
Unit 4: Incident Commander and Command Staff Functions



Unit 4: Incident Commander and Command Staff Functions



Visual Description: Unit Introduction

Key Points

This unit provides an overview of the role of the Incident Commander and Command Staff.



Unit Objectives

- Describe the role and function of the Incident Commander.
- Describe the role and function of the Command Staff.



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Visual 4.2

Visual Description: Unit Objectives

Key Points

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

- Describe the role and function of the Incident Commander.
- Describe the role and function of the Command Staff.



Incident Commander (1 of 2)

Upon arriving at an incident, the higher ranking person will either assume command, maintain command as is, or transfer command to a third party.



In some situations or agencies, a lower ranking but more qualified person may be designated as the Incident Commander.

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Visual 4.3

Visual Description: Incident Commander (1 of 2)

Key Points

Upon arriving at an incident, the higher ranking person will either assume command, maintain command as is, or transfer command to a third party.

In some situations or agencies, a lower ranking but more qualified person may be designated as the Incident Commander.

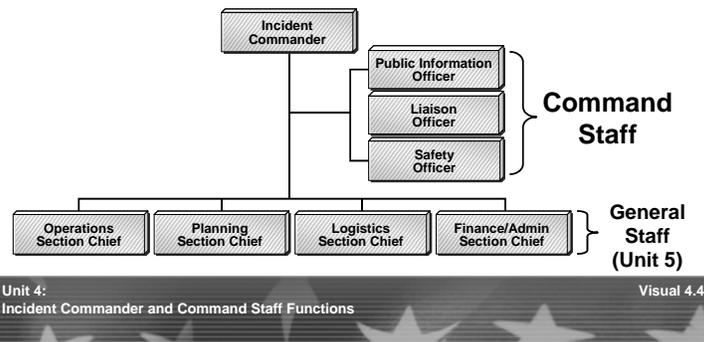


Jot down some reasons why it is critical to establish command at the beginning of the incident operations.



Incident Commander (2 of 2)

The Incident Commander performs all major ICS command and staff responsibilities unless the ICS functions are delegated and assigned.

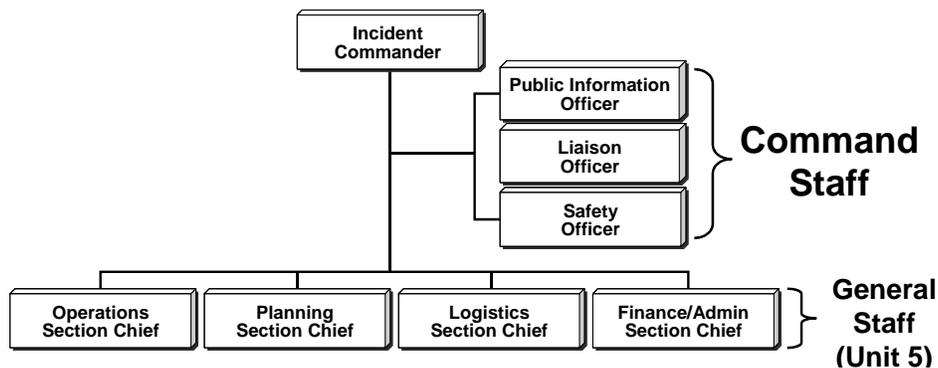


Visual Description: Incident Commander (2 of 2)

Key Points

The Incident Commander performs all major ICS command and staff responsibilities unless these functions are delegated and assigned. As illustrated on the chart below and on the visual, ICS organization may be expanded to include:

- **Command Staff:** Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer, Safety Officer
- **General Staff:** Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, Finance/Administration Section Chief



Remember: Not all Command and General Staff positions are filled on each incident. However, if a position isn't filled, then the Commander assumes that ICS management function.



Incident Commander Role

The Incident Commander:

- Provides overall leadership for incident response.
- Delegates authority to others.
- Takes general direction from agency administrator/official.



Incident Commander

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Visual 4.5

Visual Description: Incident Commander Role

Key Points

Note the following key points about the Incident Commander's role:

- Provides overall leadership for incident response.
- Delegates authority to others.
- Takes general direction from agency administrator/official.



