

Veterinary Disaster Response

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SECTION 1
TRAINING

CHAPTER 1.1

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

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1. Describe the basics of the incident command system (ICS).

The *incident command system*, or ICS, is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management concept. ICS allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS has considerable internal flexibility. It can grow or shrink to meet different needs. This flexibility makes it a very cost-effective and efficient management approach for both small and large situations and incidents.

2. What is an “incident”? List some examples.

An *incident* is an occurrence, caused by either humans or a natural phenomenon, that requires response actions to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or the environment. Examples of incidents include:

- Fire, both structural and wildland
- Natural disasters, such as tornadoes, floods, ice storms, or earthquakes
- Human and animal disease outbreaks
- Search and rescue missions
- Hazardous materials incidents
- Criminal acts and crime scene investigations
- Terrorist incidents, including the use of weapons of mass destruction
- National special security events, such as presidential visits or the Super Bowl
- Other planned events, such as parades or demonstrations

Given the magnitude of these types of events, it is not always possible for any one agency alone to handle the management and resource needs. Partnerships are often required among local, state, tribal, and federal agencies. These partners must work together in a smooth, coordinated effort under the same management system.

3. Why is it important to understand ICS as a first responder?

A thorough understanding of the ICS structure, principles, and expectations allows emergency personnel to respond to a scene, understand where they fit in the chain of command, and know their operational objectives.

- ICS is a proven management system based on successful business practices.
- ICS is the result of decades of lessons learned in the organization and management of emergency incidents.

- ICS has been tested in more than 30 years of emergency and nonemergency applications, by all levels of government and in the private sector. It represents organizational “best practices,” and as a component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), it has become the standard for emergency management across the country.
- NIMS requires the use of ICS for all domestic responses.
- NIMS also requires that all levels of government, including territories and tribal organizations, adopt ICS as a condition of receiving federal preparedness funding.

The ICS organizational structure develops in a top-down, modular method that is based on the size and complexity of the incident, as well as the specifics of the hazard environment created by the incident. As incident complexity increases, the organization expands from the top down as functional responsibilities are delegated.

The ICS organizational structure is flexible. When needed, separate functional elements can be established and subdivided to enhance internal organizational management and external coordination. As the ICS organizational structure expands, the number of management positions also expands to adequately address the requirements of the incident.

In ICS, only those functions or positions necessary for a particular incident will be filled.

4. What is meant by “management by objectives”?

All levels of a growing ICS organization must have a clear understanding of the functional actions required to manage the incident. Management by objectives is an approach used to communicate functional actions throughout the entire ICS organization. It can be accomplished through the incident action planning process, which includes the following steps:

- Step 1: Understand agency policy and direction.
- Step 2: Assess incident situation.
- Step 3: Establish incident objectives.
- Step 4: Select appropriate strategy or strategies to achieve objectives.
- Step 5: Perform tactical direction (applying tactics appropriate to the strategy, assigning the right resources, and monitoring their performance).
- Step 6: Provide necessary follow-up (changing strategy or tactics, adding or subtracting resources, etc.).

5. List four benefits of using the ICS.

1. It is a flexible system that can be used at an isolated scene involving one response group or a major regional disaster. It has the ability to meet the needs of any incident regardless of kind, size, or complexity.
2. The ICS uses common terminology, including standard titles and names for facilities, to minimize on-scene problems due to communication misunderstandings.
3. ICS allows resources to be managed in support of the incident management activities.
4. ICS relies on an *incident action plan* (IAP) to develop and issue assignments, plans, procedures, and protocols. The IAP provides a means to direct efforts in order to attain specific objectives determined by the ICS command staff.

6. The ICS relies on an IAP. Describe an IAP.

In ICS, considerable emphasis is placed on developing effective IAPs. An IAP is an oral or written plan containing general objectives reflecting the overall strategy for managing an incident. An IAP includes the

identification of operational resources and assignments and may include attachments that provide additional direction.

Every incident must have a verbal or written IAP. The purpose of this plan is to provide all incident supervisory personnel with direction for actions to be implemented during the operational period identified in the plan.

IAPs include the measurable strategic operations to be achieved and are prepared around a time frame called an *operational period*. IAPs provide a coherent means of communicating the overall incident objectives in the context of both operational and support activities. The plan may be oral or written, except for hazardous materials incidents, which require a written IAP.

