
NIMS ICS Incident Commander Training Guide

Course Number 4950



FEMA



NATIONAL DISASTER &
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Introduction

The Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for the overall management of an incident, including establishing objectives, setting priorities, and ensuring the safety and well-being of all incident personnel. The IC's team can range from a small group of section chiefs and support staff to a large, multidisciplinary organization involving hundreds of personnel. The scale and complexity of the incident will dictate the size of the team and the scope of responsibilities.

The IC will set the tone for the entire incident management effort. They focus on empowering the team to succeed, ensuring that personnel have the tools, resources, and support they need to perform at their best. Ultimately, the IC's role is to serve as a steady anchor for the response effort, balancing operational needs with personnel needs. This role demands professionalism, sound judgment, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

The IC's ability to effectively implement the principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) will guide them through challenging and dynamic situations. Success in this role also requires continuous growth through education, training, and real-world experience.

This training guide provides an overview of the IC's roles, responsibilities, and key tasks for effectively managing an Incident Management Team (IMT). It is designed for personnel preparing to serve as ICs and complements the ICS Training Reference Guide. Students will use this guide during pre-course work and in-class activities for the NIMS ICS Incident Commander Course.

Throughout this training guide, the term "Incident Commander (IC)" refers to the individual responsible for managing the incident. When appropriate, references to the IC also include the broader concept of Incident Commander/Unified Command (IC/UC), in which multiple leaders from different agencies, jurisdictions, or levels of government share command authority and jointly establish incident objectives, priorities, and direction.

Chapter 1: Incident Commander Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the IC's roles, responsibilities, and interactions with the IMT. Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify how to lead and manage an incident by effectively interacting with various members of the IMT.
- Identify effective communication practices for engaging internal and external audiences during incident management.
- Identify the purpose and function of command, agency oversight, support, and coordination as they relate to incident management and the role of the IC.
- Identify the staffing responsibilities and considerations of the IC.
- Identify the interaction and cooperation that occur between the Agency Administrator and the IC for the successful management of an incident.

The IC plays a critical leadership role in managing incidents and guiding the overall response effort. The IC is responsible for establishing incident objectives, setting priorities, coordinating resources, and ensuring the safety and well-being of incident personnel. Effective incident management requires the IC to balance operational demands, stakeholder expectations, and evolving incident conditions while maintaining a clear strategic focus. This chapter introduces the IC's leadership responsibilities, interactions with the IMT, and the key concepts, relationships, and resources that support successful incident management.

The transition from a tactical “doing” position to the leadership role of an IC can be difficult. Rather than performing the work, the IC leads the IMT in accomplishing incident objectives and managing the overall response effort. Successfully adapting to this transition requires an understanding of the duties, responsibilities, and expectations associated with the position.

Three key resources describe the Incident Commander's responsibilities:

- **Incident Commander Position Task Book (PTB)**
- **Field Operations Guides (FOG):** These guides, such as the U.S. Coast Guard Incident Management Handbook, can be agency-specific.
- **Incident Commander Job Aids:** Examples include job aids for the U.S. Coast Guard or the Texas A&M Forest Service.



The National Qualification System (NQS) Position Task Books (PTB) detail the competencies and tasks associated with various roles. Use FEMA's Resource Typing Library Tool (RTL) to locate the PTB for a given position via this URL: <https://rtl.preptoolkit.fema.gov/Public>.

Note: The PTBs assigned by the IC's agency or jurisdiction may vary.

Incident Commander Responsibilities

The following sections outline the IC's responsibilities.

Directing and Coordinating Response Efforts

- Direct overall incident operations.
- Coordinate response activities across agencies, jurisdictions, and disciplines.

Authority and Safety

- Exercise authority consistent with applicable law, the delegation of authority, and agency policy.
- Ensure incident safety.
- Demonstrate command presence.
- Foster an environment that supports an effective response.

Initial Assessment and Planning

- Review the United States Coast Guard (USCG) Incident Management Handbook, FOG, and other job aids for assistance and checklists.
- Obtain briefings from the Agency Administrator and the previous IC to assess the situation.
- Establish an Incident Command Post (ICP).
- Establish immediate priorities.
- Determine the leader's intent, priorities, objectives, limitations, and constraints.
- Ensure the IMT effectively uses the operational planning process.

Organization and Coordination

- Determine and establish the level of incident response organization needed.
- Monitor operations and the effectiveness of the incident organization.
- Coordinate Command and General Staff activities.
- Approve and implement the Incident Action Plan (IAP).

Resource Management and Communication

- Approve or delegate requests for additional resources or the release of resources.
- Approve the use of trainees, volunteers, and auxiliary personnel.
- Authorize the release of information to the news media.

Demobilization and After-Action Reporting

- Order the demobilization of the incident when appropriate.
- Ensure that an effective transition, Transfer of Command, and incident closeout occur.
- Ensure that incident After-Action Reports are complete.

Day-in-the-Life

The table below illustrates a typical sequence of activities an IC may follow during the initial phase of an incident response.

Table 1: Incident Commander Day-in-the-Life

Step	Task	Task Details
1.	Incident Check-In	Complete the Incident Check-In List (ICS Form 211) or the check-in process used by the incident or event.
2.	Initial Situational Awareness	Meet with Command and General Staff to develop a common operating picture and identify key focus areas.
3.	Agency Administrator Briefing	Receive strategic direction, leader's intent, priorities, limitations, and constraints from the Agency Administrator.
4.	Incident Size-up	Assess the incident's size, complexity, resource gaps, emerging risks, and interagency coordination needs.
5.	Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting	Lead the meeting to provide incident objectives and strategic direction. Align the IMT on priorities.
6.	Between Tactics and Planning Meetings	Interact with staff to reinforce alignment on priorities, address coordination issues, and monitor dynamics.
7.	Planning Meeting	Review the proposed IAP, provide final approval, and ensure the plan aligns with incident objectives.

Step	Task	Task Details
8.	Operational Period Briefing	Provide an opening or closing statement to reiterate the leader's intent and demonstrate command presence. Ensure access and support for tactical resources.
9.	Monitor Operations	Oversee field activities and IMT functions, address challenges, and adjust strategies as needed.

Leadership, Management, and Supervision

The IC is responsible for leading, managing, and supervising the IMT and incident personnel. These responsibilities are related, but each has a distinct purpose. As incidents grow in complexity, the IC should avoid becoming consumed by tactical details. The IC's primary responsibility is to maintain a strategic perspective, establish priorities and objectives, anticipate future challenges, and ensure the IMT remains focused on achieving incident objectives.

Comparing Leadership, Management, and Supervision

Table 2: Differences Between Leadership, Management, and Supervision

Aspect	Leadership	Management	Supervision
Definition	Influencing and enabling others for organizational success.	Organizing and directing groups to achieve goals.	Overseeing and directing activities to ensure compliance.
Focus	Guiding teams, inspiring action, and fostering collaboration.	Organizing resources, establishing priorities, and coordinating.	Monitoring performance and behavior, providing feedback, and addressing issues.
Goal	Achieving organizational success.	Attaining goals and objectives.	Ensuring compliance with standards and procedures.
Styles	Situational, transactional, and participative.	Directive, laissez-faire, and transactional.	N/A

Aspect	Leadership	Management	Supervision
Approach	Empowering, motivating, and inspiring.	Providing guidance, delegating tasks, and ensuring efficiency.	Observing, guiding, coaching, and addressing performance.
Role	Influencer, mentor, and facilitator.	Director, organizer, and coordinator.	Supervisor, overseer, and enforcer.
Responsibility	Setting the vision (leader's intent), building relationships and team culture, and fostering teamwork.	Planning (managing time, process, and quality), organizing, controlling, and directing.	Monitoring, evaluating, and intervening.

Refer to the ICS Training Reference Guide for additional information on the qualities of an effective leader.

Command Presence

Command presence refers to the demeanor, attitude, conduct, and leadership attributes that instill confidence, respect, and trust among team members, stakeholders, and the public. Effective command presence conveys authority, decisiveness, professionalism, and calmness during incident management activities. These attributes include the following:

- **Competence:** Displaying a thorough understanding and proficiency in the technical and operational aspects of incident management.
- **Confidence:** Demonstrating self-assurance and conviction in decisions and actions.
- **Assertiveness:** Effectively conveying directives and expectations with clarity.
- **Calmness under pressure:** Maintaining composure and mental clarity in high-stress situations.
- **Professionalism:** Upholding high standards of conduct and communication.
- **Visibility and accessibility:** Being visible, engaged, and responsive to personnel and stakeholders.
- **Adaptability:** Adjusting leadership approach based on changing circumstances.

Throughout the incident, the IC should treat others with respect and conduct themselves professionally. Considering how they would expect to be treated if an IMT responded to their own community can help build positive relationships and support effective incident management.

New Member Orientation Procedures

A leader is responsible for properly orienting the team. The following procedures support an effective onboarding experience:

Welcome

A genuine welcome to the team is the first and most important event that occurs between the team and the new member. At this time, the new member should receive team identification items such as hats, name tags, and shirts. This is one way to promote team identity.

Team Roster (Composition)

NIMS defines an IMT as “a rostered group of ICS-qualified personnel consisting of an Incident Commander, Command and General Staff, and personnel assigned to other key ICS positions.”

The National Resource Hub includes a defined composition and capabilities for typed IMTs. Depending on the agency and location, teams may also be referred to as “long teams,” “short teams,” and “interagency teams.” All teams will normally include an IC, General Staff, and at least part of the Command Staff.

The following differences contribute to variations within teams:

- Unit leaders in each team
- Agencies to which team members belong
- Trainees deployed with each team when on assignment

The IC should prepare a team roster that includes each member's name, position, and phone number for their home agency unit.

Written Operating Procedures

To set clear expectations for team members, an IC should have basic pre-established procedures and guidelines. The IC may need to update or modify these based on the incident or the Agency Administrator's direction. The IC shares the procedures and guidelines with all members of the Command and General Staff.

The ICS Training Reference Guide contains a sample Standard Operating Guide and Incident Commander expectations as a part of the “Tarp” IMT Appendix.

Written operating procedures should include the following:

- Rules of conduct and necessary items to bring on a team deployment.
- Expected get-away times (estimated time required for personnel, equipment, or resources to leave a particular location or situation safely and efficiently).
- Specific responsibilities of individual team members upon activation.
- Position-specific expectations.
- Primary responsibilities of each position (according to the IC).
- Required written summary reports by position.
- Schedules for regular team meetings, Planning Meetings, and briefings that last no longer than 30 minutes. The schedule will vary for each incident depending on the operational period or the Planning Section Chief's recommendations.
- Performance ratings and guidelines for which positions will be rated.

Pre-Incident Communications/Networking

One advantage of the IMT is that pre-incident communications and networking reduce the time spent “figuring out how to work together.” These opportunities include:

- Interagency conferences
- Annual or more frequent team meetings
- Conference calls
- Email communications
- Training and exercises
- Deployments for planned events

Continuing Personal Development

Provide new members with personal development opportunities, such as:

- On-the-job training opportunities (such as a Facilities Unit Leader practicing to be a Logistics Section Chief).
- Advanced training at the next organizational level (such as a Situation Unit Leader taking Planning Section Chief training).
- Depth and breadth of training (such as team-building training courses).
- Total team training exercises (such as full-scale disaster simulations).
- Position update training (such as Finance/Administration Section Chiefs learning new procurement procedures).

- Cross-training to increase the team's depth of knowledge to meet a variety of situations (such as a Situation Unit Leader learning to be a Facilities Unit Leader).
- The team's or jurisdiction's qualifications system (such as completing the PTB and progressing through the system).
- Post-incident critiques of the team.

Professionalism

Meeting expectations requires professionalism, team buy-in, and clear communication.

Enhancing professionalism involves the following:

- Team members knowing their jobs, roles within the team, and required interactions.
- Team members being easily identifiable; members can do this by using clothing and name tags.
- Team punctuality.
- Team members being approachable and open to suggestions from team members and non-team members.
- Having IAPs available to all who need them.
- Timely and meaningful interactions with pertinent jurisdiction(s).
- Organized and completed paperwork.
- Adequate use of maps and other visual displays at the ICP, incident base, camps, and helibases.

Positive and Productive Workplace

Fostering a positive and productive workplace requires creating an environment where everyone feels respected and empowered to contribute. To support this environment, the IC should:

- Value different perspectives and ensure all voices are heard and respected.
- Actively endorse, support, and promote personnel and human resources policies to reinforce a culture of professionalism and accountability.
- Clearly communicate program objectives and activities to subordinate personnel, ensuring everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.
- Provide equal opportunities for growth and development, encouraging team members to build their skills and advance in their careers.
- Lead by example with integrity, professionalism, and empathy to inspire trust and commitment from the team.
- Recognize and celebrate achievements and contributions to boost morale and foster a culture of appreciation.
- Address and correct inappropriate actions or behaviors promptly to uphold a respectful workplace environment.

- Manage conflicts constructively by encouraging open communication, identifying underlying issues, and collaborating on effective resolutions.
- Document performance or conduct concerns and coordinate appropriate corrective actions through agency policies and established supervisory channels.

Relationships and Expectations: Command and General Staff

The IC has been assigned overall authority and responsibility for managing the incident response through a delegation of authority/letter of expectation. The IC provides strategic direction, makes pivotal decisions, and ensures the attainment of incident objectives. Members of the Command and General Staff report directly to the IC and support incident management by providing leadership, operational expertise, and functional oversight to accomplish incident objectives. Therefore, it is vital for an IC to establish an effective working relationship with the Command and General Staff.

General Team Dynamics: Building a Team Culture

The IC cultivates a collaborative team environment within the Command and General Staff by fostering open communication, trust, and mutual respect. A cohesive team culture enhances coordination and decision making during the incident.

Setting Team Expectations

The IC sets clear directives for Command and General Staff, outlining their respective roles, responsibilities, and objectives. This helps ensure personnel understand their responsibilities and contribute effectively to the incident response.

The IC's expectations of Command and General Staff should include the following:

- Attending all meetings and briefings, arriving on time and fully prepared.
- Resolving all disputes and misunderstandings regarding the proposed plan *prior* to the Planning Meeting. In other words, all IMT members should be able to support the plan as proposed by the Operations Section at the Planning Meeting.
- Maintaining a reasonable span of control.
- Managing their section or function safely and effectively.
- Utilizing Essential Elements of Information (EEI) from key information requirements for situational awareness and informed decision making.
- Regularly communicating internally (in addition to formal meetings and briefings) to maintain situational awareness, a common operating picture, and effective collaboration.

- Maintaining the planning process and a positive demeanor regardless of incident conditions. This reinforces confidence that the IMT remains organized, coordinated, and capable of overcoming adversity.
- Promoting NIMS and ICS principles and helping others understand how to apply them.
- Modeling professionalism and taking appropriate corrective action when personnel fail to meet expectations.
- Maintaining personal readiness by obtaining adequate rest and nourishment.
- Avoiding setbacks or failures to undermine morale. Team members did not cause the incident; they are working with others to bring order from chaos, and that can take time.
- Taking care of each other and watching for signs of stress or unusual fatigue in team members. Providing support to team members when needed.

When the Command and General Staff fail to meet the IC's expectations, it can lead to inefficiencies, miscommunication, and compromised incident management.

Deputy Incident Commander

A Deputy Incident Commander is a fully qualified individual who can be delegated authority to manage aspects of the incident in the IC's absence. Because the IC cannot personally manage every aspect of a complex incident, additional leadership support may be necessary. A Deputy IC expands the IC's ability to oversee incident operations and organizational activities. For example, a Deputy IC may manage day-to-day internal team activities while the IC focuses on external coordination with Agency Administrators, stakeholders, and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Depending on the incident's size, complexity, or operational tempo, the IC may require multiple deputies to manage internal and external responsibilities effectively. Learn more about EOCs on page 31.

Some of the ways a Deputy Incident Commander can support the IC include:

- Handling personnel and administrative issues.
- Coordinating long-term strategic planning.
- Leading public meetings.
- Managing Incidents Within an Incident (IWI).
- Relieving the IC for rest periods.

Safety Officer

The Safety Officer (SOFR) advises the IC on safety matters and ensures the IMT adheres to safety protocols. They are the IC's safety and risk management subject matter expert and the eyes and ears for safety in the field. The SOFR should be involved in discussions involving operational risk, responder safety, or significant changes to incident strategy and tactics. The SOFR is responsible for monitoring activities around the ICP, incident base, and camps. They work closely with the Medical Unit and Compensation Unit to prevent and investigate injuries, accidents, and illnesses.

The IC's Expectations of the SOFR

- Be fully engaged in the planning process and provide appropriate and timely feedback.
- Identify, instruct, and mitigate all hazards on the incident.
- Keep the IC informed on trends/causes of accidents and illnesses.
- Promote an attitude of 100% compliance with safety rules throughout the entire organization.
- Provide a relevant and effective safety message in each IAP.

The SOFR's Expectations of the IC

- Emphasize safety in all communications and actions.
- Support recommendations for changes in tactics for safety reasons.

Safety Officer Considerations

- **Retain the Safety Function**
The IC should transition the safety function to a qualified SOFR as early as practical. Their inability to see all aspects of a situation simultaneously limits their capacity to command an incident effectively while also handling safety duties. Designate a SOFR early in the incident.
- **Consider Risks**
The SOFR should consider risks associated with all disciplines and tactical operations during an incident. Most SOFRs have a single-discipline (and even a single-scenario) focus. Keep in mind that staffing should be based on staff expertise, geography, incident complexity, and incident duration.
- **Staff Assistant Safety Officers**
Safety Officers should staff an adequate number of Assistant Safety Officers.

- **Qualifications Matter**
SOFRs should be wary of relying on non-responder assets to help. All the IC's safety personnel should work for the IC and their SOFR. The IC is responsible for the qualifications and credentials of the SOFR and Assistant SOFRs.
- **Safety Officers Have Other Responsibilities**
SOFRs are responsible for operational safety, facilities, driver safety, heavy equipment, and food safety. The IC should also address the importance of safety through its intent, priorities, objectives, EEI, and actions.

Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer (PIO) and Safety Officer (SOFR) are typically the first Command Staff positions activated. They play critical roles in providing public instructions, managing incident responses, and easing communication burdens for the team. The PIO monitors media trends, addresses public misinformation, and supports responder morale and understanding of incident activities.

The IC's Expectations of the PIO

- Understand IC intent, priorities, objectives, and EEI and align public information efforts to support them.
- Keep incident personnel informed of major developments, both on and off the incident.
- Coordinate with the Liaison Officer (LOFR) in relations with stakeholders.
- Identify and keep the IC informed of emerging issues concerning the incident in political and public arenas.
- Coordinate and represent the IC during off-site public information activities, such as those conducted through the Joint Information Center (JIC) or other agency information outlets.
- Promote a positive impression in all information and interviews about the incident among any incident personnel who may encounter the public or media.
- Ensure that the IC is appropriately prepared when going in front of the camera.

The PIO's Expectations of the IC

- Clearly define information requirements through EEI.
- Approve press releases promptly.
- Cooperate with media requests.
- Cooperate with public information meetings.
- Provide direction on media expectations.

Public Information Officer Considerations

- **Maintain Oversight of Public Information Activities**

The PIO is the best conduit of information to the public. Have confidence in the PIO, but approve and monitor all press releases.

- **Seek Those with Experience in Emergency Environments and Media**

Assign PIOs familiar with both working in an emergency management environment and dealing with the media. Someone who can adequately interpret the agency's political process may not be the best at explaining emergency tactical operations to the public.

On the other hand, tactically oriented personnel sometimes lack the knowledge and skills to effectively deal with the media. The PIO will need to handle both internal communications, such as responder morale and information needs, and external communications.

- **Fully Staff the Function**

Understaffing is also a common problem for the public information function. Staff enough Assistant PIOs to handle the scope of the incident. Consider the PIO's input regarding media and public perceptions. Be mindful of the importance of the public information function in monitoring perceptions of the media and the public.

