
NIMS ICS Operations Section Chief Training Guide

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Introduction

The Operations Section Chief (OSC) is responsible for managing incident operations and directing the implementation of strategies and tactics that support incident objectives. As a member of the General Staff, the OSC leads the Operations Section, supervises tactical resources, coordinates operational activities, and works closely with the Incident Commander/Unified Command (IC/UC) and other Incident Management Team (IMT) personnel to achieve incident objectives safely and effectively.

Success in the OSC position requires the ability to translate incident objectives into operational strategies, tactics, and work assignments; maintain situational awareness; supervise and organize operational resources; adapt to changing incident conditions; and support the incident planning process throughout the incident lifecycle. Effective OSCs also rely on leadership experience, sound judgment, collaboration, and continuous learning to support operational decision-making and incident success.

This includes the ability to:

- Translate incident objectives into strategies, tactics, and work assignments
- Effectively manage span of control
- Coordinate with branches (including the Air Operations, when activated), divisions, and groups
- Adapt to changing incident conditions
- Formulate structured transition and demobilization strategies

This training guide provides an overview of the OSC's roles, responsibilities, and functions within the Incident Command System (ICS). It is designed to complement the ICS Training Reference Guide and support completion of the pre-work requirements for the NIMS ICS Operations Section Chief course.

Chapter 1: OSC Position Overview

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

- Define the purpose, function, and structure of the Operations Section.
- Identify the OSC's specific duties regarding risk assessment, hazard mitigation, and safety management.
- Identify how the OSC's responsibilities relate to leader's intent, priorities, incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.

OSC's Key Responsibilities

The OSC is a member of the General Staff, reporting directly to the Incident Commander/Unified Command (IC/UC). The OSC is primarily responsible for the direct management of all tactical operations, translating the IC/UC's objectives into practical, on-the-ground strategies and tactics. To qualify for this role, a candidate demonstrates proficiency in each of the four competencies outlined in the PTB.

Position Task Book (PTB)



The National Qualification System (NQS) PTBs 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. Note: The PTBs assigned by your agency or jurisdiction may vary.

(<https://rtlt.preptoolkit.fema.gov/Public>)

Competency 1: Assume Position Responsibilities

The OSC effectively assumes position responsibilities. Key behaviors and tasks associated with this competency can be summarized as:

- Ensuring Readiness: Arriving properly equipped with an authorized position "go-kit" containing tactical guidelines, position manuals, and necessary ICS forms.
- Gathering Initial Situational Information: Receiving an initial briefing from the IC/UC or outgoing OSC regarding current incident priorities, strategies, objectives, and hazards.
- Activating the Section: Establishing the initial section organization, identifying the operational rhythm, and determining daily briefing and debriefing schedules with assigned personnel while adhering to span-of-control guidelines.
- Information Management: Initiating and maintaining the Section Activity Log (ICS Form 214) to establish and preserve shared situational awareness.

- **Relationship Management:** Establishing and maintaining positive interpersonal and interagency working relationships with functional areas, local agencies, and hosting units within the incident management structure.

Competency 2: Lead Assigned Personnel

The OSC effectively leads assigned personnel. Key behaviors and tasks associated with this competency can be summarized as:

- **Modeling Leadership Values:** Exhibiting the core principles of duty, respect, and integrity by making sound, timely decisions, and keeping section personnel informed.
- **Personnel Safety and Welfare:** Ensuring the health, safety, welfare, accountability, and proper crew rotation/rest cycles of all assigned personnel.
- **Clear Task Assignment:** Supervising staff to ensure they fully understand operational expectations, and allocating tasks based on personnel qualifications and capabilities.
- **Mentorship:** Training and mentoring assigned subordinates to optimize team performance and maintain professional standards.

Competency 3: Conduct Operations and Ensure Completion of Assigned Tasks

The OSC effectively conducts operations and ensures completion of assigned tasks. Key behaviors and tasks associated with this competency can be summarized as:

- **Tactical Planning:** Identifying the specific kind, type, and quantity of resources necessary to achieve objectives, and executing the ordering process through the Logistics Section.
- **Executing the Action Plan:** Implementing and managing tactical operations to maintain a common operating picture throughout the section, utilizing functional or geographical branches and divisions/groups as needed.
- **Dynamic Adjustment:** Modifying tactical operations based on ongoing changes to the incident situation, resource availability, and environmental hazards.
- **Information Reporting:** Tracking and reporting critical information requirements (CIRs), Essential Elements of Information (EELs), and significant operational developments through established incident reporting processes.
- **Demobilization Planning:** Reviewing and identifying excess resources within the section and coordinating a tentative demobilization list through the proper IMT channels.

Competency 4: Communicate Effectively

The OSC communicates effectively. Key behaviors and tasks associated with this competency can be summarized as:

- **Briefing and Debriefing Leadership:** Preparing for and leading comprehensive internal staff briefings and debriefings to maintain a common operating picture across the section.
- **Information Exchange and Evaluation:** Participating actively in IMT briefings to share, evaluate, and integrate tactical information with other Command and General Staff members.
- **Collaborative Hazard Mitigation:** Working directly with the Safety Officer (SOFR) during briefings to identify environmental or operational safety hazards and develop corresponding mitigation strategies.
- **External and Public Integration:** Briefing external support organizations to ensure unified efforts, and maintaining accurate, quality operational updates for the Public Information Officer (PIO) to support public messaging.

Day-in-the-Life During the First Operational Period

The table below outlines how the OSC applies these key responsibilities and positional elements when structuring their schedule during the first operational period.

Table 1: An OSC's Day-in-the-Life

Step	Task	Task Details
1.	Check in to the incident.	Complete the Incident Check-In List (ICS Form 211) or the check-in process used by the incident/event.
2.	Meet with the IC/UC and other Command and General Staff members.	Obtain situational awareness, the common operating picture, and team direction.
3.	Gather information.	Obtain intelligence and more situational awareness from current Operations personnel or other sources.
4.	Attend the Agency Administrator Briefing, if possible.	Receive direction from the Agency Administrator. Then, utilize the Incident Briefing (ICS Form 201) to collect information specific to the Operations Section.

Step	Task	Task Details
5.	Attend an informal initial IC/UC or OSC briefing. <i>Note: This is not a formal briefing in the Planning P.</i>	Learn the details of the incident, current objectives, priorities, and the existing Operations organization.
6.	Along with the IC/UC, determine if there are any critical issues the IMT needs to address immediately.	Consider initiating public protection measures, requesting additional critical resources, and implementing major strategy changes.
7.	Manage and support current operations.	Assign tasks, track task completion, and modify, adjust, or terminate unsafe and ineffective strategies or tactics.
8.	Evaluate the incident and verify your knowledge of the situation with the initial IC/UC or outgoing OSC.	Survey the incident by air or on land (fly or drive to the incident) and get updates from current field supervisors.
9.	Attend the Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting.	Obtain direction from the IC/UC. Brief the IC/UC and Command and General Staff on the status of the incident and current operations.
10.	Continue to manage and support current operations.	Modify, adjust, or terminate unsafe and ineffective strategies or tactics.
11.	Assign Operations Section deputies to manage the span of control.	Consider adding a Deputy OSC for planning operations or an OSC for night operations.

Step	Task	Task Details
12.	Prepare for the Tactics Meeting.	Ensure the SOFR, Planning Section Chief (PSC)/Resources Unit Leader (RESL), Logistics Section Chief (LSC), and any technical specialists know the time and location of the Tactics Meeting. Review the leader's intent, re-evaluate values at risk (e.g., protection of the population, property, environment, critical infrastructure, economic drivers, and the preservation of cultural/historical areas of importance), review strategic planning projects for the incident, and develop primary and alternate strategies. Discuss resource needs for the next operational period with Operations personnel. Then, draft the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215) for the PSC and RESL.
13.	Attend the Tactics Meeting.	Confirm that the SOFR, PSC, RESL, LSC, and any technical specialists are at the Tactics Meeting. Tasks during this meeting include developing and documenting the Operations organization chart for the next operational period, validating the accuracy of ICS Form 215, and placing necessary resource requests with the Logistics Section for the next operational period.
14.	Prepare for the Planning Meeting.	Preparing includes sharing the OSC's proposed tactical plan with the IC/UC and Command and General Staff members, anticipating questions or issues that may arise during the meeting, and conducting a final review of the Operations Section.

Step	Task	Task Details
15.	Attend the Planning Meeting.	During the Planning Meeting, provide an update on current operations for the IC/UC and Command and General Staff, present the proposed tactical plan for the next operational period, and, in conjunction with the PSC, ensure the IC/UC's operational objectives are supported in the tactical plan.
16.	Continue to manage and support current operations.	Assign tasks, track task completion, and modify, adjust, or terminate unsafe and ineffective strategies or tactics.
17.	Review all Assignment Lists (ICS Form 204).	As the RESL compiles the IAP, ensure they transcribe work assignments to every Assignment List (ICS Form 204) and list the assignments with the correct resources for each division/group and staging area.
18.	Continue to manage and support current operations until the Operational Period Briefing.	Assign tasks, track task completion, and modify, adjust, or terminate unsafe and ineffective strategies or tactics.

Establishing and Structuring the Operations Section

The IC/UC selects the OSC based on qualifications, competence, and relevant incident experience. Once assigned, the OSC follows NIMS guidance to structure an Operations Section that will allow personnel to safely plan and execute tactical activities in support of incident objectives.

Factors Influencing Organization of the Operations Section

Tactics drive resource requirements, and the internal structure should be scaled appropriately to manage those resources. When building the section, the OSC evaluates:

- Nature, scope, type, and complexity or severity of the incident.
- Area of Responsibility (AOR), jurisdictions, and various organizations involved.
- Established incident priorities, objectives, and overall strategies.
- Geographic area, functional activities required, total number of resources, and supervisor staff structure necessary to maintain a manageable span of control.

Functions of Operations Section Personnel

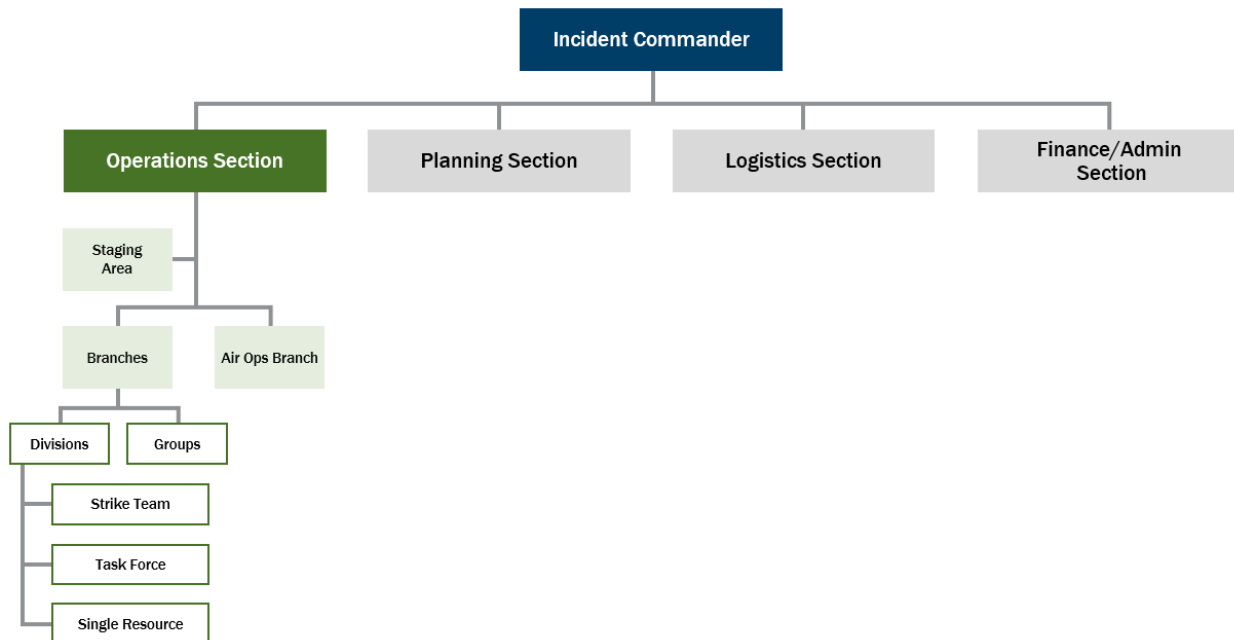
The Operations Section's personnel perform many functions, including:

- Directing the management of tactical activities on the IC/UC's behalf.
- Developing and implementing specific tactics to achieve established incident objectives.
- Defining the exact resources required to accomplish assigned tactics.
- Maintaining a manageable span of control and optimizing resource utilization.
- Supporting the IMT's development of the IAP for each operational period.
- Tracking and communicating EEIs, resource status, and task completion.

Organizational Hierarchy of the Operations Section

The OSC develops an Operations Section organization that supports incident objectives while maintaining effective supervision and a manageable span of control. The OSC should have thorough knowledge of the roles within the Operations Section and know exactly when and how to activate specific positions.

Figure 1: The Operations Section Organizational Structure



Deputy Operations Section Chief (DOSC)

The OSC may assign one or more DOSCs to provide close oversight or general assistance. A DOSC should have the same qualifications as a fully credentialed OSC.

Potential responsibilities of the DOSC include:

- **Planning Operations (“Planning Ops”):** Provides operational coordination and support during the planning process and IAP development.
- **Shift Variance Support:** Directly oversees nighttime or secondary operational periods.
- **Strategic Depth:** Develops alternative strategies, supports long-range strategic planning, or manages the transition into recovery operations.
- **Incident Within an Incident (IWI):** May be assigned to manage or coordinate response activities associated with an IWI, allowing the primary OSC to remain focused on the main mission.

Branches and Branch Directors

Branches may be activated when span of control considerations, geographic dispersion, functional complexity, or operational requirements indicate the need for an additional supervisory level. Branches are established under the leadership of a branch director for major aspects of incident operations. Because the OSC builds the section from the ground up, activating a Branch requires clear justification.

- **Functional Branching:** Activated when the incident involves diverse operations that require specialized skills or resources, the OSC may create branches based on functions, such as law enforcement, search and rescue, and medical/Emergency Medical Services (EMS).
- **Geographical Branching:** Activated when the incident covers a wide geographical area, like a flood or tornado touchdown path covering many square miles, the OSC may establish branches to help with field supervision.

Branch Naming Conventions

The naming convention for a branch can vary depending on the specific needs of the incident and the preferences of the IMT. The goal of the naming convention is to provide clarity and organization within the Operations Section, ensuring effective management of resources and operations during an incident response.

- **Geographical Branches**
 - Geographic branches are often identified using numbers, Roman numerals, geographic descriptors, or other incident-specific naming conventions.
 - Example: “Branch V” (Downtown Area Operations).

- **Functional Branches**
 - Functional branches are typically named for the function they perform.
 - Example: “Medical Branch” (Supervising the Treatment, Transport, and Triage Groups).

Operations Branch Director

An Operations Branch Director reports directly to the OSC and is responsible for managing the branch’s tactical operations. Branch Directors should possess the qualifications, experience, and competencies appropriate for the assigned branch responsibilities.

Key responsibilities of the Operations Branch Director include:

- Execute tactical plans to achieve operational objectives.
- Assist in allocating resources effectively to support operations.
- Supervise tactical operations to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
- Coordinate communication between tactical units and support functions.
- Enforce safety protocols to maintain a safe working environment.
- Monitor and assess operational effectiveness. Provide feedback to adjust strategies.
- Act as a liaison between other branches and sections.
- Assist in managing resources and facilitating resource requests.

The Operations Branch Director should immediately report to the OSC when:

- The IAP needs to be modified.
- To confirm what additional resources are required.
- For available surplus resources.
- When hazardous situations or significant events occur, such as the triggering of an EEI/critical reporting threshold. For example, if a wildfire threatens to breach containment lines and spread toward populated areas, this will trigger critical reporting thresholds for potential evacuations and heightened firefighting efforts.

Divisions, Groups, and Supervisors

Divisions and Groups are equal in the ICS hierarchy and report directly to the OSC or the active branch director. While they do not report to one another, they frequently interact when a functional group operates within a division's geographic area.

Divisions (Geographic)

Divisions divide an incident into distinct geographical areas. Boundaries are defined on maps using physical features on the ground (roads, ridges, rivers). Characteristics of Divisions include:

- **Span of Control:** Divisions help maintain a manageable span of control for supervisors by breaking down the incident operational area into two or more smaller, more manageable geographical areas.
- **Reporting Structure:** NIMS emphasizes unity of command and a standard reporting structure. DIVS report directly to the OSC or their respective branch director, if established, providing updates on operational activities, resource needs, and incident progress.
- **Communication and Coordination:** Communication and coordination between divisions, as well as with other branches/sections, ensure the effective integration of efforts and resources.