At the simplest level, all IAPs must include four elements:

1. What do we want to do?
2. Who is responsible for doing it?
3. How do we communicate with each other?
4. What is the procedure if someone is injured?

7. What are the five major management components of the ICS?

1. *Incident command* is the first major component of the ICS.

Beneath incident command are four sections:

2. Operations
3. Planning
4. Logistics
5. Administration

Managers of these sections are referred to as *chiefs*. These are set groups that never differ, regardless of the incident. A particular section may not be utilized dependent on the incident; that is, the administration and planning sections may not be staffed for a single medical incident to which the fire department responds (Fig. 1.1.1).

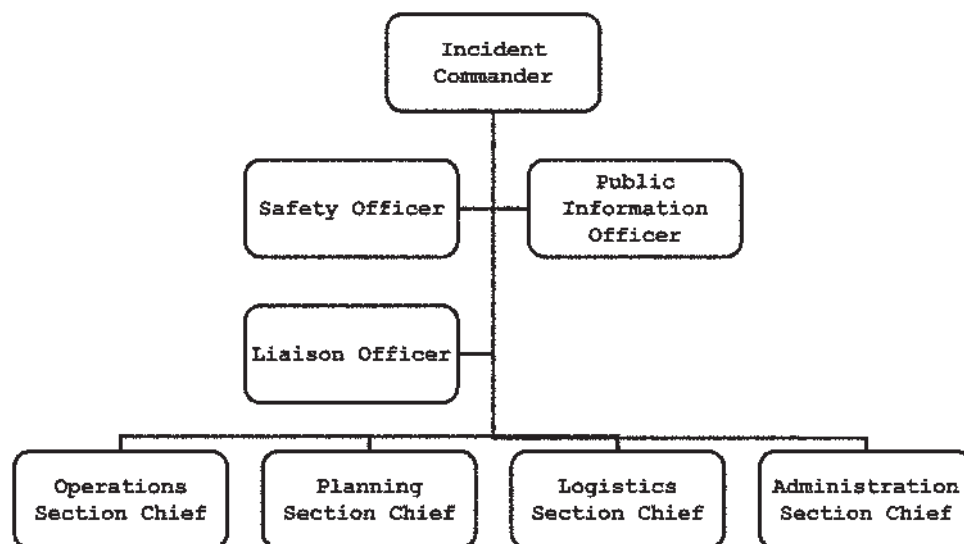


Figure 1.1.1 ICS organizational chart.

8. What are the other “groups or levels” of the ICS called, and how do they differ from each other (Table 1.1.1)?

- Branches fall under the command of the section chiefs. These are used when the span of control needs to be expanded by utilizing divisions or groups. The reason for expanding the span of control may be due to geographical or functional issues. Branch leaders are designated as *directors*.
- Divisions under the branch directors are used to divide an incident geographically. Division managers are called *supervisors*.
- Groups also fall under the branches and are used to divide an incident into functional responsibilities. Group managers are also called *supervisors*.

Table 1.1.1 Organizational Levels, Titles, and Support Positions in an ICS

Organizational Level	Title	Support Position
Incident Command	Incident Commander	Deputy
Command Staff	Officer	Assistant
General Staff (Section)	Chief	Deputy
Branch	Director	Deputy
Division/Group	Supervisor	N/A
Unit	Leader	Manager
Strike Team/Task Force	Leader	Single Resource Boss

9. What is the ICP?

This is the *incident command post*. It is a single location, usually close to, but unaffected by the incident. This is the location from which all incident operations are coordinated and directed.

10. Describe what is meant by the following terms: “staging area,” “base,” and “camp.”

- *Staging areas* are temporary locations at an incident where personnel and equipment are kept while waiting for tactical assignments. The resources in the staging area are always in available status. Staging areas should be located close enough to the incident for a timely response but far enough away to be out of the immediate impact zone. There may be more than one staging area at an incident. Staging areas can be located with the ICP, bases, camps, helibases, or helispots.
- A *base* is the location from which primary logistics and administrative functions are coordinated and administered. The base may be located with the incident command post. There is only one base per incident, and it is designated by the incident name. The base is established and managed by the logistics section. The resources in the base are always out of service.
- A *camp* is the location where resources may be kept to support incident operations if a base is not accessible to all resources. Camps are temporary locations within the general incident area, that are equipped and staffed to provide food, water, sleeping areas, and sanitary services. Camps are designated by geographic location or number. Multiple camps may be used, but not all incidents will have camps.