- **Retain Control of Their Time and Priorities**

As a member of the Command Staff, the PIO reports directly to the IC while coordinating public information activities with Agency Representatives, partner organizations, and other public information personnel, including those operating within a JIC. The IC should ensure the PIO understands incident priorities and expectations.

The PIO should promptly share information critical to incident management, including emerging public concerns, stakeholder issues, and agency sensitivities that may affect incident operations or decision making.

Liaison Officer

The Liaison Officer (LOFR) is the main link between the IMT and external agencies, organizations, and stakeholders. The LOFR fosters communication and collaboration. They handle most interactions with Agency Representatives to assess resource capabilities and provide updates, allowing the IC to focus on other tasks.

The IC's Expectations of the LOFR

- Address cooperating agency and stakeholder concerns in a professional and constructive manner.
- Track down, identify, and coordinate with all involved agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- Promote a positive and professional impression of the incident to agencies and stakeholders.
- Exercise effective leadership and coordination of the Agency Representatives.
- Coordinate with the PIO regarding stakeholder interactions and VIP visits.
- Keep other IMT members constantly aware of issues with agencies (cooperating and assisting).

The LOFR's Expectations of the IC

- Provide advice on hazards and issues affecting cooperating and assisting agencies and organizations.
- Provide input on the “safety readiness” of cooperating and assisting agencies and organizations.

Liaison Officer Considerations

- **Establish Tactical Coordination**
Do not try to maintain tactical coordination through the LOFR. Instead, establish tactical coordination at the Operations level through resources and at the Command level through Unified Command.
- **The LOFR Provides Agency Support**
The LOFR can be helpful when dealing with problems with other agencies (e.g., coordination, communication, deconfliction, and available resources).
- **Liaise With Non-Tactical Resources**
Be sure to liaise with non-tactical resources (cooperating agencies) such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and public utilities.

- **Maintain IC-Level Stakeholder Engagement**

Staffing a LOFR does not absolve the IC of the need to engage with stakeholders and other agencies; in some cases, it is best to have the IC as the direct point of contact. Do not underestimate the value of personally contacting key public and elected officials, especially when sharing bad news or if Command is not meeting the incident objectives as fast as they would like.

- **Coordinate Between the LOFR and PIO**

Ensure coordination between the LOFR and PIO in dealing with stakeholders and VIP visits.

Operations Section Chief

Although the IC may initially become involved in incident tactics, once an Operations Section Chief (OSC) is assigned, the IC's role shifts to establishing priorities, incident objectives, limitations and constraints, and EEIs. The OSC then develops the strategies and tactics needed to achieve the IC's objectives.

The IC or Unified Command may set limits or constraints on the type of strategies based on:

- Delegation of authority
- Incident factors such as political pressure, environmental regulations, economic impact, resource availability, and cost
- Restrictions on tactical activities, such as budget, safety, environmental, and political constraints

The OSC advises the IC on the tactical feasibility of incident objectives and operational priorities. The OSC also monitors resources to ensure they comply with restrictions (e.g., law enforcement investigations, body recovery, and equipment expenses) for tactical activities. They also prioritize and maximize the use of available resources.

The IC's Expectations of the OSC

- Recommend strategies to reach objectives.
- Provide alternative strategies and prepare Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency (PACE) plans.
- Keep the IC and other Command and General Staff members informed of planned tactics to ensure timely input and support from the entire IMT.
- Order resources within fiscal, environmental, and other constraints.
- Report unusual events and activities and provide regular updates on significant developments.
- Ensure all known safety procedures are incorporated into tactical planning and operational activities.
- Maintain effective communication with cooperating agencies and ensure their input is solicited, considered, and appropriately incorporated.

The OSC's Expectations of the IC

- Provide clear (SMART) objectives.
- Point out any constraints on strategy and tactics. These may include environmental, political, and financial.
- Advocate for operational plans and resources when briefing Area Command or Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Groups. Refer to page 27 and 31 to learn more about Area Command or MAC Groups.

Operations Section Chief Considerations

- **Correct Amount of Oversight**
Two common issues arise between Command and Operations. Find the balance. This will become easier as the IC builds a relationship with the OSC:
 1. Too much oversight (e.g., getting too involved in tactics).
 2. Not enough oversight (e.g., allowing Operations to manage independently).
- **Single-Discipline Focus in a Multidisciplinary Operation**
Avoid letting Operations focus on a single discipline in a multidisciplinary operation. Typically, an OSC has a strong tactical background in one discipline and can feel out of their depth managing resources from other disciplines. Therefore, the OSC may spend too much time on areas of comfort and not enough on areas where they lack expertise. Discuss with the OSC to determine if adding deputies or technical specialists could be beneficial.

- **General Staff Communication at the Tactics Meeting**

Ensure that Operations, Planning, and Logistics communicate at the Tactics Meeting. If communication issues exist, they will be evident at the first Planning Meeting. Indicators of this may be major conflicts in resource or situation status information or resource requests that have gone outside the formal ordering process.

- **Late Tactical Plans and Resource Assignments**

Monitor the OSC to ensure tactical plans and resource assignments are completed on schedule, enabling the Planning Section to produce the IAP for the next Operational Period Briefing.

The IC should monitor this process closely until they establish an effective routine to ensure their expectations are met or until they find an alternative solution, such as leveraging a Deputy IC or the Planning Section.

- **Resource Procurement**

The OSC will seek the IC's direction on the resource procurement process. The IC may consider either personally approving all requests for additional resources or delegating most resource approvals while approving only certain categories of resources.

Planning Section Chief

The Planning Section Chief (PSC) manages the collection, analysis, organization, and dissemination of incident information and facilitates the operational planning process. Through the planning process, the PSC helps the IMT transition from a reactive posture to a proactive, planned approach that keeps the organization ahead of the incident.

The IC should have a thorough understanding of the planning process and maintain a close working relationship with the PSC. The IC is responsible for ensuring Command and General Staff actively participate in the planning process and provide the information necessary to develop achievable objectives, strategies, and tactics. An effective planning process helps maintain situational awareness, anticipate future needs, and keep the IMT focused on upcoming operational periods. When the planning process falls behind, the incident can quickly become more difficult to manage, increasing the likelihood of missed opportunities, delayed decisions, and ineffective use of resources.

Resources Unit Leader

Under the guidance of the PSC, the Resources Unit Leader (RESL) manages resource tracking and allocation, providing vital support in maintaining accurate resource status updates and facilitating deployment. They play a crucial role in coordinating resource planning and deployment strategies.

Situation Unit Leader

With direction from the PSC, the Situation Unit Leader (SITL) collects and analyzes incident-related information, providing critical situational assessments and intelligence reports to support strategic planning. The SITL ensures the quick and accurate sharing of essential information to facilitate decision making.

The IC's Expectations of the PSC

- Provide effective leadership and organization for incident meetings and briefings.
- Ensure the organization follows the established planning process in a timely and accurate manner.
- Maintain a thorough overview of all incident activities to ensure complete information is provided for the planning process.

The PSC's Expectations of the IC

- Provide clear direction through intent, priorities, and incident objectives.
- Approve Planning Meeting schedules and operational periods.
- Provide deadlines for the IAP.
- Review and approve the IAP.

Planning Section Chief Considerations

- **Planning Process Pitfalls**
The most common pitfalls in the Planning Section are failing to adopt a formal Incident Action Planning Process and failing to write the IAP on time. Ensure the Operations and Planning Sections communicate early and often about incident potential and progress on the IAP.
- **Expectations for Usable Information**
Some ICs find it difficult to use Planning's information. Their analysis may not be timely or in a usable format. Clear discussion of the IC's informational needs, especially with the PSC and SITL, improves the identification and flow of required information. Defining information requirements through EEI further supports this effort.
- **Share Worst-Case Scenarios**
When specific worst-case scenarios are identified, they should guide focused research. If major shifts in strategy are anticipated, the PSC should be included in discussions with Operations before the Tactics Meeting to enable timely adjustments. Ensure contingency and long-term plans are established.

- **Planning P**

The Planning Section depends on the Operational Period Planning Cycle (Planning P) to stay on time and meet operational period milestones and deadlines. Command and General Staff members should adhere to the process, meeting schedules, and deliverables for the process and planning cycle to be successful.

- **Resource Tracking**

Effective incident management requires knowing what resources are assigned, where they are located, and their current status. Planning may need assistance getting the resource tracking process up and running. Providing additional support early in the incident can significantly improve accountability and resource tracking. Ensure the Resources Unit is effective so the IMT can track resources.

- **Reviewing the IAP**

The IC should ensure the IAP is prepared accurately and can be implemented by Operations. The IC should also confirm that the plan aligns with their established intent, priorities, and objectives. Maps and supporting information should meet incident or agency requirements. The IC is responsible for ensuring the plan is accurate before key members of the IMT approve and sign off on it. Sometimes, an incident can evolve between the time the IMT develops the IAP and the Operational Period Briefing. Pen-and-ink changes are acceptable but should be the exception, not the standard.

Logistics Section Chief

One hallmark of a successful IMT is an effective and proactive Logistics Section Chief (LSC). Logistical support is critical to sustaining incident operations and achieving incident objectives. By anticipating resource and support requirements and coordinating their acquisition before they become critical, the LSC helps ensure the IMT can maintain operational tempo and adapt to changing incident conditions. The OSC and LSC should maintain continuous communication regarding resource availability, ordering status, delivery timelines, and anticipated response times to ensure operational needs are met.

Failure of the Logistics Section and the Finance/Administration Section to follow the procurement process can cost time and money and lead to frustration.

Supply Unit Leader

Under the guidance of the LSC, the Supply Unit Leader (SPUL) procures and distributes essential resources, ensuring timely delivery to support response efforts. They coordinate with external suppliers and vendors to meet resource demands effectively.

The IC's Expectations of the LSC

- Manage the ordering process to ensure incident resource needs are met.
- Anticipate resource needs and maintain adequate supplies whenever possible.
- Coordinate with the supporting EOC to ensure effective and cordial relations.
- Work closely with Operations to ensure complete logistical support and coordination with tactical operations.
- Ensure proper support of incident personnel for food/nourishment/hydration, facilities, communications, medical, supplies, and fuel.
- Confirm the IC has the best available facilities, equipment, and resources to manage the incident.
- Complete logistical support actions in a timely manner.

The LSC's Expectations of the IC

- Provide priorities for ordering personnel, supplies, and equipment.
- Support Logistics Section activities and priorities.
- Keep Logistics informed of the anticipated direction and operational priorities of the incident.

Logistics Section Chief Considerations

- **Local Resource Integration**
If Operations begins to obtain local tactical resources, ensure those resources are integrated into incident check-in and other procedures. Also, review and reinforce the proper ordering process with the OSC.
- **Slow Responses**
If there is a slow response to resource requests or a delay in locating requested resources, investigate the cause and evaluate the impact on tactics.
- **Rapidly Expanding Incidents**
Sometimes, the Operations Section expands faster than the Logistics Section can provide support. Determine if this is happening, why it is happening, and how Logistics can catch up. The Incident Action Planning Process is a tool for preventing this, but it takes time to secure support resources during a rapidly expanding incident.
- **Planning Ahead**
Ensure Operations and other Command and General Staff plans in advance for resource requests.

- **Keeping Planning and Operations Updated**
Make sure Logistics keeps Planning and Operations up to date on the status of key resource orders and the progress of equipment repairs.
- **Undefined Relationships**
Failure to clearly define the relationship between dispatch and logistical functions will also cause problems, as the organization may duplicate orders and overload the Agency Ordering Point.
- **End-Runs**
The IC's major issue with Logistics will likely involve end-runs and a lack of advance planning for scarce resources. Keep in mind that other incidents may be competing for those same critical resources. Help to resolve problems between Logistics and the EOC or the Agency Ordering Point.

Finance/Administration Section Chief

The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for tracking costs, managing procurement and contracts, administering compensation and claims, and supporting investigations through financial and administrative documentation. As incidents increase in duration, complexity, or cost, the Finance/Administration Section becomes increasingly important to maintaining accountability, supporting decision making, and ensuring compliance with agency requirements.

The IC's Expectations of the Finance/Administration Section Chief (FSC)

- Advise and counsel all Command and General Staff on fiscal, contract, and other administrative matters.
- Be prepared to provide a cost analysis upon request of the IC or the responsible agency.
- Attend briefings and strategy sessions as necessary to provide fiscal input and guidance.
- Coordinate with all staff members and cooperating Agency Representatives.
- Maintain the knowledge and capability necessary to manage the Finance/Administration Section effectively.
- Coordinate with all responsible agencies to ensure their administrative requirements are met.

The FSC's Expectations of the IC

- Provide general guidance and support.
- Provide financial and procurement constraints.
- Provide feedback regarding performance and evaluations.
- Provide approval of excess duty time.

Finance/Administration Section Chief Considerations

- **Leverage Finance/Administration**
The Finance/Administration Section communicates with the IMT, particularly with Operations, Planning, and Logistics. Without the Finance/Administration Section, the IMT may commit itself to unnecessary or unwise expenditures. Waiting too long to activate the Finance/Administration Section may hamper the IC's ability to track incident costs and justify expenditures.
- **Contracts**
Failure to incorporate appropriate written contracts may cost thousands of dollars in arguments with contractors. While it may be tempting to use normal administrative staff and procedures, doing so may compromise on-scene incident management and overload administrative staff.
- **Remain at the Incident**
Close coordination is required between Logistics and Finance/Administration, so both should be located at or close to the incident scene. The IC will also need Finance/Administration to help with administration issues and questions, such as hazard pay and authority to approve expenditures.
- **Future Litigation**
Major emergencies will likely face litigation in the future. Failure to fully involve the Compensation and Claims Unit may jeopardize successful outcomes in future litigation against the organization. Among all incident personnel, those in the Finance/Administration Section are the least likely to have an emergency response background. Therefore, the IC may need to be particularly proactive to ensure their input is included in the incident management process. A good FSC can be the difference between a two-week assignment and months of investigations and audits.

Intelligence/Investigations Function

In NIMS, "intelligence" refers exclusively to threat-related information developed by law enforcement, medical surveillance, and other investigative organizations. The collection, analysis, and sharing of incident-related information are important activities for all incidents. Typically, staff in the Planning Section are responsible for gathering and analyzing

operational information and sharing situational awareness, and staff in the Operations Section are responsible for executing tactical activities.

However, some incidents involve intensive intelligence gathering and investigative activity and require the protection of specific incident information. For such incidents, the IC or Unified Command may opt to reconfigure Intelligence/Investigations responsibilities to meet the incident's needs. This may occur when the incident involves a criminal or terrorist act and/or other non-law-enforcement Intelligence/Investigations efforts, such as epidemiological investigations.

Intelligence/Investigations Considerations

The Intelligence/Investigations Function can be located in the Planning and Operations Sections, within the Command Staff, or established as a fifth General Staff position. The placement of Intelligence/Investigations staff depends on the specific needs and circumstances of the incident, such as gathering intelligence, investigating, assigning tasks, staying aware of the situation, and handling classified information. Each of these factors might require a different approach and reporting structure, depending on the IC's decision.

Determine who is authorized to receive classified or otherwise restricted information about the incident. Consider if certain parts of the IAP can be kept confidential and not disclosed to the public. Understand that some information may even be restricted within the IMT to only those members with a need to know. Assess whether the team has members capable of handling these tasks, or if there is a need to bring in technical specialists.

The Intelligence/Investigations Function may help coordinate access to restricted or classified information when required. Intelligence/Investigations may not be able to share certain information with the IC, but they can provide insight, especially into potential threats to the incident.

Intelligence/Investigations may be able to interface and represent the IC with some investigative entities that prefer not to integrate with the IMT, such as the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and the Medical Examiner (ME).



Refer to the NIMS Intelligence/Investigations Function Guidance and the NIMS Field Operations Guide to support effective incident management when intelligence and investigative activities are critical.

(https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_nims_intelligence-investigations-function-guidance-oct-2013.pdf)

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Branch

The ICT Branch is a specialized component of the Logistics Section within the ICS, designed to meet the growing demand for ICT capabilities during incidents. It supports the IC by managing communications, IT infrastructure, and cybersecurity. The ICT Branch may be led by an ICT Branch Director or fall under the direct supervision of the LSC, depending on incident complexity.

Key Responsibilities:

- Establishing and maintaining communications and IT systems.
- Ensuring the security and resilience of communications networks and information systems.
- Supporting other ICS functions with ICT resources and expertise.
- Adjusting to hazards to maintain continuity of communications and information flow.



For more information on the ICT Branch, refer to the *National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) Information and Communications Technology Functional Guidance, March 2023*.

(https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_ict-functional-guidance.pdf)

Relationships With Other Personnel

In addition to Command and General Staff, the IC works with other personnel who provide specialized support, advice, and coordination during an incident. Depending on incident needs, the IC may engage these individuals directly or through the appropriate Command or General Staff member. Establishing clear working relationships helps the IMT address personnel, legal, technical, labor, and coordination issues before they affect incident operations.

Human Resources Specialist

Human Resources Specialists support the IMT by addressing personnel issues that may otherwise fall to the IC, such as sexual harassment, unfair work practices, injury claims, performance concerns, accommodations, working conditions, and untrained personnel. These specialists help ensure compliance with personnel policies and support a positive, respectful work environment. The IC should remain informed of significant personnel issues and know how to reach the responsible agency if concerns require formal action.

Effective human resource management allows the IC and Agency Administrator to focus on incident management while ensuring personnel concerns are handled through appropriate channels. Human Resources Specialists can help identify inappropriate acts or conditions, refer issues to the correct staff, and support corrective action through established lines of authority, which may include the IC, Union Representatives, Equal Employment Opportunity Counselors, Employee Relations Specialists, or the responsible agency.

Legal and Technical Advisors

The IC may consult legal advisors to confirm that incident response actions comply with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and authorities. Legal advisors may represent an agency, jurisdiction, or responsible party, depending on the incident and whether that entity is part of Unified Command.

Legal advisors can provide guidance on liability, jurisdictional issues, regulatory compliance, agreements, claims, and documentation requirements. Their input helps the IC understand legal considerations and reduce risk while maintaining operational focus.

Technical advisors provide specialized expertise in areas such as hazardous materials, environmental impacts, infrastructure, public health, engineering, or other discipline-specific concerns. Their recommendations help the IC and IMT assess conditions, evaluate options, and make informed decisions about strategy, tactics, resource needs, and risk.

Legal and technical advisors should be integrated into the decision-making process when their expertise is needed. Their input supports effective planning and helps the IMT address incident challenges while remaining within applicable legal, policy, and technical constraints.

Union Representatives

Union representation during an incident is agency-specific and depends on applicable agreements. For example, the national agreement between the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service and its union requires notification when an incident reaches 500 personnel and may allow a Union Representative to be assigned to the incident.

Personnel assigned to an incident may also be represented by federal, state, local, or tribal unions. To identify whether on-incident union representation is needed, the FSC and/or LOFR should coordinate with Agency Representatives and review applicable union agreements, agency policies, and incident-specific requirements.

Early awareness of union requirements can reduce unnecessary complaints and help resolve concerns before they affect incident operations. The FSC should work with the LOFR and Agency Representatives to clarify issues such as pay, rest and recuperation, accommodations, lodging, and working conditions. The IC should ensure union-related information is shared with the appropriate IMT members.

Area Command

Area Command is an ICS structure used to oversee the management of multiple incidents handled by separate ICS organizations or a very large or complex incident involving multiple IMTs. The Agency Administrator may establish Area Command when incidents are geographically related, have similar resource demands, or require coordination across multiple IMTs. Unlike Incident Command, which manages incident operations directly, Area Command focuses on priorities, broad strategy, alignment with the Agency Administrator's direction and policy, and the allocation of scarce or critical resources among incidents.

Area Command does not take command of the incident(s) or manage tactical operations. Instead, it provides coordination and support to ICs, helps align incident objectives, supports efficient resource allocation, and ensures critical information is shared across incidents. When Area Command is established, ICs coordinate with and report to the Area Command Team for broader direction and prioritization.

