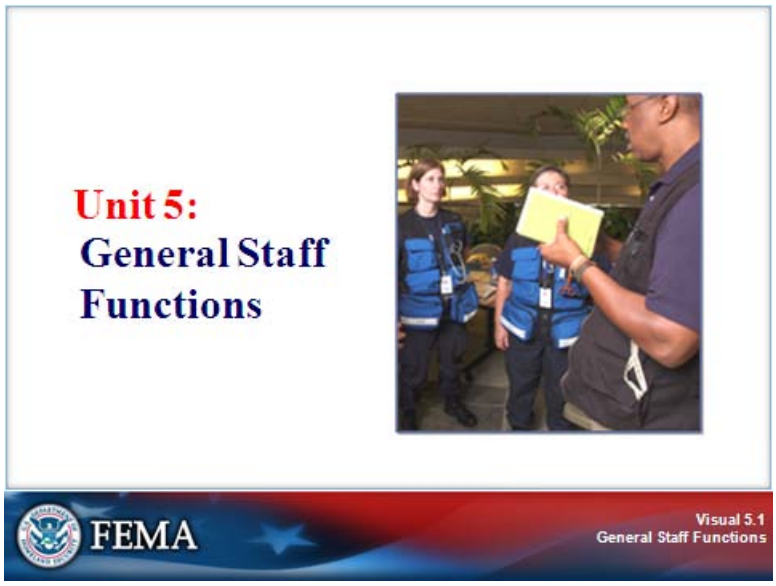
UNIT 5: GENERAL STAFF FUNCTIONS

This page intentionally left blank

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 5.1



Key Points

This unit will provide an overview of ICS General Staff functions, including the following topics:

- Operations Section
- Planning Section
- Logistics Section
- Finance/Administration Section

The unit concludes with an activity in which you will apply what you have learned about the General Staff.

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 5.2

Key Points

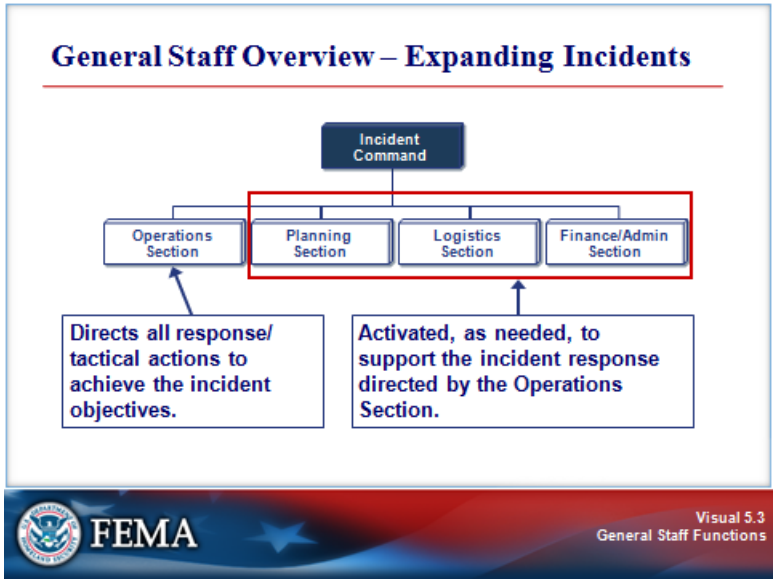
By the end of this unit, you should be able to describe the roles and functions of the General Staff, including the:

- Operations Section.
- Planning Section.
- Logistics Section.
- Finance/Administration Section.

Most incidents usually are small, managed in a short period of time, and require few outside response resources. However, an institution may become involved in a larger incident affecting the whole community and may be isolated. In such cases, a larger ICS organization may be required to manage the incident.

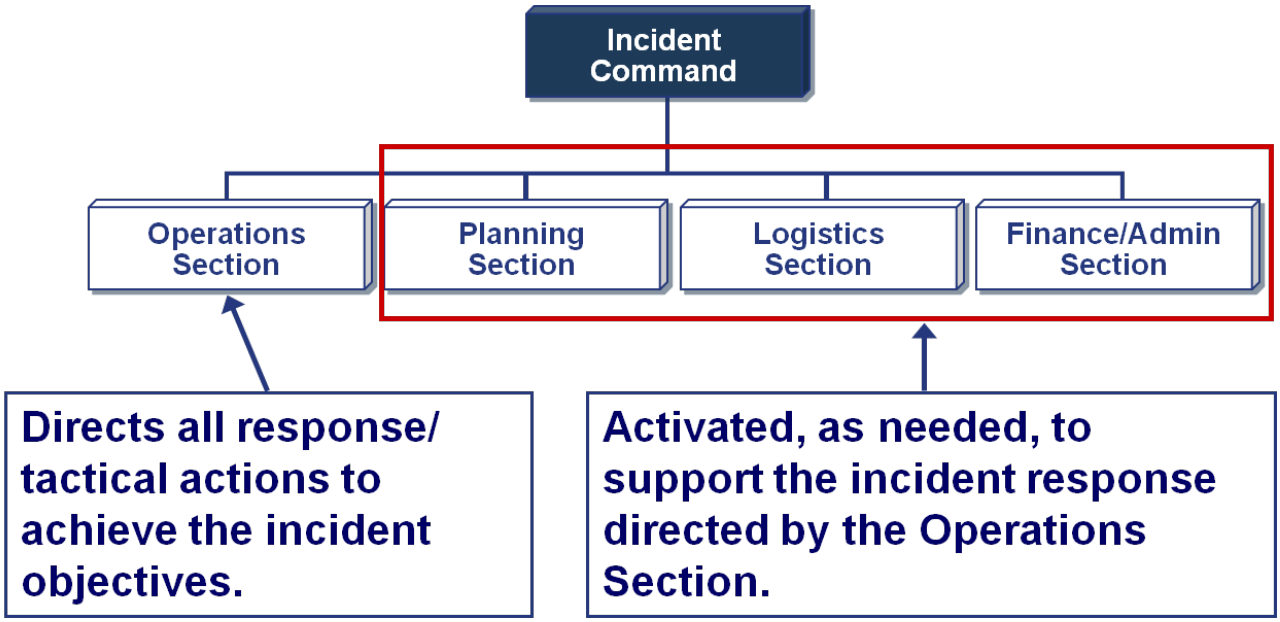
GENERAL STAFF

Visual 5.3



Key Points

The General Staff overall responsibilities are summarized in the graphic. In an expanding incident, the Incident Command first establishes the Operations Section. The remaining Sections are established as needed to support the operation.



GENERAL STAFF

Visual 5.4

Key Points

The definitions of ICS organizational components are shown below.

Later, you will learn more about the different organizational elements.

- **Sections:** The organizational levels with responsibility for a major functional area of the incident (e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration). The person in charge of each Section is designated as a Chief.
- **Divisions:** Used to divide an incident geographically. The person in charge of each Division is designated as a Supervisor.
- **Groups:** Used to describe functional areas of operation. The person in charge of each Group is designated as a Supervisor.
- **Branches:** Used when the number of Divisions or Groups exceeds the span of control. Can be either geographical or functional. The person in charge of each Branch is designated as a Director.
- **Task Forces:** A combination of mixed resources with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Task Force Leader.
- **Strike Teams:** A set number of resources of the same kind and type with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Strike Team Leader.
- **Single Resources:** May be individuals, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified supervisor that can be used at an incident.

GENERAL STAFF

Visual 5.5

Key Points

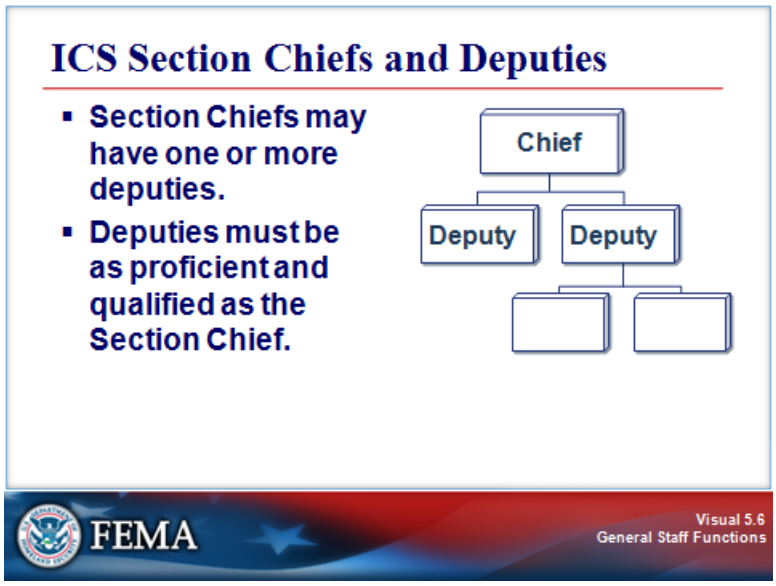
Additional levels of supervision are added as the ICS organization expands.

The ICS supervisory titles are shown in the graphic.

Organizational Level	Supervisor Title	Support Position Title
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

GENERAL STAFF

Visual 5.6



Key Points

As mentioned previously, the person in charge of each Section is designated as a Chief. Section Chiefs have the ability to expand their Sections to meet the needs of the situation.

Each of the Section Chiefs may have a Deputy, or more than one, if necessary. The Deputy:

- May assume responsibility for a specific portion of the primary position, work as relief, or be assigned other tasks.
- Must be as proficient as the person for whom he or she works.

GENERAL STAFF

Visual 5.7

Key Points

The following video will provide an overview of the General Staff Sections.

Video Transcript:

As you previously learned, an Incident Commander is responsible for all incident management functions including: operations, planning, logistics, and finance and administration.

Depending on the incident needs, the Incident Commander may delegate some or all of these functions by establishing Sections. If a Section Chief is assigned to an incident, he or she will report directly to the Incident Commander.

Together, these Section Chiefs are referred to as the General Staff. Let's take a look at the responsibilities of each Section Chief.

The Operations Section Chief is responsible for developing and implementing strategy and tactics to accomplish the incident objectives. This means that the Operations Section Chief organizes, assigns, and supervises all the tactical or response resources assigned to the incident. Additionally, if a Staging Area is established, the Operations Section Chief would manage it.