Divisions may be further subdivided into segments using incident-specific naming conventions to facilitate supervision, accountability, and resource management. Segment designations vary by incident and organization and should be clearly communicated to assigned personnel.

Groups (Functional)

Groups organize specialized resources (e.g., HAZMAT Group, a Triage Group) to address specific functional needs across the incident. Groups can operate across multiple geographical divisions, as necessary.

Characteristics of Groups include:

- **Task Specialization:** Groups often consist of resources with specialized skills, equipment, or training related to the assigned functional area or activity.
- **Reporting Structure:** Supervisors report directly to the OSC or their respective Branch Director, if established, providing updates on operational activities, resource needs, and incident progress within their assigned group.
- **Flexible Structure:** The number and structure of groups may vary depending on the incident's size, complexity, and operational requirements. An OSC may establish new groups or reorganize existing groups to adapt to changing circumstances.

Functional groups may operate within the geographic area assigned to a division. For example, a Law Enforcement Investigations Group may operate within an area managed by a geographic division, performing search and rescue operations. In this case, the two elements should communicate and coordinate their activities.

Division/Group Supervisor (DIVS)

An OSC uses DIVSs to manage tactical operations within their assigned division/group. DIVSs use the same ICS position title regardless of whether they supervise a geographic division or a functional group. They report directly to the OSC (or Branch Director, if activated) and coordinate and supervise assigned tactical resources and activities within their area of responsibility.

Key responsibilities of the DIVS include:

- Execute tactical plans and ensure that plans achieve operational objectives within their designated area of responsibility.
- Coordinate and supervise assigned tactical resources and activities within their division/group.
- Rely on the technical expertise of the strike team and task force leaders or specialized team supervisors if they are not familiar with the functions.
- Allocate resources effectively within their division or group based on the OSC's overall incident objectives and resource priorities.
- Supervise tactical operations and ensure resources are deployed and utilized efficiently to achieve operational goals.
- Facilitate communication between units, tactical resources, and other positions within their division/group and other branches/sections. Ensure information flows effectively and that the DIVS informs the OSC (or the Branch Director, if appointed) of operational developments.
- Enforce safety protocols and procedures within their area of responsibility to minimize risks to personnel and maintain a safe working environment.
- Monitor the progress of tactical operations, assess operational effectiveness, and provide feedback to the OSC or their respective Branch Director (if applicable) for ongoing evaluation and adjustment of operational strategies.
- Maintain accurate records of operational activities, resource allocations, and incident developments within their division/group, contributing to the OSC's overall documentation and reporting requirements.

Resource Configurations

The OSC packages tactical assets into three configurations to manage the span of control and streamline field coordination.

Strike Teams (Resource Teams)

Strike Teams consist of a specified number of resources of the same kind and type operating under a common leader and with common communications. They provide a highly cohesive team approach for rapid deployment to critical areas. A strike team should have a strike

team leader and common communications, including the same radio frequencies, communications protocols, and equipment.

Key responsibilities of Strike Teams include:

- Provide a cohesive team approach to conducting tactical assignments while helping to maintain the span of control.
- Manage specific operational assignments or functions safely and effectively during incidents.
- Provide specialized support in areas such as firefighting, hazardous materials response, search and rescue, medical services, or other functional needs during incidents with multiple operational objectives or diverse challenges.
- Offer rapid deployment to critical incident areas requiring immediate action, such as initial fire suppression efforts, swift water rescues, or medical triage and treatment zones.
- Streamline resource coordination and allocation (e.g., when the span of control becomes challenging for individual supervisors, or when resources need to be consolidated for effective management).
- Provide specialized equipment, expertise, or capabilities effectively and efficiently.
- Deploy to prevent potential incidents from escalating (e.g., using firefighting strike teams in high-risk areas during periods of elevated fire danger).
- Reinforce current operations or provide relief to personnel already on the scene.

Task Forces

Task Forces consist of different kinds and types of resources combined to accomplish a multifaceted mission (e.g., a civil unrest task force composed of two engines, a ladder truck, and two law enforcement patrol cars for force protection under a single leader). They are typically deployed to address complex assignments crossing multiple disciplines or jurisdictions.

Characteristics of Task Forces:

- Composed of diverse resources with different skills, equipment, and expertise, often from other jurisdictions or agencies.
- May include personnel and equipment from different organizations, such as fire departments, law enforcement agencies, and emergency medical services. For example, during civil unrest, a task force could be composed of two T-1 engines, a ladder truck for fire suppression, and two patrol cars for force protection under a single task force leader.
- Address complex or multifaceted incident needs that require a coordinated effort across multiple functions, disciplines, or jurisdictions.

- Serve specialized functions, such as urban search and rescue, hazardous materials response, or law enforcement support, where different resources and expertise are required.

Single Resources

A single resource is an individual response element—such as an individual piece of equipment, a vehicle, a person, or a specialized team acting as a standalone unit—that performs distinct tasks within the Operations Section. The OSC uses single resources for specific, standalone tasks or assignments within an incident. Single resources are categorized into four types:

- **Individual Personnel:** Single resources can include individual personnel with specialized skills or expertise, such as the IC, SOFRs, Logistics specialists, or medical personnel.
- **Specialized Teams:** Certain specialized teams may function as a single resource. "Team" is a widely used term in incident response and should not be confused with a strike team, which is a group of the same kind and type of resource (e.g., five engines or five hand crews) with a common leader assigned to a specific task. Some examples of teams functioning as single resources are Technical Rescue Teams, K-9 Teams, and Hazardous Materials Response Teams (HMRTs).
- **Vehicles:** Single resources may also include vehicles with specialized capabilities, such as fire engines, ambulances, command vehicles, or utility vehicles that the IMT uses for transportation, communication, or operational support.
- **Equipment:** The OSC may deploy individual pieces of equipment, such as generators, pumps, lights, communications devices (which may or may not require additional staffing to operate the equipment), or medical supplies as single resources to support specific operational tasks or functions.

How to Use Single Resources

- Employ single resources to perform specific tasks or functions within the Operations Section. Combine single resources into strike teams or task forces, as necessary.
- Employ vehicles, equipment, or personnel to provide support for operational activities, such as logistics support, communications support, or medical assistance.
- Leverage single resources for rapid deployment to critical incident areas where immediate action is needed.
- Use specialized teams or equipment for specialized tasks or functions, such as technical rescue operations, hazardous materials response, or incident command support.

Specialized Teams Managed as Single Resources

Some incidents utilize specialized teams that are managed as Single Resources. Examples include:

- **SWAT Team:** A law enforcement tactical team that performs specialized high-risk operations.
- **Mobile Field Force:** A law enforcement team organized to support crowd management, civil disturbance operations, or large-scale public safety events.
- **Hazardous Materials Response Team (HMRT):** A team trained and equipped to respond to hazardous materials incidents.

The composition, capabilities, and organizational structure of these teams vary by jurisdiction and agency. When assigned to an incident, they are managed and supervised in accordance with ICS principles and incident objectives.



The FEMA RTLT provides a breakdown of resource configurations by kind and type. Access current listings at:
<https://rtlt.preptoolkit.fema.gov/Public>.

Staging Areas and Staging Management

The OSC establishes staging areas to gather, store, and track unassigned resources waiting for immediate deployment. Staging Areas serve as a critical intermediary position between active operational assignment and the demobilization waitlist.

OSCs use staged resources during an incident in the following ways:

- To address the initial response for new incidents as part of a contingency plan.
- To relieve or rest assigned resources (work/rest cycles).
- To assign additional resources.
- To stage excess capacity to respond to contingencies.

The OSC can establish as many staging areas as needed. Be sure to name staging areas based on their location (e.g., 32nd Street Staging Area) and include a Staging Area Manager (STAM). Staging areas are a good intermediary position between being operationally assigned and being on the demobilization waitlist.

Assignment List (ICS Form 204) for Staging

Some incidents utilize an Assignment List (ICS Form 204) or similar documentation to define staging area responsibilities, resource expectations, reporting instructions, and special considerations. When used for a staging area, the ICS Form 204 may:

- Identify the Staging Area Manager (STAM) and provide contact information.
- Communicate reporting instructions and operational expectations.
- Describe potential assignments or incident-specific considerations.
- Reinforce resource readiness and deployment expectations.

Staging Area Manager (STAM)

A STAM staffs the Staging Area and does the following:

- Reports directly to the OSC and keeps them informed.
- Keeps an inventory of the Staging Area.
- Acts as a point of contact with the Resources Unit in the Incident Command Post (ICP).
- Meets the OSC's expectations. For example, if the OSC needs three front-end loaders in the Staging Area, the Staging Area Manager should contact the OSC if one front-end loader is being used for another purpose and only two remain. This may prompt the OSC to place an order for another front-end loader.

Air Operations Branch

When incident aviation resources are required, the OSC may establish an Air Operations Branch to manage and coordinate incident aviation activities.

Key responsibilities of the Air Operations Branch include:

- Facilitate the deployment and utilization of aerial resources, such as helicopters and drones, to support incident operations.
- Provide real-time aerial reconnaissance to gather information on incident conditions, supporting the OSC's decision-making processes.
- Ensure safe aviation operations by enforcing protocols and standards for pilot qualifications, aircraft maintenance, and flight planning.
- Manage the allocation and utilization of aerial assets based on incident priorities and operational needs.
- Facilitate communication and coordination between aerial resources, ground personnel, and incident command to integrate aerial operations effectively.
- Provide logistical support for aerial operations, including fueling, maintenance, and crew accommodations.

- Coordinate medical evacuation operations using helicopters or air ambulances to transport injured individuals to medical facilities.
- Provide an aerial platform for the OSC to conduct aerial observations and assess incident progress from a strategic perspective, as required.

Air Operations Branch Director (AOBD)

An OSC uses the AOBD to manage air operations. Air operations during a complex incident can be challenging and demanding. The AOBD coordinates and manages incident air operations and supports airspace coordination in accordance with agency authorities, policies, and applicable regulations. This highly technical area involves significant risk, so it is important to request a qualified AOBD.

Other key responsibilities of the AOBD include:

- Report to the OSC.
- Track pilot and aircraft duty hours.
- Manage agency restrictions.
- Manage and direct from the ground.
- Prepare the Air Operations Summary (ICS Form 220).
- Manage air tactics and air resources.
- Maintain constant communication with the OSC.
- Maintain contact with the communications center.
- Report on unsafe situations or issues (SAFECOMS).
- May coordinate requests for Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) through established agency and aviation coordination channels.
- Coordinate reporting of airspace conflicts, incursions, or aviation safety concerns through established aviation and agency channels.

Depending on the complexity of aviation operations, the Air Operations Branch may utilize additional supervisory positions to support air tactical operations, aircraft coordination, aviation support functions, and airbase or helibase management. Common positions include the Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS), Helicopter Coordinator (HLCO), Air Support Group Supervisor (ASGS), Fixed-Wing Base Manager, and Helibase Manager. The OSC and AOBD should ensure aviation resources are organized in a manner that maintains effective supervision, coordination, and safety.

Core Management and Leadership Principles

Resourcing and Staffing

The OSC determines and requests all personnel, teams, equipment, overhead, and supervisory staff needed to support operations. Resource requirements are driven directly by the selected tactics. When structuring and staffing the section, the OSC balances:

- The exact number of personnel necessary to achieve the assignment.
- Maintaining a strict, manageable span of control.
- Operational period factors, including day versus night operations, environmental hazards (heat, terrain), and mandatory work/rest cycles or crew rotations.
- The experience, specialized training, and skill level of available personnel.

Effective Delegation

Effective delegation prevents operational bottlenecks and builds field resilience. Managing a scaled section requires the OSC to delegate authority effectively without losing overall accountability. The OSC should understand the importance of delegation in achieving effective operations.

To delegate effectively, the OSC should:

- Listen to and use available personnel.
- Encourage proactive feedback and open communication to support sound decision-making and operational safety.
- Assign personnel strictly according to their verified ICS credentials, skills, and qualifications.
- Provide clear, explicit directions and baseline expectations.
- Assign clearly defined, non-overlapping tasks.
- Coach/mentor field supervisors without micromanaging.
- Maintain an attitude of “Trust but Verify” by systematically tracking task completion.

Internal and External Collaboration

The OSC maintains constant communication to ensure a common operating picture across all response stakeholders.

To promote healthy team dynamics, the OSC should:

- Foster a collaborative and cohesive team environment.
- Promote open communication and information sharing.
- Resolve conflicts or tensions that may arise among team members.
- Leverage individual strengths to optimize team performance.

Collaborating Internally

Collaboration between the OSC and IMT personnel includes regular briefings, meetings, conference calls, and discussions with IMT members and field supervisors to share information, address challenges, and coordinate incident operations.

Command and General Staff Members

The OSC collaborates closely with activated Command and General Staff members, including activated IC/UC, SOFR, PSC, LSC, Liaison Officer (LOFR), and Finance/Administration Section Chief (FSC). They coordinate response efforts, share information with the OSC, and align operational priorities to achieve incident objectives.

Operations Section

The OSC works with resources within the Operations Section, including branches and divisions/groups. An OSC uses and deploys operational resources, assigns tasks, and ensures the section conducts response activities safely, effectively, and efficiently. DIVSs and Branch Directors (if activated) are often closest to incident operations and can provide valuable situational awareness, operational perspective, and recommendations to support decision-making.

Collaborating Externally

Partner Agencies

The OSC collaborates with other agencies and organizations involved in the response, such as fire departments, law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, and public works departments.

Government Agencies

The OSC works with local, state, tribal, and federal government agencies to coordinate response efforts, share information, and obtain additional resources or support as needed.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Private Sector

To enhance response operations and address community needs effectively, the OSC collaborates with NGOs, private sector entities, and numerous volunteer organizations involved in the response and recovery efforts to utilize their resources, expertise, and capabilities.

Utilizing Staff Liaisons

Stakeholders via the LOFR

The OSC works with the LOFR to facilitate communication and collaboration with external stakeholders. The LOFR is responsible for sharing issues or challenges with assisting/cooperating agencies, such as assignments and special considerations.

The LOFR shares agency policy issues with the OSC, such as the use of force, union considerations, and training deficiencies. The LOFR also explains the impact that operations have on stakeholders (e.g., evacuations, road closures, smoke migration).

PIO and Joint Information Center (JIC)

The OSC utilizes the PIO to facilitate communication and collaboration with the JIC (if activated). The PIO is responsible for sharing information, addressing media inquiries, and coordinating public messaging to ensure transparency and accountability in the response effort.

Strategic Planning

The IC/UC develops and communicates the leader's intent, priorities, and objectives. The OSC identifies, selects, and implements the appropriate strategies and tactics to fulfill those objectives, often in collaboration with technical specialists, other members of the IMT, or field supervisors.

Leader's Intent and the POST Planning Framework

The development of tactical operations follows a logical progression from high-level leadership direction to specific field assignments, often referred to as the POST framework:

1. **Leader's Intent:** A clear, concise statement developed by the IC/UC detailing what personnel are expected to achieve to ensure a successful assignment. It encompasses the core task, the underlying purpose, and the desired operational end state.
2. **Priorities (P):** The foundational focal points established by the IC/UC based on the immediate needs of the incident (e.g., life safety, property preservation, environmental stabilization).
3. **Objectives (O):** Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) targets developed by the IC/UC using the established priorities.
4. **Strategies (S):** The general plan or approach designed by the OSC to control the situation and achieve the incident objectives. Strategies are initially developed as alternative courses of action before being filtered down to a final strategic plan.

5. Tactics (T): The specific actions, maneuvers, or techniques developed and implemented by the OSC to execute the chosen strategies and meet the objectives. Tactical resource requirements are derived directly from these defined actions.

Figure 2: Progression from Leader's Intent to Priorities, Objectives, Strategies, Tactics (POST)



Refer to the Sample Objective, Strategies, and Tactics figure in the ICS Training Reference Guide to learn more about how they work together.

Guidelines for Developing Strategies

During complex all-hazards incidents, the OSC may not be an expert in all aspects or facets of the response. When developing strategies, consult with those who can provide insights and recommendations.