Incident Commander Responsibilities

The Incident Commander is specifically responsible for:

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



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Visual 4.6

Visual Description: Incident Commander Responsibilities

Key Points

The Incident Commander is specifically responsible for:

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



Incident Commander Responsibilities

The Incident Commander:

- Is responsible for all activities and functions until delegated and assigned to staff.
- Assesses need for staff.
- Establishes incident objectives.
- Directs staff to develop the Incident Action Plan.



Incident Commander

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Visual 4.7

Visual Description: Incident Commander Responsibilities

Key Points

Note the following key points about the responsibilities of the Incident Commander:

- Is responsible for all activities and functions until delegated and assigned to staff.
- Assesses need for staff.
- Establishes incident objectives.
- Directs staff to develop the Incident Action Plan.



Deputy Incident Commander

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.



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Visual 4.8

Visual Description: Deputy Incident Commander

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.

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



Discussion Question

Can you think of a situation where a Deputy Incident Commander might be assigned?

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Visual 4.9

Visual Description: Can you think of a situation where a Deputy Incident Commander might be assigned?

Key Points



Describe a situation where a Deputy Incident Commander might be assigned.



Changing Incident Commanders

Command may change to meet the needs of the incident when incidents:

- Expand or contract.
- Change in jurisdiction or discipline.
- Become more or less complex.



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Visual 4.10

Visual Description: Changing Incident Commanders

Key Points

Incident command may change to meet the needs of the incident when incidents:

- Expand or contract.
- Change in jurisdiction or discipline.
- Become more or less complex.



Transferring Incident Commanders

Transfer of command requires:

- A transfer of command briefing for the incoming Incident Commander.
- Notification to all personnel that a change in command is taking place.



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Visual 4.11

Visual Description: Transferring Incident Commanders

Key Points

A transfer of command requires:

- A transfer of command briefing for the incoming Incident Commander.
- Notification to all personnel that a change in command is taking place.



Knowledge Review (1 of 3)

Who has overall
responsibility at an
incident?

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Visual 4.12

Visual Description: Who has overall responsibility at an incident?

Key Points

Answer the following question:



Who has overall responsibility at an incident?



Knowledge Review (2 of 3)

If the Operations Section has not been activated, who directs the tactical operations?

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Visual 4.13

Visual Description: If the Operations Section has not been activated, who directs the tactical operations?

Key Points

Answer the following question:



If the Operations Section has not been activated, who directs the tactical operations?



Knowledge Review (3 of 3)

The Deputy Incident Commander is assuming control for the next incident period. What needs to occur before he or she can do so?

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Visual 4.14

Visual Description: The Deputy Incident Commander is assuming control for the next incident period. What needs to occur before he or she can do so?

Key Points

Answer the following question:



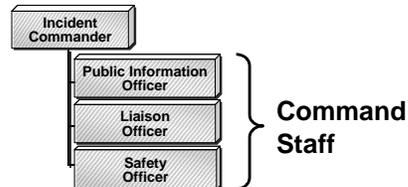
The Deputy Incident Commander is assuming control for the next incident period. What needs to occur before he or she can do so?



Command Staff

It may be necessary for the Incident Commander to designate a Command Staff who:

- Provide information, liaison, and safety services for the entire organization.
- Report directly to the Incident Commander.



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Visual 4.15

Visual Description: Command Staff includes Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer, and Safety Officer