The Planning Section Chief oversees the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of operational information related to the incident. It is the Planning Section's responsibility to prepare and disseminate the Incident Action Plan, as well as track the status of all incident resources.

(Continued on next page.)

GENERAL STAFF

Visual 5.7 (Continued)

Video Transcript:

The Planning Section helps ensure responders have accurate information and provides resources such as maps and floor plans.

The Logistics Section is responsible for providing facilities, services, and material support for the incident.

Logistics is critical on more complex incidents. The Logistics Section Chief assists the Incident Commander and Operations Section Chief by providing the resources and services required to support incident activities. During an incident, Logistics is responsible for ensuring the well-being of responders by providing sufficient food, water, and medical services. Logistics is also responsible for arranging communication equipment, computers, transportation, and anything else needed to support the incident.

Another critical function during complex incidents is Finance and Administration.

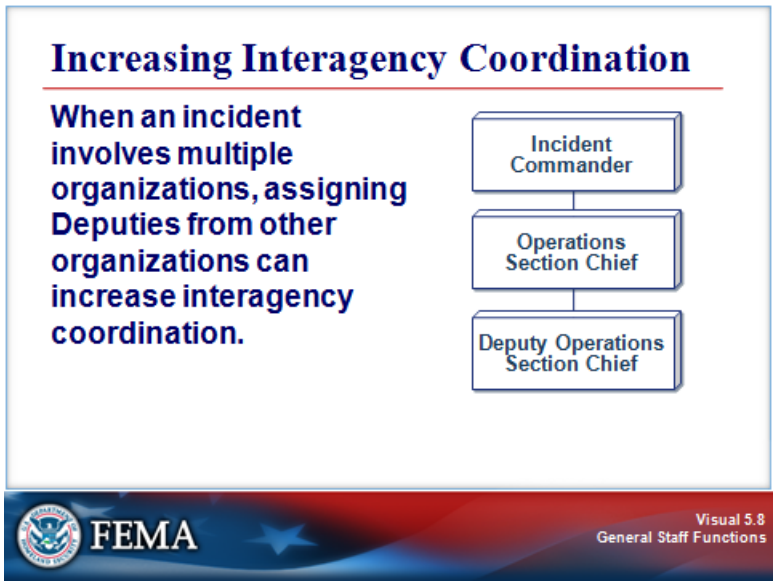
The Finance and Administration Section Chief is responsible for all of the financial and cost analysis aspects of an incident. These include contract negotiation, recording personnel and equipment time, documenting and processing claims for accidents and injuries occurring at the incident, and keeping a running tally of the costs associated with the incident.

We've now introduced you to the four ICS Sections.

It is important to remember that the ICS organizational structure is determined based on the incident objectives and resource requirements. It expands and contracts in a flexible manner. And, only those functions, positions, or Sections necessary for a particular incident are filled.

GENERAL STAFF

Visual 5.8



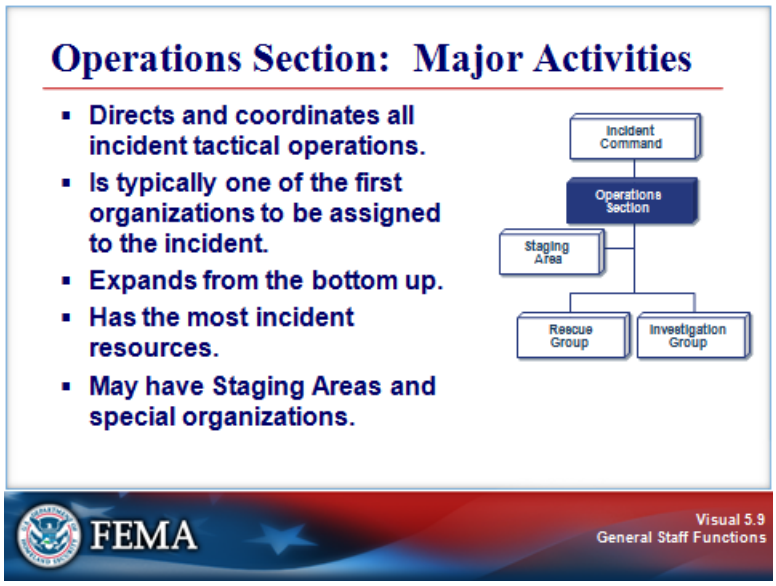
Key Points

When an incident involves multiple organizations, assigning Deputies from other organizations can increase interagency coordination.

For example, for the response to a hazardous materials incident, public works, law enforcement, and hazmat responders might work together, with one agency taking the lead and representatives from the other organizations serving as deputies.

OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.9



Key Points

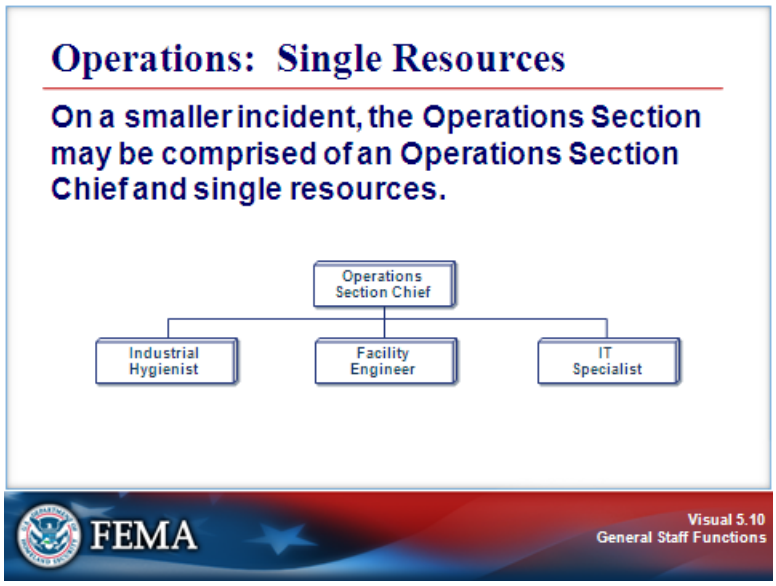
The Operations Section is responsible for directing and coordinating all incident tactical operations.

The Operations Section:

- Is typically one of the first organizations to be assigned to the incident.
- Develops from the bottom up.
- Has the most incident resources.
- May have Staging Areas and special organizations.

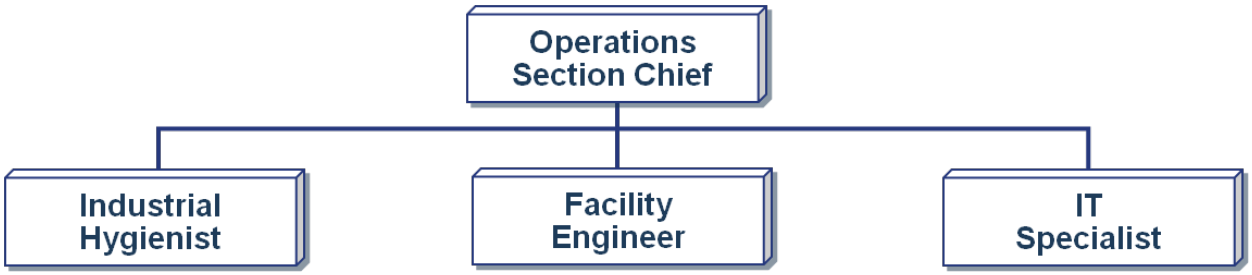
OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.10



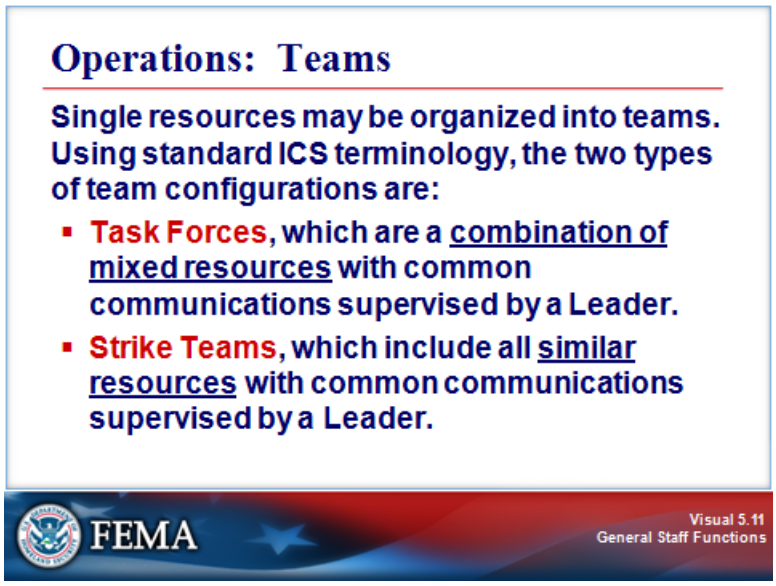
Key Points

Single resources are individuals, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified supervisor. On a smaller incident, the Operations Section may be comprised of an Operations Section Chief and single resources.



OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.11



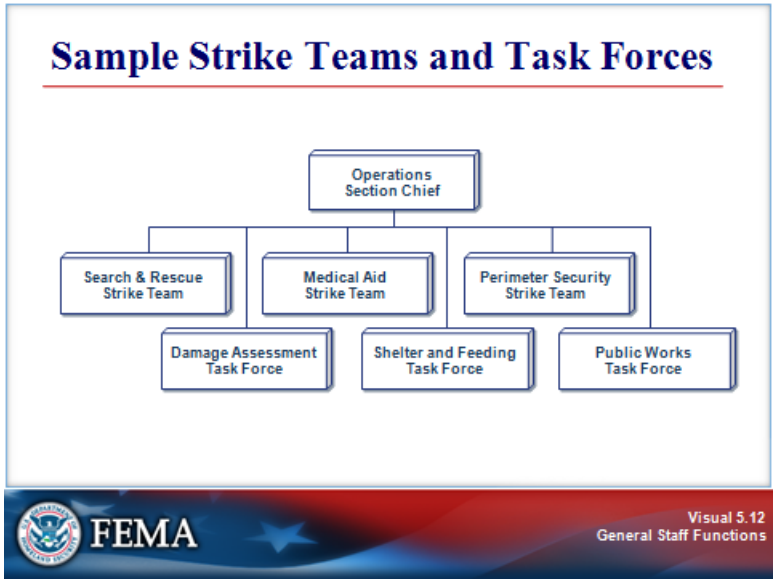
Key Points

Single resources may be organized into teams. Using standard ICS terminology, the two types of team configurations are:

- **Task Forces,** which are a combination of **mixed resources** with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Leader.
- **Strike Teams,** which include all **similar resources** with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Leader.