Strategy development follows five standard rules:

- Strategic Mapping Ratio: A minimum of one strategy is required for each operational or control objective.
 - Control objectives represent broad, long-term incident management goals (e.g., life protection)
 - Operational objectives define specific actions within a set timeframe (e.g., perimeter containment)
- Multi-Strategy Execution: Complex objectives often require a combination of concurrent or consecutive strategies.
- Command Constraints: The Agency Administrator or IC/UC may restrict the use of certain tactics, such as limiting mechanized equipment in sensitive areas, requiring de-escalation techniques in crowd control situations, or prioritizing non-lethal measures such as tear gas or water cannons for crowd management. Broader considerations often influence these decisions to ensure a balanced and appropriate response.

- **PACE Integration:** Apply the Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency (PACE) planning framework to establish strategic depth and maintain emergency reserves in the Staging Area.
- **Continuous Re-evaluation:** Incidents are dynamic. Strategies must be formally re-evaluated and adjusted during every Command and General Staff Meeting and Tactics Meeting.

Design Support Tools

To systematically evaluate course-of-action options and select the best strategies, the OSC leverages four key decision models:

- **Pre-established Agency Plans:** Utilize existing Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) and corresponding functional annexes, Area Contingency Plans, or pre-mapped Evaluation Plans to accelerate the strategic selection process.
- **Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP):** MDMP is a systematic process that enables commanders and their staff to apply critical and creative thinking and doctrine to solve problems and establish the framework and conditions for commanders to make effective decisions.
- **Work Analysis Matrix (ICS Form 234-CG):** The Work Analysis Matrix form (ICS 234-CG) is designed to help select the best strategies and tactics to achieve the operational objectives. This optional form assists staff in carrying out incident objectives by outlining the response's who, what, where, when, and how.
- **Strategic Analysis Worksheet:** The Strategic Analysis Worksheet found in the National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG) S-420 pre-course work is helpful for thinking through alternative strategies and articulating important aspects of each alternative.

Incident Exemplars: Objective to Tactic Progression

This is an excerpt from a simulated incident involving a large oil spill in open water. It shows the progression from one incident's objective, to strategy, to tactical work assignments.

Table 2: Progression from an Objective to Tactics

Objective: Within 48 hours, protect the environmentally sensitive areas of Eden Cove, the marsh areas, and the Harborview water intake by deploying containment booms and recovering oil using shallow water skimmers.

Strategy	Tactic
Containment	Deploy a 36' sea boom east of the leading edge of the oil spill and on the north and south flanks to contain the product.
Protect sensitive areas	Deploy an 18' sea boom from Dana Point to Shoreline Point to protect Eden Cove and the marsh areas. Deploy primary and secondary 18' sea booms in a deflection pattern to protect the Harborview water intake.
Collection, recovery, and disposal	Utilize shallow water skimmers to recover the product from the surface of the water and transport it to land for proper disposal.

Work Analysis Matrix (ICS Form 234-CG)

Figure 3: Work Analysis Matrix

		WORK ANALYSIS MATRIX ICS 234-CG	
1. Incident Name		2. Operational Period From: To:	
3. Operation's Objectives DESIRED OUTCOME	4. Optional Strategies HOW	5. Tactics/Work Assignments WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN	

The figure illustrates the optional Work Analysis Matrix. The OSC may use this tool to compare potential strategies and tactics and document key operational considerations. Information developed using the form may support completion of the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215).

Another purpose of the ICS Form 234-CG is to present alternative (or what-if) strategies and tactics to respond to changes in operational conditions (e.g., adverse weather). This form is a formalized version of how most OSCs turn objectives into tactical fieldwork.

The OSC and PSC complete this optional form prior to the Tactics Meeting.

Strategies for Different Kinds of Incidents

The OSC will develop strategies and tactics for a variety of incidents. The following are some examples.

Table 3: Strategies for Different Incidents

Incident	Strategies
Tornado/Hurricane	• Perform search and rescue. • Provide emergency medical care. • Secure the site and maintain law and order. • Maintain hazard control and infrastructure restoration (e.g., restoration of utilities). • Remove debris (primary to gain access vs. full-scale removal). • Initiate recovery operations.
Fire Control	• Offensive • Defensive • Direct • Indirect • Exposure protection/cooling water • Structural protection – wildland fires • Non-full suppression activities

Incident	Strategies
Hazardous Material Release	• Evacuation • Shelter-in-place • Public notification • Air monitoring and sampling (water, soil, surfaces) • Containment (dam, dike, absorb, over-pack) • Source control (engineering controls/isolate valves, plugs, patches) • Neutralization • Controlled release (flaring, vent, and burn) • Transfer product • Product recovery and disposal • Decontamination • Non-intervention
Active Shooter	• “Stop the killing”: an aggressive approach to apprehend or neutralize the perpetrator with the first officers. • “Stop the bleeding/dying”: the use of Rescue Task Forces or immediate care in the “warm” zone. • Exclusion: the use of perimeter control and waiting for a specialized tactical team. • Triage, treatment, and transport. • Screen all occupants to ensure they are not perpetrators. • Accountability of students and employees. • Reunification Centers/Family Assistance Centers (FACs) for students/employees. • Investigation.

Safety Management and Risk Assessment

Safety is a fundamental characteristic of the Incident Command System (ICS). The OSC is responsible for integrating risk management and safety considerations into tactical planning and operations while supporting the safety of assigned personnel. As the OSC assesses hazards, manages risk, and explores mitigations, they must ensure safety is a priority.

Safety Guidelines and Compliance Standards

The OSC must ensure tactical operations comply with all relevant federal, state, and discipline-specific safety mandates. The OSC may need to familiarize themselves with general and discipline-specific safety guidelines or request personnel familiar with them. While individual states may have similar or more specific guidelines, here is a partial list of potential guidelines:

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
 - OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120 Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER)
 - OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134 Respiratory Protection
 - OSHA 29 CFR.1910.146 Confined Space
 - OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1200 Hazard Communication
 - OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1030 Bloodborne Pathogens
 - OSHA 29 CFR 1926 Safety and Health Regulations for Construction
- Peace Officers Standards and Training
- NFPA 1500 – Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program
- National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
- Department of Transportation Emergency Response Guidebook
- Crew Resource Management
- Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

When operating out-of-state or on an interagency deployment, the OSC must immediately verify whether the incident justification falls under State-OSHA or Federal-OSHA enforcement. The OSC should ensure operations comply with applicable safety regulations, agency policies, and incident-specific requirements.

To bridge technical knowledge gaps across diverse disciplines, the OSC should actively pull guidance from:

- Incident SOFR
- Discipline-specific Assistant SOFRs (e.g., HAZMAT, SWAT)
- DIVS
- Technical specialists (e.g., structural engineers, meteorologists, industrial hygienists)
- Local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staff

Risk Mitigation in the Planning Cycle

It is often assumed that safety management is solely the responsibility of the SOFR. However, safety management is everyone's responsibility.

Risk Assessment

High-risk tactics should only be considered when the anticipated benefit outweighs the potential risks and appropriate mitigation measures have been implemented. Decisions should be informed by incident objectives, values at risk, available resources, and responder safety considerations. The OSC factors risk analysis directly into the development of strategies and tactics by using two primary tools: the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215) and the Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis (ICS Form 215A).

Risk and Safety Addressed at the Tactics Meeting

During the Tactics Meeting, the OSC is responsible for determining the following for the next operational period:

- Strategies and tactics (that consider risk and safety) to achieve incident objectives
- Operations organization
- Work assignments
- Resource requirements
- Specialized equipment needs

The OSC uses the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215) and may also use the Work Analysis Matrix (ICS Form 234-CG) to help determine those responsibilities.

Safety Officer Collaboration During the Tactics Meeting

The Tactics Meeting follows a structured, collaborative process to approach risk mitigation:

1. OSC identifies strategies, tactics, and resource needs using ICS Form 215.
2. SOFR reviews tactics and work assignments to isolate specific hazards and environmental risks (e.g., adverse weather during night operations).
3. SOFR works incident personnel to identify hazards, evaluate risks, and document mitigations on the Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis (ICS Form 215A).
4. OSC and SOFR evaluate residual risk to determine if the plan is safe to execute.

Once the SOFR identifies mitigations and screens out threats not directly linked to tactics (such as environmental challenges), the OSC, subordinate supervisors, and the SOFR collaborate throughout the implementation of the IAP. This risk assessment remains an ongoing process throughout the entire operational period.

Frontline Safety Information Gathering

To inform decisions regarding tactical risks, alternatives, and mitigation measures, the OSC should listen to field supervisors and gather frontline data using several collection techniques:

- **Field Personnel Consultations:** Directly leverage the frontline perspective of Branch Directors, DIVSs, Field Observers (FOBS), and field supervisors.
- **Specialized Technical Flow:** Capture information from technical specialists and Assistant SOFRs with specialized qualifications (e.g., HAZMAT, SWAT, USAR).
- **Direct Field Reconnaissance:** Conduct formal site visits, direct observations, field interviews, and trend analyses.
- **Span of Control Safety:** Use strict span of control management to reduce a supervisor's cognitive load, making it easier for them to maintain a safe work environment.

Span of Control

An OSC can promote safety through span of control. Ensuring a supervisor or manager has the appropriate number of subordinates makes it easier for them to maintain a safer work environment.

Role Modeling Safety

Responders quickly tune out generic phrases like “Be safe out there!” During operational briefings, the OSC should clearly communicate specific threats, hazards, and corresponding mitigations. The OSC should actively listen to safety concerns raised by assigned personnel and model strict adherence to safety protocols.

- **Provide Clear Safety Direction:** During the Operational Period Briefing, communicate specific hazards, risks, and required mitigations rather than relying on general safety reminders.
- **Champion Crew Resource Management:** Foster an environment where personnel are expected to raise safety concerns and communicate operational risks. Respect, evaluate, and act upon safety information provided by field personnel.
- **Weigh Actions Against Values at Risk:** Do not unnecessarily endanger personnel to protect property or achieve tactical objectives. Strategies, tactics, and operational decisions should be commensurate with the values at risk and informed by a thorough risk-benefit assessment.
- **Plan for Contingencies and Maintain Tactical Flexibility:** Anticipate changing conditions and potential operational disruptions. Consider contingency actions,

maintain awareness of available reserve resources, and ensure the Operations Section can respond effectively to emerging situations.

- **Prioritize the Health, Safety, and Welfare of Personnel:** Personnel who are fatigued, hungry, frustrated, stressed, or otherwise impaired are more likely to make poor decisions or take unnecessary risks. Plan for work/rest cycles, crew rotations, rehabilitation needs, and other measures that support responder well-being.

Meeting the Expectations of the IMT

Members of the IMT have certain expectations of the OSC and their role within the team. An OSC works closely with various IMT members, whose expectations are as follows:

IC/UC's Expectations of the OSC

- Recommend strategies to reach incident objectives.
- Keep the IC/UC and other Command and General Staff members informed of planned tactics to ensure the entire IMT provides timely input and support.
- Order resources within the boundaries of fiscal, environmental, and other constraints.
- Report unusual events/activities and provide daily updates on the situation.
- Ensure the Operations Section follows safety procedures in all tactical planning and execution.
- Maintain effective communication with all cooperating agencies. Solicit and consider their input, respectively.

SOFR's Expectations of the OSC

- Maintain a close working relationship with the SOFR when developing tactics.
- Understand possible hazards.
- Be flexible enough to change tactics that cannot be mitigated.
- Provide information on unusual hazards occurring in the field.
- Avoid changing the tactical plan without conferring with the SOFR.

PSC's Expectations of the OSC

- Provide strategy and tactics.
- Provide timely notification of actual and anticipated tactical resource modifications.
- Be on time and prepared for meetings.
- Provide the necessary information for maps and other planning essentials.
- Provide information for the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215).
- Provide information for the PSC to complete all Assignment Lists (ICS Form 204).
- Provide a debriefing from the field at the end of the operational period.

LSC's Expectations of the OSC

- Provide timely requests for all needs.

- Provide a timely notification (a tentative demobilization list) concerning resources to be demobilized so Logistics can coordinate transportation and inspect vehicles.
- Provide early and consistent coordination and communication. Understand that requested resources may take time to arrive and that Operations Section time requests can be impossible to meet.

The OSC's Expectations of the IMT

Just as the IMT has expectations of the OSC, the OSC also has expectations of the IMT.

OSC's Expectations of the IC/UC

- Supply realistic, timely objectives.
- Highlight any constraints on strategy and tactics, including environmental, political, or financial constraints.

OSC's Expectations of the SOFR

- Work closely with the OSC to develop tactics.
- Notify the OSC of any hazards or safety issues.
- Provide mitigations and implications for tactics.
- Scrutinize the safety of operations in the field.
- Order enough safety resources to help ensure safe operations in the field.

OSC's Expectations of the PSC

- Work closely with the OSC to prepare the IAP.
- Provide the requested resources.
- Provide input in the Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting.
- Provide a complete, accurate IAP, including maps and all plans, with adequate copies.
- Facilitate concise, accurate briefings.
- Provide a completed Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215) for the Planning Meeting.

OSC's Expectations of the LSC

- Provide adequate, timely transportation.
- Provide an adequate quantity and quality of food.
- Provide adequate facilities for eating, sleeping, and conducting work.
- Provide needed equipment and supplies to perform work.
- Track resource requests.
- Arrange for medical care, emergency transportation, and a Medical Plan.
- Demonstrate flexibility in changing requests.

Continuous Evaluation and Communications

The OSC plays a vital role in supporting effective incident operations by continuously evaluating incident conditions, anticipating future operational needs, and planning for contingencies. The OSC also contributes to incident success by:

- Coordinating operational activities.
- Managing resources.
- Ensuring safety.

Evaluating the Incident

The OSC should continually seek and assess the incident's effectiveness, progress, and trajectory, then adjust strategies and tactics accordingly. This can be achieved by tracking assigned tasks and clearly defining information requirements for decision-making (EEI). The best source of information is the OSC's frontline personnel.

Evaluation techniques include:

- Performing the evaluation objectively.
- Using evaluations to judge the effectiveness of the current tactical plan's objectives.
- Using currently accepted standards to evaluate the effectiveness of the tactical plan.
- Ensuring tactical resources are completing work assignments/tasks as assigned and expected (e.g., the correct resources and number of resources).

Communication Protocols

An OSC communicates continuously throughout an incident.

- **Incident Briefing:** At the onset of an incident, the OSC participates in an Incident Briefing with the IC/UC and other members of the IMT. During this briefing, the OSC receives information about the incident, including its size, scope, and objectives, and begins to coordinate response efforts accordingly.
- **Ongoing Briefings and Updates:** The OSC conducts regular briefings and updates with IMT members, field supervisors, and support personnel throughout the incident. These sessions provide an opportunity to obtain and disseminate information, provide updates on incident status, and coordinate response activities. Based on the evolving situation, briefings may occur at scheduled intervals or as needed.
- **Face-to-Face or Virtually:** The OSC communicates virtually or face-to-face with IMT members, field supervisors, and support personnel. Virtual or face-to-face communication is particularly important for critical decision-making and coordinating response efforts. It allows for immediate interaction, clarification of issues, and resolution of concerns in real time.

- **Radios:** Radios provide quick and efficient communication between the OSC and field personnel, as well as among field supervisors within the Operations Section. This enables the OSC to relay instructions, coordinate activities, and receive status updates from various response teams. Radio communications provide a direct and immediate means of communication, especially in dynamic and rapidly changing situations.
- **Phones/Mobile Devices:** Telephones and electronic devices are used to communicate with other members of the IMT, external stakeholders, and support agencies. This allows direct communication over longer distances and facilitates coordination with off-site personnel and resources.
- **Telephone and mobile communications provide flexibility and accessibility,** particularly when face-to-face communication is not feasible. Using two-way radios can increase the situational awareness of the other listeners, whereas using telephones and mobile devices often limits this capability.
- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Field Data Collection Technology:** GIS technology provides tools and platforms for collecting spatial data and conducting field surveys. Some examples are:
 - **ArcGIS Collector/Field Maps:** enables mobile GIS data collection, editing, and synchronization, supporting offline use.
 - **Disaster Assessment and Assistance Dashboard (DAAD)** is a FEMA-developed app for rapid damage assessment and reporting during disasters.
 - **ESRI QuickCapture:** allows for rapid field observation and incident recording with customizable buttons.
 - **ESRI Survey123:** enables custom survey creation for data collection, integrating with GIS technology.
 - **Fieldwire:** facilitates task management and collaboration through shared tasks, drawings, and documents.
 - **Fulcrum:** supports custom forms and surveys, GPS tagging, and offline data collection for various response tasks.
- **Reports and Messages:** The OSC will use incident reports, situation reports (SITREPs), and ICS forms to document incident information, track resource utilization, and communicate key details to stakeholders and decision-makers. Written communication ensures clarity, accuracy, and consistency.

