only as needed.

## COMMAND STAFF

### Visual 4.12

### Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

The following video will provide an overview of the Command Staff Officers.

**Video Transcript:**

You've now learned that the Incident Commander has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations. An Incident Commander may assign staff to assist with managing the incident.

The Command Staff consists of the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, and Liaison Officer, who all report directly to the Incident Commander.

Let's look at the roles of each member of the Command Staff. The Public Information Officer serves as the conduit for information to internal and external stakeholders, including the media and the public.

Accurate information is essential. The Public Information Officer serves as the primary contact for anyone who wants information about the incident and the response to it.

Another member of the Command Staff is the Safety Officer, who monitors conditions and develops measures for assuring the safety of all personnel.

The Safety Officer is responsible for advising the Incident Commander on issues regarding incident safety, conducting risk analyses, and implementing safety measures.

**(Continued on next page.)**

## COMMAND STAFF

### Visual 4.12 (Continued)

**Video Transcript (Continued):**

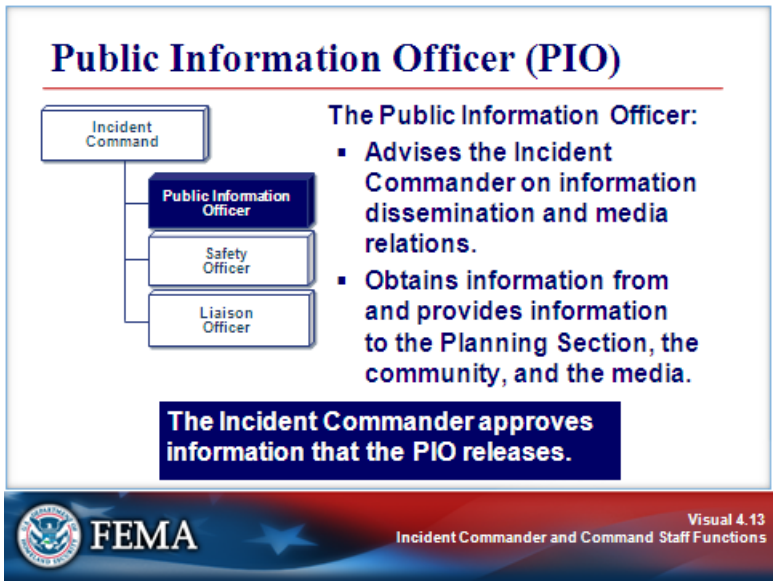
The final member of the Command Staff is the Liaison Officer, who serves as the primary contact for supporting agencies assisting at an incident.

Additionally, the Liaison Officer responds to requests from incident personnel for contacts among the assisting and cooperating agencies, and monitors incident operations in order to identify any current or potential problems between response agencies.

A Command Staff may not be necessary at every incident, but every incident requires that certain management functions be performed. An effective Command Staff frees the Incident Commander to assume a leadership role.

## COMMAND STAFF

### Visual 4.13




### Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

The Public Information Officer (PIO):

- Advises the Incident Commander on information dissemination and media relations. Note that the Incident Commander approves information that the PIO releases.
- Obtains information from and provides information to the Planning Section.
- Obtains information from and provides information to the community and media.

## COMMAND STAFF

### Visual 4.14

### Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

The Safety Officer:

- Advises the Incident Commander on issues regarding incident safety.
- Works with the Operations Section to ensure safety of field personnel.
- Ensures the safety of all incident personnel.

## COMMAND STAFF

### Visual 4.15

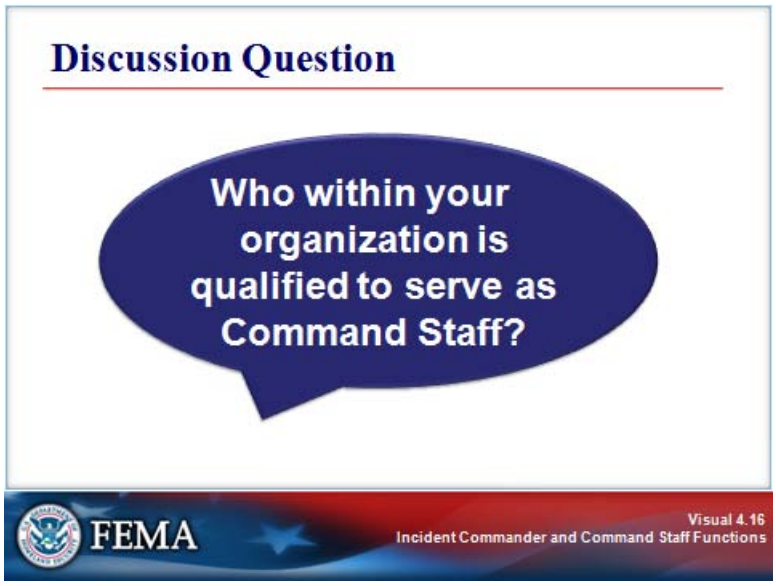
### Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

The Liaison Officer:

- Assists the Incident Commander by serving as a point of contact for representatives from other response organizations.
- Provides briefings to and answer questions from supporting organizations.