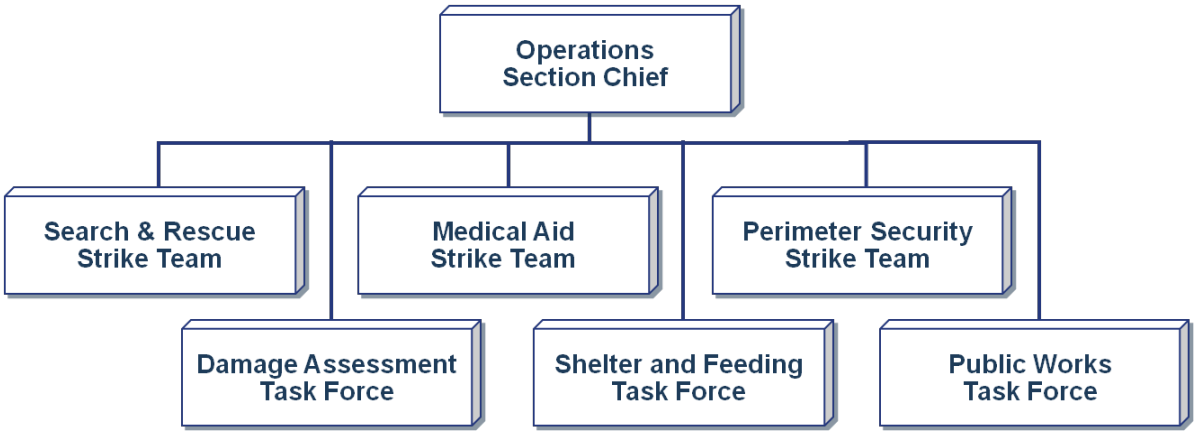
OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.12



Key Points

The Operations Section organization chart shows possible team assignments during an incident. Each team would have a Team Leader reporting to the Operations Section Chief.

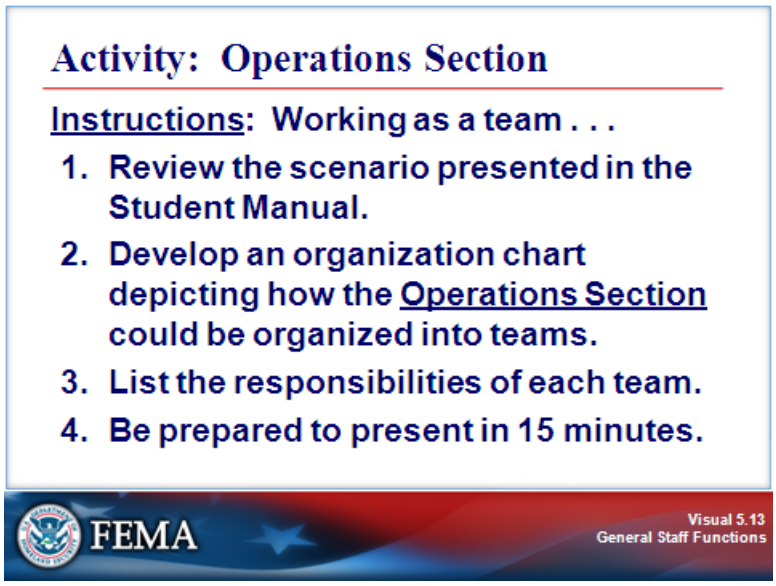


These are examples of possible strike teams and task forces. Strike teams and task forces should be established based on the type of incident and unique requirements of the area.

What other strike teams and task forces might you use during a response?

OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.13



Key Points

Activity Purpose: To reinforce your understanding of how Operations Sections are organized.

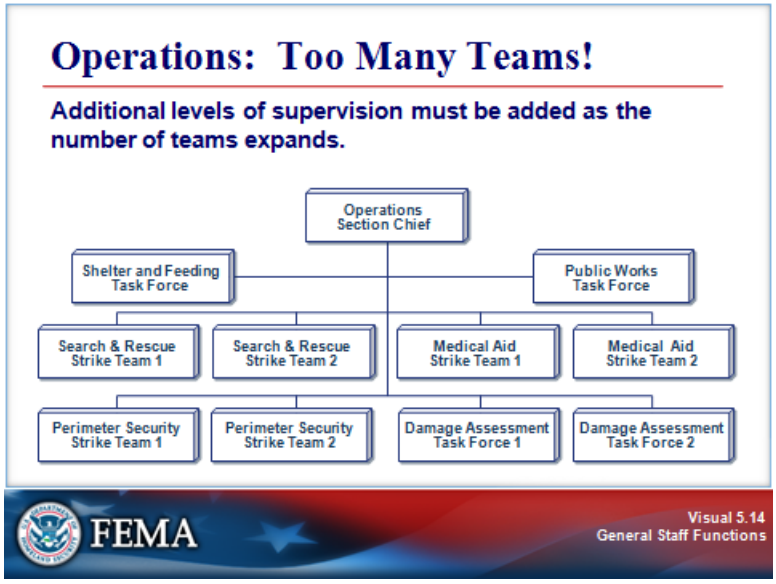
Instructions: Working as a team:

1. Review the scenario presented below.
2. Develop an organization chart depicting how the Operations Section could be organized into teams. Draw the team structure on chart paper as large as possible.
3. List the responsibilities of each team.
4. Be prepared to present in 15 minutes.

Scenario: Heavy rains have caused flash flooding. Your jurisdiction is effectively isolated by the flood waters and damage. It may be several hours before mutual aid resources arrive.

OPERATIONS SECTION

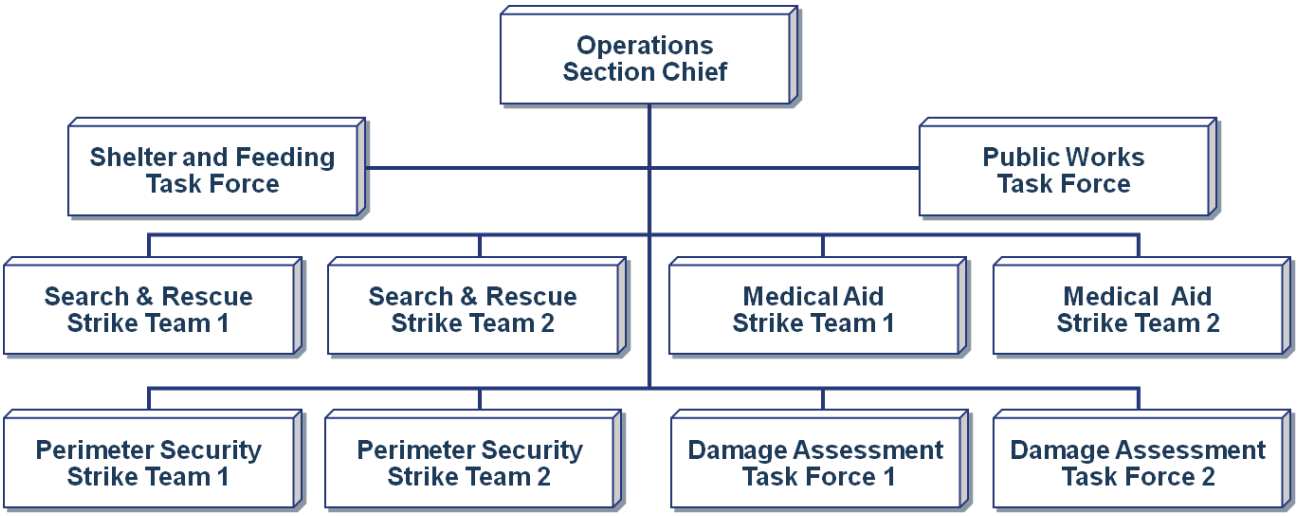
Visual 5.14



Key Points

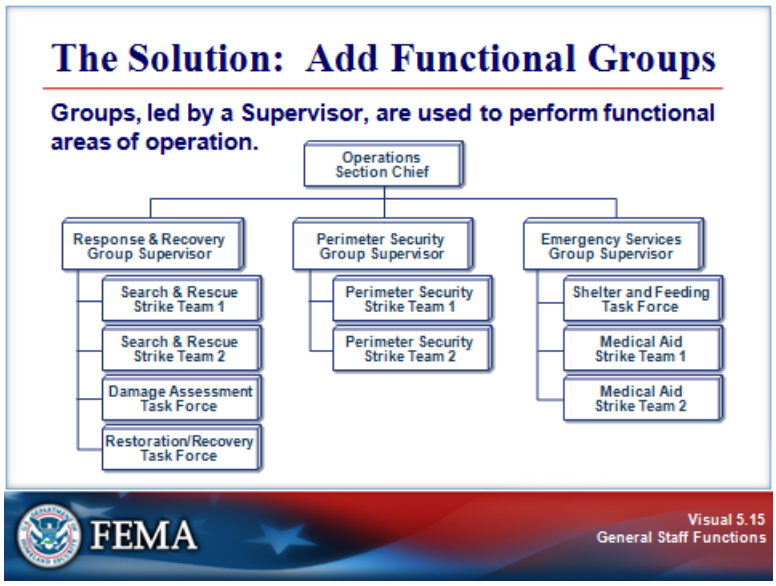
To maintain span of control, each team should be comprised of a Team Leader and no more than 5 to 7 team members.

As teams are added, what happens to the Operations Section Chief's span of control?