Community Lifelines and Recovery

FEMA Community Lifelines

The FEMA Community Lifelines are an effective indicator of the status of a community's critical government and business functions as the incident moves into recovery. Community Lifelines provide a global and holistic view of the situation and are often interconnected and dependent on each other for a successful response and recovery.

Community Lifelines offer a better understanding of how a disaster affects a community's fundamental infrastructure. This will not only drive incident objectives but will also affect the resources available to the team. The OSC must recognize the value of Community Lifelines and what they mean to the community. By applying the Community Lifeline information, the OSC can gain situational awareness, more effectively apply tactical resources, and help the community recover faster.



Learn more about
FEMA Community Lifelines and the Community Lifelines Toolkit

<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/lifelines>

Supporting the Transition to Recovery

Guided by Community Lifeline indicators, direction from the Agency Administrator, and the IC/UC's objectives, the OSC prepares the section to support the transition from emergency response to initial recovery operations. Depending on the incident needs, this operational shift may require the OSC to organize and oversee:

- Establishment, management, and staffing of emergency shelters, feeding centers, and Points of Distribution (PODs).
- Debris management operations, access route clearance, and donations management.
- Initial community damage assessments and coordination for volunteer utilization.
- Critical infrastructure restoration projects, including temporary utility, transportation, and healthcare system coordination.
- Operational and logistical support for the establishment of Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs).

Pause and Reflect

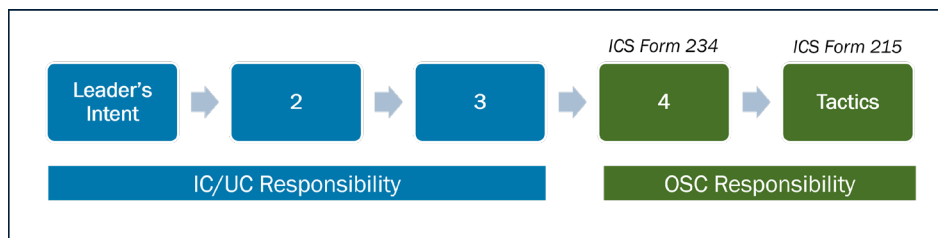


Being an OSC means understanding your responsibilities and thinking critically about how you'll apply them. Let's take a moment to pause and reflect on what you've learned in this chapter.

1. Locate and download the NQS Position Task Book (PTB) for the Operations Section Chief (OSC) position in FEMA's Resource Typing Library Tool (<https://rtlt.preptoolkit.fema.gov/Public>).

2. Review the PTB and list the competencies or tasks you want to develop during training. Be ready to share at least one of these areas with the class.

3. Below is the progression from the leader's intent (Step 1) to the OSC's tactics (Step 5). Fill in the gaps.



1.	Leader's Intent
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	Tactics

4. What is the relationship between strategies and tactics?

Read the scenario and incident objective. Develop a strategy and tactics for each scenario. Review the “Guidelines for Developing Strategies” and “Work Analysis Matrix (ICS Form 234-CG)” sections as you work through this activity.

You are the OSC for a flash flood incident that has caused significant disruption in a rural area following an unexpectedly heavy downpour. The flash flood has swept away multiple vehicles, including cars and buses, which are now scattered downstream in a debris field. There are potential HAZMAT issues due to a possible release of hazardous materials from the vehicles and nearby facilities.

Vehicles Involved: Multiple passenger vehicles and buses have been swept away and are now submerged or stuck in various locations downstream.

Occupants: The vehicles need to be located and searched, and the occupants rescued. Some individuals may be trapped inside their vehicles or carried away by the floodwaters.

Injuries: Numerous injuries have been reported with varying degrees of severity. Immediate medical attention and triage are required on-site.

Hazards: There are potential HAZMAT releases from vehicles and nearby industrial facilities affected by the floodwaters.

Area Security: Law enforcement is needed to secure the area to prevent unauthorized access and ensure the safety of the rescue operations.

Weather: Weather conditions remain unstable with intermittent rain, which could complicate rescue operations.

Resources: Local emergency services are limited and are being coordinated to manage the extensive area affected by the flood.

Incident Objective Example

“Identify and mitigate any hazardous material releases to prevent further risks to health and safety.”

5. Create at least one strategy that achieves the incident objective.

6. Provide two tactics that support your strategy or multiple strategies.

Chapter 2: Information Gathering — Pre-Incident and Activation

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

- Identify sources and methods for gathering accurate, usable, and timely information and how to use the information throughout the incident.

Operational Intelligence

Information Gathering

As the leader of the Operations Section, the OSC manages a large volume of information — some of it relevant, and some false or irrelevant. Identifying and focusing on the information necessary to perform operational responsibilities is essential. Relevant information can include the status of resources, progress on tasks and tactics, safety issues, and trigger points for key decisions or contingencies.

The OSC is responsible for translating objectives into strategies and tactics, which requires using information to inform their decision-making. A major component of the OSC role is knowing where to look for data, how to filter out irrelevant noise, and how to synthesize valid data into four operational products:

1. **Comprehensive Size-up:** The initial, rapid physical assessment of the incident's scope, magnitude, and immediate hazards.
2. **Situational Awareness:** The ongoing cognitive understanding of what is happening around you, how current events relate to objectives, and how conditions are likely to evolve.
3. **Common Operating Picture:** A continuously updated overview of an incident shared across all Command and General Staff elements, ensuring everyone works from identical maps, resource counts, and hazard data.
4. **EEL:** Critical information requirements identified by the IC/UC that support situational awareness, decision-making, and incident management. EELs help focus information collection and reporting efforts on information most important to incident operations.

Sources of Information

There is a wide variety of information available to the OSC. Information on current incident conditions can come from the internet, media, and internal sources such as the Agency Administrator and local responders. Communicating specific information requirements to these providers is important. When providers understand these requirements, the OSC is more likely to receive the necessary information.

Personal Observations

When conditions permit, the OSC should personally observe incident conditions through field visits, overflights, or direct interaction with incident personnel. Firsthand observations can help validate information, improve situational awareness, identify operational issues, and support informed strategic and tactical decision-making.

Subordinate Supervisors

The OSC should empower those in the DIVS position with the authority to complete their assignments and consider them a valuable source of information. The OSC should clearly communicate reporting requirements to the DIVS, including critical reporting thresholds identified by the IC/UC and expectations for the content and frequency of reports.

To support effective performance, the OSC communicates clear expectations to the DIVS:

- Define reporting requirements and critical information needs.
- Request that they provide updates on the incident, progress, and recommendations for planning for the next operational period.
- Request that they evaluate information for relevance and accuracy.

SOFRs, medical personnel, and technical specialists in a division/group can be additional sources of information for the DIVS.

Agency Administrator

The Agency Administrator establishes incident priorities, policies, limitations, and expectations and delegates responsibility for incident management to the IC/UC. These factors can significantly influence operational strategies and tactics.

Agency Administrator Briefing

The Agency Administrator Briefing is generally a high-level overview of incident priorities, policy issues, expectations, and limitations. Although most of the briefing will target the IC/UC, information about local conditions, such as ecological details in a HAZMAT cleanup, budget concerns, or political pressures, will affect operations.

Refer to the Agency Administrator Briefing Worksheet in the Appendix. This worksheet helps the OSC identify critical topics and prompt questions for the Agency Administrator.

Delegation of Authority

In some incidents, the Agency Administrator may issue a written Delegation of Authority to the IC/UC. The Delegation of Authority documents the authorities, expectations, reporting requirements, limitations, and other parameters established for incident management. The OSC should understand these priorities and constraints because they may influence operational strategies, tactics, resource allocation, and incident expenditures.

Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting

After developing or revising incident objectives, the IC/UC typically meets with the activated Command and General Staff members, and others as needed, to discuss priorities, objectives, limitations, constraints, and operational direction. This meeting may be called the Strategy Meeting or Command and General Staff Meeting and is held as needed throughout the incident.

The IC/UC will:

- Set immediate and possibly long-term priorities.
- Define information requirements.
- Identify deficiencies in incident information.
- Set timeframes for meetings.
- Establish incident objectives (operational/control and management).
- Establish the operational period.
- Make special assignments.
- Identify limitations and constraints.
- Outline policies, decisions, and directives on how the IMT will function.

This meeting is important to the OSC as the information learned (priorities and operational/control objectives) will drive the strategy and tactics.

Limitations and constraints may also affect the OSC. For example, the IC/UC may limit certain strategies, prohibit night operations, and limit the use of resources. The OSC will share these decisions and directives, such as critical reporting thresholds, rules for posting on social media, and who can order supplies, with the Operations Section supervisors.

When setting incident priorities, the IC/UC may present incomplete information. When this occurs, the OSC will confirm with sources by:

- Asking outgoing OSCs or the IC/UC for information.
- Obtaining information from returning responders.
- Acquiring information from other sources, such as local administrators or technical specialists.

Initial Response IC/UC or Current Team

Another source of information is the IC/UC or the current team managing the incident when the OSC arrives. When debriefing the IC/UC or current team, consider the following:

- Be aware of the situation. The IC/UC or current team may be tired, rushed, or resentful.
- Treat them with mutual respect and be sensitive to the situation. This action may foster trust and encourage the sharing of knowledge and experience. If possible, request that some team members remain available to help close information gaps.
- Make the debriefing concise. Consider using a structured briefing process and prepared questions to improve the efficiency and quality of information transfer.
- Obtain a thorough briefing from the IC/UC or current team and review available incident documentation, including the Incident Briefing (ICS Form 201), to understand incident objectives, strategies, tactics, resource status, current operations, and operational challenges. Use the ICS Form 201 and other available briefing documents to support situational awareness and information sharing among IMT personnel.
- Maintain professional and objective documentation practices, recognizing that incident records may be subject to applicable records retention and disclosure requirements.

Technical Specialists

Technical specialists are experts the OSC may use for critical aspects of an incident, such as hazardous materials, structural engineering, and environmental remediation. During the operational planning process, these specialists can aid the OSC in making informed strategic and tactical decisions.

Local Plans, Policies, and Processes

Additional sources of information include local plans, policies, and processes, which are especially helpful if the OSC is deployed to a new area. In many cases, local plans can provide communications, resources, contact information, and potentially primary and alternative strategies.

Local Plans as Sources of Information:

- EOPs and annexes for evacuation, shelters, setting up PODs, or civil unrest
- Hazard mitigation plans
- Structure protection plans
- Nuclear power plant release response plans
- Area contingency plans for oil spills
- Wildland pre-attack plans
- Evacuation plans

Other Sections

Other Sections of the IMT are valuable sources of information.

- Logistics: Advises if they can provide the resources (e.g., personnel, equipment, supplies) and other support, such as communications, to meet the OSC's tactical plan.
- Planning: Provides the weather, mapping, progress reports/updates from field observers, and resource status.
- Finance/Administration: Informs the OSC if their strategy and/or tactics are advisable under reimbursement procedures and if the OSC needs to address any finance-related matters.
- Safety: Provides a hazards/threats analysis and assists with risk mitigation (hazard exposure and risk levels).

Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)

The CEMP is typically maintained by the jurisdiction's emergency manager or emergency management agency and outlines the jurisdiction's framework for preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities.

When available, the OSC should review the CEMP and other applicable local emergency plans to better understand incident priorities, response procedures, available resources, coordination mechanisms, and local operating considerations. These documents may also provide information on hazard-specific response actions, evacuation and sheltering procedures, resource coordination processes, and interagency relationships that can influence operational planning and decision-making.

External Organizations

The OSC may obtain information, resources, and operational support from organizations outside the IMT. Depending on the incident, these organizations may be actively supporting response operations.

- Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs): Provide situational updates, resource coordination, and jurisdiction-level support.
- Joint Information Centers (JICs): Coordinate public information activities and provide updates regarding public messaging, community concerns, and media engagement.
- Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Groups: Support resource prioritization, policy coordination, and resolution of interagency issues.
- Support Agencies and Organizations: Provide specialized resources, expertise, technical assistance, and operational support.
- Local, State, and Federal Agencies: Provide incident information, coordination, resources, and emergency management support.
- Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Groups: Assist affected populations and provide community support, resources, and services.

OSC's Role During the Initial Response

The context of an operational deployment determines how the OSC structures information workflows. NIMS differentiates between unplanned and planned occurrences.

Incident or Event

The terms "incident" and "event" are often used interchangeably, but they can have distinct meanings depending on their use.

Table 4: Differences between an Incident and an Event

Incident	Event
An incident is an unplanned or unexpected situation that disrupts normal operations, causes harm, or requires a response or intervention, and management to mitigate its effects.	An event is a planned or scheduled occurrence or happening. Events may or may not result in disruption or adverse consequences.

Incident	Event
Incidents often involve emergencies, accidents, crises, or other adverse unplanned situations that require immediate attention, intervention, or management to protect life, property, or the environment.	Events can vary widely in nature and scope, ranging from routine occurrences such as meetings, celebrations, or scheduled activities to more significant occurrences such as the Super Bowl, large conventions, and annual community events.
Incidents are characterized by their potential to escalate, cause harm, or trigger a response from emergency responders, authorities, or other stakeholders.	Events may or may not result in disruption or adverse consequences,

OSC Go-Kit

Many All-Hazards Type 3 incidents occur in remote locations or areas with limited communications, power, internet access, or printing capabilities. As a result, maintaining a well-equipped go-kit can help the OSC establish situational awareness, support operational planning, and manage incident activities during the initial response.

The contents of an OSC go-kit will vary based on agency requirements, incident type, and anticipated operating conditions. Typical items may include:

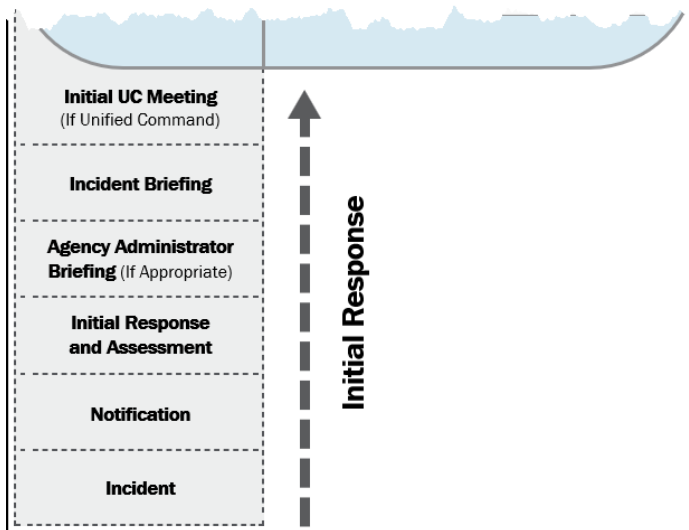
- Roll of white contact paper for creating hand-drawn waterproof maps, which can be mounted virtually anywhere due to the adhesive on the back.
- Grease pencils or “twist-up” crayons in assorted colors for waterproof maps.
- Wet-erase, dry-erase, and permanent markers in assorted colors.
- Avery-style adhesive labels (0.5" x 0.75") in white, rose, yellow, orange, and blue to adhere to contact paper. Use these labels to create a visual reference to designate resources by kind and ID.
- Copies of ICS Form 201 or tactical worksheets for the initial response to use until a planned response and IAP are developed.
- At least 12 letter-size sheet protectors to protect documents from rain.
- Quart and one-gallon zipper storage bags. Bring a minimum of six of each, all stored in a gallon zipper storage bag.
- Small composition book that fits in cargo pants pockets.
- Sticky Notes, 2" x 1.5" pads in standard cream color, yellow, rose, blue, and orange to create visual references that designate resources by kind and record details of that resource.

- At least three file folders for letter-size documents for traditional and non-traditional applications.
- Double-sided poster tape, one roll.
- Portable weather meter or weather kit.
- General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) portable radios:
 - Use GMRS short-range, two-way radio communications around an ICP or camp. They allow almost instant operations since GMRS radios are fully interoperable without reprogramming. These can be beneficial when an incident radio system is set up and/or cellular service is unavailable. Once incident communications are established, these radios can be discontinued.
 - Require recharging of the battery with standard micro-USB or micro-USB-C charging cables. Some units can also operate on AA batteries and rechargeable batteries. Consider bringing at least three GMRS radios, along with their charging cables. The radios are small and take up very little space.
 - Are equipped with built-in National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Service Radio (NOAA Wx) channels.
 - Are rugged and fully interoperable out of the box with other GMRS radios.
- PPE for specific and anticipated hazards.
- Gear for severe weather.
- Binoculars.
- Flagging tape.
- Personal lighting and headlamps.
- Visual aids for reading maps.