Four Areas of Responsibility in Large Incident Management

The following table summarizes four areas of responsibility within incident command and coordination. Together, these areas illustrate how incident command, agency oversight, incident support, and public information functions interact within the NIMS framework.

Table 3: Functions and their Responsible Organization

Area of Responsibility	Purpose	Responsible Organization
Tactical Activities	Oversees overall incident management, sets objectives, and ensures a coordinated response. Applies resources to achieve defined incident objectives.	Incident Commander/Unified Command (see Chapter 2)
Policy Guidance and Senior-Level Decision - Making	Ensures the incident response aligns with agency policies and legal responsibilities. Provides senior-level decision making, policy guidance, and allocation of scarce resources.	Agency Administrator Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Group/Policy Group

Area of Responsibility	Purpose	Responsible Organization
Incident Support	Operational and strategic coordination, resource acquisition, information gathering, analysis, and sharing. Provides logistical and operational resources needed for incident response.	Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) Department Operations Centers (DOCs) Area Command
Outreach and Communication	Outreach and communication with the media and public to keep them informed about the incident.	Public Information Officers (PIOs) Joint Information System (JIS)

In NIMS, Command is performed by the IC at the incident. Coordination synchronizes response efforts across agencies and functions so personnel can collaborate effectively, share information, and allocate resources appropriately. Coordination occurs across NIMS components, including EOCs, MAC Groups, and the JIS.

Agency Administrator

As an incident grows in complexity, size, cost, or significance, the Agency Administrator role may shift to someone with greater authority or experience. In Unified Command, more than one Agency Administrator may be involved. The Agency Administrator is responsible for agency oversight of the incident and its outcomes. Although the Agency Administrator is accountable within their own organization, that supervisor does not directly supervise the IC unless designated through the incident's chain of authority.

The Agency Administrator is generally not at the incident and does not manage on-scene operations. They operate from a primary office of the jurisdiction or agency, a jurisdictional EOC, or a MAC Group, as either a functional Agency Representative or a representative of a political subdivision in a regional situation.

Common Agency Oversight Duties

When an IMT is requested from outside the home jurisdiction, the Agency Administrator requests the team and establishes the parameters for its work. These parameters may include priorities, policy decisions, direction, rules of engagement, and limitations documented in a delegation of authority, letter of expectation, or memorandum of understanding.

The IMT translates the Agency Administrator's direction into incident priorities, interim direction, incident objectives, limitations and constraints, decisions, and directives for managing the incident. If the IC is from the local agency or jurisdiction, authority may already exist by statute, policy, or assignment. If not, the Agency Administrator should provide the necessary authority through an appropriate delegation or authorization.

Although legal, policy, and regulatory requirements vary by agency and jurisdiction, Agency Administrators commonly perform the following duties:

- **Determine Complexity**
At the beginning of the incident, the IC may be asked to assist the Agency Administrator with determining the incident's complexity. Various tools are available to help the Agency Administrator determine the incident's complexity level.
- **Assign Qualified Personnel to the Incident**
Once they assess the incident's complexity, they will be able to "type" it. The agency should staff the incident with leadership and personnel who are trained, experienced, and qualified to manage an incident of the assessed type/ complexity.
- **Clarify Authority**
The Agency Administrator determines if the IC has the necessary authority to manage the incident. If not, the IC may need a delegation of authority or another type of authorization.
- **Provide Agency Administrator Direction**
The Agency Administrator presents their overall guidance and direction to the IC. They clarify agency policy, rules, and regulations as needed.
- **Brief the IC and IMT**
The IMT requires a comprehensive briefing to quickly gain control of an incident. The Agency Administrator should provide a formal briefing that includes all pertinent information known about the incident at the time of the briefing.
- **Assign an Area Commander (When Necessary)**
If there are multiple incidents or if the incident is so large and complex that more than one IMT is required, the Agency Administrator may elect to assign an Area Commander to supervise the ICs.

- **Supervise the Incident Commander or Area Commander**
The IC or Area Commander is accountable to the Agency Administrator for incident outcomes and operates within the authorities, policies, limitations, and constraints established by the Agency Administrator.
- **Assign Agency Personnel to Staff the EOC and Other Coordination Functions**
Have agency personnel staff the EOC, a JIC, and a MAC Group as needed to support the incident.
- **Monitor and Evaluate Incident Commander and IMT Performance**
As part of the supervisory relationship between the Agency Administrator and the IC, the Agency Administrator often conducts a performance evaluation of the IC and/or the entire IMT.
- **Conduct an Incident Situation Analysis (ISA)**
There are several versions of an ISA — a process and practice of gathering, analyzing, and sharing information about the current situation during an incident. Many other agencies have a similar process for ISA.

Some Agency Administrators are familiar with their incident management responsibilities, while others may have limited experience in the role. When needed, the IC should help the Agency Administrator understand the IMT's capabilities, the initial briefing process, and the decisions or direction needed to support effective incident management.

Lines of Authority

The lines of authority between the IC and the Agency Administrator include the following:

- Only one IC should be appointed unless the incident operates under Unified Command (UC).
- The IC is accountable to the Agency Administrator(s).
- The Agency Administrator is responsible for orienting, counseling, and instructing the IC on management objectives and expected accomplishments.
- If needed, the Agency Administrator issues a written delegation of authority to the IC.

The Agency Administrator representative is different from an Agency Representative (AREP). The IC/UC generally coordinates with the Agency Administrator representative, while the LOFR typically coordinates with AREPs.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The EOC is a location away from the incident where personnel from multiple agencies and organizations coordinate support for the IC and incident organization. EOC staff may consolidate and exchange information, coordinate resources, communicate with field personnel and other EOCs, and support public-facing operations such as shelters or points of distribution.

Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Group

A MAC Group, sometimes referred to as a Policy Group, provides off-site coordination and support for incidents. MAC Groups consist of representatives from organizations involved in incident management activities. The Agency Administrator may establish the MAC Group and participate directly or through a designee.

MAC Group membership should reflect the organizations that are directly affected by the incident or that have committed resources. Depending on the incident, membership may also include business organizations, voluntary organizations, or entities with specialized expertise or community knowledge.

MAC Groups provide policy guidance, support incident prioritization, and assist with allocating critical or scarce resources. They operate in an incident support role and do not replace the IC or the incident command structure. Instead, they help ensure the IC has the resources, information, and policy guidance necessary to manage the incident effectively.

Unlike an EOC, which generally focuses on information sharing and resource coordination, a MAC Group focuses on policy direction, incident prioritization, and the allocation of scarce resources across incidents or jurisdictions.

Stakeholders

A stakeholder is a person, group, or organization directly or indirectly affected by the incident or its outcomes. Stakeholders may include government agencies, private sector organizations, non-governmental organizations, individuals, and community groups.

The LOFR, in coordination with the IC, supports stakeholder engagement by:

- Providing regular, clear updates to build trust.
- Coordinating with stakeholders and incorporating their input into planning and response efforts, when appropriate.
- Working with stakeholders to support resource coordination and community recovery efforts.

- Supporting compliance with relevant regulations and documenting actions for accountability.
- Maintaining trust through effective communication that supports current operations and future preparedness.

Building a Successful Team

ICS-qualified personnel, including the IC, incident leadership, and individuals qualified for key ICS positions, form the IMT. The team's composition, or typing, is based on the qualifications of its members and helps determine the incidents, tasks, or functions the team is capable of managing. When assigned to manage an incident or support incident-related operations, the affected jurisdiction or organization typically delegates the necessary authority to the IMT.

Standing Team vs. Ad Hoc Team

A standing team consists of individuals who are officially rostered and identified as members of the IMT. These pre-identified members are expected to be available for deployment in the event of an incident. An ad hoc team consists of individuals who respond based on availability at the time of the incident. These personnel may not be members of the IC's standing team. The composition of an ad hoc team is determined by who is available, qualified, and able to respond immediately.

Short Team vs. Long Team

A short team is a smaller group of key personnel deployed to meet immediate incident needs. This approach is often used when a full team is unavailable or when incident complexity does not warrant one.

A long team, or a full Type 3 team, includes 12 to 15 members who cover the essential positions needed for comprehensive incident management. Whether a short or long team is deployed depends on incident complexity, staffing availability, and the needs of the jurisdiction or organization.

Interdependencies

Each Command and General Staff member often leads a functional group that operates as a team within the larger IMT. These internal teams have their own dynamics, priorities, and performance patterns. The IC also operates within broader coordination structures, such as an EOC or MAC Group. Because each team influences the others, the attitude, professionalism, and performance of one part of the organization can affect the entire incident management effort.

The IC should strive to shape the team's core values and culture by demonstrating a positive attitude, competence, leadership, and integrity. The IMT should maintain a professional environment focused on collaboration and problem-solving. Even during periods of uncertainty or high operational tempo, the IMT should remain composed, disciplined, and professional.

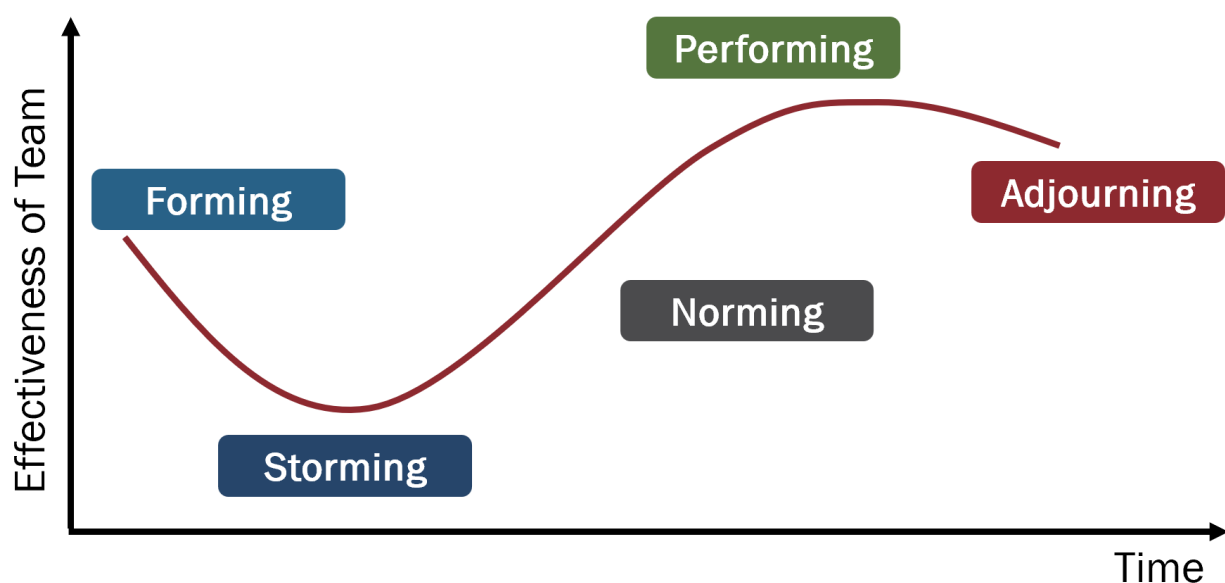
A strong team culture promotes unity and safety, reinforces team identity, supports a respectful work environment, and uses conflict management strategies to de-escalate problems before they affect performance.

Tuckman Model and Team Building

The Tuckman Model explains how teams form, develop, and change as they work together. It includes the following stages:

- **Forming** – Team members meet, roles are unclear, and relationships are just beginning to develop.
- **Storming** – Conflicts may arise as individuals assert themselves and challenge group norms.
- **Norming** – The team establishes norms, trust builds, and collaboration improves.
- **Performing** – The team operates efficiently toward common goals with strong cohesion and clear roles.
- **Adjourning** – The team disbands after achieving its objectives, reflecting on performance and outcomes.

Figure 1: Tuckman's Ladder for Team Development



The Tuckman Model provides a useful framework for understanding IMT dynamics under pressure. Because IMTs often form quickly, training, preparation, and clear leadership help teams move through the stages efficiently. Changes in staffing, incident complexity, or stress can cause setbacks, making adaptability and strong leadership critical to team performance

Indicators of a Successful Team

Successful incident management teams typically demonstrate the following characteristics:

- **Effective/Timely Briefings**
Briefings are held at scheduled times and when conditions change. They provide critical updates on incident status, operational priorities, safety concerns, and other issues needed to keep personnel and stakeholders informed and aligned.
- **Effective/Frequent Communication**
Effective communication includes regular updates, two-way feedback, and clear methods for elevating concerns. This helps information move between Command, operational elements, support functions, and external stakeholders.
- **Performance That Matches Expectations**
Team performance aligns with the IAP objectives, including meeting operational targets, adhering to timelines, and using resources efficiently.
- **Effective Integration of Command and General Staff as a Team**
The IMT demonstrates integration, communication, coordination, collaboration, and synchronization across all functional areas. Team members support and complement one another.
- **Team Alertness for Potential Risks/Issues**
The team proactively uses risk assessments and situational analyses to identify potential hazards, disruptions, or emerging issues. This allows the IMT to adjust plans before risks affect operations.
- **Well-Prepared IAPs**
The team develops detailed, actionable, and flexible IAPs that guide operations. These plans include clear objectives, assignments, resource allocations, safety information, and contingency measures tailored to evolving incident conditions.
- **Strong Safety Practices**
Strong safety practices help safeguard personnel and operations. These practices include regular safety briefings, appropriate use of personal protective equipment, and adherence to procedures that prevent accidents, injuries, and illnesses.
- **Continuous Long-Range Planning**
Long-range planning looks beyond the current operational period to anticipate longer-term impacts, recovery needs, and the transition toward normal operations. The team should look 72 to 120 hours ahead, assess the incident's likely trajectory, and anticipate future actions and resource needs.

- **Positive Team Morale**
Positive team morale is reinforced by recognizing achievements, maintaining reasonable workload balance, and supporting the physical and mental well-being of personnel. A motivated and cohesive team is more effective and resilient in the face of challenges.
- **Thorough Documentation**
Thorough documentation captures decisions, actions, and communications related to incident management. It supports accountability, lessons learned, legal protection, reimbursement, and post-incident reviews or audits.
- **Ensuring Operational Rhythm**
A consistent operational rhythm balances urgency with thoroughness, supports rest and recovery, aligns meetings and briefings with the Operational Period Planning Cycle, and helps maintain a sustainable pace throughout response and recovery operations.
- **Agency Satisfaction**
The IMT regularly communicates with the sponsoring agency and affected stakeholders to understand expectations, provide updates, solicit feedback, and adjust as needed to remain aligned with their priorities and requirements.

Communicating and Sharing Information

Effective communication ensures personnel understand the leader's intent, priorities, objectives, information requirements, and how to safely accomplish their assignments. The IC is responsible for ensuring accurate and timely communication throughout the incident organization. Communication includes both what is said and how it is conveyed. Messages should be clear, concise, accurate, and tailored to the audience and situation.

The IC sets the tone and expectations for the incident through communication.

The IC should communicate effectively with the following audiences:

- Agency Administrator and headquarters
- Command and General Staff and other responders
- Individuals assigned to the incident
- Assisting Agency Representatives
- Elected officials
- News media
- Affected public (community, one-on-one)

Incident Information Management

Data, information, and intelligence support effective, consistent, coordinated, and timely decision making. Refer to the ICS Training Reference Guide for definitions and additional information.

Sources of Incident Information

The IC should encourage IMT members to use available information sources to support sound decision making. Examples include:

- Community Lifelines
- Home and host agency coordination centers
- Outgoing IC and IMT
- Agency Administrator
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Weather Service sites
- Visual observations from flying or driving the incident; updates from field supervisors and observers
- Internet/social media
- Existing documentation, such as the Incident Status Summary (ICS Form 209) and the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215)

Essential Elements of Information (EEI)

The IC establishes and communicates EEI to identify the information needed to support incident management and anticipated decisions. EEI helps personnel understand what information should be collected, analyzed, and shared, and when that information should be elevated for action or awareness.

Incidents generate large volumes of information. Some information may be inaccurate, some may be accurate but not relevant, and some may be critical to incident operations. Clearly defined EEI helps personnel focus on information that supports situational awareness, planning, and decision making.

Well-defined EEI helps:

- Provide context and contribute to the common operating picture.
- Identify when a trigger/decision point is reached.
- Focus information collection and reporting efforts.
- Support analysis by distinguishing critical information from inaccurate, irrelevant, or low-value information.

Sharing Information

When sharing information with staff, the IC should provide as much relevant information as possible, especially when safety is involved. The IC should also clarify how information is to be handled, protected, or shared. In a multiagency incident, the IC should work with the Agency Administrator to establish incident-specific guidance for handling incident information.

Be mindful of radio communications, as it is never certain who may be listening on the other end.

Situation Reports

ICs are expected to remain engaged in the situation-reporting process and are responsible for ensuring reports are accurate, appropriate, and useful. The IC should also monitor off-incident information requests, which can create a significant workload for the IMT if not managed effectively. When needed, additional staff may be assigned to the Situation Unit to support reporting requirements.

The Agency Administrator, EOC, or other officials may have specific requests or demands regarding the use of different methods for situation reports, such as the Incident Status Summary (ICS Form 209), online or cloud-based information management systems, and specific electronic document formats.

Internal Communication

For large incidents, internal communication reaches beyond the personnel who attend formal meetings and briefings. The IMT should use appropriate methods to share information throughout the organization, including with unit leaders and responders who may not be present when key information is discussed.

Information Boards

Information boards are an effective way to communicate internally when placed in locations where personnel will see them. Consider posting the following information:

- The IAP
- Meeting and Briefing Schedules
- Newspapers
- Local newsprint with coverage of the incident
- Newspapers that have national and international interests
- National situation reports

- News releases that were released by the team
- The organizational chart
- Thank you letters
- Special messages
- Meal schedules and menus
- Transportation schedules

Within the ICP, the Situation Unit may also maintain a display with current maps, progress reports, projections, the IAP, and ICS Form 209. This provides a central location for detailed incident information.

Meetings and Briefings

Meetings support the exchange of information, discussion of issues, and development of alternatives. Briefings provide concise information, so personnel understand assignments, priorities, and critical issues before beginning work.

In addition to meetings and briefings within the Planning P, the IC should meet with section chiefs to maintain situational awareness and address coordination issues. The IC and Command and General Staff may also hold a team meeting each day or every other day to assess how the team is functioning and address sensitive internal issues, such as discipline or performance. After Command and General Staff members attend meetings or briefings, they should share relevant information with their sections or staff to maintain situational awareness and support a common operating picture

External Communication

Effective external communication keeps the public informed about developments affecting their community. The Agency Administrator establishes the priority for timely public information. Accurate, timely communication helps build trust and encourages the public to cooperate with protective actions and response efforts.

Protocols for communicating with the public include:

- Being specific, not general (areas affected, types of impact, and expected public safety response).
- Using plain language and avoiding jargon and acronyms.
- Being honest but remembering some things are confidential.
- Being positive when possible.
- Conveying the message and objectives in clear, simple language.
- Avoiding the phrase “no comment” because it creates doubt.

The Agency Administrator has a stake in the incident and should remain part of the communication loop. They may request approval or release of news releases.

Roles in External Communication

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The EOC may support external communications with the public, stakeholders, and other entities of interest. Close coordination with the EOC helps ensure public messages are accurate, appropriate, and consistent. The EOC may also disseminate alerts and public safety instructions, such as shelter-in-place or evacuation information, through public notification systems.

Dispatch Center

Dispatch centers primarily support operational communications and help ensure response personnel, including the IC, have the information needed to respond effectively.

MAC Groups

MAC Groups may provide policy direction, priorities, or strategic guidance that shape external communication by the IC, EOC, or public information function.

Joint Information Center (JIC)

The JIC serves as a centralized hub for public information during an incident. It helps ensure information released to the public and media is accurate, consistent, and coordinated among participating agencies and organizations.