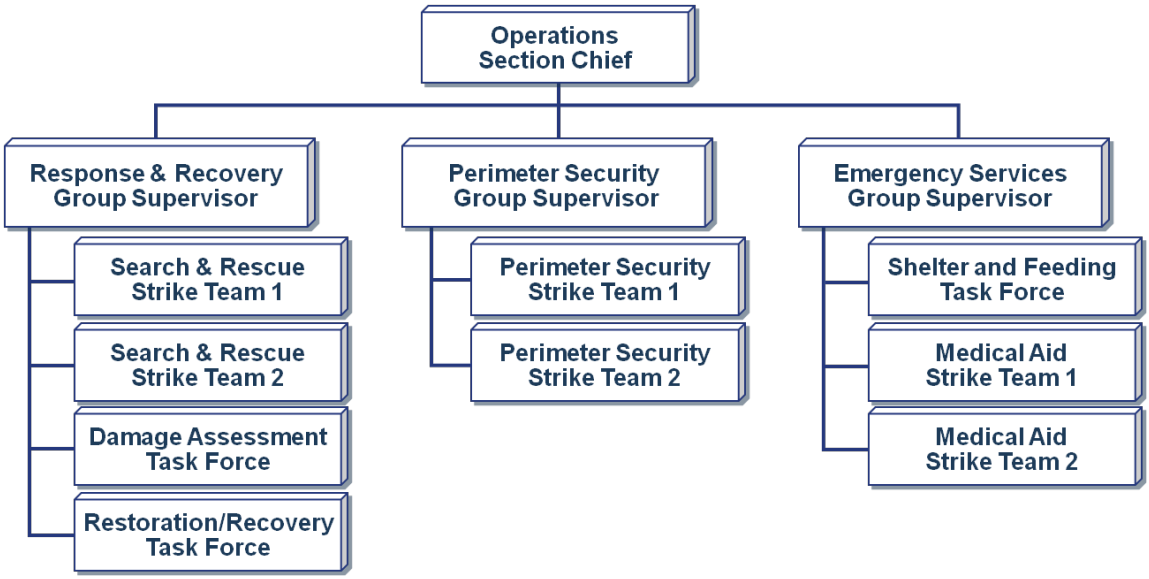
OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.15



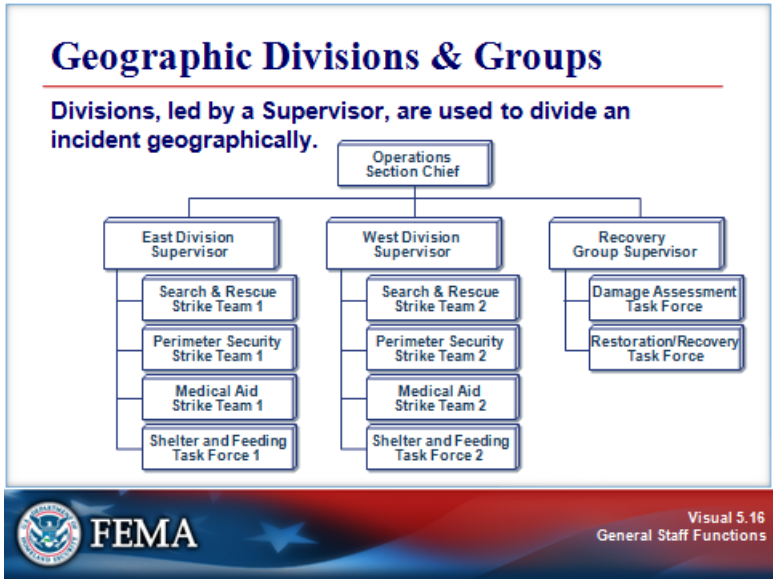
Key Points

On a large, complex incident the Operations Section may become very large. Using the ICS principle of modular organization, the Operations Section may add elements to manage span of control. **Groups are used to perform functional areas of operation.** The organization chart below illustrates how Groups can be used to maintain span of control within the Operations Section.



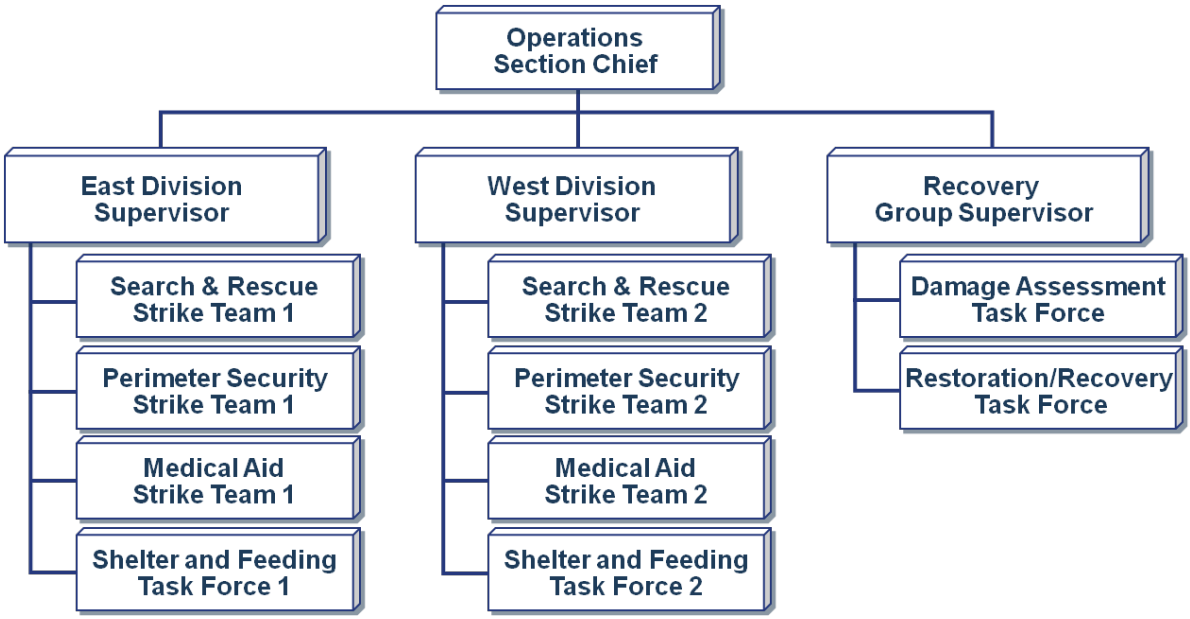
OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.16



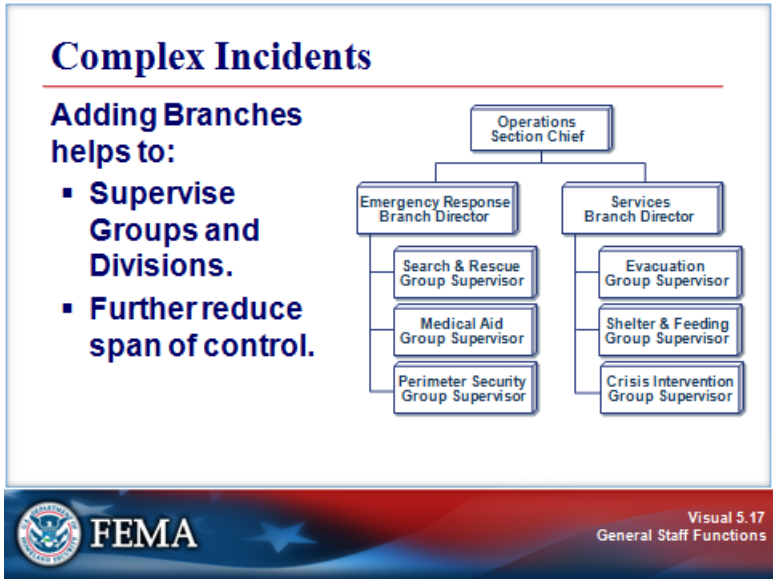
Key Points

Divisions can be used to add a level of supervision. Divisions are used to divide an incident geographically. The organization chart below illustrates how Groups and Divisions can be used together to maintain span of control within the Operations Section. The use of Divisions would be effective if the incident covered a large or isolated area.



OPERATIONS SECTION

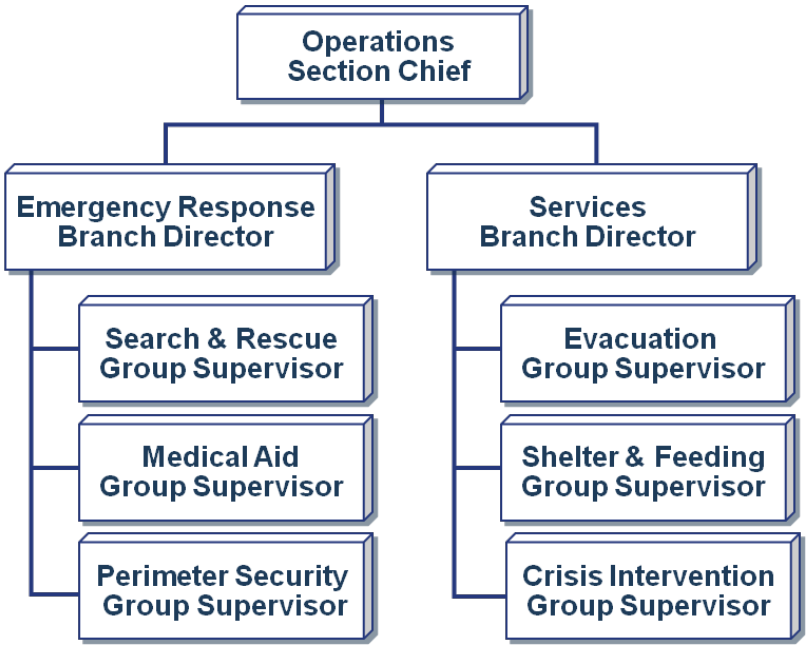
Visual 5.17



Key Points

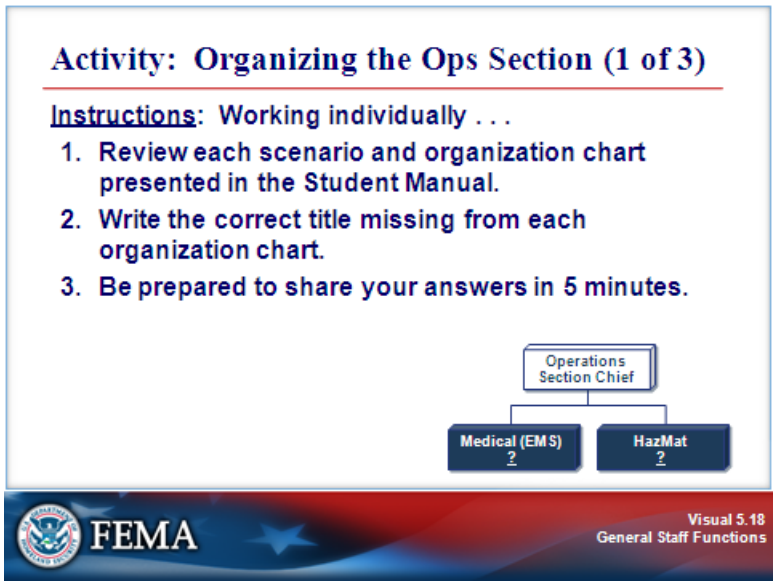
The Operations Section Chief may add Branches to supervise Groups and Divisions and further reduce his or her span of control. The person in charge of each Branch is designated as a Director.