**COMMAND STAFF**

**Visual 4.16**




**Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.**

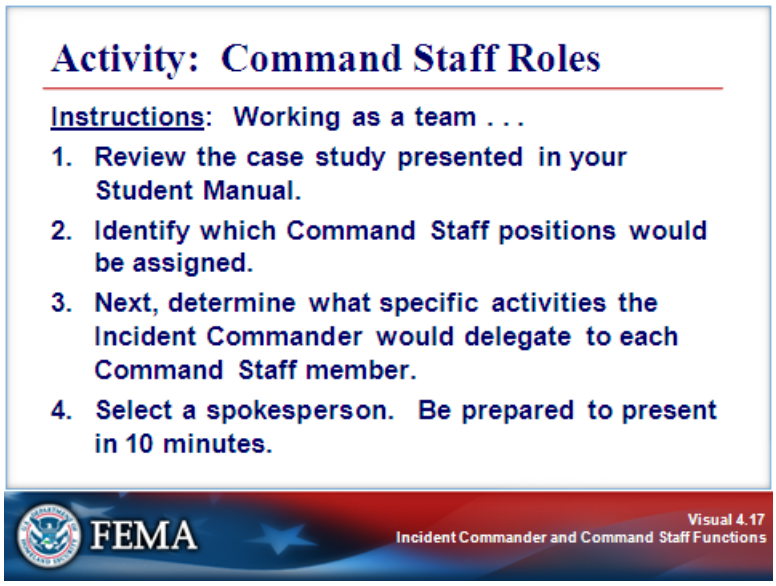
**Ask the participants: Who within your organization is qualified to serve as Command Staff?**

Acknowledge the participants' responses. If necessary, remind the participants that the following personnel comprise the Command Staff:

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

**COMMAND STAFF**

**Visual 4.17**




**Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.**

**Activity Purpose:** To illustrate how ICS can be used to address incident management issues.

**Instructions:** Working as a team:

1. Review the scenario presented on the next page of your Student Manual.
2. Identify which Command Staff positions would be assigned.
3. Next, if you were the Incident Commander, what specific activities would you delegate to each Command Staff member?
4. Select a spokesperson. Be prepared to present in 10 minutes.

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Instructor Debrief Instructions:**

1. Monitor the time. Notify the participants when 5 minutes remain.
2. When 10 minutes have passed, ask the spokesperson from each group to present their Command Staff positions assigned and the activities that were delegated.

**(Continued on the next page.)**

**COMMAND STAFF**

**Visual 4.17 (Continued)**

**Scenario:**

An unexpected flash flood has struck a small community. As a result:

- Homes, schools, the business district, and the community college are being evacuated.
- Damage to critical infrastructure includes contamination of the water supply, downed power lines, and damaged roads.
- Perimeter control and security in the business district are needed.
- Mutual aid is arriving from several surrounding communities.
- Media representatives are arriving at the scene.

**Questions:**

1. Which Command Staff positions would be assigned?

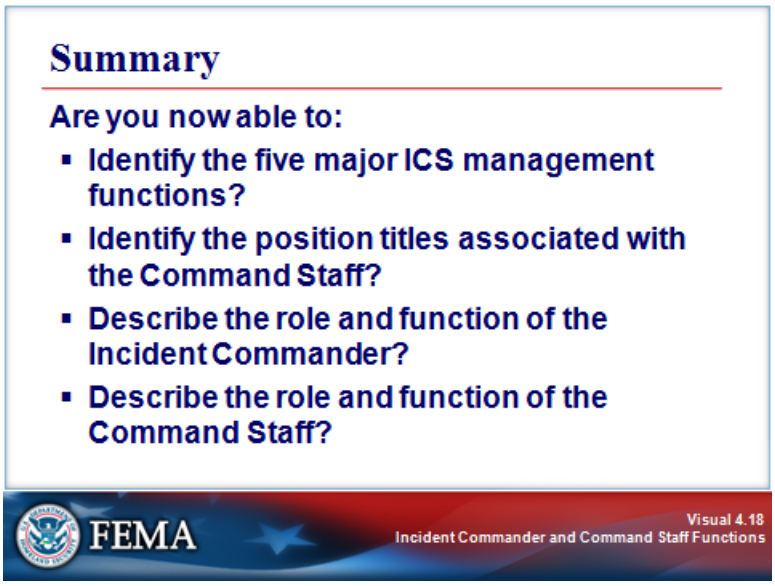
2. If you were the Incident Commander, what specific activities would you delegate to each Command Staff member?

Acknowledge the groups' responses. If not mentioned by the group, add the following potential activities:

- **Public Information Officer:** Work with the media to ensure that evacuation orders are communicated to affected neighbors. Prepare releases with information about the status of the business district prior to the next morning. Arrange a press briefing in advance of the next news cycle.
- **Liaison Officer:** Coordinate with communities that are providing mutual aid and with private-sector utilities that are supporting the response. Work with the business community to identify response needs.
- **Safety Officer:** Ensure the safety of incident personnel from contaminated waste water, electrical hazards, and fatigue.

## UNIT SUMMARY

**Visual 4.18**




**Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.**

Are you now able to:

- Identify the five major ICS management functions?
- Identify the position titles associated with the Command Staff?
- Describe the role and function of the Incident Commander?
- Describe the role and function of the Command Staff?

**Answer any questions the participants might have about this unit.**

The next unit will discuss the roles and responsibilities of the General Staff.