Initial Response to an Incident

During the **initial response**, the IMT develops situational awareness and requests additional resources to support, develop, and implement initial tactics.

Figure 4: Initial Response Phase of the Planning P



The OSC will perform several tasks during the initial response phase of the Planning P:

- Upon notification, conduct research: Review available information sources and identify questions that will help size up the incident upon arrival.
- Gather information and conduct an assessment: Gather information about the incident, including its nature, location, size, and potential impact, to help prioritize efforts and allocate resources effectively.
- Conduct a visual assessment: Drive to different areas of the incident to view it firsthand. Or, if available, conduct an overflight of the incident.
- Contact field supervisors: Reach out to existing field supervisors for an update on the situation. They can provide critical information about the incident's current status and inform the OSC on resource allocation.
- Attend briefings: Attend the Agency Administrator Briefing and Incident Briefing to develop situational awareness and build knowledge to make informed decisions about the Operations Section.
- Support ongoing current operations: Support or manage ongoing current operations.
- Coordinate with Logistics: Obtain a work location and necessary equipment from the LSC.
- Order resources: Order immediate-need resources from the LSC.
- Appoint a DOSC: Appoint a DOSC if necessary and if available.
- Address safety issues: Correct any immediate/severe safety issues.

Pause and Reflect



Ensuring assignment readiness and gathering information before and after arrival are important PTB tasks. Now, it's time to put what you've learned into action.

1. Building on the go-kit items outlined earlier in this guide, consider what additional equipment or supplies you would bring for the following types of deployments:

- A wind incident, such as a tornado

- A train derailment that involves hazardous materials

- An explosion and subsequent fire during a county fair

2. Brainstorm a list of questions you anticipate needing answers to before arriving at the scene, and once you are on-site as the OSC.

- Pre-arrival:

- Arrival on-scene:

Chapter 3: Managing Current Operations and Planning for Future Operational Periods

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

- Identify the OSC's roles and responsibilities when managing current operations and planning for the next operational periods.
- Identify the OSC's roles and responsibilities in preparing for and participating in the operational planning process, including meetings and briefings.
- Describe the OSC's responsibilities for supervising and managing the Operations Section.
- Describe when and how to make adjustments to the Operations Section.
- Identify the other personnel the OSC may engage with throughout the operational period.

Balancing Current Operations and Future Planning

For an OSC, the first operational period during an emerging or expanding incident is one of the most challenging they will face. The OSC must manage current operations with a plan and resources they did not develop. At the same time, they must plan for the next operational period (planned operations) to progress from a reactive state to proactive operations.

Operational Period Parameters

The IC/UC determines the length of operational periods (typically 12 or 24 hours) based on input from the Planning Section and the OSC. A 24-hour configuration is best suited for incidents with significant travel times to the response site. Under a 24-hour period, the Operations Section typically runs two 12-hour shifts. The OSC develops tactical assignments and identifies resource requirements for each operational period. These assignments are incorporated into Assignment Lists (ICS Form 204s) and other IAP components as part of the planning process. Depending on the complexity of the incident, the OSC may consider adding a DOSC, but this is not mandatory.

Mitigating Responder Fatigue

To avoid burnout, fatigue, and the potential for accidents, integrate separate work/rest cycles into the operational period. Consider a 2:1 ratio of work-to-rest hours. Remember, working 16 hours does not give personnel eight hours of rest. They still need to eat, shower, restock supplies, and do other activities.

Managing Current Operations

While planning for future operational periods, the OSC remains responsible for managing current operations and evaluating the effectiveness of the response. This requires maintaining situational awareness, supervising tactical activities, coordinating resources, managing risk, and assessing progress toward incident objectives.

To manage current operations, the OSC should:

- **Maintain Situational Awareness**
 - Gather information from field supervisors, technical specialists, reconnaissance activities, incident intelligence, and direct observations.
 - Monitor incident conditions, operational progress, resource status, and emerging issues that may affect incident objectives.
- **Manage Tactical Operations**
 - Monitor current operations to ensure strategies and tactics remain aligned with incident objectives.
 - Provide guidance, direction, and support to subordinate supervisors.
 - Resolve operational issues and support field personnel in accomplishing assigned tasks.
- **Evaluate Operational Effectiveness**
 - Review progress toward incident objectives and assess whether assigned work is being completed as planned.
 - Compare actual conditions and accomplishments against expectations established in the IAP.
 - Identify operational successes, challenges, delays, and emerging issues.
- **Coordinate Resources**
 - Monitor the status and availability of personnel, equipment, supplies, and other resources.
 - Reallocate resources as necessary to support changing priorities and incident conditions.
 - Identify future resource requirements and coordinate anticipated needs with the Planning and Logistics Sections.
- **Communicate and Coordinate**
 - Maintain communication with field supervisors, Command and General Staff members, and external partners, as appropriate.
 - Share operational updates, emerging issues, and critical information affecting incident operations.

- Conduct meetings and briefings as necessary to maintain coordination and situational awareness.
- Manage Risk and Safety
 - Coordinate with the SOFR and field supervisors to identify hazards and implement risk mitigations.
 - Monitor operations to ensure personnel are operating safely and within acceptable risk parameters.
 - Take prompt action to address unsafe conditions or activities that present an unacceptable level of risk.
- Adjust Operations as Needed
 - Evaluate whether current strategies and tactics remain effective.
 - Identify situations that require operational adjustments, contingency actions, additional resources, or changes in priorities.
 - Coordinate significant strategy changes with the IC/UC and other IMT personnel, as appropriate.
- Document and Report
 - Ensure significant operational activities, decisions, and incident developments are documented.
 - Provide timely updates and reports to the IC/UC and other IMT personnel.
 - Communicate information that will support planning for future operational periods.

Participating in the Strategy Meeting

The OSC plays a lead role in developing tactical plans and operational assignments within the ICS Planning Process. After developing or revising the incident objectives, the IC/UC typically meets with the Command and General Staff, including the OSC, to discuss the incident objectives and provide direction.

Initial Meeting

The initial Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting is held at the start of the planning cycle. It is particularly important because the meeting allows team members to share information and collaboratively determine the initial approach to response operations. The meeting may include the initial IC/UC and an Agency Administrator Representative.

The OSC's role in the initial Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting is to listen to the IC/UC's priorities, incident objectives, limitations, constraints, decisions, and directives, and determine how they affect the Operations Section.

As they listen to the IC/UC, the OSC may conclude that certain strategies are not viable due to factors such as resource availability, costs, or safety concerns.

Subsequent Meetings

At subsequent Strategy Meetings/Command and General Staff Meetings, the IC/UC will present new or modified incident objectives. This allows the OSC to discuss optional strategies if incident conditions change or current strategies are unsuccessful.

OSC Preparation and Meeting Tasks

In preparation for the Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting, the OSC will:

- Review the current objectives and status of the incident.
- Assess operational needs and challenges.
- Coordinate with operational personnel.
- Develop comprehensive operational updates.
- Identify strategic objectives and priorities.
- Anticipate questions and concerns.
- Coordinate with other sections.
- Review the current IAP.
- Prepare for decision-making discussions.

OSC's Role During the Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting

During the Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting, the OSC will:

- Listen for new objectives, directions, or decisions that affect the Operations Section.
- Provide an update for the Operations Section.
- Include safety information, as sharing safety information is a key outcome of the meeting.
- Provide feedback.
- Express concerns.
- Discuss (if necessary) the IC/UC objectives, expectations, and timelines, and negotiate if they are unreasonable or unattainable.

Vetting Tactics in the Tactics Meeting

Typical Tactics Meeting Participants

The Tactics Meeting allows the OSC to develop strategies and tactics for the next operational period with input from personnel who provide information necessary for tactical planning and decision-making, including:

- The LSC determines if they can support the tactics logistically.
- The SOFR shares if the team can mitigate the risks to a level that provides safe tactical operations.
- The RESL/PSC advises the OSC on available personnel and resources. The RESL often takes the place of the PSC during these meetings.

Attendance should be limited to personnel who provide information or support necessary for tactical planning and decision-making. Additional personnel may participate as needed based on incident complexity and operational requirements.

Ideally, for more complex assignments, having a DOSC (Planning Operations) attend the Tactics Meeting can be beneficial, allowing the OSC to focus on managing current operations. However, in most cases, the OSC would normally attend the Tactics Meeting directly.

Preparing for the Tactics Meeting

Before the Tactics Meeting, the OSC gathers information, assesses current operations, and develops recommendations for the next operational period. Preparation helps ensure proposed tactics are achievable, adequately resourced, and aligned with the IC/UC's objectives.

The OSC should:

- Assess Current Operations
 - Evaluate progress toward incident objectives and identify operational successes, challenges, and emerging issues.
 - Gather input from field supervisors, technical specialists, and other IMT personnel regarding current conditions, resource needs, and operational concerns.
 - Consider current and forecasted factors that may affect operations, such as weather, hazards, resource availability, and incident complexity.
- Evaluate Resource Requirements
 - Review the status of personnel, equipment, supplies, and other operational resources.
 - Identify resource shortfalls, anticipated needs, and logistical requirements for the next operational period.

- Coordinate with the RESL, PSC, and LSC, as appropriate, regarding resource availability and ordering needs.
- Review the Operations Organization
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the current Operations Section organization.
 - Confirm that assignments, span of control, supervisory relationships, and communication channels remain appropriate for the next operational period.
- Develop Strategies and Tactical Recommendations
 - Develop proposed strategies, tactics, work assignments, and resource allocations for the next operational period.
 - Consider alternate strategies, contingency options, and trigger points that may require adjustments to planned operations.
 - Evaluate proposed actions using risk management principles and the probability of operational success.
- Apply Decision-Support Tools
 - Use the PACE framework, ICS Form 234-CG, or other decision-support tools, as appropriate, to evaluate primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency courses of action.
- Prepare the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215)
 - Develop a draft ICS Form 215 that documents the proposed tactical plan, work assignments, and resource requirements for the next operational period.
 - Coordinate with subordinate supervisors, the DOSC (if assigned), and the RESL, as appropriate, when developing or updating the worksheet.

During the Tactics Meeting

During the Tactics Meeting, the OSC (or DOSC) will identify and select primary and alternate strategies for the incident, including contingency and emergency plans.

- Contingency Planning: Is necessary to address potential adverse events that the primary plan does not include.
- Emergency Planning: Helps prepare for dire circumstances, such as tactical retreats and shelter deployments.

The OSC has several responsibilities during the Tactics Meeting, including:

- Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215): Developing the tactical plan for the next operational period. The RESL typically completes the ICS Form 215 (as dictated by the OSC) as part of their administrative duties. Information from ICS Form 215 is used to support development of Assignment Lists (ICS Form 204s) and other operational planning products.

- **Leader's Intent:** Communicating the leader's intent for each work assignment. The OSC may enter the work assignment with enough specificity that the team knows what needs to be accomplished, but not in such a way that it micromanages or constrains the operator's options. Conversely, some teams utilize the leader's intent and a "task/purpose/end state" approach to identify what needs to be done, why, and what is trying to be achieved. This gives the operators some latitude to complete the task as long as it achieves the identified end state.
- **Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis (ICS Form 215A):** Collaborating with the SOFR to complete the ICS Form 215A, which assesses safety hazards and risks associated with operational activities and identifies ways to mitigate them.
- **Proposed Tactics:** Reaching a consensus or resolution on the proposed tactics, work assignments, and the SOFR's recommendations. The OSC and SOFR should collaborate to ensure proposed tactics, hazards, risks, and mitigations are fully understood and addressed.
- **Resources:** Identifying the resources (personnel/teams/crews, supervisors, equipment, and supplies) necessary for the tactical plan for the next operational period. Then, the RESL identifies unassigned resources for the next operational period. The LSC or their designee orders the remainder or difference. The RESL, LSC, and OSC should coordinate this effort to ensure the required resources will be available for the next operational period.
- **Deployment and Positioning:** Collaborating with the SITL to update details like division and/or branch boundaries, staging area locations, and drop points based on evolving incident conditions. This collaboration confirms that operational resources are deployed and positioned effectively to support operational efforts.

Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215)

Figure 5: Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215)

OPERATIONAL PLANNING WORKSHEET (ICS 215)																	
1. Incident Name:				2. Operational Period: Date From: _____ Date To: _____ Time From: _____ Time To: _____													
3. Branch	4. Division, Group, or Other	5. Work Assignment & Special Instructions	6. Resources											7. Overhead Position(s)	8. Special Equipment & Supplies	9. Reporting Location	10. Requested Arrival Time
			Req.														
			Have														
			Need														
			Req.														
			Have														
			Need														

The Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215) allows the OSC to *plan* for the next operational period. It is completed with input from other IMT members at the Tactics Meeting.

Guidelines for Completing ICS Form 215

- Develop the Operations Section organization (branches, divisions/groups, others).
- Ensure operational boundaries, assignments, and organizational elements are accurately reflected on incident maps and displays used during planning and operational briefings.
- Identify staging area locations.
- Determine what resources are on hand and which are needed for each branch and division/group for the next operational period, including supervisory personnel.
- Include the reporting location.
- Provide clear, detailed work assignments and expectations that the subordinate supervisors will understand. Write the assignments to capture the intent of the IC/UC and provide supervisors flexibility in managing how tactics and tasks are accomplished. For example, “Conduct primary search and rescue operations of all damaged buildings on 14th Avenue between A Street and L Street within the next operational period.”
- Include special instructions and any specialized equipment or supplies (noted in Section 8 of ICS Form 215).
- Write clear, concise, and achievable assignments and ensure they meet the intent of the incident objectives.
- For current operations, keep resource location changes from the previous IAP to a minimum. This allows personnel to become familiar with their response area, work assignments, terrain, and hazards.
- ICS Form 215 is not included in the IAP. The information from ICS Form 215 is transcribed onto multiple copies of ICS Form 204 and is included in the IAP.
- Ensure that the SOFR’s ICS Form 215A or 215A/R identifies the risks and mitigation measures of the operational assignments as described on ICS Form 215.

Timing

Before the Tactics Meeting, the OSC should prepare a draft ICS Form 215 to save time for themselves and the RESL. Notifying the LSC of the need for additional resources will also save time. Any advanced notice given to Logistics allows the section time to “source out” those resources.

When the new operational period begins and the IMT executes the IAP, the OSC can update the written plan as required by incident conditions. The IMT includes information from ICS

Form 215 in the IAP, so be sure to track any changes for incident documentation purposes and provide altered forms to the Planning Section to include in incident documentation.

Resourcing

If requested resources are unavailable or delayed, the OSC should work with the RESL, PSC, LSC, and IC/UC, as appropriate, to evaluate alternatives, adjust priorities, or modify the operational plan:

1. Reallocate resources from another operation of lower priority, or
2. Revise the operational plan to accommodate the lack of resources.

Writing work assignments clearly in the draft ICS Form 215 is essential. Upon giving this form to the RESL, they will transfer the information onto a wall-sized or digital/LC projector version and subsequently add it into the work assignment box on the ICS Form 204 for the next operational period.

In most cases, it is better to verbally share the draft ICS Form 215 or tactical plan with the RESL and let them complete the actual ICS Form 215.

Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis (ICS Form 215A)

Figure 6: Safety Officer Completes ICS Form 215A

INCIDENT ACTION PLAN SAFETY ANALYSIS (ICS 215A)					
1. Incident Name:			2. Incident Number:		
3. Date/Time Prepared:		4. Operational Period:			
Date: Time:		Date From: Date To:		Time From: Time To:	
5. Incident Area	6. Hazards/Risks			7. Mitigations	

Once the OSC completes ICS Form 215, the SOFR (with knowledge of the Operations organization) will complete ICS Form 215A, identifying the safety threats and risks and developing safety mitigations. Risk mitigations vary based on incident type and may include controls such as Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes, and Safety Zones (LCES), engineering controls, PPE, exclusion zones, medical support, and other hazard-specific measures.

Once the SOFR identifies the mitigations, they add them to ICS Form 215A. The OSC should collaborate closely with the SOFR to ensure hazards, risks, and mitigations associated with

planned operations are identified and addressed. The RESL takes those mitigations and includes them in the “Special Instructions” section of the Assignment List (ICS Form 204).

Finalizing the Plan at the Planning Meeting

“Planning” is an ordered sequence of events over a specific period to meet the objectives of the incident. The OSC’s role in the Planning Meeting is to finalize the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215) and to present the proposed tactical plan to seek approval from the IC/UC and support from the Command and General Staff.