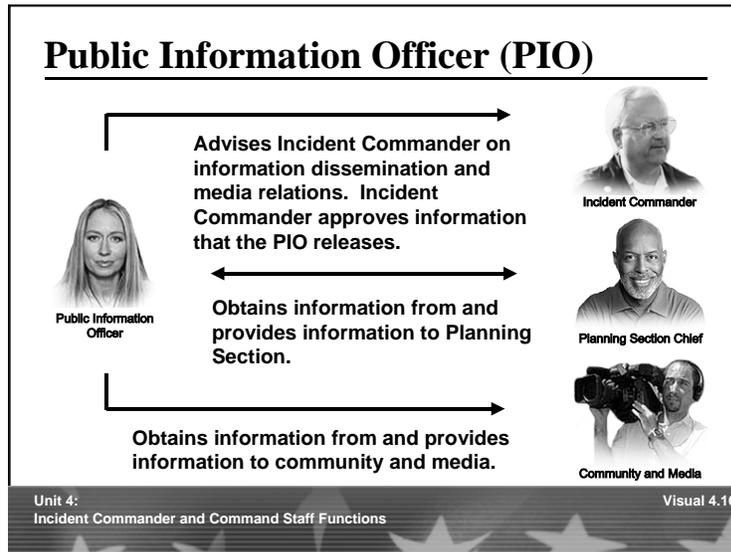
Key Points

The next section of this unit focuses on the Command Staff. It may be necessary for the Incident Commander to designate a Command Staff who:

- Provide information, liaison, and safety services for the entire organization.
- Report directly to the Incident Commander.

The Command Staff includes the following positions:

- Public Information Officer
- Liaison Officer
- Safety Officer



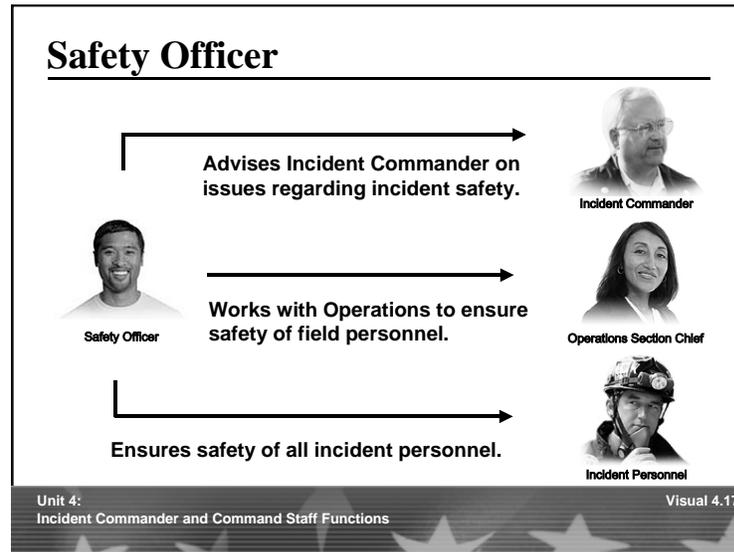
Visual Description: Public Information Officer

Key Points

The Public Information Officer (PIO) serves as the conduit for information to internal and external stakeholders. The PIO:

- Advises the Incident Commander on information dissemination and media relations.
- Obtains information from and provides information to the Planning Section.
- Obtains information from and provides information to the community and media.

The Incident Commander approves all information that the PIO releases.



Visual Description: Safety Officer

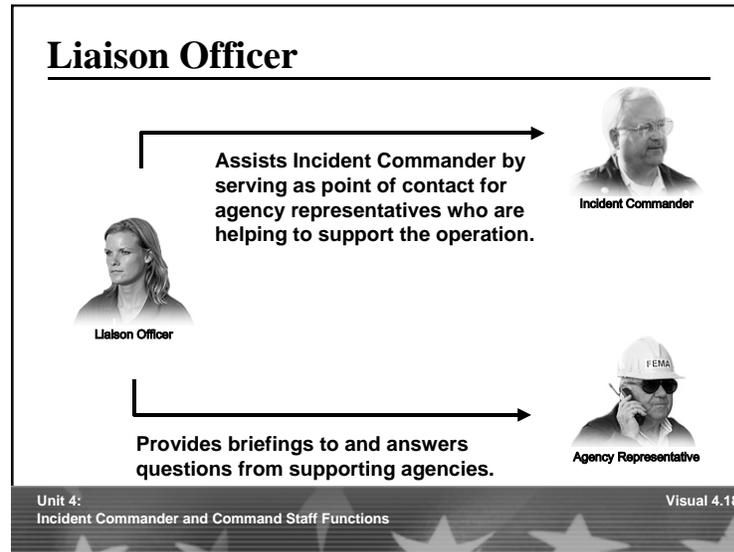
Key Points

The Safety Officer monitors safety conditions. The Safety Officer:

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



What type of incident would create a situation where it would be critical to assign a Safety Officer?