11. Describe the basic map symbols used to describe the basic ICS facilities (Fig. 1.1.2).

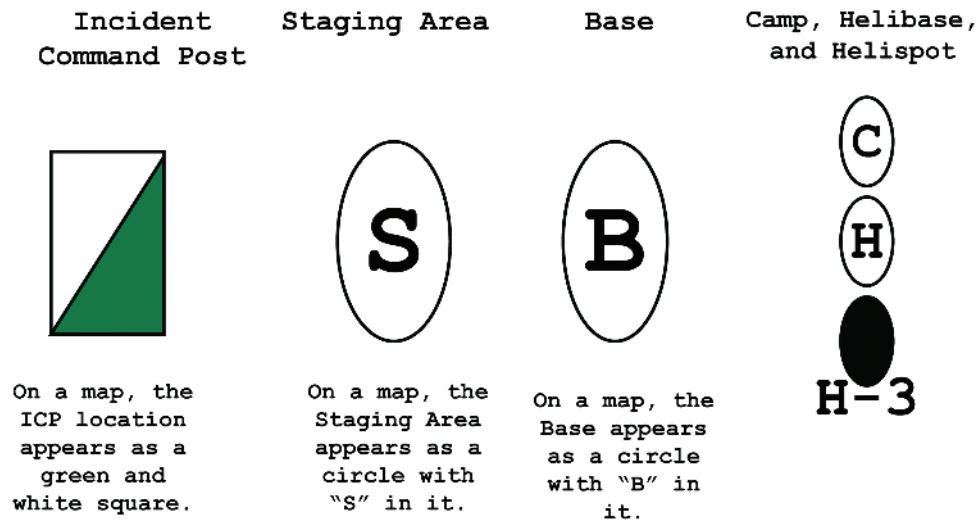


Figure 1.1.2 Map symbols used in identifying ICS components.

12. What is *accountability*, and how is it used during an incident?

Effective accountability during incident operations is essential at all jurisdictional levels and within individual functional areas. Individuals must abide by their agency policies and guidelines and any applicable local, tribal, state, or federal rules and regulations. The following guidelines must be adhered to:

- *Check-in*: All responders, regardless of agency affiliation, must report in to receive an assignment in accordance with the procedures established by the incident commander.
- *IAP*: Response operations must be directed and coordinated as outlined in the IAP.
- *Unity of command*: Each individual involved in incident operations will be assigned to only one supervisor.
- *Span of control*: Supervisors must be able to adequately supervise and control their subordinates, as well as communicate with and manage all resources under their supervision.
- *Resource tracking*: Supervisors must record and report resource status changes as they occur.

13. How would you be expected to participate in accountability during an incident?

Accountability requires that all responders “check in” when they arrive on scene and “check out” when they leave. Each individual “checks in” once through a single supervisor.

14. What is span of control?

Span of control is the number of individuals or resources reporting to any one manager or supervisor that can be effectively controlled.

15. What is the recommended span of control?

The recommended span is between three and seven people, with five being optimal.

16. What do you do when the span of control is exceeded in any one area?

If the number of direct reports is more than seven, the branch, division, or group may be expanded. Likewise, when the number of direct reports is less than three, the branch, division, or group can be contracted.

17. How is communication managed by the ICS?

ICS establishes common terminology and a clear chain of command for communications to flow through. Communications hardware, frequencies, and protocols are also defined by the ICS. Public information dissemination is handled only through the *public information officer* (PIO), who is a member of the command staff.

18. Differentiate between “chain of command” and “unity of command.”

- *Chain of command* means that there is an orderly line of authority within the ranks of the organization, with lower levels subordinate to, and connected to, higher levels.
- *Unity of command* means that every individual is accountable to only one designated supervisor to whom they report at the scene of an incident.

19. What is “unified command,” and how does it work?

Unified command is a unified team effort comprised of multiple agencies. The agencies work together as an *incident management team* and establish common objectives and strategies, which are used to manage the incident.

20. Describe the “command staff” and their role during an incident.

Depending on the size and complexity of the incident, the incident commander may find it necessary or helpful to assign individuals to provide public information, safety, and liaison services. These individuals report directly to the incident commander and are called “officers”: public information officer, safety officer, and liaison officer.