Preparing for the Planning Meeting

- Share the proposed tactical plan with the IC/UC and others.
- Learn the status of current field operations to share at the Planning Meeting.
- Work with the PSC to ensure ICS Forms 215 and 215A and the display maps are ready for the Planning Meeting.

During the Planning Meeting

At the Planning Meeting, the PSC may ask the OSC to present any of the following:

- Current location/status of the branch, division boundaries, and resources assigned on the display map.
- Current and anticipated accomplishments.
- Areas where critical tactical operations are taking place.
- A statement noting that it is necessary to make progress or “hold” these points to prevent the incident from escalating.
- Strategies and the tactical plan for the next operational period.
- Safety concerns in conjunction with the SOFR.
- Resource needs, especially critical in-demand resources that are difficult to obtain.
- Values at risk — what needs to be protected (e.g., population, environment, critical infrastructure, economic drivers, cultural/historical locations, property).
- The need for technical specialists.
- Alternate or Contingency Plans (PACE framework).

After the Planning Meeting

After the Planning Meeting, if the OSC does not assign a DOSC for Planning Operations, the OSC will return to managing the current field operations. As they plan for future operations, they should review the established tactics and assigned tasks to gauge tactical progress, and consider the following:

- When ordering resources, the OSC must consider the next operational period. If they require additional resources, they should order them as early as possible. The OSC may need more, fewer, or similar resources than those they currently use. Next, the OSC should staff the divisions and groups they are implementing for the next operational period.
- The OSC should consider all available sourcing options and avoid constraining tactical planning based solely on current local resource availability. If the OSC requires additional personnel/equipment for the tactical plan, they should request it. Depending on the incident, the EOC or area of operations may be able to obtain additional resources through mutual aid, statewide mutual aid, Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), contractors, or the Stafford Act.
- The OSC should be reasonable and responsible as they identify and work to obtain the required resources through the LSC.
- It is important for the OSC to consider staff and resource needs for a tactical reserve in staging areas and for executing contingency plans.
- The OSC will have cycles in the incident, including peaks and troughs, which vary in nature. They must accommodate this while planning for future operations periods and demobilization.
- The OSC should check back orders for things like resources. Check outstanding resource orders to avoid delivering resources that are no longer needed.
- If the OSC is responsible for managing initial operational activities for Operations, this may require additional resources that the LSC will need to order for each operational period.

IAP Preparation and Approval

Once the Planning Meeting has ended and the support of the Command and General Staff has been granted, the next step in the Planning Process is to prepare and approve the IAP. The IAP serves as a comprehensive guide for coordinating response efforts, ensuring consistency in decision-making, and facilitating effective communication and collaboration among all stakeholders in managing the incident. The primary audience for the IAP is field operators. The OSC has a vested interest in the accuracy and quality of the IAP to provide direction and support to the field personnel.

OSC's Role in the IAP

As part of IAP preparation, the OSC should:

- Review the IAP and safety points. Highlight any changes.
- Review all Assignment Lists (ICS Form 204) to ensure accuracy with the work assignments and resources identified on the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215).

Meeting with OSC Leadership

Some OSCs conduct an informal coordination meeting with Branch Directors and DIVSs before the Operational Period Briefing to review assignments, clarify expectations, and address questions.

Operational Period Briefing

Up to this point, the OSC has:

1. Received the IC/UC's objectives at the IC/UC's Objectives Meeting.
2. Obtained IC/UC approval and Command and General Staff support at the Strategy Meeting/Command and General Staff Meeting.
3. Developed strategies and tactics for the next operational period at the Tactics Meeting.
4. Finalized ICS Form 215 for the Planning Meeting.
5. Received support and approval for the operational plan.
6. Reviewed the IAP to determine if tactical or resource changes were necessary.

The Operational Period Briefing is next.

Purpose

The Operational Period Briefing helps orient incoming resources to operate during the upcoming operational period. The OSC should confirm arrangements for the Operational Period Briefing with Planning and Logistics. The Logistics Section sets up the briefing area. The PSC typically coordinates the briefing agenda and facilitates the Operational Period Briefing, although local procedures may vary. During the Operational Period Briefing, the Planning Section displays maps and distributes copies of the IAP to operational supervisors and other incident personnel.

The briefing is concise and highlights appropriate assignments, safety concerns, and overall incident information. It is not intended to be operationally comprehensive or detailed; there will be an Operations sub-briefing/breakout session for that purpose. Incident personnel designated by the IC/UC or PSC may provide updates regarding incident status, operational progress, and significant developments.

OSC's Responsibilities During the Briefing

- Provide a situation update on current operations for operators.
- Present the tactical plan, major assignments, operational priorities, and any significant changes for the upcoming operational period.

- Ensure Division/Group Supervisors and other resources identify themselves when called upon. Some teams stage their Division/Group Supervisors to the side of the stage so the operators can see who they will be working with.
- Give general overall assignments by division or group.
- Defer questions until the sub-briefing/breakout meeting.
- Announce the locations for the Operations sub-briefings/breakout sessions.
- Finish with positive, motivating comments.
- After the briefing, stay to answer questions from branch directors or Division/Group Supervisors.

Speakers at the Briefing

Some personnel who may speak during the Operational Period Briefing include the following:

- Deputy OSC
- Air Operations Branch Director (the OSC is responsible for providing the Air Operations Briefing if no AOBD is assigned)
- Meteorologist – for the weather update
- SOFR – for the safety message
- Communications Unit Leader (COML) – for the communications plan
- Medical Unit Leader (MEDL) – for the Medical Plan
- Technical specialists
- IC/UC or Deputy IC/UC – opening and/or closing remarks
- Agency Administrator

Operations Sub-Briefings

During Operations sub-briefings or breakout sessions, the DIVSs will provide a detailed briefing to their assigned resources. These briefings cover tactical objectives, assignments, safety considerations, and other critical details. Supervisors are also responsible for ensuring all resources listed in the IAP have arrived, are accounted for, and are ready to begin work.

Typically, Strike Team/Task Force Leaders will then conduct a tactical briefing for the personnel within their teams. If any resources arrive late, they will still be briefed before deployment; however, this will be a focused update rather than a repeat of the full Operational Period Briefing. Branch directors and DIVSs may also conduct their own targeted sub-briefings to ensure incoming personnel are fully informed and mission-ready.

The OSC must provide timely updates throughout the operational period to ensure all assigned resources operate with the most current information. The information for the updates may come from a variety of sources, including reconnaissance flights, updated incident projections, or information shared during the previous Operational Period Briefing.

Adjusting Operations

Incident conditions, resource availability, and operational priorities may change throughout an operational period. The OSC must continually assess the effectiveness of operations and make adjustments as necessary to maintain progress toward incident objectives.

- Recognize When Adjustments Are Needed
 - Monitor operational progress and evaluate whether desired outcomes are being achieved.
 - Identify changing incident conditions, emerging threats, resource shortfalls, or other factors that may affect operational effectiveness.
 - Consider input from field supervisors, technical specialists, and other IMT personnel when evaluating the need for change.
- Implement Contingencies and Alternate Strategies
 - Anticipate potential disruptions or changing conditions that could affect planned operations.
 - Develop and implement contingency plans and alternate strategies when necessary.
 - Coordinate contingency actions with other members of the IMT to ensure alignment with incident objectives and priorities.
- Modify Tactics and Resource Assignments
 - Adjust tactics, reallocate resources, activate tactical reserves, or request additional resources as incident conditions warrant.
 - Coordinate significant strategy changes with the IC/UC and communicate approved changes to affected personnel.
 - Implement changes promptly when necessary to maintain operational effectiveness or address safety concerns.
- Modify the Operations Organization
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the current Operations Section organization.
 - Adjust span of control, activate or deactivate organizational elements, and realign resources as needed to support incident objectives.
 - Coordinate organizational changes with the PSC and other affected personnel.
- Manage Risk
 - Apply risk management principles when evaluating operational activities.
 - Encourage personnel to identify and communicate hazards and safety concerns.
 - Reassess, modify, suspend, or discontinue activities that present an unacceptable level of risk.

Leadership and Administrative Responsibilities

In addition to managing tactical operations, the OSC performs a variety of leadership, coordination, and administrative responsibilities throughout the incident.

The OSC should:

- Coordinate contingency planning, strategic planning, and future operational planning efforts.
- Provide operational information and updates to the Planning Section to support situation reporting and decision-making.
- Coordinate with the PIO to ensure operational information is communicated accurately and consistently.
- Conduct Operations Section meetings to provide direction, maintain situational awareness, and support coordination.
- Complete required timekeeping, documentation, and administrative responsibilities.
- Maintain regular communication with the IC/UC and Command and General Staff members to discuss operational issues, resource needs, and emerging concerns.
- Participate in IMT meetings and other coordination activities as directed by the IC/UC.

Pause and Reflect



Managing current operations while simultaneously planning for the future is no small feat. It's a balancing act that requires staying grounded in the present while watching what's ahead.

Now it's time to step back and reflect on what you've just learned.

Read the scenario and answer the question.

During a significant industrial accident near a small town, OSC Miguel uses unmanned aerial surveillance (UAS) early in the morning to assess the spread of hazardous materials and their potential impact on the local community. After reviewing aerial footage, Miguel meets with field supervisors who report shifting wind patterns that could carry the hazardous materials toward nearby residential areas.

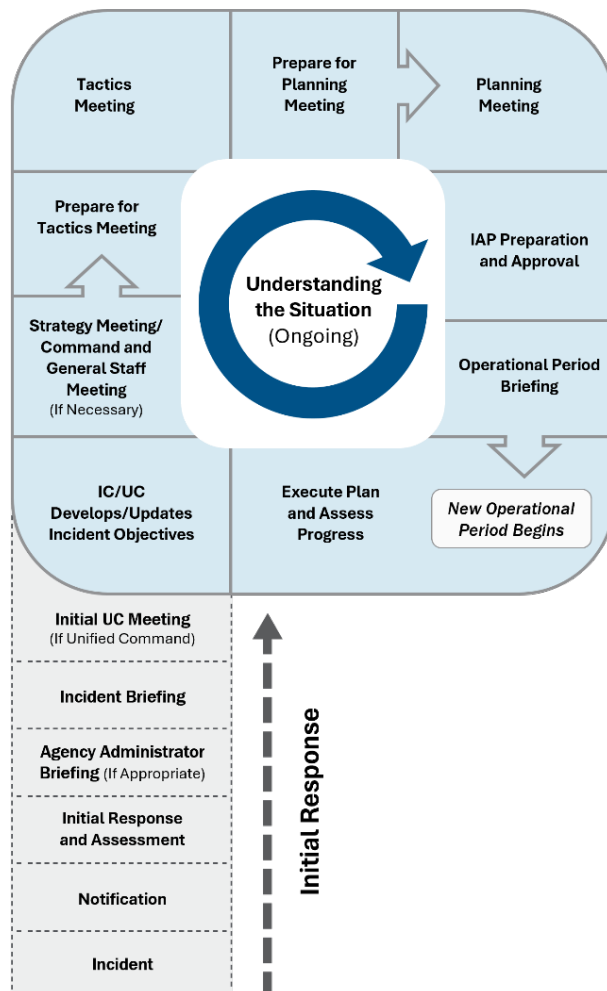
Miguel then leads an Operational Period Briefing for all personnel, updating them on the current status of the incident and the effectiveness of existing containment strategies. He highlights the need to adjust tactics and strategies in response to the new wind patterns, focusing on the northern perimeter where homes and critical infrastructure are at immediate risk. Miguel reallocates resources to strengthen containment efforts in that area and ensure better protection for the community.

As the day progresses, Miguel continues to monitor weather conditions and updates from the UAS. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with the IMT and local emergency services, ensuring that all efforts remain well-coordinated and adaptive to the evolving situation.

Through proactive adjustments and clear communication, Miguel aims to enhance the planned response, minimizing the need for major changes while effectively addressing the ongoing challenges.

1. What else could Miguel have done to enhance the operational response, and how might these changes have potentially improved outcomes?

2. Outline the key responsibilities of the Operations Section Chief 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: IMT and External Stakeholders

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

- Identify how the OSC integrates, communicates, and coordinates with internal/external partners and stakeholders.
- Identify significant issues that may require special communications.

Internal Coordination and Authorities

Authorities, Policies, and Constraints

The OSC should understand the authorities, policies, limitations, and requirements that govern incident operations. These parameters influence tactical decision-making, resource use, and operational priorities throughout the incident.

The IC/UC derives authority to manage the incident from the Agency Administrator or other appropriate authority. In some incidents, this authority is documented through a written Delegation of Authority. For interstate mutual aid incidents, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) Request for Assistance (REQ-A) documents requested resources, mission requirements, reimbursement provisions, and other deployment requirements. The OSC should understand any authorities, policies, limitations, and requirements that may affect incident operations.

Core Command Interfaces

- **IC/UC:** IC/UC serves as the OSC's supervisor and establishes incident objectives, priorities, and operational expectations. The OSC provides realistic tactical assessments, identifies operational challenges, and recommends adjustments when field conditions affect the ability to achieve incident objectives.
- **Agency Administrator:** Although the Agency Administrator typically communicates through the IC/UC, they may provide valuable insights regarding agency priorities, policy considerations, political sensitivities, stakeholder concerns, environmental issues, and local operating conditions. Understanding these factors helps the OSC develop tactical plans that support incident objectives while minimizing unintended impacts on affected communities and stakeholders.

Internal Operations and Support

To execute the Incident Action Plan (IAP), the OSC coordinates closely with Command and General Staff personnel, subordinate supervisors, and technical specialists throughout the incident.

Tactical and Aviation Oversight

- **Directors and Division/Group Supervisors:** Branch Directors and Division/Group Supervisors are the OSC's primary field supervisors. The OSC should maintain regular communication with them throughout the operational period to obtain updates, assess progress, identify issues, and support decision-making.
- **AOBD:** The OSC coordinates with the AOBD to establish priorities for incident air operations and ensure aviation resources support incident objectives safely and effectively.

Planning Section

The OSC works closely with the PSC and units in the Planning Section throughout the incident planning process.

- **Resources Unit:** The Resources Unit tracks resource status and supports the OSC in developing the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS Form 215) and Assignment Lists (ICS Form 204s).
- **Situation Unit:** The Situation Unit maintains incident status information and supports situational awareness. Operational input is essential for ensuring the Incident Status Summary (ICS Form 209) and other situation reports accurately reflect current conditions.
- **FOBS:** FOBSs deploy in the field to determine the progress of operations. FOBSs may provide independent observations regarding operational progress, incident conditions, and emerging issues.
- **GIS Specialist:** GIS Specialists support the OSC by producing maps, spatial analyses, and projections used for operational planning and situational awareness.
- **Incident Meteorologist:** An Incident Meteorologist provides vital information on weather and predicted weather.
- **Fire Behavior Analyst:** Fire Behavior Analysts and other technical specialists provide incident-specific expertise to support operational planning and decision-making.

Command and General Staff Coordination

- **Finance/Administration:** The FSC provides information regarding incident costs, fiscal constraints, reimbursement requirements, and financial considerations that may affect operational decisions.
- **Logistics:** The OSC coordinates closely with the LSC to ensure personnel, equipment, supplies, facilities, communications, transportation, and other support requirements are available to sustain operations.
- **SOFR:** The OSC and SOFR work closely throughout the planning process and operational period to identify hazards, evaluate risks, and implement appropriate mitigations.
- **PIO:** The OSC coordinates with the PIO to ensure operational information is communicated accurately and consistently. The OSC may also assist with VIP visits, operational briefings, and site visits coordinated through the PIO and LOFR.
- **LOFR:** The LOFR is the information conduit between the IMT, assisting/cooperating Agency Representatives, and affected stakeholders. In continually communicating with stakeholders and assisting/cooperating agencies, the LOFR addresses and deconflicts issues that could take the OSC away from managing operations.
- **Responsible Party:** In certain incidents, a designated responsible party may hold specific responsibilities related to the incident, such as the owner or operator of a facility involved in an incident. The OSC may need to work with the responsible party to obtain critical information, coordinate response efforts, and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements or operational protocols.

Critical Information Reporting

Critical information must be communicated as soon as practical when it may affect incident objectives, responder safety, stakeholder interests, public confidence, or operational effectiveness. These communications occur outside routine meetings, briefings, and reporting cycles and support timely decision-making by incident leadership.

The OSC should establish critical reporting thresholds and use Essential Elements of Information (EElIs) to focus information collection and reporting on matters requiring leadership attention or action.