What are the advantages of reducing the Operations Section Chief's span of control?



OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.18



Key Points

Activity Purpose: To reinforce your understanding of Groups and Divisions in the Operations Section.

Instructions: Working individually:

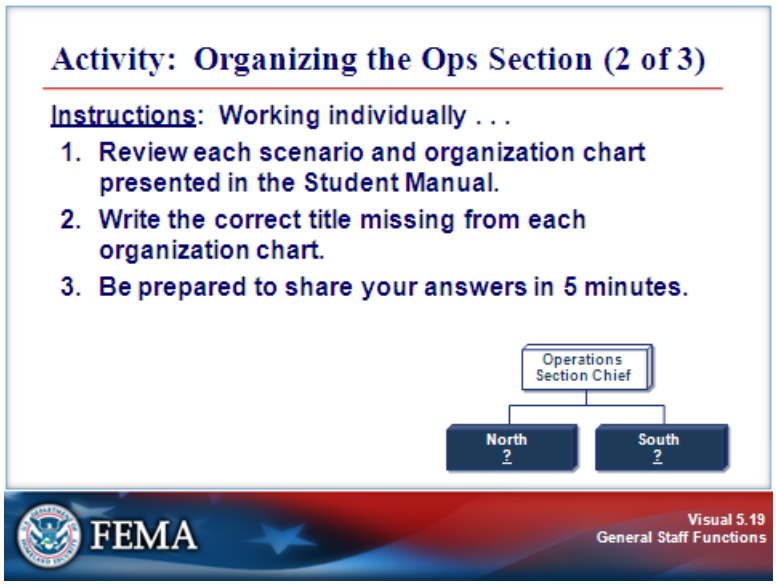
1. Review each scenario and organization chart.
2. Write the correct title missing from each organization chart.
3. Be prepared to share your answers in 5 minutes.

Scenario 1: As incident objectives and resources expand, the Operations Section Chief begins organizing resources into functional areas. What title is the correct addition to the organization chart?

- ☐ Unit Supervisor
- ☐ Team Supervisor
- ☐ Group Supervisor

OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.19



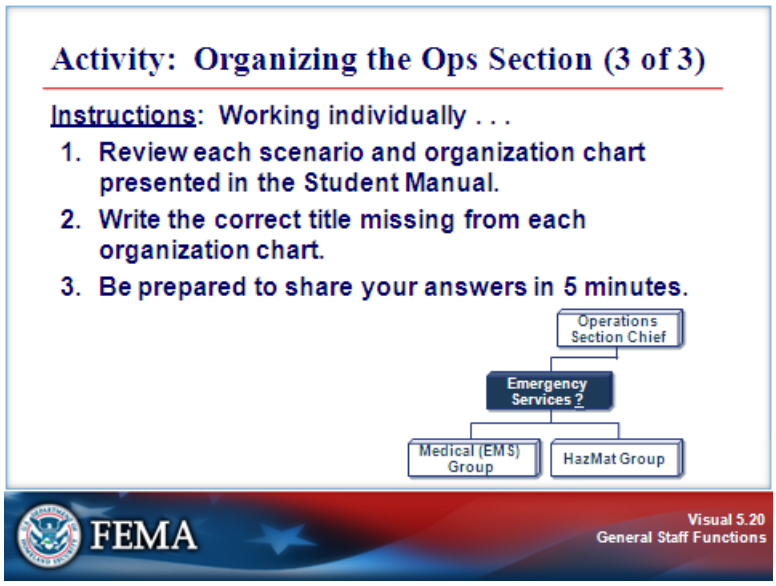
Key Points

Scenario 2: The incident has isolated one part of the area. Given this isolation, the Operations Section Chief has decided to organize resources by geographical areas. What title is the correct addition to the organization chart?

- ☐ Task Force Supervisor
- ☐ Division Supervisor
- ☐ Sector Supervisor

OPERATIONS SECTION

Visual 5.20



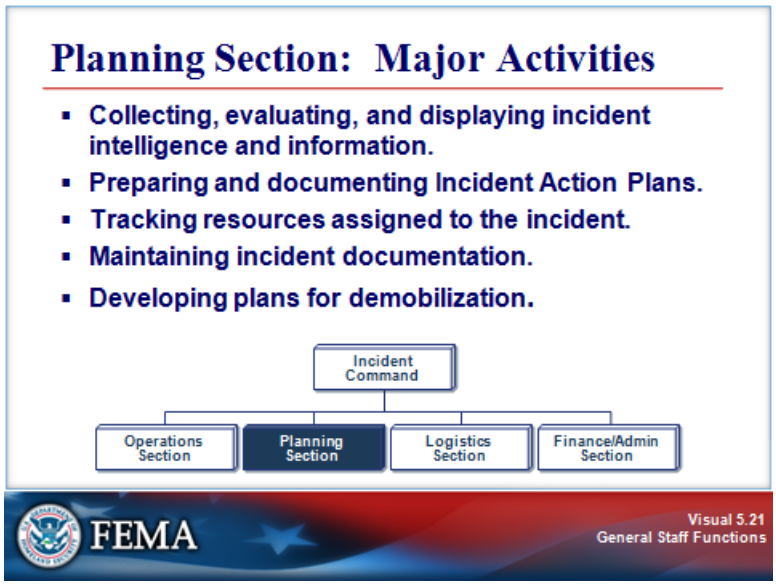
Key Points

Scenario 3: As the incident expands even further, the Operations Section Chief determines that there is a need to add another level of supervision to manage the Groups. What title is the correct addition to the organization chart?

- ☐ Branch Director
- ☐ Department Director
- ☐ Field Director

PLANNING SECTION

Visual 5.21



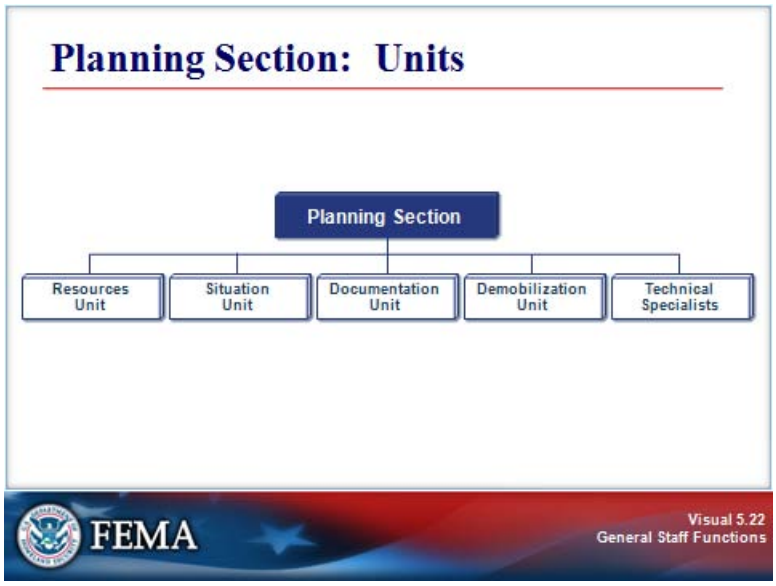
Key Points

The major activities of the Planning Section may include:

- Collecting, evaluating, and displaying incident intelligence and information.
- Preparing and documenting Incident Action Plans.
- Tracking resources assigned to the incident.
- Maintaining incident documentation.
- Developing plans for demobilization.

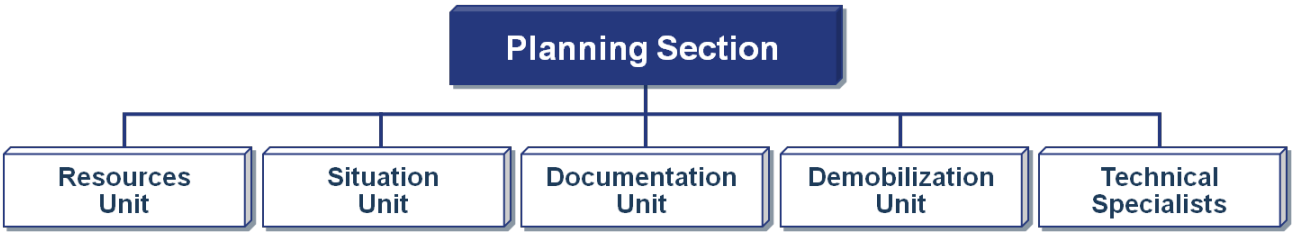
PLANNING SECTION

Visual 5.22



Key Points

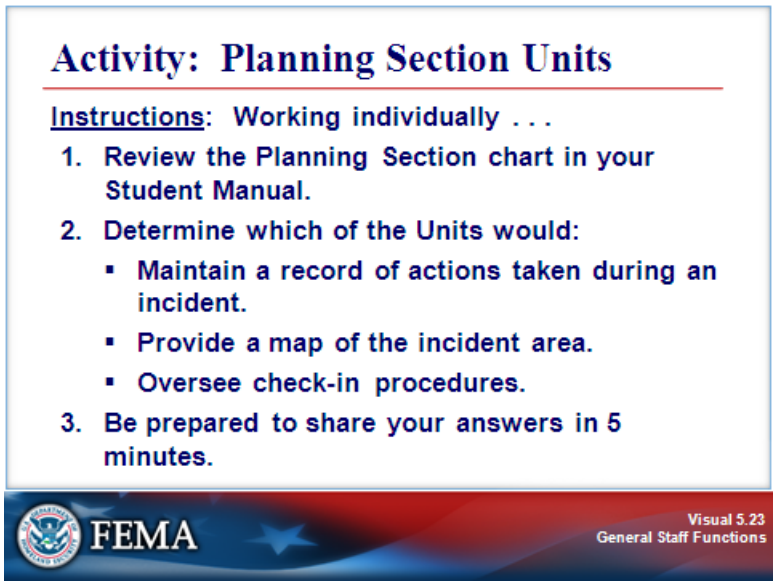
The Planning Section can be further staffed with four Units. In addition, Technical Specialists who provide special expertise useful in incident management and response may also be assigned to work in the Planning Section. Depending on the needs, Technical Specialists may also be assigned to other Sections in the organization.