Media

Refer to the ICS Training Reference Guide for general information on news media and social media. To support effective public information, the IC should:

- Carefully consider internal information before sharing it publicly, such as information on the deceased, contingency plans, and investigations.
- Schedule news conferences at times that support media deadlines and encourage cooperation.
- Direct the PIO to prepare background information. For example, the IC may ask the PIO to prepare background information on driver training, drug testing, and licensing requirements for agency drivers in anticipation of a possible vehicle accident.
- Anticipate likely media questions and address them proactively when appropriate.
- Identify a primary contact for the news media.
- Have the PIO create a social media action plan and message map to address key information elements.
- Use holding statements when appropriate. Holding statements are pre-prepared templates used in crisis communication to acknowledge the situation while the IMT collects information, verifies facts, and develops more complete messaging.

Refer to the Appendix for an example of a message map the IC can use to prepare for media interviews.

Community Meetings

The PIO typically leads community meetings, but the community will often want to hear directly from the IC or Deputy IC. The IC should:

- Prepare an agenda and focus on the public's needs.
- Leverage the PIO to develop talking points to help anticipate potential conflicts and sensitivities.
- Ensure the Agency Administrator is aware of the information being shared with the community.
- Use local experts to help explain the situation and response actions.
- Disseminate information before the community meeting. Information boards at central locations, such as post offices or general stores, can support this effort.
- Task the PIO with assessing audience concerns and anticipating difficult questions or reactions.
- Establish community information centers in affected communities early in the incident to support community relations.
- Use up-to-date maps as a focal point during community meetings.
- Exchange information with the community, including evacuation status, remaining residents, access issues, and emerging concerns.

Pause and Reflect



Let's take a moment to assess your current skills against the required competencies for the role.

Download and review the Incident Commander (Type 3) PTB in FEMA's Resource Typing Library Tool (<https://rtlt.preptoolkit.fema.gov/Public>)

Review the PTB and answer the following questions. Write down your responses in a notepad and be prepared to discuss your answers during the classroom or FLEX portion of the course.

1. List the competencies or tasks you want to develop during training. Be ready to share at least one of these areas with the class.

2. What characteristics do you currently possess that would help you to be an effective Incident Commander?

Chapter 2: Pre-Arrival and Initial Response

Once activated, the IC quickly transitions from preparation to action. Before assuming responsibility for an incident, the IC should develop situational awareness, understand Agency Administrator expectations, assess incident complexity, establish relationships with key personnel, and determine the organization needed to manage the incident effectively. Decisions made during the initial response phase often influence the success of the entire incident management effort.

This chapter focuses on the actions the IC takes before arrival and during the early stages of incident management to establish command, assess the situation, and position the IMT for success.

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Recall the IC's responsibilities for IMT administration and readiness.
- Identify strategies and sources of information that the IC may use to gain situational awareness prior to arrival, upon arrival at the incident, and during initial meetings and briefings.
- Identify the information gathered from the initial meetings, briefings, and documents.

Go-Kit

Many Type 3 incidents occur in remote or heavily impacted environments where internet access, printing, copying, and administrative support may be limited. To support immediate operations, the IC should understand the contents and capabilities of both individual go-kits and team caches. While a go-kit contains the items needed by an individual responder, a team cache provides shared resources such as communications equipment, medical supplies, tools, and personal protective equipment to sustain incident operations until additional support is available.

An IC go-kit should include, at a minimum:

- Team plans, such as an Incident Within an Incident Emergency Plan (IWI-EP), Severe Weather Plan, and Mobilization Plan
- Draft letter of expectation or delegation of authority
- Pre-established team procedures and guidelines
- Decision support tools, job aids, field operations guides, and the Incident Management Handbook
- Incident Briefing and Agency Administrator Briefing checklists
- Draft incident objectives
- Personal protective equipment and other agency-required items

Refer to the ICS Training Reference Guide for a general list of go-kit items.

Develop Situational Awareness

Situational awareness begins before arrival and continues throughout the incident. The IC gathers, verifies, and organizes information to understand what is happening, what is changing, what is at risk, and what decisions are needed. Early situational awareness helps the IC establish priorities, identify safety concerns, assess complexity, and provide clear direction to the IMT.

Notification and Mobilization

The IC should be familiar with emergency notification systems, alerting procedures, communication channels, and team mobilization processes. Upon activation, the IC should confirm the mission, authorized team configuration, reporting instructions, travel expectations, and anticipated duration of assignment.

During notification and mobilization, the IC should gather and share essential activation information, including:

- Situation overview and incident name or mission assignment.
- Reporting location, reporting time, and point of contact.
- Team type, authorized personnel strength, and any limits on staffing.
- Travel information, logistical support, and safety considerations.
- Estimated assignment duration and initial operational expectations.
- Known political, social, environmental, or community concerns.

The IC should communicate this information to the team as early as possible so personnel can mobilize safely, prepare appropriate equipment, and begin developing a shared understanding of the incident.

Pre-Arrival Information Gathering

Before arrival, the IC should use available sources to build an initial operating picture. Information may come from dispatch, the Agency Administrator, the initial IC, the EOC or DOC, Agency Representatives, maps, weather products, media reports, remote sensing, satellite imagery, unmanned aircraft systems, or other verified sources.

The IC should consider the affected area's geography, infrastructure, access routes, weather, hazards, Community Lifelines, cultural considerations, languages spoken, and socioeconomic conditions. These factors may influence operational priorities, public messaging, resource needs, and stakeholder engagement.

As information is gathered, the IC should identify EEI needed to support decision making. Clearly defining EEI focuses information collection, improves situational awareness, and helps the IMT develop achievable priorities, objectives, and strategies.

Arrival and Initial Assessment

Upon arrival, the IC should confirm check-in procedures, receive available briefings, and begin validating information gathered before arrival. Firsthand observations and discussions with personnel already on scene help build situational awareness and identify issues requiring immediate attention. If time and conditions allow, incoming Command and General Staff members should obtain the information listed below from their outgoing counterparts or the most knowledgeable available source.

Incident Commander

- Meet with the outgoing IC or responsible official.
- Obtain a briefing on incident status, current priorities, safety concerns, resource needs, and any immediate decisions requiring attention.

Operations

- Observe incident activities and tactical operations.
- Assess control measures, operational progress, resource assignments, and field safety concerns.

Planning

- Collect and review incident documentation.
- Gather maps, resource status information, incident history, current plans, weather information, and other relevant records.

Logistics

- Assess support requirements for ongoing operations.
- Identify incident facilities, communications capabilities, supply processes, transportation needs, and responder support requirements.

Public Information

- Coordinate with the local PIO, JIC, media contacts, and other information outlets.
- Review current messaging, public concerns, media activity, and potential misinformation issues.

Liaison

- Identify assisting and cooperating agencies and Agency Representatives.
- Assess stakeholder concerns, interagency coordination requirements, and unresolved coordination issues.

Check in Using the Incident Check-In List

The IC should ensure that incoming personnel, equipment, and supplies are checked in using the Incident Check-In List (ICS Form 211) or the incident's established check-in process. Accurate check-in supports accountability, resource tracking, safety, communications, and demobilization planning.

For teams transitioning onto an incident, the check-in process should be established or confirmed as soon as practical. If the incident organization is still forming, the IC should ensure that check-in procedures are initiated early and communicated clearly to incoming resources.

Evaluate the Incident

Every incident presents unique challenges and requirements. Before developing objectives, strategies, and tactics, the IC should understand the current situation. This begins with an initial size-up.

Initial Size-Up

Conduct an initial size-up to gain situational awareness and identify immediate priorities. When safe and appropriate, observe the incident area from the air or by traveling through affected areas to assess:

- Hazards and safety concerns
- Access and egress routes
- Incident scope and impacts
- Resource needs and limitations
- Potential containment or control opportunities
- Immediate response priorities

As information is gathered, consider the factors contributing to incident complexity:

- What conditions are increasing the complexity of the incident?
- How might these conditions affect response operations?
- What actions can be taken through organizational structure, information management, resource ordering, or safety measures to reduce complexity?

Incident Complexity

Incident complexity helps determine the organizational structure, staffing, resource requirements, and management processes needed to effectively manage the incident. The following process can be used to evaluate incident complexity and determine the level of incident management required.

Step 1: Understand Complexity Levels

Incidents are categorized into five complexity levels that reflect the increasing difficulty of managing the incident.

- Type 5: Least complex
- Type 4: Minor complexity
- Type 3: Moderate complexity
- Type 2: High complexity
- Type 1: Most complex

Step 2: Evaluate Incident Effect Indicators

Assess the incident effect indicators, including:

- Geographic Area Involved: extent of the affected area
- Threat to Life and Property: potential harm to individuals and infrastructure
- Values at Risk: cultural, economic, or environmental assets
- Weather Conditions: current and forecasted weather impacting the incident
- Potential for Escalation: the likelihood of the incident worsening

Step 3: Assess Incident Management Indicators

Evaluate factors that influence management requirements, including:

- Jurisdictional Boundaries: number and types of jurisdictions involved
- Organizational Complexity: structure and size of the response organization
- Political Sensitivity: public and political interest or scrutiny
- Resource Availability: access to necessary personnel and equipment
- Agency Policies: existing protocols that may affect the response

Step 4: Compare Indicators to Complexity Levels

Using the Incident Complexity Level Table in the *National Incident Management System Incident Complexity Guide*, compare identified indicators to the characteristics associated with each complexity level. Begin with Type 5 and progress upward until the incident characteristics align with a specific complexity level.

Step 5: Determine the Appropriate Response

Use the identified complexity level to determine the organizational structure, management processes, and resources needed for an effective and scalable response. Reassess incident complexity throughout the incident as conditions change.



For additional information on incident complexity, refer to the following resources:

- *National Incident Management System Incident Complexity Guide*: <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nims-incident-complexity-guide.pdf>
- *NWCG Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment, PMS 236*: <https://www.nwcg.gov/announcement/publications/updated-nwcg-wildland-fire-risk-and-complexity-assessment-pms-236>
- USCG Incident Complexity Analysis (ICS Form 239) located in the Appendix of this training guide.

Community Lifelines

The next step in evaluating the incident is to determine which Community Lifelines are affected and assess their current level of functionality. Prioritizing lifeline stabilization and restoration can help maximize community benefits and support incident objectives.

The Community Lifelines are:

- Safety and Security
- Food, Hydration, Shelter
- Health and Medical
- Energy
- Communications
- Transportation
- Hazardous Materials
- Water Systems

Use safety, status, and progress reports to enhance situational awareness, address specific incident needs, and improve resource allocation.

Agency Administrator Briefing

The Agency Administrator Briefing provides the IC with strategic direction, priorities, limitations, constraints, reporting requirements, and other considerations necessary to manage the incident. This briefing should occur before the IMT assumes command and should serve as the foundation for incident objectives, organization, and decision making.

During the briefing, the IC should clarify:

- Mission, assignment, or Statement of Work.
- Area of Responsibility.
- Agency priorities, leader's intent, limitations, and constraints.
- Delegation of authority or other applicable authority.

- Political, social, cultural, economic, environmental, or legal sensitivities.
- Resource ordering expectations, fiscal constraints, and cost reporting requirements.
- EOC, DOC, MAC Group, or other coordination structures supporting the incident.
- Reporting schedule, information requirements, and documentation expectations.

The IC should share relevant information from the briefing with Command and General Staff so the IMT can translate the Agency Administrator's direction into priorities, incident objectives, staffing decisions, and operational planning. Sensitive information should be shared only with personnel who have a need to know.

Refer to the Agency Administrator Briefing Checklist in the Appendix of this training guide for additional information.

Incident Briefing

The Incident Briefing provides current information about incident conditions, ongoing operations, resource status, safety concerns, and immediate priorities. The IC should use this briefing to validate pre-arrival information, identify urgent decisions, and determine whether interim direction is needed before the next planning cycle.

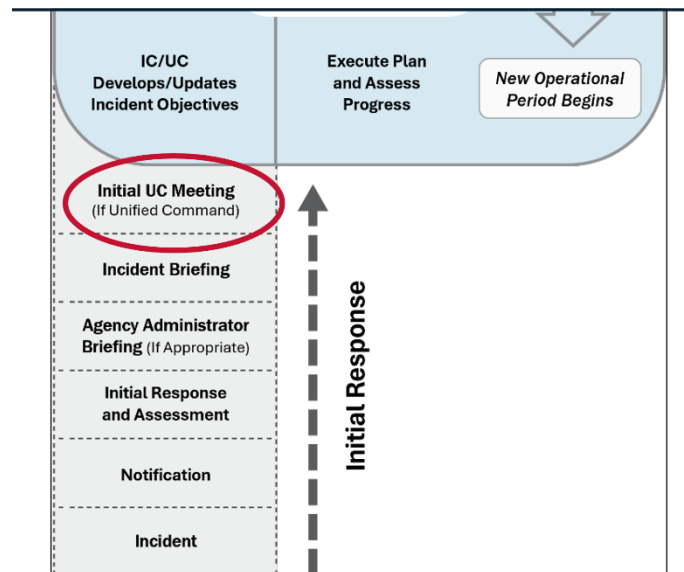
The briefing may include information from the initial IC, current Command and General Staff, dispatch, Agency Representatives, EOC or DOC staff, or other personnel with direct knowledge of the incident. The IC should confirm what is known, what is uncertain, what is changing, and what information is needed next.

Refer to the ICS Training Reference Guide for more information about the Incident Briefing.

Initial Unified Command (UC) Meeting

If the incident is managed under Unified Command, the Initial Unified Command Meeting provides participating agencies and jurisdictions with an opportunity to establish a shared command structure before the IMT moves further into the planning process. The meeting should occur after the Incident Briefing and before unified objectives are finalized.

Figure 2: Unified Command Meeting



The purpose of the Initial Unified Command Meeting is to:

- Confirm which agencies or jurisdictions are members of Unified Command.
- Clarify each member's authority, priorities, limitations, constraints, and decision-making role.
- Establish shared priorities and a common incident management approach.
- Resolve conflicting direction before it affects the IMT or field operations.
- Agree on the incident organization, including the Operations Section Chief and other key positions.
- Confirm information release procedures, stakeholder coordination expectations, and resource ordering processes.

Before the meeting, the IC or Unified Command should provide interim direction if serious safety concerns, resource issues, or operational deficiencies require immediate correction.



Refer to the *USCG Incident Management Handbook* for more information on the Initial Unified Command Meeting.

Unified Command

Unified Command is used when more than one agency or jurisdiction has authority or functional responsibility for managing an incident. In Unified Command, no single person serves as the sole IC. Each member of Unified Command shares command responsibility and participates in establishing incident priorities, objectives, strategies, and direction.

Unified Command is commonly appropriate when an incident:

- Crosses jurisdictional boundaries.
- Involves multiple agencies with legal or functional responsibilities.
- Requires coordination across local, state, tribal, territorial, federal, private sector, or non-governmental organizations.
- Requires integrated public messaging, resource coordination, or policy alignment.

Benefits

Unified Command offers several significant benefits, including the following:

- Facilitates a coordinated response by aligning strategies and tactics to minimize duplication of efforts and optimize resource allocation.
- Establishes unified objectives that bring together stakeholders to create a cohesive set of goals that reflect each agency's priorities and constraints.
- Enhances communication channels that reduce misunderstandings and strengthen interagency cooperation.
- Creates resource efficiency through the pooling of resources and expertise, ensuring that all incident needs are comprehensively met.
- Enhances public messaging by delivering consistent information, building community trust, and facilitating greater cooperation.

Qualifications

Participants in a Unified Command should meet the following qualifications:

- Have jurisdictional authority or legal responsibility: agencies or entities with statutory or legal obligations related to the incident.
- Be able to provide resources: organizations that can contribute personnel, equipment, or other resources necessary for the response.
- Have decision-making authority: representatives who can make decisions for their respective organizations or jurisdictions.

Successful Attributes

- **Shared Decision Making**
The members of the Unified Command make unified decisions. They assess the situation, discuss priorities, and agree on a unified incident response strategy.
- **Resource Coordination**
The members of the Unified Command coordinate resources from all participating agencies to ensure an effective response. The Unified Command allocates resources where they are most needed, optimizing their use to achieve common objectives.
- **Communication**
The UC establishes and facilitates communication channels among all participating agencies and organizations, ensuring that critical information is shared promptly and effectively. Members of the UC play a key role in coordinating with external stakeholders, providing updates, and addressing concerns to maintain situational awareness and public confidence in the incident response.
- **Role Clarity**
Each member of the Unified Command retains their authority and responsibilities within their jurisdictional boundaries. Each member of the Unified Command should understand their roles and responsibilities and promote accountability and effective coordination.
- **Adaptability**
Unified Command allows for adaptability in response to changing circumstances. The Unified Command collaborates to assess the situation continuously and adjust strategies and tactics as needed.

Considerations

- **Policies, Objectives, and Strategies**
Each member of the UC will have priorities, objectives, limitations, constraints, and direction from their respective agency/jurisdiction.
- **Organization**
In ICS, the organization consists of the various jurisdictional or agency on-scene senior representatives (agency members of the Unified Command) operating within a UC structure.
- **Resources**
Resources are the personnel and equipment supplied by the jurisdictions and agencies with functional or jurisdictional responsibility.

- **Operations**

With Unified Command, agencies have administrative and policy control of their resources. However, operationally, they respond to mission assignments under the coordination and direction of the OSC based on the requirements of the IAP.

Staff and Evaluate Incident Needs

Staffing decisions should be based on incident complexity, risk, operational tempo, span of control, and the Agency Administrator's direction. The IC should balance the need for an effective organization with cost containment, local capability, resource availability, and the need to avoid overbuilding.

When determining staffing levels, the IC should consider:

- Span of control and supervision requirements.
- Current and projected resource needs.
- Agency Administrator objectives, limitations, constraints, and reporting expectations.
- Jurisdictional capabilities and local resource availability.
- Environmental, legal, political, or policy considerations affect the response.
- Public information, liaison, and stakeholder engagement needs.
- Opportunities to use trainees without compromising safety or incident performance.
- Cost containment and the ability to demobilize resources when no longer needed.

The IC should evaluate whether the current organization can safely and effectively accomplish incident objectives. Staffing should be adjusted when incident complexity changes, when span of control is exceeded, when critical functions lack coverage, or when the current organization cannot keep pace with incident demands.

Technical Specialists and Advisors

Technical specialists and advisors provide expertise to help the IC and IMT understand specialized hazards, legal considerations, environmental impacts, infrastructure issues, public health concerns, and other incident-specific conditions. Their input can improve risk assessment, strategy development, resource ordering, public messaging, and operational decision making.

Technical specialists may be assigned within Operations, Planning, Logistics, or another appropriate section based on the nature of their work. When a specialist provides direct strategic advice to the IC or Unified Command, the position may be assigned to Command Staff as a Command Advisor.

Command Advisors

Command Advisors support the IC and Command Staff by providing an incident-wide perspective on specialized issues. They help the IC interpret technical information, understand consequences, and ensure response actions remain aligned with the Agency Administrator's direction, legal authorities, and incident objectives.

Legal Advisors

Legal advisors provide guidance on authorities, liability, jurisdiction, contracts, claims, interagency agreements, regulatory compliance, and documentation requirements. In Unified Command, a legal advisor may represent an agency, jurisdiction, or responsible party when appropriate. Legal input should inform decisions without replacing the IC's responsibility to maintain operational focus and incident command authority.

Environmental Advisors

Environmental advisors help the IC and IMT understand environmental impacts, permitting requirements, waste management considerations, wildlife protection issues, and applicable local, state, tribal, territorial, or federal regulations. Their expertise can help the IMT develop strategies that protect responders, the public, and the environment while supporting incident objectives.

Manage and Monitor Incident Progress

The IC and Agency Administrator work together to ensure the incident progresses effectively. The IC monitors progress toward incident objectives and evaluates whether the IMT is achieving the desired outcomes.