External OSC Partners

Local Leaders, Responders, and Residents

Local residents, community leaders, and local responders may provide valuable information regarding hazards, access routes, local conditions, cultural considerations, and community concerns. The OSC should demonstrate professionalism, respect, and empathy when interacting with community members and local personnel. While supporting incident objectives, the OSC should consider community impacts and strive to minimize unnecessary disruptions to residents, businesses, and local activities whenever possible.

Local Law Enforcement

Local law enforcement officers offer critical insight into the operating environment, including political conditions, high-risk areas, and the location of key resources. They can identify areas affected by political tensions, civil unrest, or other localized threats, enabling the OSC and assigned personnel to plan effectively and implement appropriate safety measures during operations.

Media

Official media communications should be coordinated through the PIO and conducted in accordance with incident policies and agency procedures. The OSC should ensure media activities do not interfere with incident operations or create unnecessary safety risks.

Agency Administrator Personnel

Agency personnel can provide valuable information regarding local policies, plans, priorities, operating conditions, and stakeholder concerns. Maintaining positive working relationships with agency personnel supports coordination and contributes to incident success. When appropriate, the OSC may coordinate through the LOFR to address agency-related issues.

Technical Specialists

The OSC routinely integrates guidance from several specialized disciplines:

- **Natural and Cultural Resource Specialists:** Provide direction on avoiding historical artifacts, sacred grounds, or sensitive archaeological sites during heavy equipment operations (e.g., bull-dozer line construction).
- **Fishery Biologists and Hydrologists:** Assist in calculating the downstream impacts of chemical counter-measures, water drawdowns, or tactical containment booming.
- **Soil Scientists and Seismologists:** Analyze slope stability, landslide risks, and mudslide hazards following severe weather or structural collapses.

- Public Health, EMS, and HAZMAT Professionals: Provide guidance on containment thresholds, community exposure risks, and specialized medical decontamination protocols.
- Tribal Leadership: Provides guidance regarding tribal sovereignty, cultural resources, community priorities, and operations occurring on or affecting tribal lands.

Pause and Reflect



Collaborating with the IMT and external stakeholders is critical to your role as an OSC. Building strong relationships and clear communication lines can make all the difference in achieving successful outcomes.

Before moving on, let's pause to reflect on the material.

1. How does direction from the enabling authorities, such as the Agency Administrator or Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), influence the position and work of the OSC?

2. Match how the other section chiefs work with the Operations Section.

A. Finance/Administration

☐

works intimately with the OSC during the incident action planning process and throughout the operational period. You are both constantly evaluating incident conditions, weather, and operations.

B. Logistics

☐

is an information conduit between the IMT, assisting/cooperating Agency Representatives, and affected stakeholders. They attempt to address and deconflict issues that could take an OSC away from managing operations by continually communicating with stakeholders and assisting/cooperating agencies.

C. Safety Officer

☐

informs the OSC on the amount spent against the allocated budget and whether they are spending money on unauthorized items, which the budget determines.

D. Liaison Officer

☐

Complex incidents and response activities require an OSC to work closely with this section. This is especially true if the event involves air support, remote support, or specialized resources. They are your "go-to" for support resources.

3. Provide an example of an external partner and their potential input during an incident. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency may provide guidance on hazardous material cleanup procedures.

Chapter 5: Contingency Planning

Incident conditions can change rapidly, requiring the OSC to anticipate potential threats, operational challenges, and resource needs before they occur. Effective contingency planning helps the OSC prepare for changing conditions and maintain operational effectiveness when current tactics become ineffective or unexpected events occur.

This chapter discusses the foundations of contingency planning, including the Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency (PACE) framework, threat analysis, trigger points, contingency plan development, and contingency plan implementation.

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

- Identify the purpose, function, importance, and the difference between short- and long-term contingency plans as they pertain to an OSC.
- Recognize how an OSC develops, adjusts, finalizes, and disseminates a contingency plan.

Foundations of Contingency Planning

Contingency planning is the process of identifying potential future conditions, establishing trigger points, and developing alternative courses of action if incident conditions change significantly. Examples may include resource shortages, responder injuries, severe weather, critical infrastructure failures, or evacuation requirements.

The OSC plays a key role in identifying operational vulnerabilities, forecasting future conditions, developing tactical options, and determining resource requirements. Because contingency planning often requires input from multiple IMT functions, the OSC works closely with the Planning Section, Logistics Section, Safety Officer, and other personnel to develop coordinated and actionable plans.

Common Triggers Requiring Contingency Plans

Contingency plans are often developed in response to known threats, anticipated changes in incident conditions, or vulnerabilities that could affect incident operations.

Common triggers include:

- **Resource Depletion:** Local mutual-aid agencies are recalled to handle an independent emergency within their own jurisdiction.
- **Personnel Emergencies:** A serious accident or line-of-duty injury causes an IWI.
- **Environmental Shifts:** Sudden, severe weather shifts occur, such as wind direction reversals, flash flooding, or secondary storm systems.

- **Catastrophic Failure:** A HAZMAT railcar breaches, forcing an immediate, unplanned exclusion zone expansion.
- **Tactical Inadequacy:** The current strategy or tactics are not achieving the desired incident objectives.

Using the PACE Framework

The PACE framework is a planning and decision-support tool used to develop multiple courses of action for accomplishing an objective or sustaining operations when conditions change. The OSC should consider PACE options when developing strategies, contingency plans, tactical assignments, and resource requirements. The framework helps the OSC identify options before they are needed and supports operational decision-making during disruptions, resource shortages, or other changes that may affect incident operations.

- **Primary (P):** The preferred strategy or course of action used to accomplish an objective under expected conditions.
- **Alternate (A):** A secondary strategy that can achieve the same objective if the Primary option becomes unavailable, ineffective, or impractical.
- **Contingency (C):** A pre-identified course of action designed to address anticipated problems, trigger points, or changing incident conditions that may significantly affect operations.
- **Emergency (E):** The last-resort option used when immediate action is required to protect life, responder safety, critical infrastructure, or other values at risk.

OSC and Planning Section Responsibilities

The OSC is responsible for identifying operational vulnerabilities, establishing trigger points, developing tactical actions, and determining resource requirements. The Planning Section often assists in documenting, coordinating, maintaining, and distributing contingency planning information. Successful contingency planning requires close collaboration among Operations, Planning, Logistics, Safety, Finance/Administration, and other IMT personnel.

Alternative Plans vs. Contingency Plans

Alternative plans and contingency plans both address situations where the original plan may no longer be effective; however, they serve different purposes.

Table 5: Differences in Alternative and Contingency Plans

Alternative Plan	Contingency Plan
A backup strategy designed to achieve the same objective using different tactics, resources, or methods.	A proactive plan developed in advance to address a specific threat, risk, or potential future condition.
Developed as part of the planning process to provide flexibility if the primary approach becomes impractical or ineffective.	Developed to identify actions that will be taken if predefined conditions or trigger points occur.
Focuses on accomplishing the mission through another approach.	Focuses on preparing for and responding to anticipated problems or changing conditions.

Alternative Plan Example

Scenario: Due to adverse weather, which is creating strong winds and low visibility during a wildfire incident, aerial firefighting operations are not feasible.

Alternative Plan: The OSC's alternative plan for this scenario could include:

- Redirecting ground-based firefighting resources to establish firebreaks and containment lines using hand crews, bulldozers, and other heavy equipment.
- Prioritizing structure protection efforts by deploying ground crews to defend homes and critical infrastructure from the advancing fire.
- Implementing controlled burns or backburning operations to create buffer zones and reduce the fire's intensity and spread.
- Requesting additional ground support from neighboring jurisdictions or agencies to augment firefighting efforts and reinforce containment lines.
- Communicating with incident leadership, support functions, and external partners to coordinate response actions and resource allocations in alignment with the alternative plan.

Contingency Plan Example

Scenario: A wildfire incident is rapidly spreading toward a residential area, threatening homes, and residents.

Contingency Plan: The OSC's contingency plan for this scenario could include:

- Activating additional firefighting resources, such as air support or specialized crews, to contain the fire's spread.
- Establishing evacuation routes and coordinating with law enforcement and emergency management agencies to facilitate the safe evacuation of residents.
- Deploying resources to protect critical infrastructure, such as water supplies, power lines, and communication networks, from advancing fire.
- Implementing public safety measures such as road closures or shelter-in-place orders to protect residents and prevent further spread of the fire.
- Monitoring weather conditions and fire behavior to anticipate changes and adjust response strategies accordingly.

Short-Term and Long-Term Contingency Planning

Contingency plans may address either short-term or long-term concerns. The distinction is based on the anticipated timing of the threat and the amount of time available to prepare.

Short-Term Contingency Plan

Short-term contingency plans typically address threats that may occur within the current or upcoming operational periods. These plans often focus on immediate operational adjustments and rapid resource deployment.

- Example Issue: A train derailment is leaking toxic gas.
- Short-term contingency: Shelter residents in place while attempting to control the leak. If release conditions worsen or weather conditions change, transition to evacuation and defensive operations.

Long-Term Contingency Plan

Long-term contingency plans address projected threats that may affect future operational periods. These plans often require extensive coordination, resource planning, and trigger-point development.

- Example Issue: Preparing for a second hurricane that may arrive in five days.
- Long-term contingency: Identify evacuation requirements, establish operational trigger points, determine personnel sheltering options, and develop plans for suspending and resuming operations.

Assessing Threats and Trigger Points

Before developing a contingency plan, the OSC should review existing local, state, tribal, territorial, federal, and private-sector plans that may be applicable to the incident.

Leveraging existing plans helps avoid duplication of effort and may provide pre-established trigger points, response actions, and coordination procedures.

High-Value Areas for Evaluation

When developing contingency plans, the OSC should evaluate areas where incident impacts could have the greatest consequences:

1. High life-safety risk areas, including residential populations, schools, healthcare facilities, and special populations.
2. Environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, wildlife preserves, watersheds, and protected habitats.
3. Critical infrastructure, including power generation and distribution systems, water treatment facilities, transportation systems, and emergency communications networks.
4. Major economic drivers, including ports, rail systems, industrial facilities, and major commercial centers.
5. Critical resource availability, particularly specialized personnel, and equipment that may be difficult to replace.
6. Political, cultural, and social considerations, including jurisdictional boundaries, tribal lands, and public confidence factors.

Threat Analysis

Threat analysis is the process of identifying, evaluating, and prioritizing hazards that may affect incident operations. The OSC should leverage available expertise, technical specialists, historical data, local plans, and predictive tools to assess potential threats and their operational implications.

When conducting a threat analysis, the OSC should:

- Utilize technical specialists, meteorologists, local experts, and other subject matter experts.
- Review hazard mitigation plans, emergency operations plans, and other pre-existing planning documents.
- Evaluate current and forecasted incident conditions.

- Identify potentially threatened populations, infrastructure, resources, and environmental areas.
- Assess the probability and consequences of identified threats.
- Determine the operational actions that may be required if conditions deteriorate.

Establishing a Threshold Point (Trigger Point)

A threshold point, also referred to as a trigger point or decision point, is a predefined condition that initiates a specific operational action. Trigger points provide incident personnel with clear criteria for implementing contingency actions before conditions worsen.

Examples of factors used to establish threshold points include:

- Changes in incident behavior or threat conditions.
- Resource availability and response times.
- Evacuation timelines.
- Weather conditions and forecasts.
- Operational effectiveness.
- Safety considerations.
- Critical infrastructure impacts.

Developing a Contingency Plan

After identifying potential threats, trigger points, and operational impacts, the OSC must develop a contingency plan that provides clear direction for incident personnel if conditions change. Effective contingency plans are actionable, coordinated, and scalable. They identify what actions will be taken, when they will be implemented, who is responsible, and what resources are required.

Coordination and Collaboration

Developing a contingency plan is a collaborative process that involves personnel from across the IMT as well as external partners and stakeholders, as appropriate. The OSC is responsible for integrating operational considerations into the plan and ensuring it supports incident objectives, responder safety, and operational effectiveness.

The following are effective steps for building a contingency plan with the input of internal and external resources:

- Coordinate with internal IMT partners. Collaborate with other members of the IMT to gather input, expertise, and the resources necessary for contingency planning. They may have valuable insights and contributions, such as whether the tactics are acceptable from a logistical, safety, or financial standpoint.

- Find and meet local cooperators. Identify and engage with local agencies, organizations, and stakeholders that may play a role in the incident response, such as law enforcement, public health departments, and businesses. Establish communication channels and partnerships with local cooperators to exchange information, coordinate resources, and address mutual objectives in contingency planning.
- Coordinate with utilities. Work with utility companies (e.g., power, water, and telecommunications providers) to understand their capabilities, response procedures, and potential impacts on incident management. Collaborate with utilities to develop contingency measures for maintaining essential services, restoring infrastructure, and mitigating disruptions during the incident.
- Review mutual aid agreements. Review existing mutual aid agreements with neighboring jurisdictions, agencies, or organizations to assess available resources and capabilities for mutual assistance. Coordinate with partner agencies to activate mutual aid agreements as needed, facilitating the exchange of personnel, equipment, and support services to bolster response efforts.
- Implement division/group planning and management strategies. Coordinate with Branch Directors and DIVSs to identify operational concerns, resource requirements, trigger points, and implementation actions. Establish clear objectives, priorities, and communication protocols for Branch Directors and DIVSs to ensure alignment with the overall contingency plan and incident objectives.

Core Elements

A comprehensive contingency plan contains five core elements and specific supporting documentation.

- **Problem Statement:** Define the specific risk, hazard, or challenge that the plan addresses. Identify what could disrupt operations and why the contingency plan is necessary.
- **Objectives:** Establish clear and measurable goals to mitigate the identified problem. Ensure objectives align with incident priorities and focus on maintaining safety, continuity, or resource protection.
- **Pre-Event Actions:** Identify proactive steps to prepare for the potential problem. Include actions like pre-positioning resources, conducting briefings, or monitoring conditions to ensure readiness.
- **Triggers:** Specify the measurable conditions or events that activate the contingency plan. Examples include resource depletion, a weather incident reaching a threshold, or operational failure.

- **Tactics/Logistics:** Outline the strategies and logistical needs to execute the plan. Detail who will carry out the actions, what resources are needed, and how they will be deployed or managed.

Supporting Appendices

Depending on the incident, supporting appendices may include:

- Maps and geographic information.
- Evacuation routes.
- Safe refuge areas.
- Escape routes.
- Triage or prioritization guides.
- Search marking systems.
- Resource inventories.
- Communications information.

Approval and Coordination

Contingency plans should be coordinated with affected members of the IMT to ensure operational, logistical, safety, and financial considerations have been addressed. Because contingency plans may involve significant operational, policy, financial, or stakeholder considerations, the OSC should obtain approval from the IC/UC before implementation.

- **Operations:** Ensures field crews understand the tactical triggers and know how their assignments might change.
- **Finance/Administration:** Identifies financial considerations, cost-tracking requirements, reimbursement issues, and fiscal impacts associated with plan implementation.
- **Logistics:** Prepares staging areas, coordinates food and fuel supplies, establishes rehab stations, and configures emergency communication channels.
- **Planning:** Updates resource tracking, maps new division lines, and plans for potential demobilization.
- **Command Staff:** Prepares the SOFR, LOFR, and PIO to manage their respective parts of the plan.

Implementing the Contingency Plan

Following IC/UC approval, the contingency plan has been shared with and briefed to the IMT. Activation of the contingency plan is the next step.

Resource Preparation

When the likelihood of plan activation increases, the OSC may request additional resources, pre-position personnel and equipment, establish staging locations, and maintain tactical reserves needed to support contingency operations.

Resource preparation may include:

- Ordering additional personnel or equipment.
- Pre-positioning specialized resources.
- Establishing or expanding staging areas.
- Conducting reconnaissance, surveys, or preparatory field actions.
- Refining assignments and operational objectives.

Infrastructure Coordination

The OSC should coordinate with local agencies, utility providers, transportation agencies, and technical specialists to understand potential impacts to critical infrastructure and identify measures that support continuity of operations.

Utility Providers

Coordinating with utilities is a necessary part of an effective contingency plan. Utilities play a vital role during an incident in supporting various essential services and infrastructure systems. Additionally, the IMT may be building a plan to protect radio/cell towers, fiber optic communication hubs, and water pumping stations (critical infrastructure). In most cases, the local government entity will request to be the point of contact for the utility companies in their area or act to furnish some utilities as part of their taxing entity services. In most cases, assessing utility infrastructure will require subject matter experts.