- **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.

PLANNING SECTION

Visual 5.23



Key Points

Activity Purpose: To reinforce your understanding of the Planning Section Units.

Instructions: Working individually:

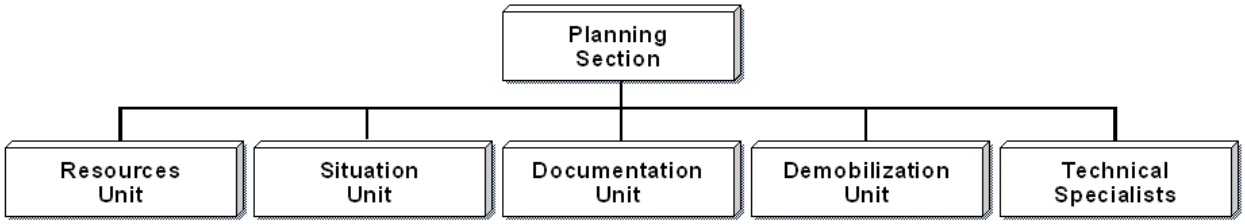
1. Review the Planning Section chart.
2. Determine which of the Units would:

   - Maintain a record of actions taken during an incident.
   - Provide a map of the incident area.
   - Oversee check-in procedures.

3. Be prepared to share your answers in 5 minutes.

PLANNING SECTION

Visual 5.23 (Continued)



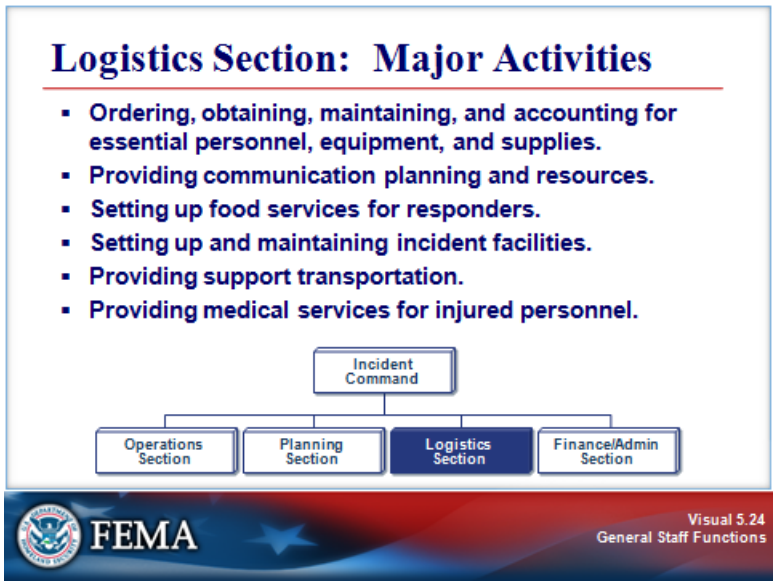
Which Planning Section Unit would maintain a record of actions taken during an incident?

If you needed a map of the incident area, which Planning Section Unit would you go to?

If you needed to check in at an incident, which Planning Section Unit would you go to?

LOGISTICS SECTION

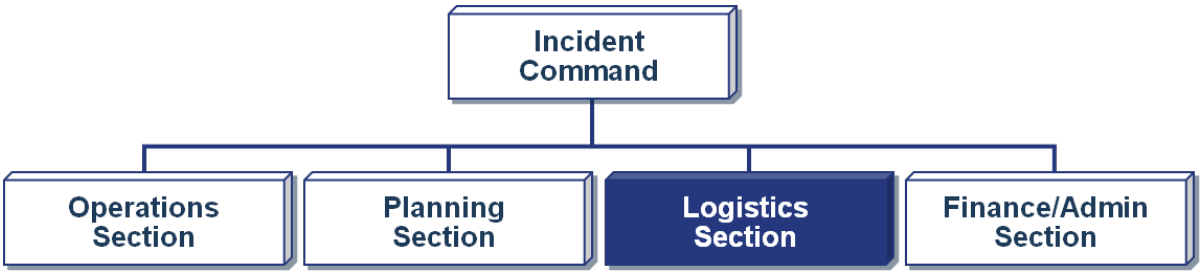
Visual 5.24



Key Points

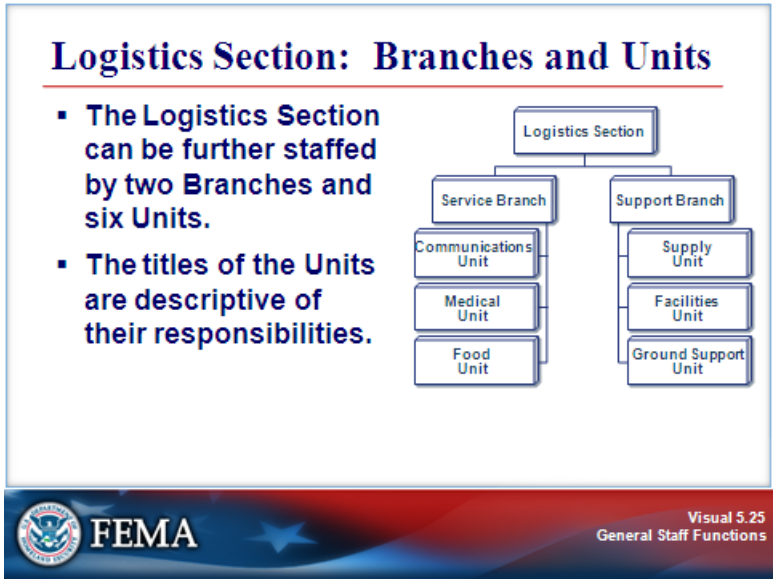
The Logistics Section is responsible for all of the services and support needs, including:

- Ordering, obtaining, maintaining, and accounting for essential personnel, equipment, and supplies.
- Providing communication planning and resources.
- Setting up food services for responders.
- Setting up and maintaining incident facilities.
- Providing support transportation.
- Providing medical services to incident personnel**.**



LOGISTICS SECTION

Visual 5.25



Key Points

The Logistics Section can be further staffed by two Branches and six Units. Remember that the Logistics Section provides support incident personnel only.

The titles of the Units are descriptive of their responsibilities.

Service Branch

The Logistics Service Branch can be staffed to include a:

- **Communications Unit:** Prepares and implements the Incident Communications Plan (ICS-205), distributes and maintains communications equipment, supervises the Incident Communications Center, and establishes adequate communications over the incident.
- **Medical Unit:** Develops the Medical Plan (ICS-206), provides first aid and light medical treatment for personnel assigned to the incident, and prepares procedures for a major medical emergency.
- **Food Unit:** Supplies the food and potable water for all incident facilities and personnel, and obtains the necessary equipment and supplies to operate food service facilities at Bases and Camps.

(Continued on the next page.)

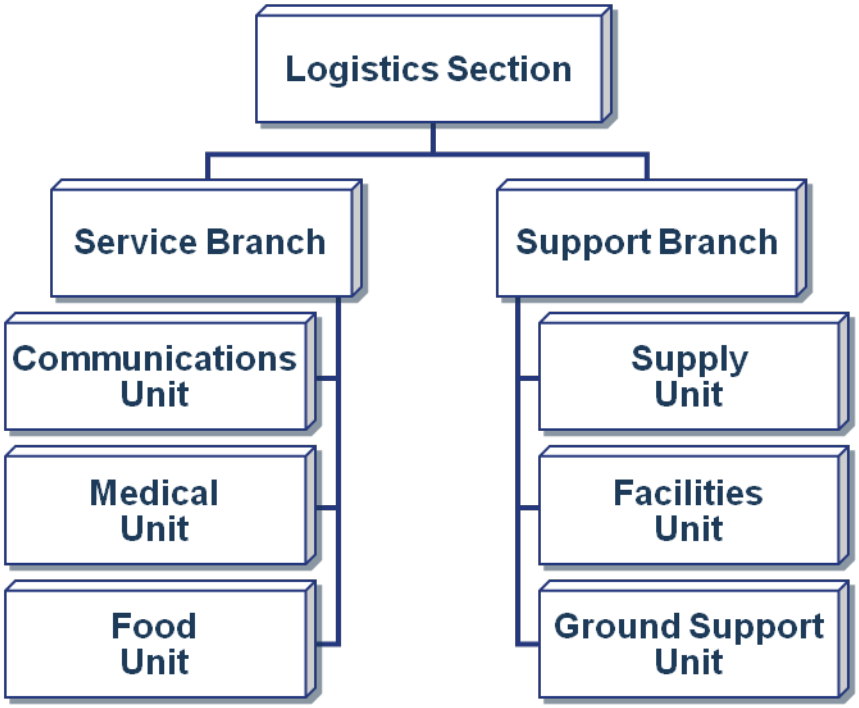
LOGISTICS SECTION

Visual 5.25 (Continued)