21. What is the purpose of logistics?

Logistics is tasked with all functions necessary to support the Operations. Logistics provides food, transportation, and medical services for the responders. Logistics is also responsible for providing communications planning and resources, and providing facilities used in the support of the incident (i.e., ICP).

22. What is a task force?

A *task force* is any combination of single resources grouped together to accomplish a specific duty.

23. What is the role of the planning section during an incident?

The planning section is responsible for collecting, evaluating, disseminating, and using information about the status of resources and the progress of the incident. The following organizational chart shows an example of planning section units (Fig. 1.1.3).

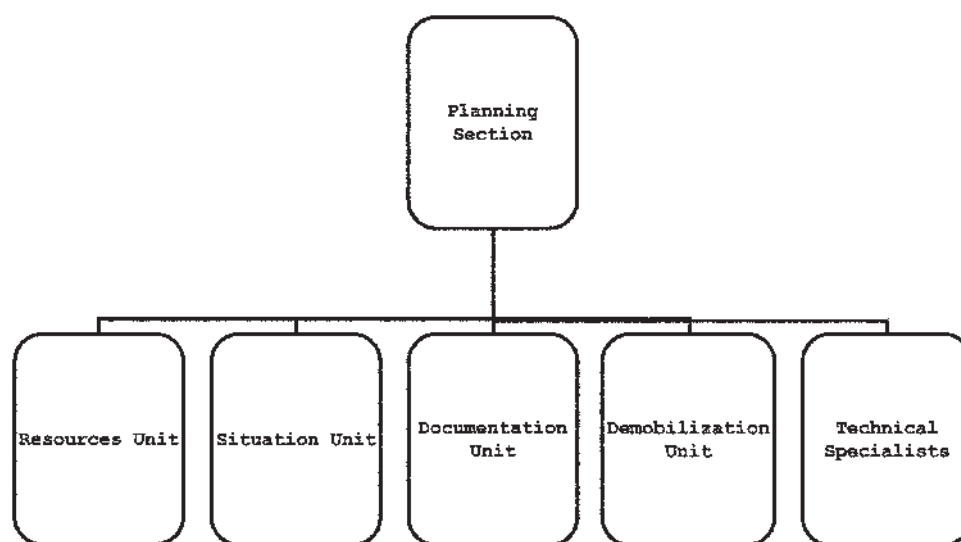


Figure 1.1.3 Planning section organizational chart.

24. What is “resource typing,” and why is it beneficial to use it as part of the ICS?

Resource typing describes resource capabilities using common terms. When a resource is requested, “typing” eliminates mistakes based on miscommunication of need.

For instance, air tankers (airplanes) are a “kind” of resource and are “typed” by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as follows:

- *Type 1*: 2000 gallon capacity, 300 gallons per minute (GPM) pump capability
- *Type 2*: 1000 gallon capacity, 120 GPM pump capability
- *Type 3*: 1000 gallon capacity, 50 GPM pump capability

This allows an incident commander at a wildfire to request use of three “type 1 air tankers” from a federal assistance agency and allows both parties to know exactly what is being requested without having to discuss capacity or pump capability.

25. What is a staging area, and what goes on there?

The *staging area* is the physical location where resources that are available wait for assignment.

26. Is demobilization a concern of the ICS? Why?

Yes. Resources need to be released from the scene of an incident in an orderly, safe, and cost-effective manner.

27. What is an EOC, and how does it differ from an ICP?

The EOC is the *emergency operations center*. The EOC is a preestablished location, usually geographically distant from the incident, that is staffed with people who will help ensure that policies are implemented and resources are deployed through the ICP.

28. What is NIMS, and how does it relate to ICS?

NIMS is the National Incident Management System developed as a result of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5). It is intended to provide a cohesive nationwide management system allowing all levels of government and private sector organizations to work together during an incident.

ICS is a component of NIMS along with a Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS) and the Public Information System.

29. What is the purpose of the National Response Framework?

The purpose of the National Response Framework is to ensure that all response partners across the nation understand domestic incident response roles, responsibilities, and relationships so they can respond more effectively to any type of incident. The Framework is written especially for government executives, private sector and nongovernment organization leaders, and emergency management practitioners.