An effective initial complexity analysis identifies the factors driving incident complexity. As conditions change, the IC should reassess complexity to identify emerging challenges, evaluate progress, and determine whether adjustments to the organization, resources, or incident strategy are needed.

Analysis tools such as the *National Incident Management System Incident Complexity Guide*, *USCG Incident Complexity Analysis* (ICS Form 239), and *NWCG Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment* (PMS 236) can support Incident Situational Analysis (ISA) and help the IC assess progress toward meeting Agency Administrator expectations.

Situation Analysis Tools

The IC may use a variety of situation analysis tools to assess incident conditions, support decision making, and develop response strategies. The appropriate tool will vary based on the incident type, complexity, and agency requirements. Examples include:

- Action Memo – Documents and justifies proposed actions or decisions.
- FEMA Mission Assignment (MA) and Tasking – Directs federal resources to support state and local response efforts.
- Area Contingency Plan (ACP) or Sub-Area Contingency Plan – Provides response strategies for specific geographic areas, particularly for oil spills and hazardous substance releases.
- Fire Situation Analysis (FSA) – Evaluates wildfire conditions and supports strategy development.
- Wildland Fire Decision Support System – Supports strategic and tactical decision making for wildland fire incidents.
- All-Hazards Situation Analysis – Assesses a broad range of incidents to support coordinated multiagency response.

Pause and Reflect



Preparation and gathering the right information before and after arrival are crucial for setting yourself up for success. Reflect on and answer the following questions to share with the class.

1. Building on the go-kit items outlined earlier in this guide, what additional equipment or supplies would you bring as an IC and for the following types of incidents?

- A wind event, such as a tornado

- A train derailment that involves hazardous materials

- An explosion and subsequent fire during a county fair

2. What strategies and sources of information can the Incident Commander use to gain and maintain situational awareness prior to and upon arrival at an incident?

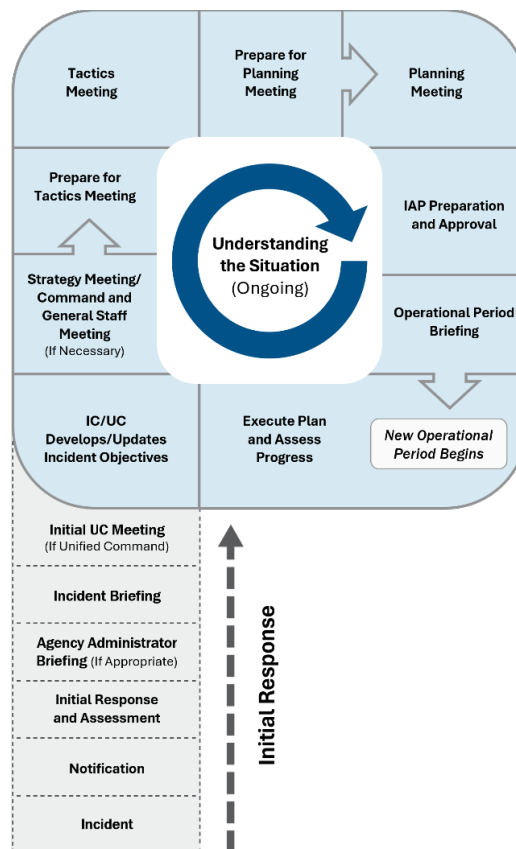
Chapter 3: Operational Period Planning Cycle

Once the initial assessment is complete, the IC uses the Operational Period Planning Cycle to establish objectives, communicate priorities, develop plans, allocate resources, and evaluate incident progress. The planning process provides a structured approach for managing ongoing operations, anticipating future needs, and adapting to changing incident conditions.

This chapter focuses on the IC's role in managing an incident through the planning process. By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Recall how to develop SMART objectives for effective incident management.
- Identify the IC's responsibilities for the various plans and meetings in which they participate.
- Identify the IC's routine administrative duties.
- Identify the financial management responsibilities of the IC and the role of the Finance/Administration Section.
- Identify the agreements the IC may encounter while managing incidents.
- Recall how the IC can identify and manage a special situation that occurs within an incident.

Figure 3: The Planning P



IC Products

The IC establishes products that communicate strategic direction, define priorities, and guide incident operations. These products provide the foundation for planning and help ensure the IMT remains focused on achieving incident objectives. The table below describes the primary products used by the IC to communicate direction and support incident management.

Table 4: Products and Their Purposes

Product	Purpose	How to Create	Wildfire Incident Example
Leader's Intent	Establishes the overarching vision and desired end state for the incident. Refer to the ICS Training Reference Guide for more information about the leader's intent.	Define success, prioritize goals (e.g., life safety, stabilization), and communicate values such as teamwork and professionalism.	<i>Safely evacuate affected populations while maintaining containment of the hazardous material.</i>
Incident Priorities	Identifies the primary principles guiding all actions (e.g., life safety, stabilization, property conservation).	Review the incident's scope and align priorities with the Agency Administrator's guidance and ICS principles.	<i>1. Protect life safety.</i> <i>2. Stabilize the wildfire.</i> <i>3. Protect critical infrastructure.</i>
Limitations/Constraints	Defines boundaries and non-negotiables for operations.	Specify resource limits, jurisdictional restrictions, safety-critical boundaries, and Agency Administrator constraints.	<i>Do not operate aerial resources after sunset due to safety concerns.</i>

Product	Purpose	How to Create	Wildfire Incident Example
Incident Objectives	Sets specific, actionable, and measurable goals to address priorities and achieve the leader's intent.	Use SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) and align with priorities and operational needs.	<i>Contain fire within the established perimeter by 1800 hours on [date].</i>
Command Emphasis	Highlights critical focus areas and risks necessary to achieve objectives.	Identify specific concerns (e.g., safety, resource coordination) and emphasize adherence to priorities and objectives.	<i>Ensure clear communication during team transitions to avoid operational gaps.</i>
Length of the Operational Period	The operational period is the time frame during which the IAP is executed. The length of the operational period is determined based on the complexity and dynamics of the incident. Typical operational periods range from 12 to 24 hours.	Set the appropriate length of the operational period to balance responsiveness with the need for thorough planning. Adjust the length of operational periods as the incident evolves. Obtain input from the Operations Section and Planning Section Chiefs when deciding on the operational period, as it will affect those sections significantly.	N/A

An operational period is not the same as a work shift. A 24-hour operational period may include both day and night operations, with personnel rotating to meet work/rest requirements while continuing to operate under the same objectives and IAP.

IC Develops/Updates Incident Objectives

Incident objectives describe the outcomes the IC intends to achieve. They provide direction to the IMT and serve as the foundation for strategies, tactics, and resource assignments. The IC may develop several types of objectives, including:

- **General Operational Objectives**
Broad objectives that guide overall incident management, such as ensuring responder safety, providing public information, protecting property and the environment, and maintaining effective communications.
- **SMART Operational Objectives**
Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound objectives that provide clear direction and allow progress to be evaluated during an operational period.
- **Management Objectives**
Objectives focused on administrative and support activities, such as resource management, cost control, documentation, stakeholder coordination, and interagency cooperation.

Some objectives may apply throughout the incident, while others may be specific to a particular operational period. Regardless of duration, objectives should be clearly communicated and understood by personnel responsible for implementing them.

The IC establishes and refines incident objectives throughout the incident. Objectives are typically developed or updated at the following points:

- **Immediately Following the Initial Response and Assessment**
Establish initial objectives to address immediate threats, stabilize the situation, and provide direction for incident operations.
- **During the Operational Period Planning Cycle**
Review and update objectives for the next operational period based on incident progress, changing conditions, resource availability, and Agency Administrator expectations. Incident objectives are documented on the Incident Objectives (ICS Form 202).
- **During Significant Incident Changes**
Adjust objectives as needed when incident conditions, priorities, risks, or stakeholder expectations change during an operational period.

The IC is responsible for establishing and updating incident objectives, while the Planning Section Chief assists in documenting, organizing, and communicating them throughout the planning process.

Refer to the Appendix of this training guide for a worksheet that provides the most common incident objectives and related strategies.

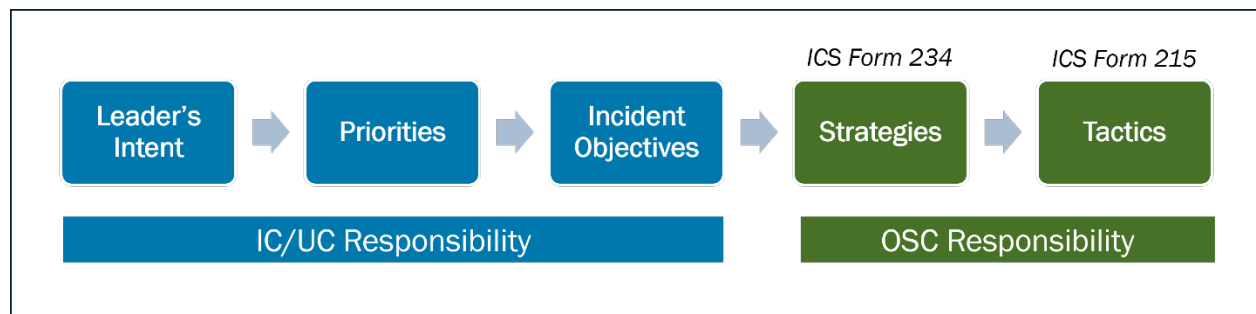
Tips for Developing Objectives

- Arrange objectives in a logical sequence that supports incident priorities and provides clear direction for planning and operations.
- Use existing objectives, templates, and lessons learned from previous incidents when appropriate. Leveraging proven approaches can improve consistency and reduce planning time.
- Collaborate with the Planning Section Chief (PSC) to develop, refine, and document objectives. The PSC helps ensure objectives are clearly communicated, appropriately documented, and incorporated into the planning process.

How IC Products Affect Operations

The IC establishes the strategic direction for the incident through the leader's intent, priorities, and incident objectives. Using this direction, the Operations Section Chief (OSC) develops strategies and tactics to achieve the desired outcomes. This process may involve input from technical specialists, Command and General Staff members, and field supervisors. The following illustrates how the IC's strategic direction is translated into operational actions through the progression from Leader's Intent to Priorities, Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics (POST).

Figure 4: From Leader's Intent to Priorities, Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics



- **Leader's Intent:** A clear and concise statement that communicates the desired outcome of the incident and provides guidance for decision making.

- **Priorities:** Broad areas of emphasis established by the IC to guide incident management and resource allocation.
- **Incident Objectives:** Specific outcomes established by the IC that provide direction for planning and operations.
- **Strategies:** The overall approaches developed by the OSC to achieve the incident objectives. Alternative strategies may be evaluated before selecting the most appropriate approach.
- **Tactics:** Specific actions and assignments developed to implement the selected strategies and accomplish the incident objectives. Tactical resource requirements are identified based on these actions.

Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting

The Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting provides the IC with an opportunity to establish or refine strategic direction for the incident and communicate planning guidance to the Command and General Staff for the next operational period.

The initial meeting typically includes more extensive discussion of the leader's intent, priorities, objectives, organizational expectations, and team operating procedures. As the incident progresses, subsequent meetings focus on significant changes in incident conditions, priorities, objectives, and resource needs.

During the meeting, the IC will typically:

- Lead the meeting, establish the agenda, and maintain focus on key issues.
- Provide leadership and direction to the Command and General Staff.
- Review the current status of the incident and significant developments.
- Communicate or confirm the leader's intent, priorities, and incident objectives.
- Address issues, concerns, and emerging challenges.
- Ensure planning efforts remain aligned with incident objectives, Agency Administrator expectations, and applicable policies.
- Provide guidance needed to support the development of the IAP.

The Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting does not necessarily occur for every operational period. It is held as needed to discuss incident objectives.

Tactics Meeting

The Tactics Meeting is used to develop and evaluate strategies and tactics that will achieve the incident objectives. The Operations Section Chief (OSC) typically leads the meeting with participation from Command and General Staff members and other personnel involved in planning the next operational period.

The IC does not normally attend the Tactics Meeting. During this time, the IC typically focuses on managing the ongoing incident, coordinating with stakeholders, and addressing emerging issues. The strategies and tactics developed during the meeting should support the incident objectives and priorities established for the operational period.

Managing the Ongoing Incident

While the Planning Section develops plans and the Operations Section executes tactics, the IC remains responsible for overall incident management. Throughout each operational period, the IC monitors incident progress, evaluates changing conditions, resolves emerging issues, and ensures operations remain aligned with incident objectives and Agency Administrator expectations.

Although the IC does not personally develop every incident-related plan, they are responsible for ensuring appropriate plans are developed, coordinated, approved when necessary, and integrated into the overall incident strategy. This includes contingency, long-range, transition, demobilization, and safety planning, as well as other plans needed to support incident objectives.

Common Plans and IC's Role

The table below identifies common incident-related plans, the primary lead responsible for each planning effort, and the IC's role in supporting and overseeing their development and implementation.

Table 5: Common Plans and IC's Role

Primary Position Responsible	Plan and IC's Role
Operations Section Chief	Contingency Planning: Ensure contingency plans are developed to address potential changes in incident conditions. Review trigger points, alternate courses of action, and resource requirements needed to support operational flexibility.

Primary Position Responsible	Plan and IC's Role
Entire IMT	Incident Within an Incident – Emergency Plan (IWI-EP): Ensure personnel understand the IWI-EP and their responsibilities should a secondary emergency occur during incident operations.
Planning Section Chief and Operations Section Chief	Long-Range Planning: Coordinate with the PSC and OSC to anticipate future operational needs, resource requirements, potential incident escalation, and transition considerations.
Planning Section Chief	Demobilization Plan: Ensure a Demobilization Plan is developed and updated as appropriate. Review demobilization priorities, release criteria, and resource accountability considerations.
Planning Section Chief	Transition Plan: Ensure transition planning supports continuity of operations, effective information transfer, and minimal disruption during changes in personnel, teams, or organizational structure.
Logistics Section Chief	Traffic/Transportation Management Plan: Ensure transportation and traffic management needs are addressed, including the movement of personnel, equipment, supplies, and supporting resources.
Safety Officer	Safety/Security and Risk Management Plans: Ensure hazards are identified, risks are assessed, and appropriate mitigation measures are incorporated into incident operations. Review significant safety and security concerns with the Safety Officer.
Liaison Officer	Cooperator/Stakeholder Management Plan: Ensure effective coordination and communication with cooperating agencies, assisting organizations, stakeholders, and other external partners.
Public Information Officer	Media Plan: Ensure public information and media engagement activities support incident objectives and provide accurate, timely, and coordinated messaging.

Existing Plans and Preparedness Documents

Incidents rarely occur without prior planning. Communities, agencies, and organizations often maintain emergency plans that identify authorities, responsibilities, resources, and procedures for responding to a variety of hazards and emergencies.

The IC should understand which plans exist and are applicable to the incident. Existing plans can also provide valuable information regarding resource availability, evacuation procedures, shelter operations, environmental protection measures, and recovery activities. The following are examples of plans the IC may encounter while managing an incident.

Table 6: Existing Plans and Preparedness Documents

Plan	Description
Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)	Establishes the overall framework for emergency management and describes the roles, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms of participating organizations.
Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)	Provides operational guidance for responding to emergencies and identifies how agencies and organizations coordinate response activities.
All-Hazard Comprehensive Preparedness Plan (ACP)	Describes preparedness measures for a range of hazards and supports coordinated planning, response, and recovery efforts.
Evacuation Plan (Evac)	Identifies evacuation procedures, routes, sheltering considerations, and provisions for populations with access and functional needs.
Shelter Plan	Identifies shelter locations, capacities, staffing requirements, and logistical support needed to accommodate displaced individuals.
Area Contingency Plan	Describes coordinated response strategies, resources, and responsibilities for oil spills and hazardous substance releases within a defined geographic area.

Plan	Description
Point of Distribution (POD) Plan	Provides procedures for establishing and operating distribution sites for essential commodities during emergencies.
Debris Management Plan	Establishes procedures for debris removal, collection, storage, reduction, and disposal following disasters.
Facility Response Plans	Facility-specific plans that identify procedures for responding to spills, releases, fires, explosions, and other emergencies at industrial facilities.

Contingency Planning

Contingency planning prepares the IMT for conditions or events that could significantly affect incident operations. Effective contingency planning helps the organization anticipate potential problems, identify decision points, and develop alternative courses of action before conditions deteriorate.

Contingency planning addresses the question:

"What will we do if conditions change or our current strategy is no longer effective?"

Examples of situations that may require contingency planning include:

- Resources assigned to the incident become unavailable.
- A serious injury, illness, or accident occurs.
- Significant weather changes affect incident operations.
- Evacuation becomes necessary due to a hazardous materials release or other emerging threat.
- Incident conditions exceed current operational capabilities.

When reviewing a contingency plan, refer to the Contingency Plan Checklist in the Appendix of this training guide.

Trigger Points and Management Action Points

A trigger point, also referred to as a threshold point or decision point, is a predefined condition that signals the need to take a specific action. Trigger points help the IC and IMT identify when conditions have changed sufficiently to require implementation of a contingency plan.

Contingency Planning = What might happen?

Trigger Points = When do we act?

Examples of trigger points include:

- Incident reaches a specified geographic location.
- Resource availability falls below a predetermined level.
- Safety conditions exceed established risk tolerances.
- Fire behavior, weather conditions, or other indicators reach established thresholds.

A Management Action Point (MAP) is the condition or location at which a planned action should be implemented. For example, a community may establish a MAP requiring evacuation when floodwaters reach a specified level or when a wildfire reaches a predetermined location.

Incident Within an Incident – Emergency Plan

An Incident Within an Incident – Emergency Plan (IWI-EP) prepares the IMT to respond to serious injuries, illnesses, fatalities, accidents, or other emergencies that occur during incident operations. The plan helps ensure personnel can respond quickly and effectively to a secondary emergency while continuing to manage the original incident.

An IWI-EP serves several purposes:

- Prepares the IMT for a variety of responder and operational emergencies.
- Establishes roles, responsibilities, and notification procedures before an emergency occurs.
- Supports a rapid, coordinated response to IWI.
- Helps maintain command and control during unexpected events.
- Promotes responder safety and accountability.

Unlike a contingency plan, which typically addresses a specific operational issue or condition, an IWI-EP prepares the organization to manage a range of potential emergencies that may occur during incident operations.

Long-Range Planning

Long-range planning is necessary for incidents expected to extend beyond the initial response phase and the next operational period. As the IC, understanding and overseeing long-range planning helps ensure sustained, effective incident management.

- Effective PSCs and OSCs typically plan at least 48 hours ahead, although long-range plans may extend days, weeks, or even months into the future.
- The PSC typically prepares the long-range plan and may involve the OSC, technical specialists, or other IMT members, depending on incident complexity.
- The IC and Command and General Staff should maintain awareness of current operations, the next operational period, and potential future incident needs.

Sharing long-range planning information helps coordinate future actions and prepare organizations that may become involved as the incident evolves. Depending on the incident, this information may be shared with the IMT, the Agency Administrator, cooperating agencies and organizations, stakeholders, and elected or appointed officials to support coordination, strategic planning, and informed decision making.

Planning Meeting

The Planning Meeting provides the IC with an opportunity to review the proposed plan for the next operational period and ensure it supports incident objectives, priorities, and Agency Administrator expectations. Although the PSC facilitates the meeting, the IC plays a critical role in validating the proposed direction of the incident before final development of the IAP.

The IC should attend the Planning Meeting whenever possible to:

- Confirm that incident objectives remain valid and appropriate.
- Evaluate the proposed strategies and tactics to ensure they support incident objectives, priorities, limitations, and leader's intent.
- Identify potential concerns related to safety, Agency Administrator expectations, stakeholder interests, and politically or socially sensitive issues.
- Determine whether additional contingency planning is necessary.
- Encourage active participation and collaboration among Command and General Staff members.
- Ensure the planning process remains productive and focused.
- Approve the proposed plan prior to finalization of the IAP.