Water

Supplying the affected area(s) with safe and sufficient water involves coordinating with water utility providers to:

- Assess the integrity of water supply systems.
- Identify any damages or disruptions.
- Implement measures to restore or maintain water services.

- Prioritize water distribution efforts.
- Address any contamination or quality issues.

Electric

Ensuring electrical service protection is essential for infrastructure and public safety during emergencies. Coordination with electric utility providers includes:

- Monitoring power grids and shutting off power to affected areas for safety reasons.
- Identifying potential hazards or vulnerabilities.
- Implementing measures to prevent or mitigate power outages.
- Establishing and/or maintaining temporary power supply solutions, including generators.
- Coordinating with utility crews to expedite repairs and restoration efforts.

Telecommunications

Reliable communication is crucial for coordinating an emergency response and sharing vital information. Coordination with telecommunication providers involves:

- Verifying the integrity of telephone and cellular service and public safety radio networks.
- Assessing communications capabilities.
- Implementing contingency plans to address any disruptions or limitations.
- Prioritizing emergency calls.
- Establishing alternative communication methods.
- Coordinating with telecommunications personnel to troubleshoot issues and restore service quickly.

Transportation

Transportation is critical for emergency response, evacuations, and resource movement. Coordination with transportation agencies includes:

- Monitoring road conditions.
- Assessing infrastructure damage.
- Implementing measures to ensure safe and efficient travel routes.
- Coordinating with road maintenance crews.
- Deploying traffic management strategies.
- Prioritizing transportation resources to support emergency response efforts in affected areas.

Communications

The OSC should coordinate with the Command Staff to ensure stakeholders receive timely and accurate information regarding contingency planning and activation. Coordination with the LOFR, PIO, and other stakeholders helps support information sharing, stakeholder engagement, and public awareness efforts.

- LOFR: The OSC should coordinate with the LOFR to ensure assisting and cooperating agencies, stakeholders, and external partners receive timely information regarding contingency planning activities and plan activation.
- PIO: Coordinate with the PIO regarding public information requirements associated with contingency planning and activation. Public messaging may include protective actions, evacuation information, operational impacts, and other information approved by the IC/UC.

Evacuation Considerations

Some contingency plans may require evacuation, shelter-in-place, relocation, or other protective actions. The OSC should coordinate with the IC/UC, Command Staff, emergency management agencies, law enforcement, and other partners to support implementation of approved protective actions and ensure operational activities align with jurisdictional procedures and public warning systems.

Provide Advanced Warning

Give the PIO an advanced warning of the contingency plan. Ensure the PIO can explain the contingency plan clearly, including the threshold points and potential impacts. Providing the PIO with advanced warning and explanation of the plan allows them to:

- Participate in the notification process as part of any evacuation.
- Establish information kiosks or other public information tools, as needed.
- Leverage social media and alerting systems.
- Link with the local emergency management agencies to push emergency warnings.

Ready, Set, Go

Some jurisdictions use phased evacuation frameworks such as Ready, Set, Go. The OSC should understand applicable evacuation procedures and public warning systems used within the affected jurisdiction.



Refer to the Ready, Set, Go website to learn more.

(<https://www.wildlandfirersg.org>)

Pause and Reflect



As an OSC, your ability to think ahead and prepare for the unexpected is what sets the stage for resilience and adaptability during an incident. Contingency planning ensures you're ready to pivot when the situation demands it.

Now, let's take some time to reflect on the key points from this chapter.

1. What are some reasons an OSC would require a contingency plan?

2. Read the scenario and use the PACE Framework below. Then, develop plans to manage the situation.

As a newly appointed OSC, you are faced with managing a severe winter storm that has blanketed your region with heavy snowfall and caused widespread power outages. The storm has downed trees and power lines, blocked roads, and disrupted essential services, posing significant challenges to public safety and infrastructure.

Primary Plan

Alternative Plan

Contingency Plan

Emergency Plan

3. Review each issue related to the severe winter storm scenario and provide a short-term, long-term, and alternate plan.

Issue	Short-Term Contingency Plan
Prolonged Power Outages The severe winter storm has caused widespread power outages, leaving many residents without electricity for an extended period.	

Issue	Long-Term Contingency Plan
Blocked Roads Heavy snowfall and fallen trees have blocked major roadways, hindering emergency response and essential services.	

Issue	Alternative Plan
Shortage of Heating Fuel Due to the increased demand during the winter storm, there is a shortage of heating fuel, exacerbating the cold conditions for residents without power.	

Chapter 6: Transition and Demobilization

As incident objectives are achieved and operational demands decrease, the OSC begins planning for the orderly transition of responsibilities and release of resources.

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

- Identify the OSC's role and responsibilities for demobilization, including executing the Demobilization Plan.
- Identify the OSC's key responsibilities relating to transition and incident closeout.

Differentiating Transition and Demobilization

As an incident moves past its peak complexity and enters its de-escalation phase, the OSC must manage two distinct administrative and physical processes:

- Transition is the process of transferring incident management responsibilities from one organization, IMT, or authority to another while maintaining continuity of operations and situational awareness.
- Demobilization is the orderly, safe, and efficient release of incident resources that are no longer required to support incident objectives.



Refer to the ICS Training Reference Guide for more general information about the transition and demobilization processes.

Building the Transfer Strategy: The Transition Plan

As the incident winds down, the OSC develops and provides operational information and recommendations that support the overall Transition Plan. These inputs are coordinated with the PSC and other members of the IMT. The Transition Plan provides information necessary for an incoming team or organization to assume responsibility while maintaining continuity of operations, situational awareness, and resource accountability.

The OSC's portion of the plan should include the following information:

- **Operational Strategies and Priorities:** A summary of current operations, priorities, and initiatives that should continue during and after the transition.
- **Operational Resource List:** A summary of assigned resources, their current status, locations, capabilities, and anticipated disposition during the transition.
- **Resource Demobilization Procedures:** Procedures for the safe, orderly, and efficient release of resources that are no longer required to support incident objectives.

- **Transfer Protocols:** Procedures for transferring operational responsibilities, communications, situational awareness, and resource accountability to incoming personnel or organizations.
- **Ongoing Operational Tasks:** Critical actions, assignments, and operational priorities that require continued attention during and immediately following the transition.
- **Interagency Coordination Efforts:** Documented agreements and contact points for external cooperating and assisting agencies still engaged on-scene.

Executing the Demobilization Plan

The Demobilization Plan is compiled and published by the Planning Section under the supervision of the PSC. However, because the OSC directly manages the vast majority of all on-scene tactical assets, the plan cannot function without the OSC's input and validation.

Releasing Resources

Resource release decisions are coordinated through established incident management processes and approved by the IC/UC in accordance with agency policies and incident requirements. The OSC plays a key role in identifying excess resources and providing recommendations regarding resource release priorities.

- **Formulating Recommendations:** The OSC provides real-time tactical advice to the IC/UC regarding which crews are no longer needed to meet active incident objectives.
- **Designating "Excess to Operations":** The OSC identifies specific resources – including field personnel, strike teams, task forces, and Operations Section overhead – as excess.
- **Forecasting Timeline:** The OSC should continually monitor field output and identify excess assets one to two operational periods in advance to allow sufficient time to coordinate resource release activities.

After designating resources as "excess to operations," work with the IC/UC and relevant stakeholders to determine whether to reassign, release, or stage them.

OSC's Responsibilities for Demobilization

In addition to providing input and notifying the IC/UC of excess resources, the OSC's demobilization responsibilities include:

- **Reviewing the Demobilization Plan** to understand the OSC's role and what is required. The Demobilization Plan is often edited from previous plans, so the OSC must read it to understand the content.
- **Informing subordinates** and ensuring they follow demobilization procedures.

- Ensuring complete and accurate documentation for personnel evaluations, personnel and equipment time records, and accident reports.
- Returning loaned equipment.
- Reviewing and approving the Operations Section's portion of the Demobilization Plan.
- Providing input on the glide path.

Demobilization Check-Out (ICS Form 221)

The Demobilization Unit Leader (DMOB) uses ICS Form 221 to document the release procedures for each resource. The DMOB coordinates the demobilization check-out process and uses ICS Form 221 to document required release actions and approvals.

The OSC should ensure required timekeeping records, evaluations, and other Operations Section documentation are completed and submitted in accordance with incident procedures. Any trainees in the Operations Section will need documentation for their files as they seek credentialing in their positions. The DMOB will verify that the IC/UC releases resources properly, the equipment is accounted for, and personnel complete the necessary check-out procedures.

Helpful Tips for Demobilization

The OSC should use strategic discretion when recommending asset rollouts. Releasing resources requires balancing many factors, including local political needs, financial impacts, and crew safety.

Table 6: Actions for Demobilization

Action	Description
Maintain a Tactical Reserve.	While the incident is de-escalating but still active, ensure the IMT maintains a tactical reserve as a contingency in case the incident or conditions change. Resources should be retained only when operationally justified and consistent with incident objectives and contingency requirements.
Share the Demobilization Plan.	Transitioning from one IMT to another may involve sharing the Demobilization Plan.
Consider travel permits for specialized equipment.	Some specialized equipment may require permits to travel on the highway systems. These permits typically restrict the equipment to weekday travel. Large equipment, such as dozers, may need to be permitted before

Action	Description
	release. The expense of permits adds to the complexity of scheduling demobilization.
Demobilize expensive/borrowed resources.	Consider releasing borrowed, scarce, specialized, or costly resources once they are no longer required to support incident objectives and operational contingencies. Local governments may need them back quickly, and it saves money. Releasing resources when they are no longer required is a good practice (even if this occurs before the mitigation is complete).
Release critical/specialized resources.	Critical or specialized resources should be evaluated for release based on current incident needs, contingency requirements, availability of replacement capabilities, and competing demands.
Use contract carriers for out-of-area demobilization.	Demobilizing resources from outside the area may require using contract carriers for their transportation (which saves money on air carrier costs).
Demobilize the appropriate incident-specific resources first.	Release incident-specific resources first and coordinate with Agency Representatives to release agency resources.
Consolidate.	Consolidating resources means sending resources from the same geographic area at the same time (usually, people flying to the incident).
Monitor fatigue.	Ensure that fatigued resources do not operate apparatus or vehicles. Announce this guidance at a briefing and post it in front of the Demobilization Unit in the Planning Section. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring personnel rest and fatigue, with the OSC maintaining overall responsibility for ensuring sufficient rest periods.

The Glide Path

Some incidents use a resource reduction forecast, often referred to as a "glide path," to project anticipated resource needs and support demobilization planning. Review the ICS Training Reference Guide for a sample glide path and the information typically included.

When providing input to support development of a glide path, the OSC should consider:

- **Resource Projections by Kind and Type:** Forecasted resource requirements based on anticipated operational needs and projected incident conditions.
- **Operational Milestones:** Key operational achievements and decision points that may support resource reductions, organizational changes, or transition activities.
- **Work/Rest Constraints:** Information regarding operational tempo, work/rest requirements, responder fatigue, and anticipated needs for relief resources.
- **Transition and Demobilization:** Anticipated transfer of responsibilities, release priorities, organizational changes, and other factors that may affect future resource requirements.

Incident Closeout and Narrative Capture

Incident closeout represents the final administrative phase for the IMT. The OSC focuses on documenting operational history, capturing lessons learned, and conducting equipment checks.

Compiling the Operational Narrative

During incident closeout, the OSC typically writes their portion of the incident narrative from their perspective, which describes the following:

- **Arrival on the incident:** the status and actions taken to begin mitigation.
- **Overview of what happened during the assignment.**
- **Lessons learned to improve future operations using information collected at the Operations Section After-Action Review (AAR).**
- **Status of the incident at the time of demobilization and/or Transfer of Command.**

The Agency Administrator Closeout Briefing

At the Agency Administrator Closeout Briefing, the OSC will provide an overview of the incident from arrival to demobilization or Transfer of Command. This information is derived directly from their portion of the incident narrative and may include lessons learned during the AAR.

Final Section Closeout Actions

- **Equipment Rehabilitation:** The OSC coordinates with appropriate personnel to ensure incident equipment is accounted for, inspected, maintained, and prepared for future use. Additionally, the OSC will conduct rehabilitation of all equipment brought to the incident for future deployments and address any deficiencies regarding knowledge, skills, or abilities that may have affected their work while deployed.
- **Training and Skill Evaluations:** The OSC addresses any training gaps or skill deficiencies identified during the deployment, ensuring they are documented to guide future team development.
- **Internal Team Review:** The IMT conducts a final internal review to evaluate how the Command and General Staff integrated across sections. If lessons learned have long-term value, the OSC should ensure they are documented and shared for incorporation into future planning, training, and team best practices.

Pause and Reflect



Your understanding of the transition and demobilization process helps 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.

1. Explain the difference(s) between “transition” and “demobilization.”

2. What are three things an OSC should include in a Transition Plan, and why?

Read the scenario and answer the questions.

After a prolonged response to a significant wildfire incident, the situation has finally stabilized, and the IMT is beginning the demobilization process. The Planning Section has provided you with the preliminary Demobilization Plan that was adapted from a previous plan. Your role as OSC is crucial in overseeing the safe and orderly return of resources and personnel. You are responsible for reviewing and adjusting the plan as necessary, ensuring all procedures are followed, documenting all key activities, and advising the IC on the status of the demobilization.

3. What key elements should be considered in the Demobilization Plan, particularly concerning release priorities, and the timeline for identifying surplus resources (which may not align with the needs of the previous incident's plan)?

4. What strategies might you employ to handle resistance or confusion among team members regarding demobilization steps?

5. How would you ensure the Operations Section aligns with the overall demobilization objectives and the IC's goals?

6. How do you determine when and how to demobilize critical and specialized resources, such as helicopters and HAZMAT teams, which may be needed elsewhere?

7. How do you incorporate monitoring for mission fatigue into this decision-making process to ensure the safety of personnel, particularly those operating vehicles or other critical equipment, during demobilization?

Appendix

Briefing Checklist

Situation

Overview of Incident

- Current status of incident progression (getting worse/better)
- Tactical resource challenges
- Limitations/constraints, sensitive issues:
 - Political
 - Social
 - Environmental
 - Media
- AREP/Cooperator Issues/Concerns
- Stakeholder challenges
- Media response/public sentiment

Mission/Execution

Command

- IC/UC/immediate supervisor
- Leader's intent: overall objectives/strategy
- Specific tactical assignments
- Contingency plans
- Medevac plan: personnel, equipment, transport options, contingency plans

Communications

Communications Plan

- Tactical, command, and air-to-ground frequencies
- Cell phone numbers

Service/Support

Other Resources:

- Working adjacent to those available to order
- Aviation operations
- Logistics transportation
- Supplies and equipment

Risk Management

Identify Known Hazards and Risks:

- Identify control measures to mitigate hazards/reduce risk.
- Include LCES (Lookouts, Communications, Escape routes, Safety zones).
- Identify trigger points for reevaluating operations.
- Other factors that may impact tactical operations or public expectations/perceptions of the response.

Questions or Concerns?

Agency Administrator Briefing Worksheet

Instructions: Use this worksheet during the Agency Administrator Briefing to ensure the Agency Administrator addresses topics relevant to the Operations Section.

Topic	Question	Answer
Priorities for Management	What are the primary objectives and priorities for managing this incident?	
Priorities for Management	What strategies have been selected to address these priorities?	
Threatened Structures	Are any structures threatened by the incident?	
Threatened Structures	What measures are in place to protect these structures?	
Equipment Status	Has all the equipment been inspected and signed up for use?	
Tactics Used and Success	Has the equipment undergone necessary cleaning and maintenance?	
Tactics Used and Success	What has been the success and effectiveness of these tactics?	
Weather and Environmental Data	What forecasting services or environmental data stations are available?	
Weather and Environmental Data	How is weather or environmental data being utilized in incident management?	
Mitigation and Cleanup Standards	What are the standards for mop-up or mitigation efforts?	
Mitigation and Cleanup Standards	What processes are in place to ensure thorough cleanup and mitigation?	

Topic	Question	Answer
Initial Response Responsibilities	Who is responsible for the initial response to the incident?	
Initial Response Responsibilities	What protocols are in place for the initial response?	
Air Resources Assigned	Are any air resources (e.g., air tankers, helicopters) assigned to the incident?	
Air Resources Assigned	What is the effectiveness of these air resources?	
Air Base Information	What is the location of the air base supporting the incident?	
Air Base Information	What is the contact information for the air base?	
Helibase Information	Are any helicopters assigned to the incident?	
Helibase Information	What is the location of the helibase supporting these helicopters?	