30. Describe the scope of the National Response Framework.

The Framework provides structure for implementing national-level policy and operational coordination for domestic incident response. The term “response” as used in the Framework includes the following:

- Immediate actions to save lives, protect property and the environment, and meet basic human needs
- The execution of emergency plans and actions to support short-term recovery

31. Describe the response doctrine of the National Response Framework.

Incidents begin and end locally, and most are managed at the local level. Many incidents require unified response from local agencies, the private sector, and nongovernment organizations. Other incidents may require additional

support from neighboring jurisdictions or the state. A small number require federal support. National response protocols recognize this and are structured to provide additional, tiered levels of support. A key concept in the National Response Framework is as follows: A basic premise of the Framework is that *incidents are generally handled at the lowest jurisdictional level possible*.

32. How does the National Response Framework work in conjunction with NIMS?

The number, type, and sources of resources must be able to expand rapidly to meet needs associated with a given incident. The Framework builds on NIMS. Together, the Framework and NIMS help to ensure that all response partners use standard command and management structures that allow for scalable, flexible, and adaptable operational capabilities.

33. Provide a bit more information about the National Response Framework and how it relates to disasters.

The National Response Framework is comprised of the core document, the Emergency Support Function (ESF), Support, and Incident Annexes; and the Partner Guides. The core document describes the doctrine that guides our national response, roles and responsibilities, response actions, response organizations, and planning requirements to achieve an effective national response to any incident that occurs.

The following documents provide more detailed information to assist practitioners in implementing the Framework:

- **Emergency Support Function Annexes** group federal resources and capabilities into functional areas that are most frequently needed in a national response (e.g., transportation, firefighting, mass care).
- **Support Annexes** describe essential supporting aspects that are common to all incidents (e.g., financial management, volunteer and donations management, private-sector coordination).
- **Incident Annexes** address the unique aspects of how we respond to seven broad incident categories (e.g., biological, nuclear/radiological, cyber, mass evacuation).
- **Partner Guides** provide ready references describing key roles and actions for local, tribal, state, federal, and private-sector response partners.

These documents are available at the NRF Resource Center, <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/>.

34. Is it really important that I know about ICS, NIMS, and the National Response Framework?

Yes, you need to know and understand all of these items. In fact, to be deployed as a temporary federal employee (NVRT, NMRT, etc.), you are required to take the following free, online FEMA courses related to these topics:

- ICS 100
- ICS 200
- ICS 700
- ICS 800

These courses are available to everybody and can be found at the following website: <http://training.fema.gov>.

35. How do you prepare for deployment to an incident?

Many incidents last only a short time and may not require travel. Other deployments may require a lengthy assignment away from home. Below are general guidelines for incidents requiring extended stays or travel:

- Assemble a travel kit containing any special technical information (e.g., maps, manuals, contact lists, and reference materials).
- Prepare personal items needed for your estimated length of stay, including medications, cash, credit cards, etc.
- Ensure that family members know your destination and how to contact you.
- Determine appropriate travel authorizations.
- Familiarize yourself with travel and transportation arrangements.
- Determine your return mode of transportation (if possible).
- Determine payroll procedures (at incident or through home agency).
- If you are going on a foreign assignment, be sure to take your passport.

36. How do you determine your role and authority during deployment?

In addition to preparing for your travel arrangements, it is important to understand your role and authorities.

- Review your emergency assignment. Know who you will report to and what your position will be.
- Establish a clear understanding of your decision making authority.
- Determine communications procedures for contacting your headquarters or home office (if necessary).
- Identify purchasing authority and procedures.
- Identify procedures for obtaining food and lodging.

37. What should be discussed with you prior to a deployment?

Upon receiving an incident assignment, your deployment briefing should include, but may not be limited to, the following information:

- Incident type and name or designation
- Descriptive location and response area
- Incident check-in location
- Specific assignment
- Reporting date and time
- Travel instructions
- Communications instructions (e.g., incident frequencies)
- Special support requirements (facilities, equipment transportation and off-loading, etc.)
- Travel authorization for air, rental car, lodging, meals, and incidental expenses

Suggested Reading

FEMA Emergency Management Institute. IS-100. **An Introduction to Incident Command System, I-100.** Available at <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is100.asp>. Accessed September 5, 2008.

FEMA Emergency Management Institute. IS-700. **National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction.** Available at <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is700.asp>. <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is100.asp>. Accessed September 5, 2008.