Handling Special Situations

Despite thorough planning, incidents may present unexpected challenges that require immediate attention from the IC and IMT. These situations may disrupt ongoing operations, require rapid decision making, and necessitate adjustments to incident priorities, strategies, tactics, or resource assignments.

When a special situation occurs, the IC should ensure the IMT responds effectively while maintaining command and control of the overall incident. Actions may include:

- **Implement Applicable Plans:** Implement contingency plans, emergency procedures, or other incident-specific plans as appropriate. Evaluate the situation and adapt existing plans when necessary.
- **Delegate Management Responsibilities:** Assign management of the special situation to a Deputy IC, Command Staff member, or Section Chief when appropriate. Delegation helps maintain focus on overall incident management while ensuring the emerging issue receives adequate attention.
- **Ensure Required Notifications Occur:** Notify the Agency Administrator and ensure appropriate notifications are made to stakeholders, family members, home units, investigators, regulators, or other required parties. Notification responsibilities may be delegated, but the IC remains accountable for ensuring they occur.

- **Maintain Incident Management Discipline:** Ensure command, control, and coordination are maintained for the original incident while responding to the emerging situation. Loss of focus can increase risk, delay response actions, and create additional operational challenges.
- **Reassess Incident Conditions:** Evaluate how the situation affects incident objectives, priorities, strategies, resource requirements, and risk. Modify plans and organizational structures as necessary.
- **Support Personnel and the IMT:** Following stabilization of the situation, keep personnel informed and ensure appropriate emotional, psychological, and organizational support is available.

Support and Coordination

Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs)

EOCs support incident management by coordinating resources, information, and policy-level activities across multiple agencies and organizations. While the IC manages tactical incident operations, the EOC supports the incident through multiagency coordination and resource support.

The IC should understand the EOC's capabilities and responsibilities and maintain appropriate coordination throughout the incident. While EOCs support incident operations, they do not direct, command, or supervise the IC or IMT.

The EOC may support the incident by:

- Coordinating resource requests and resource support.
- Implementing jurisdictional plans, policies, and community support functions.
- Coordinating activities among governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- Supporting public information, warning, and community outreach efforts.
- Providing administrative and coordination support to MAC Groups.
- Maintaining continuity of government and essential community services.

Effective incident management depends on a collaborative relationship between the IC and the EOC. The IC manages incident operations, while the EOC provides support and coordination needed to help achieve incident objectives.

Additional Coordination Structures

Large or complex incidents may require support from organizations beyond the IMT and local EOC. The IC should understand the roles of these coordination structures and how they support incident operations.

Joint Field Office (JFO)

A JFO is a temporary federal coordination center established to support response and recovery activities during significant incidents. The JFO facilitates interagency coordination, resource support, information sharing, and recovery planning among federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local partners.

Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT)

IMATs are federal teams that support incident management and coordination during complex incidents. They often deploy before or alongside other federal resources and may assist with coordination, planning, resource support, and establishment of a JFO.

Emergency Support Functions (ESFs)

ESFs organize federal capabilities into functional areas such as transportation, communications, public works, firefighting, logistics, public health, and search and rescue. ESFs help coordinate federal resources and expertise in support of incident operations.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)

EMAC provides a legal framework for states to request and provide resources across state lines during emergencies and disasters. Through EMAC, personnel, equipment, and other resources can be mobilized to support incident operations when local and state resources are insufficient.



For more information on coordination structures, review the National Response Framework.

(<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/response>)

Resource Support and Ordering

As incidents grow in complexity, resource requests may move beyond local response agencies and require support from dispatch centers, agency ordering points, EOCs, state agencies, or federal partners.

Dispatch Centers and Agency Ordering Points

Effective incident management depends on the timely ordering, mobilization, and tracking of resources. Dispatch Centers and Agency Ordering Points (AOPs) perform complementary roles in supporting resource requests and ensuring needed personnel, equipment, supplies, and services are delivered to the incident.

The table below summarizes the primary functions and responsibilities of Dispatch Centers and AOPs.

Table 7: Dispatch Centers and Agency Ordering Points

Aspect	Dispatch Centers	Agency Ordering Points
Primary Function	Receive incident information, dispatch resources, and track resource status.	Process requests for additional personnel, equipment, supplies, and support resources.
Resource Support	Mobilize and track assigned resources.	Acquire and coordinate resources that are not immediately available for the incident.
Communication	Maintain communication with responding resources and incident personnel.	Coordinate resource requests among agencies and supporting organizations.
Coordination	Support initial and ongoing resource deployment.	Facilitate resource ordering and interagency resource support.

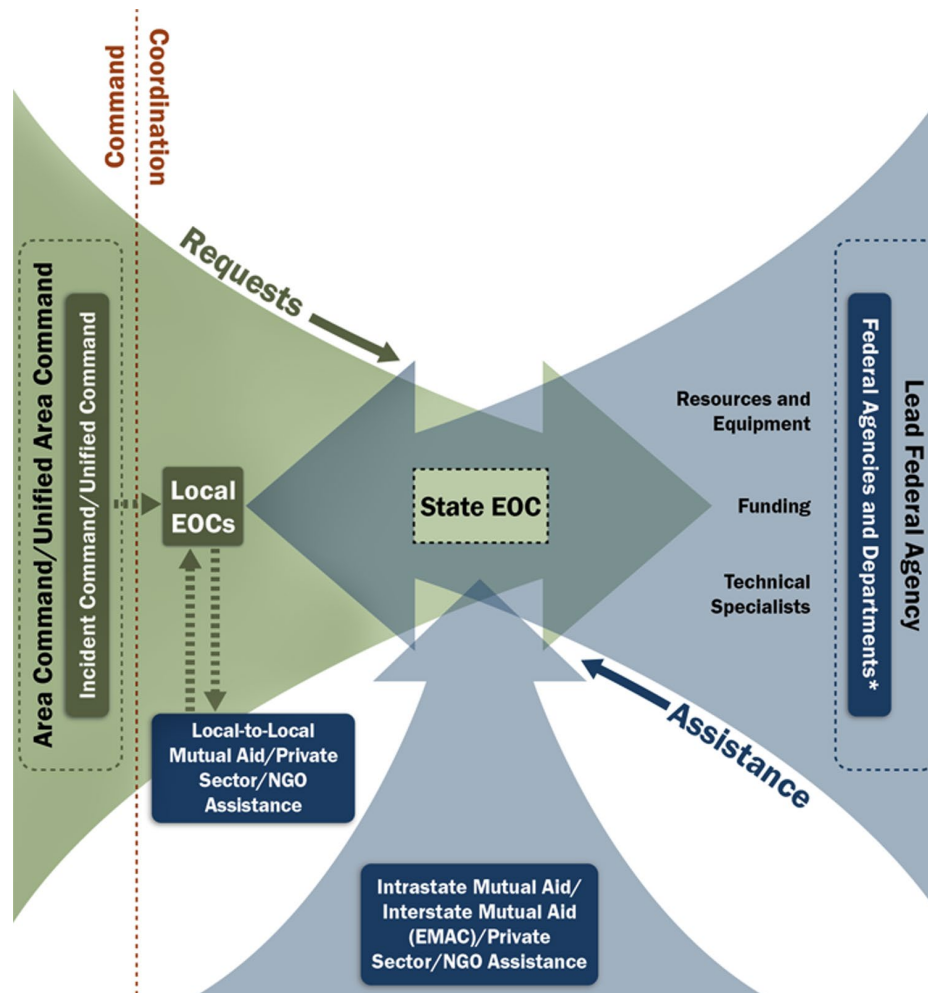
Flow of Requests/Assistance During Large-Scale Incidents

As incidents grow in complexity, resource needs may exceed the capabilities of the local jurisdiction. When this occurs, requests for assistance are elevated through established coordination channels to obtain additional personnel, equipment, supplies, technical expertise, funding, and other support.

Typically, local incident management, led by an IC, UC, or Area Command, coordinates resource requests through local authorities and the EOC. If local resources are insufficient, requests may be elevated to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). When state resources are unable to meet incident needs, additional assistance may be requested through interstate mutual aid agreements, federal agencies, or a combination of these sources.

The following illustrates how local, state, interstate, and federal coordination structures support incident operations when resource requirements exceed local capabilities.

Figure 5: Federal Support to Response Activities



Source: National Incident Management System, Third Edition, October 2017

* Some Federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency) have statutory responsibility for response and may coordinate and/or integrate directly with affected jurisdictions. During responses conducted under Stafford Act declarations, FEMA establishes a Joint Field Office (JFO) to coordinate Federal response activities.

Routine Administrative Duties

In addition to directing incident operations and participating in the planning process, the IC performs a variety of routine administrative duties necessary to maintain situational awareness, coordinate incident activities, and support effective decision making.

Routine duties may include:

- **Reviewing reports and decision support materials.** Review the Incident Status Summary (ICS Form 209), situation reports, Activity Logs (ICS Form 214), decision memoranda, crew time reports, and other information needed to assess incident progress, identify emerging issues, and support decision making.
- **Coordinating with key personnel and organizations.** Meet or hold conference calls with the Agency Administrator, Command and General Staff, MAC Groups, EOCs, Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACCs), cooperating agencies, and other entities to discuss incident priorities, resource needs, and emerging issues.
- **Conducting formal and informal meetings.** Hold team meetings and engage regularly with Command and General Staff members to address communication, coordination, performance, accountability, and other issues affecting incident operations.
- **Supporting public and stakeholder engagement.** Prepare for and participate in public meetings, stakeholder briefings, media engagements, and other outreach activities as needed. Coordinate messaging and public information activities with the PIO.
- **Maintaining required documentation.** Complete personal records and documentation, such as Activity Logs (ICS Form 214), Crew Time Reports (CTRs), and other records required by the incident or agency.
- **Monitoring financial information.** Meet regularly with the Finance/Administration Section Chief (FSC) to review incident costs, burn rates, financial limitations, procurement issues, and other fiscal considerations.
- **Observing incident operations.** Conduct regular on-site management by walking through the Incident Command Post (ICP), base camp, and other incident facilities and, when appropriate, visiting field operations to assess progress, identify concerns, and maintain situational awareness.
- **Ensuring compliance with policies and agreements.** Monitor adherence to applicable authorities, policies, procedures, agreements, and agency expectations to support a safe, effective, and efficient response.

Financial Management Responsibilities

The IC is responsible for ensuring that incident resources are used effectively and efficiently, and in accordance with applicable authorities, agreements, and financial limitations. While the FSC manages many of the detailed financial processes, the IC remains accountable for understanding the financial implications of operational decisions.

Cost Constraints and Financial Authorities

The IC should identify and understand any financial limitations that may affect incident operations. These may include agency cost ceilings, delegation of authority limitations, Emergency Funding Authorizations (EFAs), FEMA funding restrictions, EMAC agreements, cost-share agreements, and other fiscal constraints.

Jurisdictions may establish financial ceilings or spending limits for response operations. Exceeding these limitations can affect reimbursement eligibility, grant funding, or other financial authorities. The IC should work closely with the FSC to understand applicable limitations and ensure incident operations remain within authorized financial parameters.

Cost Apportionment and Cost-Share Agreements

Multi-jurisdictional incidents often require cost apportionment or cost-share agreements to document how incident expenses will be allocated among participating agencies, jurisdictions, or responsible parties. These agreements help establish financial accountability and reduce disputes regarding incident costs.

Agency Representatives typically negotiate and approve these agreements; however, the IC should understand their terms and operational implications. Resource ordering, personnel assignments, equipment use, and incident strategies may all affect how costs are allocated and reimbursed.

The IC should also be prepared to address cost-sharing considerations within a Unified Command structure or when coordinating with a private-sector responsible party.

Monitoring Incident Costs

The IC should regularly review incident expenditures and projected costs with the FSC. Effective cost management involves balancing incident objectives, values at risk, available funding, and operational requirements.

The IC should monitor:

- Current incident expenditures.
- Projected future costs and incident burn rates.

- Financial ceilings, funding limitations, and reimbursement requirements.
- Cost impacts associated with operational decisions and resource ordering.
- High-cost resources and activities.

Managing High-Cost Resources

Personnel, equipment, aviation resources, contractors, feeding, lodging, transportation, and support services often represent significant incident costs. The IC should ensure these resources are necessary, appropriately assigned, and demobilized when no longer needed.

Particular attention should be given to specialized or high-cost resources, such as aircraft, heavy equipment, boats, contractors, and other assets that may significantly affect incident expenditures.

Working With the Finance/Administration Section

The FSC provides financial expertise, cost tracking, projections, procurement support, and the documentation necessary for incident management. The IC should maintain regular communication with the FSC regarding incident costs, financial risks, procurement issues, reimbursement requirements, and other fiscal considerations that may affect incident operations.

For incidents involving federal assistance, cost-share agreements, EMAC resources, or other reimbursement programs, the IC should possess a basic understanding of the applicable financial requirements and coordinate closely with the FSC, Agency Administrator, and supporting finance personnel.

ICs may encounter incidents involving FEMA reimbursement programs, federal cost-share requirements, or EMAC resources. For additional information, review:

- FEMA Disaster Assistance: <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public>
- Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC): <https://www.emacweb.org>

Off-Incident Financial Coordination

The IC may coordinate with off-incident financial support personnel, including local finance and budget offices, EOCs, Agency Administrators, and other supporting organizations to ensure financial requirements, documentation, and reimbursement processes are understood and addressed.

Managing Liability and Risk

Incident management involves legal, financial, and operational risks that can affect responders, agencies, jurisdictions, and the public. While many responsibilities may be delegated, the IC remains accountable for ensuring incident operations are conducted safely, effectively, and in accordance with applicable authorities, policies, and procedures.

Legal Considerations

The IC should operate within established authorities, laws, regulations, and agency policies. Liability issues may arise from actions or decisions that fail to meet legal, regulatory, or policy requirements. Maintaining adequate documentation, following established procedures, and consulting Agency Representatives, technical specialists, or legal advisors when appropriate can help reduce legal risk.

Financial Considerations

The IC is responsible for ensuring incident resources are used appropriately and in accordance with applicable financial authorities, agreements, and funding limitations. Maintaining accurate documentation and coordinating closely with the FSC helps support accountability, reimbursement, and cost recovery efforts.

Operational Considerations

The IC is responsible for managing risk and maintaining a safe and effective incident organization. This includes ensuring responder and public safety, implementing appropriate strategies and tactics, maintaining accountability, managing resources effectively, and making decisions based on available information and established incident objectives.

Reducing Liability Exposure

The IC can help reduce liability exposure by:

- Following applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures.
- Maintaining qualifications and participating in ongoing training.
- Documenting significant decisions, actions, and incident activities.
- Implementing sound risk management practices.
- Ensuring personnel are properly supervised and accountable.
- Seeking technical, financial, or legal guidance when appropriate.

Effective incident management, sound decision making, and thorough documentation are among the most important tools for reducing liability exposure during incident operations.

Agreements

The IC's management of various agreements is necessary for effective incident management. Agreements define resource use, funding obligations, and operational roles. Agreements affect the legal, financial, and operational aspects of an incident response.

“Fund obligation” means that funds are available and dedicated for the services, training, and response outlined in the agreement. However, the agency cannot commit to or guarantee more funds than are appropriated.

Using Agreements as Part of the Initial Response

Agreements establish the framework for sharing resources, coordinating responsibilities, and managing financial obligations before, during, and after incidents. During incident operations, agreements may affect resource availability, cost reimbursement, authorities, and operational coordination.

The IC should understand the agreements that apply to the incident and their potential operational and financial implications. When operating outside their home jurisdiction, the IC should coordinate with Agency Representatives, the FSC, and other appropriate officials to identify existing agreements rather than assume how resources, costs, or authorities are managed. The table below summarizes common agreements that may affect incident operations.

Table 8: Agreement Types

Agreement Type	Description	What does the IC need to know or consider?
Cooperative Agreement (Interagency Agreement)	Establishes cooperation between agencies for preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation, training, or resource support activities.	Understand any funding commitments, resource obligations, and operational requirements that may affect incident operations.
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	Documents how organizations will coordinate activities and responsibilities in a mutually beneficial manner.	Understand the roles, responsibilities, and coordination expectations established by the agreement.

Agreement Type	Description	What does the IC need to know or consider?
Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)	Formalizes specific commitments, responsibilities, or resource support arrangements between parties.	Understand any specific resource commitments, operational responsibilities, or support obligations.
Mutual Aid Agreement	Establishes how agencies provide assistance and share resources during incidents.	Verify resource availability, reimbursement requirements, deployment limitations, and applicable authorities.
Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)	Provides a legal framework for interstate mutual aid during declared emergencies.	Ensure assigned resources are used in accordance with the approved mission, reimbursement requirements, and EMAC provisions.
Cost-Share Agreement	Documents how incident costs will be allocated among participating agencies, jurisdictions, or responsible parties.	Understand how operational decisions and resource use may affect cost allocation and reimbursement.
Emergency Rental Agreement	Governs the acquisition and use of rented equipment, facilities, and services.	Monitor resource utilization and contract requirements to avoid unnecessary costs.
Local Agreements	Establish local arrangements for resource support, facilities, services, or operational coordination.	Understand local authorities' expectations and support arrangements that may affect incident operations.
Land Use Agreement	Establishes conditions for using private or public property to support incident operations.	Understand access requirements, use restrictions, restoration responsibilities, and associated costs.
International Agreement	Supports coordination and assistance involving foreign governments.	Understand any operational, legal, or coordination requirements that affect incident activities.

Importance of Legal Review of Agreements

The IC should understand the agreements that affect incident operations and seek clarification when questions arise about authorities, responsibilities, reimbursement requirements, or liability. Agency Representatives, legal advisors, contracting officials, and other appropriate personnel can provide guidance regarding the interpretation and application of agreements.

When operating outside their home jurisdiction, the IC should coordinate with local officials, Agency Representatives, and the FSC to identify applicable agreements and understand any operational or financial requirements that may affect the incident.

Documenting an Incident

Accurate and timely documentation supports effective incident management, accountability, continuity, and after-action analysis. Incident documentation provides a record of decisions, actions, communications, and significant events that occur throughout the incident. While the Documentation Unit manages incident records, the IC is responsible for ensuring that important activities and decisions are documented appropriately.

Documentation Practices

The IC should document significant incident activities as they occur and ensure records are factual, accurate, and complete. Documentation should support situational awareness, decision making, accountability, and the incident record.

When documenting incident activities:

- Record the date, time, location, and individuals involved.
- Document significant decisions, actions, agreements, and events.
- Capture information that supports situational awareness and future decision making.
- Follow agency policies regarding documentation, record retention, and electronic communications.

Incident documentation may be reviewed during audits, investigations, after-action reviews, or legal proceedings. Documentation should therefore be objective, factual, and free from personal opinions or speculation.

Activity Log (ICS Form 214)

The Activity Log (ICS Form 214) is commonly used to document significant activities, decisions, communications, and events that occur during an incident. The IC should complete an ICS Form 214 for each operational period and ensure it is submitted in accordance with incident procedures. The Documentation Unit maintains Activity Logs as part of the official incident record.

A useful memory aid for documenting important incident activities is the:

Three D's

- Decisions – Significant decisions and the information supporting them.
- Discussions – Important discussions that influence objectives, strategies, policies, or incident actions.
- Disputes – Significant disagreements, conflicts, or issues requiring resolution.

The IC should also maintain notes to support situational awareness and follow-up actions. A useful memory aid is the:

Three I's

- Information – Information that may assist with situational awareness or future decision making.
- Issues – Questions, concerns, or problems that require attention or resolution.
- Ideas – Recommendations, lessons learned, or opportunities for improvement.

While the ICS Form 214 is the primary incident documentation tool, notebooks, electronic communications, agency-specific documentation systems, and other approved methods may also be used to support incident documentation. Regardless of the format used, the goal is to create a clear and accurate record of incident activities and decisions.