Visual Description: Liaison Officer

Key Points

The Liaison Officer serves as the primary contact for supporting agencies assisting at an incident. The Liaison Officer:

- Assists the Incident Commander by serving as a point of contact for agency representatives who are helping to support the operation.
- Provides briefings to and answers questions from supporting agencies.



What type of incident would create a situation that would warrant the assignment of a Liaison Officer?



Knowledge Review

Instructions: Identify which member of the Command Staff performs the following tasks.



Tasks:

- Advises Incident Commander on issues related to information dissemination and media relations.
- Serves as primary contact for anyone who wants information about the incident.
- Serves external and internal audiences.
- Obtains information from Planning Section.

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Visual 4.19

Visual Description: Knowledge Review (1 of 3)

Key Points

Instructions: Identify which member of the Command Staff perform the following tasks:

- Advises Incident Commander on issues related to information dissemination and media relations.
- Serves as primary contact for anyone who wants information about the incident.
- Serves external and internal audiences.
- Obtains information from Planning Section.



Which member of the Command Staff performs these tasks?



Knowledge Review

Instructions: Identify which member of the Command Staff performs the following tasks.



Tasks:

- Makes sure everyone does their job safely.
- Advises Incident Commander on issues regarding incident safety.
- Conducts risk analyses and implements safety measures.
- Promotes safe driving habits.
- Eliminates tripping hazards.

Unit 4:
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Visual 4.20

Visual Description: Knowledge Review (2 of 3)

Key Points

Instructions: Identify which member of the Command Staff perform the following tasks:

- Makes sure everyone does their job safely.
- Advises Incident Commander on issues regarding incident safety.
- Conducts risk analyses and implements safety measures.
- Promotes safe driving habits.
- Eliminates tripping hazards.



Which member of the Command Staff performs these tasks?



Knowledge Review

Instructions: Identify which member of the Command Staff performs the following tasks.



Tasks:

- Serves as point of contact for assisting and cooperating agency representatives.
- Identifies problems between supporting agencies.
- Participates in planning meetings by providing the status on current resources, resource limitations, and resource capabilities of other agencies.

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Visual 4.21

Visual Description: Knowledge Review (3 of 3)

Key Points

Instructions: Identify which member of the Command Staff perform the following tasks:

- Serves as point of contact for assisting and cooperating agency representatives.
- Identifies problems between supporting agencies.
- Participates in planning meetings by providing the status on current resources, resource limitations, and resource capabilities of other agencies.



Which member of the Command Staff performs these tasks?



Activity: Command Staff Roles (1 of 2)

Instructions:

1. Working as a team, review the scenario presented on the next visual.
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.

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Visual 4.22

Visual Description: Activity: Command Staff Roles (1 of 2)

Key Points

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to illustrate how ICS can be used to address incident management issues.

Instructions: Follow the steps below to complete this activity:

1. Working as a team, review the scenario presented on the next page.
2. Identify which Command Staff positions would be assigned.
3. As Incident Commander, identify the specific activities that would be delegated to each Command Staff member.
4. Select a spokesperson. Be prepared to present in 10 minutes.



Activity: Command Staff Roles (2 of 2)

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

- Homes, schools, and the business district are being evacuated.
- Critical infrastructure has been damaged including 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.

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Visual 4.23

Visual Description: Activity: Command Staff Roles (2 of 2)

Key Points

Review the following scenario that was first presented in Unit 2:

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

- Homes, schools, and the business district are being evacuated.
- Critical infrastructure has been damaged including 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.



Identify the Command Staff positions that would be assigned.



Identify the specific activities that would be delegated to each Command Staff member.



Summary

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

- Incident Commander?
- Public Information Officer?
- Safety Officer?
- Liaison Officer?

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Visual 4.24

Visual Description: Summary

Key Points

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

- Incident Commander?
- Public Information Officer?
- Safety Officer?
- Liaison Officer?

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