Support Branch

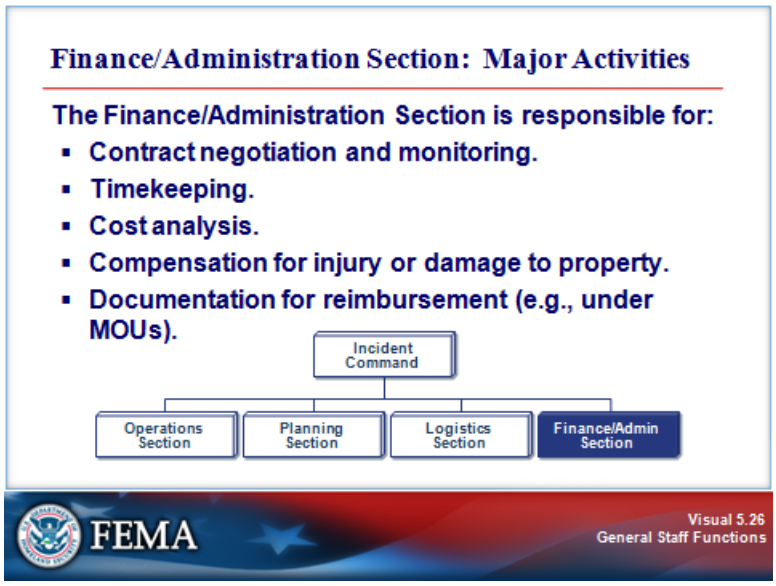
The Logistics Support Branch can be staffed to include a:

- **Supply Unit:** Determines the type and amount of supplies needed to support the incident. The Unit orders, receives, stores, and distributes supplies, services, and nonexpendable equipment. All resource orders are placed through the Supply Unit. The Unit maintains inventory and accountability of supplies and equipment.
- **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 and facility maintenance services such as sanitation, lighting, and cleanup.
- **Ground Support Unit:** Prepares the Transportation Plan. Arranges for, activates, and documents the fueling, maintenance, and repair of ground resources. Arranges for the transportation of personnel, supplies, food, and equipment.



FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION SECTION

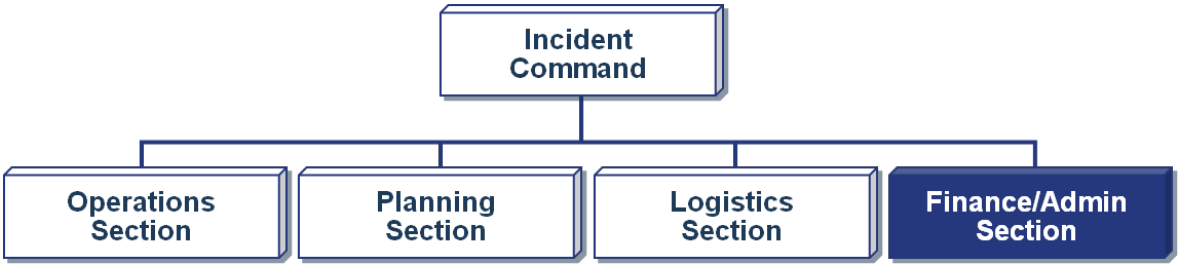
Visual 5.26



Key Points

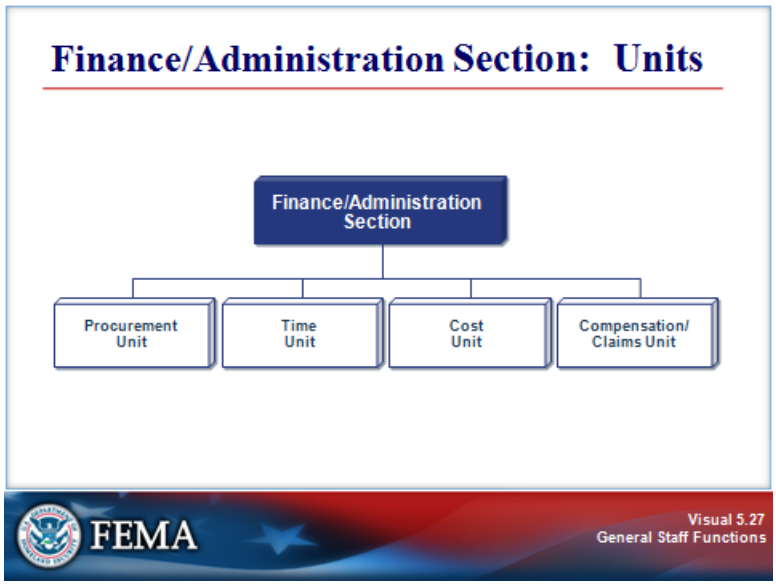
The Finance/Administration Section is set up for any incident that requires incident-specific financial management. The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for:

- Contract negotiation and monitoring.
- Timekeeping.
- Cost analysis.
- Compensation for injury or damage to property.
- Documentation for reimbursement (e.g., under memorandums of understanding (MOUs)).



FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION SECTION

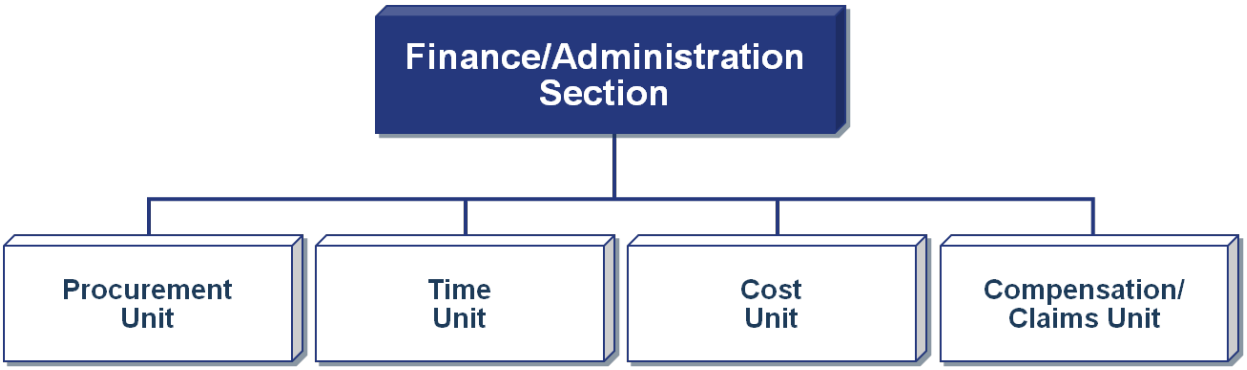
Visual 5.27



Key Points

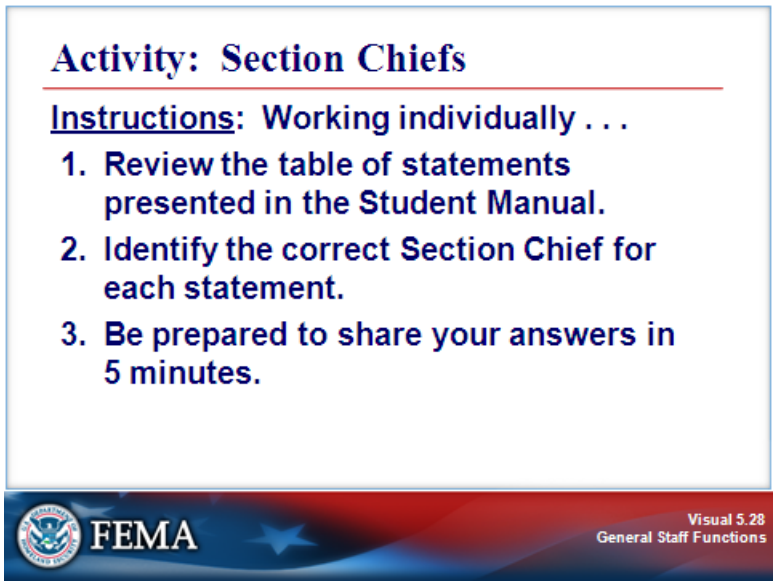
The Finance/Administration Section can be further staffed with four Units.

- **Procurement Unit:** Responsible for administering all financial matters pertaining to vendor contracts, leases, and fiscal agreements.
- **Time Unit:** Responsible for incident personnel time recording.
- **Cost Unit:** Collects all cost data, performs cost effectiveness analyses, provides cost estimates, and makes cost savings recommendations.
- **Compensation/Claims Unit:** Responsible for the overall management and direction of all administrative matters pertaining to compensation for injury-related and claims-related activities kept for the incident.



ACTIVITY: SECTION CHIEFS

Visual 5.28



Key Points

Activity Purpose: To review the General Staff Section responsibilities.

Instructions: Working individually:

1. Review the table in your Student Manual.
2. Identify the correct Section Chief for each statement.
3. Be prepared to share your answers in 5 minutes.

(Continued on the next page.)

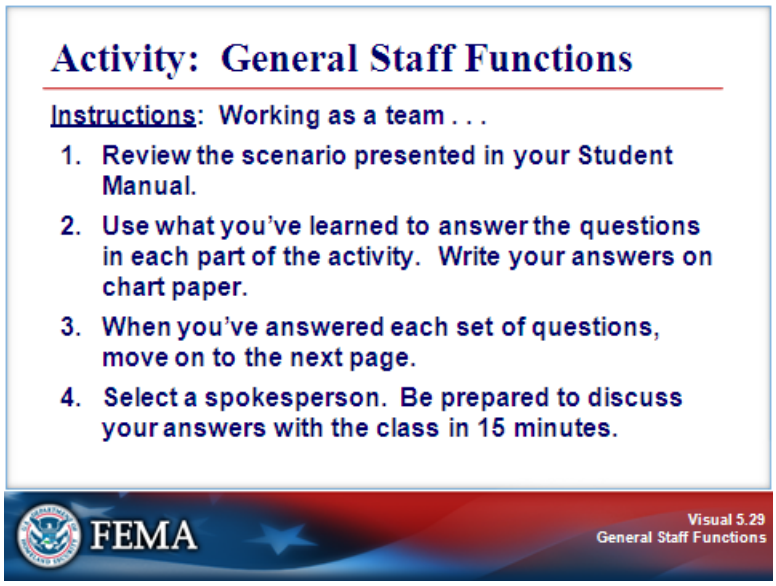
ACTIVITY: SECTION CHIEFS

Visual 5.28 (Continued)

	Statement	Which Section Chief?
1.	In advance of severe flooding, there is a need to get generators and communications equipment to the Staging Areas to equip advance response teams. My Section is responsible for making sure the needed equipment arrives at the Staging Areas.	
2.	As the response is underway, my Section tracks all personnel participating in the response.	
3.	My Section conducts response activities such as search and rescue, and first aid services being provided to disaster survivors.	
4.	I support the incident response activities by overseeing contracting for needed supplies and services that are not already available.	