Adjusting Incident Operations

Incidents are dynamic and rarely unfold exactly as anticipated. As conditions change, the IC should continually assess the situation, evaluate risks, and determine whether adjustments are needed to incident priorities, objectives, strategies, or resource assignments. Effective incident management requires ongoing situational awareness, critical thinking, and timely decision making.

The IC communicates significant adjustments by changing the leader's intent, priorities, incident objectives, EEIs, and other incident direction.

Factors that may require the IC to adjust incident operations include:

- Changes in threats to life, property, the environment, or critical infrastructure.
- Changes in incident complexity, scope, or tempo.

- Resource limitations, shortages, or logistical challenges.
- Changes in weather, terrain, operating conditions, or other environmental factors.
- New information, intelligence, or situational awareness.
- Public expectations, stakeholder concerns, or media attention.
- Political, legal, or policy considerations.
- Decisions or actions by cooperating agencies, EOCs, MAC Groups, or other coordinating entities.
- Emerging risks, unexpected events, or other factors affecting incident objectives.

Common Operating Picture

A common operating picture (COP) is a shared display of relevant incident information that supports situational awareness and decision making across the incident organization. The Situation Unit Leader (SITL) typically maintains the COP, while the IC ensures that information requirements are clearly defined and that incident personnel have access to accurate and timely information.

The COP supports a common understanding of incident conditions, resource status, incident objectives, and operational priorities. By promoting information sharing and situational awareness, the COP helps personnel make informed decisions and coordinate activities effectively. The IC supports the development and maintenance of the COP by communicating the leader's intent, priorities, incident objectives, and EEIs.

Private Meetings

The IC should be accessible for private discussions with the Command and General Staff to address any issues and concerns. Whatever the IC discusses in these meetings is private unless otherwise agreed upon. It is a time to work through issues professionally and privately to minimize potential public conflicts.

Incident Coordination Meetings

In addition to Operational Period Planning Cycle meetings, the IC may participate in meetings with external organizations and stakeholders to support incident coordination, resource management, and information sharing. The IC should ensure information shared during these meetings is accurate, consistent, and aligned with incident objectives and agency expectations.

Table 9: Key Meetings for Incident Coordination and Management

Meeting Type	Purpose	Frequency
EOC/MAC Group Meetings	Coordinate support, resource needs, priorities, and interagency issues.	Regularly or as needed.
Agency Administrator Meetings	Provide incident updates, discuss priorities, obtain guidance, and ensure policy alignment.	As required, it is often daily.
VIP or Stakeholder Meetings	Inform key stakeholders, elected officials, and other interested parties regarding incident status and response activities.	As needed.

IAP Preparation and Approval

The Incident Action Planning Process is the foundation of effective incident management. Through this process, the IMT develops, communicates, and implements plans that support incident objectives and operational priorities.

The IC is responsible for ensuring the planning process begins early, remains effective throughout the incident, and results in an IAP that supports the leader's intent, incident objectives, and operational requirements.

Preparation

During IAP development, the IC should:

- Provide strategic direction through the leader's intent, priorities, incident objectives, and EEs.
- Actively participate in the Planning Meeting and other key planning activities.
- Ensure safety, operations, logistics, finance/administration, communications, and other incident requirements are appropriately integrated into the IAP.
- Ensure the Planning Section is adequately staffed to support the planning process.
- Ensure IMT members provide the information necessary to complete the IAP in a timely manner.

Review and Approval

The PSC coordinates the development of the IAP and facilitates the planning process. Before approval, the appropriate contributors and the PSC should review the draft IAP to verify accuracy, completeness, and consistency.

The IC conducts a final review to ensure the IAP is realistic, supports incident objectives, reflects current incident conditions, and provides clear direction for the upcoming operational period. Once approved, the IC authorizes implementation of the IAP.

Depending on agency requirements, the Agency Administrator may also review or approve the IAP for significant incidents or incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies.

Communication

After approval, the PSC is responsible for distributing and communicating the IAP to incident personnel and support organizations. The IC should ensure personnel understand the incident objectives, priorities, and expectations outlined in the plan.

Operational Period Briefing

The Operational Period Briefing communicates key elements of the IAP to incident personnel and ensures a common understanding of incident objectives, assignments, priorities, and operational expectations for the upcoming operational period. The OSC typically leads the briefing and confirms that personnel understand their assignments and responsibilities for the upcoming operational period.

The IC should attend the Operational Period Briefing and may:

- Provide opening remarks that reinforce the leader's intent, priorities, and incident objectives.
- Demonstrate command presence and support for the incident organization.
- Provide closing comments when appropriate.
- Remain available following the briefing to answer questions and interact with incident personnel.

Pause and Reflect



Effective incident management requires balancing current operations with future planning. In this activity, you will practice developing three key IC products: the leader's intent, incident priorities, and incident objectives.

1. Read the scenario below. Then, develop the IC's initial strategic direction for the incident by drafting a Statement of Leader's Intent, Incident Priorities, and Incident Objectives for the first operational period.

During a busy summer evening at the county fair, a large explosion occurs near the food vendor area, resulting in multiple casualties and widespread panic. Initial reports indicate at least 15 casualties and 12 fatalities. Several nearby structures may be damaged or unstable, and the cause of the explosion is unknown. Responders are concerned that the incident may have been intentionally caused. Hundreds of attendees are attempting to leave the fairgrounds, creating significant traffic congestion and confusion at exits and access points.

Draft a Statement of Leader's Intent

Draft a brief statement describing the desired end state and overall direction for the initial response. Consider life safety, incident stabilization, responder safety, public safety, and incident coordination.

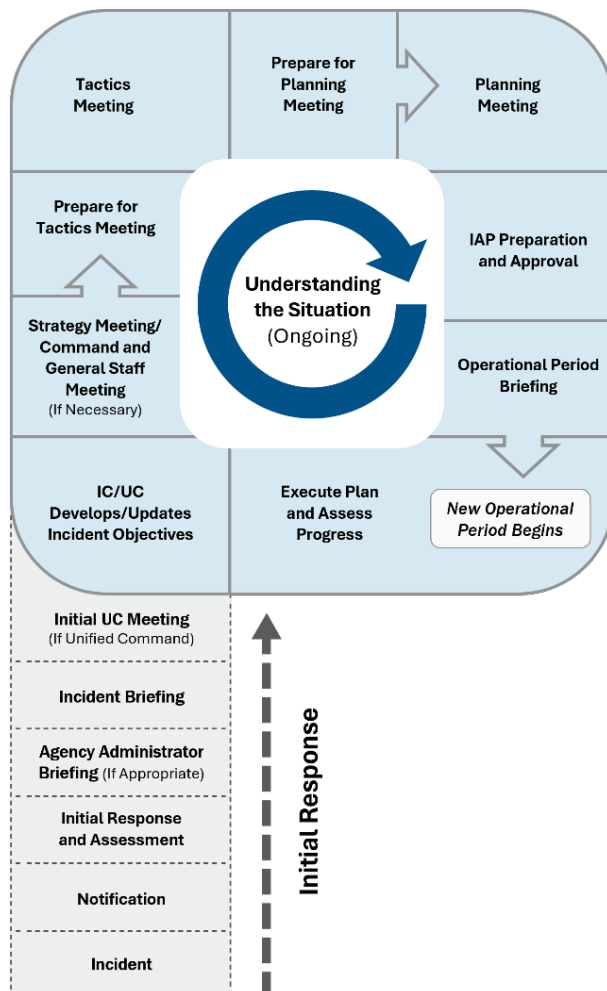
Draft Incident Priorities

Identify and rank at least three priorities for managing the incident.

Draft Incident Objectives

Develop at least three SMART incident objectives for the first operational period.

2. Outline the key responsibilities of the Incident Commander during each meeting or briefing in the Operational Period Planning Cycle.



Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting

Tactics Meeting

Planning Meeting

Operational Period Briefing

Chapter 4: Transition, Demobilization, and Closeout

As incidents evolve and eventually wind down, the IC manages the transfer of responsibilities, demobilization of resources, and return of the incident to local management. Effective transition, demobilization, and closeout activities support a safe and orderly conclusion to incident operations.

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Identify the responsibilities of the IC pertaining to transition, demobilization, and returning an incident to local management.
- Recall the considerations and procedures an IC should follow to ensure effective and safe Transfer of Command.

Transition and Transfer of Command

As incidents evolve, command responsibilities may transfer from one IC or IMT to another. Transfer of Command is the process of formally moving incident management responsibilities while maintaining accountability, continuity of operations, and effective incident management.

Transfers may occur when:

- An IC or IMT assumes command from the initial response organization.
- Incident complexity increases and requires a more qualified IC or IMT.
- Incident complexity decreases and command is transferred to a less complex organization.
- An IC or IMT is rotated, reassigned, or released.

In some situations, an incoming IMT may augment an existing incident organization rather than immediately assume command. In these cases, the team may support the existing IC or Unified Command, and the incoming IC may serve as a Deputy IC or Unified Command member until a formal transfer occurs.

Before assuming command, the incoming IC or IMT should receive an Agency Administrator Briefing, receive an Incident Briefing (typically using the ICS Form 201 or current IAP), assess current incident conditions and resource status, and coordinate with the outgoing IC to establish an appropriate transfer time. Whenever possible, transfers should occur at the beginning of an operational period after adequate shadowing and information exchange. However, urgent safety or operational concerns may require a transfer at another time.

Transition Plan

A Transition Plan supports the orderly transfer of command between ICs or IMTs by identifying the information and actions needed for the incoming organization to assume responsibilities effectively. The PSC typically coordinates development of the Transition Plan with input from the Command and General Staff. The IC provides input and ensures the plan addresses information needed by the incoming IC or IMT to assume command effectively.

A Transition Plan typically includes:

- Leader's intent, incident objectives, and priorities.
- Delegation of authority and policy considerations.
- Current incident status and operational progress.
- Resource assignments and organizational structure.
- Key contacts and stakeholder information.
- Upcoming operational periods, meetings, and critical timelines.
- Safety concerns, hazards, and risk information.
- Logistical and support considerations.
- Communications procedures.
- Public information considerations.
- Outstanding issues requiring follow-up.

Common documents that support the transition include the Incident Briefing (ICS Form 201), current IAP, situation reports (SITREPs), incident analyses, and resource or ordering records.

Transfer of Command Considerations

To support a successful transfer:

- Allow adequate time for information exchange and shadowing whenever possible.
- Existing personnel should remain assigned until they can be safely relieved.
- Recognize that transitions create elevated safety, communication, and situational awareness risks.
- Maintain continuity of support to field resources and ongoing operations.
- Clearly establish when command transfers and who is responsible.
- Notify incident personnel, stakeholders, and support organizations of the transfer.
- Evaluate current risks, safety concerns, and unresolved issues before assuming command.
- Document transition activities in accordance with agency requirements.

Team-to-Team Transition

When one IMT replaces another, the transition extends beyond the IC and involves the entire incident organization. Effective team-to-team transitions rely on information sharing, shadowing, and direct coordination between outgoing and incoming personnel. Whenever possible, incoming personnel should meet with their outgoing counterparts to discuss:

- Current incident status and priorities.
- Ongoing operations and planned activities.
- Resource assignments and outstanding needs.
- Safety concerns and emerging risks.
- Sensitive issues, stakeholder concerns, and unresolved problems.
- Administrative, logistical, and financial considerations.

The Agency Administrator may conduct a transition briefing with incoming and outgoing IMT leadership to review incident status, operational priorities, resource needs, safety concerns, and expectations for the incoming team.

Returning an Incident to Local Management

As incident complexity decreases, responsibility for managing the incident may transition from the IMT back to the local jurisdiction. The IC coordinates closely with the Agency Administrator and incoming leadership to prepare the receiving organization to assume responsibility for the incident.

To support a successful transition, the IC should:

- Coordinate transition timing with the Agency Administrator and incoming IC.
- Establish turn-back standards, transition milestones, and resource requirements.
- Ensure critical information is transferred to the receiving organization.
- Communicate unresolved issues, risks, and sensitive concerns, including political issues, media attention, personnel matters, environmental impacts, and ongoing investigations or claims.
- Confirm that documentation, resource accountability, and financial matters are current.
- Ensure the receiving organization has the personnel, resources, and capability necessary to manage the remaining incident workload.

Demobilization

Demobilization is the orderly, safe, and efficient release of incident resources when they are no longer needed. Effective demobilization reduces costs, maintains accountability, and supports the timely return of personnel, equipment, and facilities to their home units or new assignments.

Timing and Early Planning

Demobilization planning should begin early in the incident and continue throughout incident operations. The IC should consider demobilization requirements as resources are ordered and assigned to ensure personnel, equipment, and facilities can be released safely and efficiently when no longer needed. Establishing a Demobilization Unit early in the incident provides dedicated support for demobilization planning and coordination. The IC should also be prepared for the emergency demobilization of resources due to illness, injury, family emergencies, or changing operational requirements.

Indicators for Demobilization

The IC should continuously evaluate incident conditions and resource requirements to determine when to begin demobilization activities. Common IC decision indicators include:

- Incident objectives are being achieved.
- Resource requirements are decreasing.
- No additional resource orders are anticipated.
- Resources remain unassigned or underutilized.
- Resource commitments exceed operational needs.
- Personnel or equipment are approaching assignment or work-rest limitations.

Demobilization Plan

The PSC coordinates plan development with input from Command and General Staff members, agency dispatch or coordination centers, and other personnel as appropriate. The IC or Unified Command approves the Demobilization Plan and establishes release priorities.

A typical Demobilization Plan includes:

- General instructions and responsibilities.
- Release priorities.
- Release procedures.
- Resource check-out requirements.
- Travel and transportation information.
- Directory and contact information.

Supporting documents may include maps, schedules, check-out sheets, vehicle inspection forms, and special instructions for early or emergency demobilization.

Role of the Incident Commander

Key IC responsibilities include:

- Approving the Demobilization Plan.
- Establishing release priorities.
- Ensuring compliance with Agency Administrator direction and agency policies.
- Integrating safety considerations into the demobilization process.
- Confirming personnel are adequately rested before release, particularly when extended travel is required.
- Maintaining accountability for personnel, equipment, facilities, and incident records.

Closeout

Incident Closeout Meeting

The Incident Closeout Meeting provides an opportunity for the Agency Administrator and IMT to review incident management activities, discuss lessons learned, identify areas for improvement, and address any outstanding issues before the team is released.

The IC coordinates the meeting with the Agency Administrator and ensures appropriate IMT personnel attend. Participants typically include Command and General Staff members and other personnel as needed. The Closeout Meeting should focus on organizational learning, continuous improvement, and supporting future incident management efforts.

Discussion topics commonly include:

- Incident accomplishments and outcomes.
- Significant events and key decisions.
- Resource management and support issues.
- Outstanding operational, administrative, or financial concerns.
- Lessons learned and recommendations for future incidents.

Incident Documentation and Narrative

The IC is responsible for ensuring that incident documentation is complete, accurate, and submitted in accordance with agency requirements. The Documentation Unit Leader (DOCL) coordinates compilation of the final incident documentation package and ensures records are organized and maintained in accordance with host agency standards.

The IC should review the final documentation package and ensure all required materials have been submitted before team release.

The incident narrative summarizes the incident's activities, decisions, accomplishments, and lessons learned. The IC is responsible for reviewing the narrative and preparing the IC's portion of the report.

The IC's narrative should address:

- Incident overview, including date, location, and incident type.
- Significant objectives, strategies, and operational accomplishments.
- Major decisions and resource management considerations.
- Significant challenges and how they were addressed.
- Interagency coordination and stakeholder engagement.
- Safety issues, incidents, or notable risk management actions.
- Transition and demobilization activities.
- Outstanding issues and recommendations for future incidents.

Review a sample IC incident narrative in the Appendix of this training guide.

Team Debriefings

Internal team debriefings provide an opportunity for IMT members to review performance, identify lessons learned, and discuss opportunities for improvement. The focus is on organizational learning and continuous improvement rather than assigning blame. These discussions should occur before the final Closeout Meeting whenever possible.

The PSC typically coordinates the debriefing process and documents key observations and recommendations. The IC should foster an environment of professionalism, trust, and constructive feedback so that team members can openly discuss strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

Personnel Performance Evaluations

The IC is responsible for ensuring personnel evaluations are completed in accordance with agency or IMT policy. Evaluations help document performance, support professional development, and provide feedback for future assignments.

The Incident Personnel Performance Rating (ICS Form 225) may be used to document evaluations. Particular attention should be given to:

- Trainees working toward PTB completion.
- Personnel demonstrating exceptional performance.
- Personnel requiring corrective feedback or performance improvement.

When evaluating performance, consider the following guidelines:

- Be objective, candid, and professional.
- Focus on performance, behaviors, and results.
- Base feedback on communicated expectations and incident objectives.
- Conduct evaluations face-to-face whenever practical.
- Complete evaluations before personnel are released from the incident.
- Address performance concerns promptly and document them appropriately.

Some agencies also conduct IMT-level evaluations. These evaluations assess the team's effectiveness in achieving incident objectives, supporting agency expectations, coordinating with stakeholders, and managing incident operations. The IC should review evaluation results and incorporate lessons learned into future assignments.

Pause and Reflect



Your understanding of your role during both transition and demobilization will help achieve a smooth handoff and the efficient conclusion of incident operations. This is where your skills in forward planning, clear communication, and effective prioritization truly shine.

Let's take a moment to pause and reflect on the key takeaways from this chapter and how you might apply them moving forward in your role.

1. What are your key responsibilities as the IC during the transition and demobilization stages of an incident?

Transition:

Demobilization:

2. Brainstorm a list of closeout documents, forms, and/or plans you would expect to be responsible for completing and/or overseeing during the transition and demobilization stages of an incident.

3. What are some challenges you might anticipate during demobilization?

Appendix

Sample Agency Administrator Briefing Checklist

Incident Name:

Incident #:

Date:

Agency Administrator/Official:

Incident Commander:

1. Other unit/cooperators:
2. Delegation of authority; Agency Administrator Representative:
3. Resource advisor(s) assigned to incident:
4. Technical specialists assigned to the incident:
5. Unit Mgmt. Plan/Fire Mgmt. Plan direction:
6. Priority for this incident (local, regional, national):
7. Values to be protected:
8. Political considerations:
9. Social/economic considerations:
10. Social/economic considerations:
11. Health and welfare considerations:

12. Human resources management considerations:

13. Desired local participation in fire team organization:

14. Unified Command (in place or contemplated):

15. Area Command (in place or contemplated):

16. MAC organization (in place or contemplated):

17. Evaluation team assigned:

18. News media relations:

19. Organization reports to:

20. Special relationships/"thank you" policy for assistance:

21. Other agencies on this incident:

22. Land status:

23. Cooperative agreements relevant to the incident:

24. Condition of the organization in the rest of the unit:

25. The capability of the unit to support the team:

26. Training opportunities/policy on use of trainees:

27. Team will assume command: Date: Time:

28. Transition and Closeout Plan:

Incident Complexity Analysis (ICS Form 239-CG) (Type 1 and 2)

1. Analyze each element and check the response, Yes or No.
2. If element positive responses exceed or are equal to negative responses within any primary factor (A through G), the primary factor should be considered as a positive response.
3. If any three of the primary factors (A through G) are positive responses, this indicates the incident situation is or is predicted to be of Type 1 complexity.
4. Factor H should be considered after elements 1–3 are completed. If more than two of the elements in factor H are answered yes, and three or more of the other primary factors are positive responses, a Type 1 organization should be considered. If the composites of H are negative, and there are fewer than three positive responses in the primary factors (A-G), a Type 2 organization should be considered. If the answers to all questions in H are negative, it may be advisable to allow the existing overhead to continue action on the incident.

Incident Complexity Analysis (Type 1 and 2)		YES	NO
A. Incident Behavior (Observed or Predicted)			
1. Incident predicted to increase in magnitude, duration, and in the total affected area.			
2. Potential exists for extreme public impact.			
3. Public impact is increasing in magnitude and complexity (number of people affected and duration is increasing).			
4. Weather forecast indicating no significant relief or worsening conditions.			
Total			
B. Resources Committed			
1. 200 or more personnel assigned.			
2. Three or more divisions.			
3. Wide variety of special support personnel.			
4. Substantial air operation, which is not properly staffed.			
5. The majority of available initial responder resources committed.			
Total			

Incident Complexity Analysis (Type 1 and 2)		YES	NO
C. Resources Threatened			
1. Urban areas.			
2. Developments and infrastructure facilities.			
3. Restricted, threatened, or endangered species habitat.			
4. Cultural or historical sites.			
5. Unique natural resources, special-designation areas, and wilderness.			
6. Other special resources.			
Total			
D. Safety			
1. Unusually hazardous incident conditions.			
2. Serious accidents or fatalities.			
3. Threat to public safety from the incident and related operations.			
4. Restrictions and/or closures of areas surrounding the incident are in effect or being considered.			
5. No night operations are in place for safety reasons.			
Total			
E. Ownership			
1. Incident involves or threatens more than one jurisdiction.			
2. Potential for claims (damages).			
3. Different or conflicting management objectives.			
4. Disputes over incident responsibility.			
5. Potential for Unified Command.			
Total			
F. External Influences			
1. Controversial emergency response policy.			
2. Pre-existing controversies/relationships.			
3. Sensitive media relationships.			
4. Other management problems.			
5. Sensitive political interests.			
6. Other external influences.			
Total			

Incident Complexity Analysis (Type 1 and 2)		YES	NO
G. Change in Strategy			
1. Change in strategy.			
2. Public safety complexities are increasing (e.g., disease outbreaks, looting, civil unrest, expanding plumes from HAZMAT).			
3. Incident Situational Analysis (ISA) is invalid or requires updating.			
Total			
H. Existing Incident Management Personnel			
1. Worked two operational periods without achieving initial objectives.			
2. The existing management organization is ineffective.			
3. Incident Management Personnel overextended mentally and/or physically.			
4. Incident Action Plans or briefings missing information or poorly prepared.			
Total			

Objectives and Strategies Worksheet

Potential Objectives and Strategies Worksheet

Instructions: Each numbered item is an objective common to many Type 3 incidents. Below each objective is a list of potential strategies for accomplishing the objective. Use this worksheet to help formulate objectives for your incident.

1. Provide for the safety, health, welfare, and security of responders.

- ☐ Safety issues (PPE, body armor, work/rest rotation, environment, weather, shade, hydration, and LCES [Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes, Safety Zones])
- ☐ Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC)
- ☐ Responder family safety
- ☐ Medical Unit (rehab, procedures for medical emergencies, etc.)
- ☐ Health (sanitation, food, etc.)
- ☐ Assistant Safety Officers (HAZMAT, USAR, wildland, structural, law, etc.)
- ☐ Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)
- ☐ HR Specialist
- ☐ Moral, Welfare, & Recreation Officer (MWR)
- ☐ Labor MOU issues

2. Ensure the safety, health, welfare, and security of citizens.

- ☐ Identify hazard(s) from spilled materials.
- ☐ Establish work zones (exclusion zone, contamination reduction zone, and support zone).
- ☐ Establish site perimeter security and access controls.
- ☐ Consider evacuation or shelter-in-place, as needed.
- ☐ Establish aircraft restrictions.
- ☐ Monitor the air in affected areas to determine the appropriate personal protective equipment needed.
- ☐ Develop a unified Health and Safety Plan for response personnel.
- ☐ Run an air dispersion model; determine potential evacuation zones.

3. Provide for the safety, health, welfare, and security of the public by rendering treatment to the sick and injured, managing fatalities, and providing for the orderly evacuation and care of the displaced and their animals.

- ☐ EMS (triage, treatment, and transportation)
- ☐ Evacuations/shelter-in-place
- ☐ Public outreach (businesses, schools, tourism offices, social media, and reverse 911)
- ☐ Shade and hydration
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Mass Care (sheltering, special needs population)
- ☐ Hospitals (capacity, contamination, and security)
- ☐ Public Health (disease control)
- ☐ PODs (Points of Distribution/Dispensing, security)
- ☐ Volunteers (convergent/trained)
- ☐ Morgue
- ☐ Large and small animal care
- ☐ Occupant support
- ☐ 911 system failure/overload

4. Maintain civil order and provide security and investigation.

- ☐ Outer perimeter control
- ☐ Explosives (detection/mitigation)
- ☐ Active shooter (hot zone, warm zone, and cold zone)
- ☐ Intelligence (deterrent, detection, fusion center, Joint Terrorism Task Force, aerial recon, surveillance, observation, video, Forward-Looking Infrared)
- ☐ Inner perimeter (access control points, visible deterrents)
- ☐ Force Protection (Mobile Field Force, Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, SWAT)
- ☐ Investigation (crime/cause, ID locate, suspect ID, and apprehension)
- ☐ Traffic Control
- ☐ National Guard
- ☐ Escort function
- ☐ Temporary flight restriction

5. Provide for search and rescue of the public; Contain, control, mitigate, and/or suppress all hazards (fire, hazardous substances, and hazardous environments).

- ☐ Search and rescue (primary search, USAR, swift water, etc.)
- ☐ Fire containment (hold fire east of, west of, south of, north of)
- ☐ HAZMAT (hot zone, warm zone, cold zone, safe refuge areas, and mass decontamination)
- ☐ Environment
- ☐ Structural protection
- ☐ Tactical patrol

6. Restore, control, and maintain access, vital infrastructure, and utilities; Identify, isolate, and/or stabilize all structures that pose a safety threat to responders, the public, and the community.

- ☐ Highway/road/street restoration (debris management, snow/ice, and washouts)
- ☐ Emergency access
- ☐ Critical infrastructure safety/restoration
- ☐ Utilities: gas and electric (responder/public safety), sanitation, water (drinking and firefighting)
- ☐ Utilize engineering services for safety and restoration (bridge/roadways, dams/levees, landslides, flood control systems, and buildings/structures).

7. Ensure compliance with the Agency Administrator and stakeholders' priorities by:

- ☐ Damage assessment (disaster declaration)
- ☐ Cost Containment
- ☐ Recovery/Rehabilitation
- ☐ Economic impact
- ☐ Natural resources
- ☐ Political considerations and other limitations/expectations
- ☐ Demobilization
- ☐ Updates/briefings to the Agency Administrator and the EOC, ICS Form 209

8. Control the source of the spill.

- ☐ Complete emergency shutdown procedures.
- ☐ Conduct firefighting.
- ☐ Eliminate potential flammable vapor ignition sources.
- ☐ Initiate temporary repairs to stop the leak.
- ☐ Transfer the product to a Department of Transportation-approved container.
- ☐ Construct barriers to prevent spills from reaching the stream.
- ☐ Conduct salvage operations; do not interfere with spill cleanup operations.

9. Manage coordinated response efforts.

- ☐ Complete or confirm notifications.
- ☐ Establish a Unified Command organization and facilities (command post, etc.).
- ☐ Ensure local and tribal officials are included in the response organization.
- ☐ Initiate a spill response Incident Action Plan (IAP).
- ☐ Ensure mobilization and tracking of response resources.
- ☐ Account for personnel and equipment.
- ☐ Complete documentation.
- ☐ Evaluate planned response objectives vs. actual response (debrief).

10. Maximize protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

- ☐ Implement the Area Contingency Plan's pre-designated response strategies.
- ☐ Identify resources at risk in the spill vicinity.
- ☐ Track product movement and develop spill trajectories.
- ☐ Conduct visual assessments (e.g., aerial overflights, ground-truthing).
- ☐ Identify, prioritize, and flag areas used as habitats by endangered species.
- ☐ Develop/implement appropriate protection strategies.

11. Remove contamination from affected areas.

- ☐ Conduct appropriate cleanup efforts.
- ☐ Decontaminate structures (buildings, streets, sidewalks, etc.).
- ☐ Set up and operate vehicle and equipment cleaning operations to prevent off-site spread of contamination.
- ☐ Excavate contaminated soils to depths of two feet below the ground surface.
- ☐ Identify the contents of all drums and other containers.
- ☐ Restore the site to pre-cleanup conditions (backfill, regrade, fence, etc.).
- ☐ Keep stakeholders informed of response activities.
- ☐ Provide a forum to obtain stakeholder input and concerns.
- ☐ Provide stakeholders with details of response actions.
- ☐ Identify and document stakeholder concerns and issues.
- ☐ Provide elected officials with details of response actions.

12. Minimize economic impacts.

- ☐ Consider tourism, commerce, and local economic impacts throughout the response.
- ☐ Protect public and private assets as resources permit.
- ☐ Establish a damage claims process.
- ☐ Implement safe and practical measures that will allow businesses to stay open during cleanup operations (alternate work schedules, dust and noise control, dust screens, etc.).

13. Keep the public informed of response activities.

- ☐ Provide timely safety announcements.
- ☐ Establish a public hotline.
- ☐ Establish an incident website.
- ☐ Implement a community relations plan.
- ☐ Establish a Joint Information Center (JIC).
- ☐ Conduct regular news briefings.
- ☐ Manage news media access to spill response activities.
- ☐ Conduct public meetings as appropriate.

Contingency Plan Checklist

Objectives

- ☐ Identify objectives not already in the IAP and specific to the contingency issue.
- ☐ Include specific or special instructions and safety information.
- ☐ Assign resources to tasks such as:
 - Recon
 - Outside agency coordination
 - Tactical planning
 - Public relations

Trigger Points/Management Action Points

- ☐ Define trigger points or management action points that initiate the contingency plan (e.g., "If the hazardous material passes this point" or "If the protesters begin violent activities").

Activation Authority

- ☐ Identify the individual(s) who will initiate the contingency plan, such as:
 - IC/UC
 - OSC
 - Contingency Plan Branch Director
 - Division/Group Supervisor

Responsibilities During Implementation

- ☐ Clearly define responsibilities for:
 - IC/UC
 - OSC
 - EOC

Organization

- ☐ Provide a diagram and brief description of the operational organization needed to manage the contingency or event.

Resources

- ☐ Identify resources that will be utilized to manage the contingency.
 - Specify resources or a generic “type” of resources.
 - Consider pre-staging resources or reassigning them from other areas of the incident if necessary.

Tactical Operations

- ☐ Outline strategies and tactics necessary to carry out the contingency plan.

Communications

- ☐ Notify the affected public with concise directions and information.
- ☐ Develop a communications plan for contingency operations and resources.
 - Ensure high priority and exclusive use of frequencies for contingency resources when possible.

Maps

- ☐ Include maps with:
 - Areas to be evacuated or protected
 - Values at risk
 - Appropriate symbology
 - New division breaks
 - Staging areas

Demobilization Plan Template

Demobilization Plan

Incident: _____

Location: _____

Date and Time Prepared: _____

Prepared by: _____

Title: _____

Approved by: _____

Title: _____

Approved by: _____

Title: _____

Approved by: _____

Title: _____

Approved by: _____

Title: _____

Approved by: _____

Title: _____

Approved by: _____

Title: _____

Approved by: _____

Title: _____

This Demobilization Plan contains five (5) sections:

1. General Information
2. Responsibilities
3. Release Priorities
4. Release Procedures
5. Travel Information

1. General Information:

- All releases of resources from the incident will be initiated in the Demobilization Unit after the approval of the IC.
- The size and location of the incident base allow for the holding of surplus equipment and personnel while processing all releases safely and efficiently.
- No resources are to leave the incident until authorized to do so.
- At this time, no off-incident demobilization center will be activated.
- An off-incident staging area could be established at: _____.
- The Logistics Section will provide for all ground transportation of released personnel and equipment.
- The Demobilization Unit will provide for any flight arrangements, giving at least 24 hours' notice to expanded dispatch.
- All property, including rental vehicles, shall be properly returned and appropriate records forwarded to Finance/Administration.

The following are general guidelines to be followed for resources that are leaving the incident:

- A. No person(s) will be released without having a MINIMUM of _____ hours of rest.
 - a. (Unless specifically approved by the IC.)
- B. All vehicles leaving the incident will have a safety inspection.
 - a. (Any deficiencies noted or corrected)
- C. If applicable, all oversized vehicles (e.g., cranes, transports) MUST have appropriate permits to comply with state vehicle codes and State Road Department and Highway Patrol requirements.
- D. All resources MUST be able to arrive at their home base prior to 2200 hours (10 PM).
- E. All resources must meet their individual agency regulations pertaining to rest and travel.

- F. All Strike (Resource) Team/Task Force Leaders, single resources, and IMT members will be thoroughly briefed:
 - a. Prior to leaving the incident. The briefing should include:
 - 1. Method of travel
 - 2. Personnel
 - 3. Destination
 - 4. ETD Camp/ETA Home Base
 - 5. Transportation arrangements
- G. All personnel traveling on commercial aircraft should be clean.
- H. To prevent delays and work overloads:
 - a. Notify Logistics and Finance/Admin. as soon as resources are identified for demobilization at least 24 hours in advance.
 - b. Expanded dispatch will be notified at least 24 hours in advance.
 - c. Notification of incident personnel will occur by posting Tentative Releases 36 hours in advance.
 - d. Strike (Resource) Team/Task Force Leaders, single resources, and IMT members will also be paged when their demobilization process begins.
- I. Performance ratings are required for all personnel.

2. Responsibilities

Section chiefs and unit leaders are responsible for determining resources surplus to their needs and submitting lists to the Demobilization and Resources Unit Leader or the Planning Section Chief.

The Demobilization Unit Leader (or Planning Section) is responsible for:

- Preparing the Demobilization Plan.
- Compiling “tentative” and “final” release sheets.
- Making all notifications regarding tentative and final releases from the incident (on and off incident).
- Working with jurisdictional agencies to arrange air transportation.
- Ensuring all signatures are obtained on the Demobilization Check-Out (ICS Form 221).
- Monitoring the demobilization process and making any adjustments.

The Incident Commander is responsible for:

- Establishing the release priorities.
- Review and approval of the Demobilization Plan.
- Review and approval of all tentative release sheets.

The Safety Officer is responsible for:

- Identifying any special safety considerations for the Demobilization Plan

The Planning Section Chief is responsible for:

- Review and approval of the Demobilization Plan.

The Logistics Section Chief is responsible for:

- Facilities: All personnel scheduled for release have good facilities for proper rest.
- Facilities: All sleeping and work areas are cleaned up before personnel are released.
- Supply: ensuring that all non-expendable items are returned or accounted for prior to release.
- Transportation: ensuring there is adequate ground transportation during the release process.
- Communications: ensuring all radios, phones, and pagers are returned or accounted for.
- Food Unit Leader: ensuring there will be adequate meals for those being released and those remaining.

The Finance/Administration Section Chief is responsible for:

- Completion of all personal time reports.
- Completion of all rental and agency equipment time reports.
- Contract equipment payments as required.

3. Release Priorities:

The following release priorities have been established by the IC:

- _____
- _____

4. Release Procedures:

- All IMT members shall be released at the same time to allow for after-action issues and a smooth transition.
- Section chiefs and unit leaders will identify surpluses within their units and submit a list(s) to the Demobilization Unit Leader in the Planning Section.
- The Demobilization Unit will form a “tentative release” list for approval by the IC.
- The Demobilization Unit will work with resources to ensure that status board(s) are current.
- After “tentative release” approval, Planning will contact expanded dispatch or the appropriate agency.
- The Dispatch system will contact all respective home agencies.

- The Demobilization Unit will give a minimum of 24 hours' notice for all resources needing flight arrangements.
- The Demobilization Unit will give transportation lead time to arrange ground transportation.

When final approval for releases is obtained, the Demobilization Unit will:

- Prepare transportation manifests.
- Notify incident supervisors and/or personnel to be released.
- Give incident supervisors and/or personnel the final release and briefing.
- The Resources Unit and/or personnel will take the Demobilization Check-Out (ICS Form 221) to:
 - Communications Unit Leader: if communication equipment is issued.
 - Transportation Unit Leader: for the transportation plan, rental vehicle issued, and vehicle safety inspection.
 - Facilities Unit Leader: to ensure all facilities are clean.
 - Supply Unit Leader: to ensure all expendable supplies are returned.
 - Finance/Administration Section: to close out all personnel and equipment time records.
 - Documentation Unit Leader: to turn in all copies of ICS Form 214 and any necessary paperwork.
 - Demobilization Unit Leader: to turn in the ICS Form 221 with all the signatures.

The Demobilization Unit will be the last stop in the release process, and personnel will:

- Sign off the Demobilization Check-Out (ICS Form 221).
- Notify the Resources Unit so that T-Card information is complete.
- Notify local agency and home unit of ETD and ETA, destination, and travel arrangements.
- Collect and send all demobilization paperwork to the Documentation Unit.

5. Travel Information:

- All resources will have a minimum amount of rest prior to being released from the incident.
- Personnel traveling on commercial aircraft will be given time to shower and dress in clean clothes.
- Any heavy or oversized equipment must have appropriate permits and follow any limitations on the movement of their equipment on public highways.
- All resources will meet any agency-specific requirements on hours of travel per day or other restrictions concerning travel.

- During travel, ground resources should check in with Dispatch every two hours.
- During travel, resources should check in with Dispatch immediately should any problems occur.
- All released resources will check in with their home unit upon arrival at their home unit.

Incident Directory:

See the attached Incident Communication Plan and phone lists.

Sample IC Incident Narrative

The goal for CIIMT1 was to develop a strategy that would contain, confine, and monitor the Liberty Fire while meeting objectives defined in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) decision. The affected land ownership included the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Forest Service (FS), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Protection responsibility within the Liberty Fire is shared by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), the Forest Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Values at risk were identified as the designated primitive area within the Flathead Indian Reservation, Rattlesnake Wilderness within the Lolo National Forest, and private lands owned by The Nature Conservancy. Cultural values on tribal land include spiritual and traditional medicine gathering, recreational value within the designated wilderness, and ecological values on TNC lands.

The three signing agencies (DNRC, FS, BIA) delivered a concise delegation of authority and leader's intent document that provided expectations and direction to all functions of the Incident Management Team (IMT). The Wildland Fire Decision Support document delivered a full suppression course of action, which was later revised to a confine, contain, and monitor direction.

CIIMT1 used operational assessments and fire modeling techniques to develop on-the-ground actions that had the highest probability for success regarding firefighter safety, fire effects, timing, and agency concerns to develop indirect line locations. Line locations were agreed upon by resource advisors, Agency Administrators, and private landowners.

An operational plan was developed by the Operations and Planning Sections, supported by fire modeling. The plan incorporated management action points (MAPs) addressing values at risk, the likelihood of fire threat to values at risk, and areas where the fire could cross primary direct and indirect containment lines. This provided a foundation to evaluate the fuel and weather conditions, the probability of success, and necessary contingency planning to keep the fire from affecting values at risk. This strategy is the guiding principle for Liberty Fire suppression activities with the intent to minimize further growth of the fire, reduce exposure to firefighters, focus suppression efforts, and minimize cost.

This fire is unique due to multiple strategies (confine, contain, and monitor) being used in a coordinated stakeholder effort. With multiple jurisdictions affected, interagency coordination required regularly scheduled IMT/Agency Administrator meetings to develop a consistent and common direction for the IMT.

The Liberty Fire is under a cost-share agreement between the BIA and DNRC.

Successes

- The interaction between the team, Agency Administrators, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes developed a partnership that allowed the team to be consistent in direction and, in turn, developed trust between the team and stakeholders. This integration and shared leadership provided a very effective model for overall sound risk management.
- The team continually right-sized the organization to match the complexity of the incident and the protection of values at risk.

Challenges

- Articulating the confine, contain, and monitor methods on the ICS Form 209 was confusing when reporting percentages of work completed rather than the traditional percentage contained historically used to measure production and success. The 2017 National Multiagency Coordinating Group direction is what CIIMT1 followed; however, because there is no national standard and the ICS Form 209 report is not formatted to articulate the new expectations of the coordination group, the process of explaining IMT progress is confusing.