ACTIVITY: GENERAL STAFF FUNCTIONS

Visual 5.29



Key Points

Activity Purpose: To reinforce your understanding of General Staff functions.

Instructions: Working in groups:

1. Review the scenario presented in your Student Manual.
2. Use what you've learned to answer the questions for each part of the activity before proceeding to the next page. Write your answers on chart paper.
3. When you've answered each set of questions, move on to the next page.
4. Select a spokesperson and be prepared to discuss your answers to all the questions in 15 minutes.

Scenario Part 1: A store employee at a small shopping mall discovers a package leaking a noxious smelling chemical in a storage room. No one is sure how long the box has been there, or how long it has been leaking. Employees and customers are beginning to complain about feeling lightheaded and nauseous. The business owner calls 911. In the meantime, the mall security manager arrives to see why people are rushing out of the store. The security manager establishes the initial ICS organization.

Question:

- **In the ICS organization described above, the mall security manager has assumed which role?**

ACTIVITY: GENERAL STAFF FUNCTIONS

Visual 5.29 (Continued)

Scenario Part 2: A Battalion Chief and hazmat team arrive at the scene. In addition, a law enforcement patrol car with one officer has arrived to help with perimeter control.

Questions:

- **What must happen before the HazMat Battalion Chief assumes the Incident Commander role?**

- **What role might the police officer play in the ICS organization?**

ACTIVITY: GENERAL STAFF FUNCTIONS

Visual 5.29 (Continued)

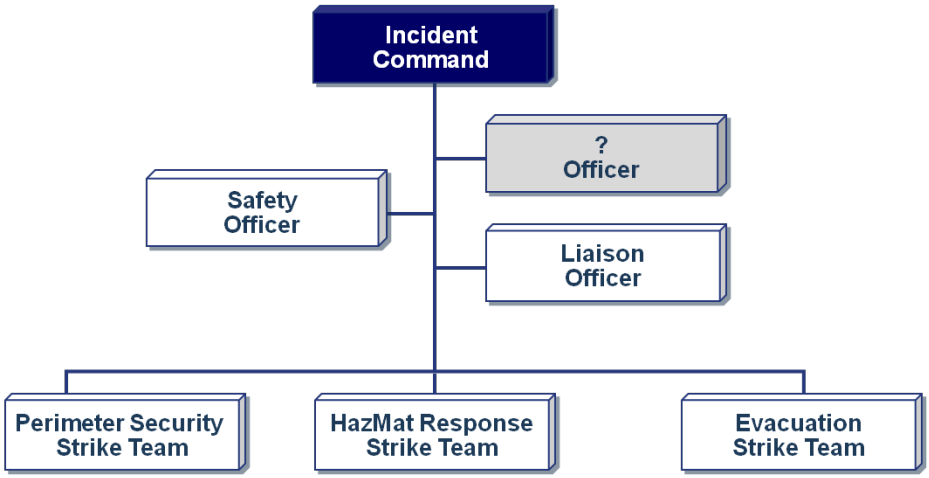
Scenario Part 3: A transfer of command occurs and the HazMat Battalion Chief assumes the Incident Commander role. The Command and General Staff positions are filled as shown on the chart.

Questions:

- **Does the Incident Commander have a manageable span of control?**

- **What is the title of the person in charge of the Perimeter Security Strike Team?**

- **What member of the Command Staff would go in the box with the question mark?**



Caption: Organization chart with Incident Commander, Safety Officer, [?] Officer, Liaison Officer, Perimeter Security Strike Team, HazMat Response Strike Team, and Evacuation Strike Team.

ACTIVITY: GENERAL STAFF FUNCTIONS

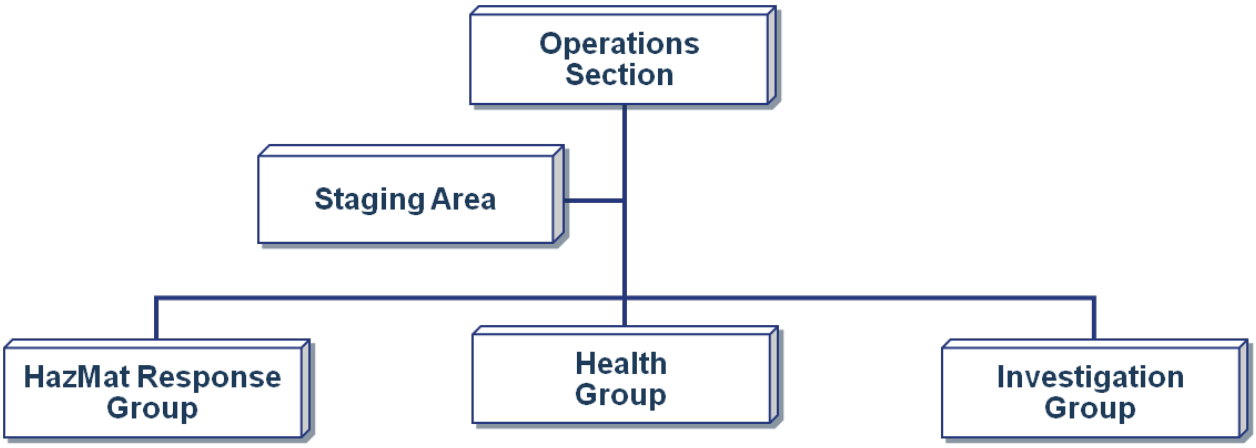
Visual 5.29 (Continued)

Scenario Part 4: To maintain span of control as the incident expands, the Incident Commander establishes an Operations Section.

Questions:

- **What is the role of the Operations Section?**

- **What is the ICS title of the person in charge of the Operations Section?**



Caption: Organization chart showing the Operations Section. Reporting to the Operations Section are the following: Staging Area, HazMat Response Group, Health Group, and Investigation Group.

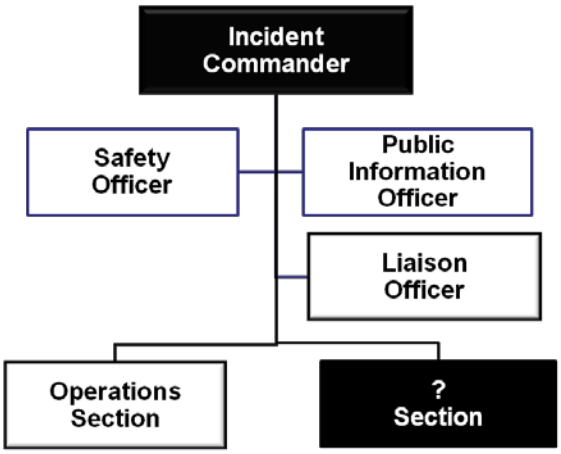
ACTIVITY: GENERAL STAFF FUNCTIONS

Visual 5.29 (Continued)

Scenario Part 5: After the first hour, the Incident Commander establishes a second Section that will develop the Incident Action Plan and track the status of resources on the scene.

Question:

- **What is the correct title of this Section?**



Caption: Organization chart with Incident Commander, Command Staff, and Operations Section. A second Section has been added.

ACTIVITY: GENERAL STAFF FUNCTIONS

Visual 5.29 (Continued)

Scenario Part 6: In an interview, the business owner mentions that she has received threats from a recently terminated employee. The substance has yet to be identified. Given these circumstances, there is a need to find witnesses and locate people who may have come in contact with the package. Interview areas have been set up in the mall parking lot. There are an increasing number of response personnel at the scene, creating the need for communications support along with food and drinks.

Question:

- **Which Section is responsible for providing these support resources?**

ACTIVITY: GENERAL STAFF FUNCTIONS

Visual 5.29 (Continued)

Scenario Part 7: Cleanup is complete, and the few exposed customers and staff have been located and are undergoing treatment. The operation is now shifting to an ongoing investigation of the disgruntled former employee.

Question:

- **Which resources would you demobilize?**

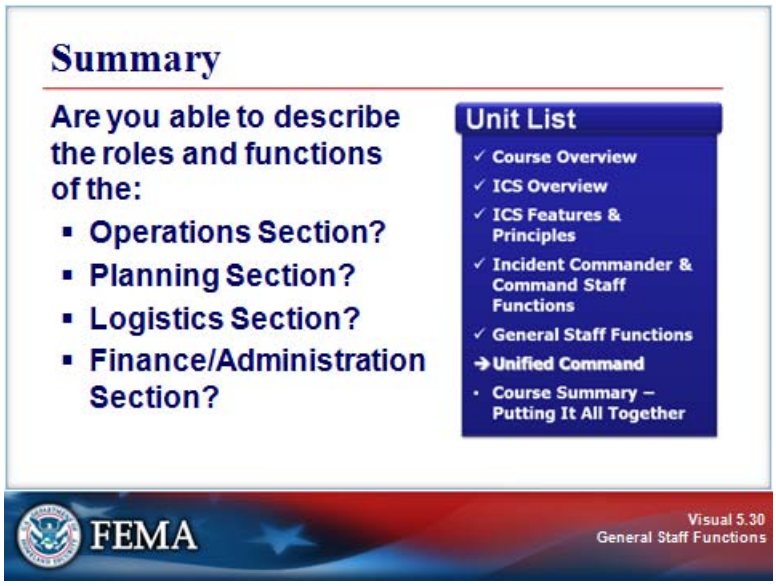
ACTIVITY: GENERAL STAFF FUNCTIONS

Visual 5.29 (Continued)

Your Notes:

UNIT SUMMARY

Visual 5.30



Key Points

Are you able to describe the roles and functions of the:

- Operations Section?
- Planning Section?
- Logistics Section?
- Finance/Administration Section?

The next unit will focus on the features and organizational structures related to Unified Command.

Your Notes: