

ICS in a Nutshell for Public Health

When an incident occurs within a single jurisdiction and there is no jurisdictional or functional agency overlap, a single **Incident Commander** is designated with overall incident management responsibility by the appropriate jurisdictional authority.

The designated Incident Commander develops the incident objectives that direct all subsequent incident action planning. The Incident Commander approves the Incident Action Plan and the resources to be ordered or released.

Incident Commander Responsibilities

The Incident Commander is the individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and the release of resources. The Incident Commander has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site.

The Incident Commander must:

- Have clear authority and know agency policy.
- Ensure incident safety.
- Establish the Incident Command Post.
- Set priorities, and determine incident objectives and strategies to be followed.
- Establish the Incident Command System organization needed to manage the incident.
- Approve the Incident Action Plan.
- Coordinate Command and General Staff activities.
- Approve resource requests and use of volunteers and auxiliary personnel.
- Order demobilization as needed.
- Ensure after-action reports are completed.
- Authorize information released to the media.

Command Staff

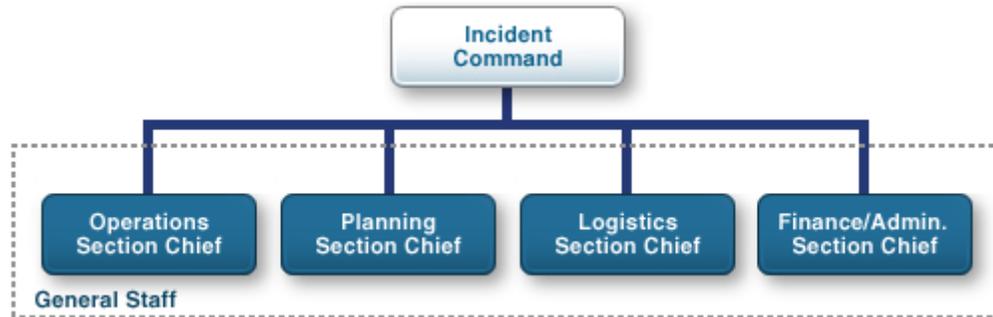
In an Incident Command organization, the Command Staff typically includes the following personnel:

- The **Public Information Officer** is responsible for interfacing with the public and media and/or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements.
- The **Safety Officer** monitors incident operations and advises the Incident Commander/Unified Command on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel.

The Liaison Officer is the point of contact for representatives of other governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

General Staff (Section Chiefs)

The General Staff includes a group of incident management personnel organized according to function and reporting to the Incident Commander. Typically, the General Staff consists of the Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, and Finance/Administration Section Chief.



Operations Section Chief: The Section Chief is responsible to Incident Command for the direct management of all incident-related tactical activities. The Operations Section Chief will establish tactics for the assigned operational period. An Operations Section Chief should be designated for each operational period, and responsibilities include direct involvement in development of the Incident Action Plan.

Planning Section

The Planning Section collects, evaluates, and disseminates incident situation information and intelligence for the Incident Commander/Unified Command and incident management personnel. This Section then prepares status reports, displays situation information, maintains the status of resources assigned to the incident, and prepares and documents the Incident Action Plan, based on Operations Section input and guidance from the Incident Commander/Unified Command.

Logistics Section

The Logistics Section is responsible for all service support requirements needed to facilitate effective and efficient incident management, including ordering resources from off-incident locations. This Section also provides facilities, security (of the Incident Command facilities), transportation, supplies, equipment maintenance and fuel, food services, communications and information technology support, and emergency responder medical services, including inoculations, as required.

The Logistics Section is led by a Section Chief, who may also have one or more deputies. Having a deputy is encouraged when all designated units are established at an incident site. When the incident is very large or requires a number of facilities with large numbers of equipment, the Logistics Section can be divided into two Branches. This helps with span of control by providing more effective supervision and coordination among the individual units.

Conversely, in smaller incidents or when fewer resources are needed, a Branch configuration may be used to combine the task assignments of individual units.

Finance/Administration Section

A Finance/Administration Section is established when the incident management activities require on-scene or incident-specific finance and other administrative support services. Some of the functions that fall within the scope of this Section are recording personnel time, maintaining vendor contracts, compensation and claims, and conducting an overall cost analysis for the incident. If a separate Finance/Administration Section is established, close coordination with the Planning Section and Logistics Section is also essential so that operational records can be reconciled with financial documents.

The Finance/Administration Section is a critical part of ICS in large, complex incidents involving significant funding originating from multiple sources. In addition to monitoring multiple sources of funds, the Section Chief must track and report to Incident Command the accrued cost as the incident progresses. This allows the Incident Commander/Unified Command to forecast the need for additional funds before operations are negatively affected.

Public Information

Public information, education strategies, and communications plans help ensure that numerous audiences receive timely, consistent messages about:

- Lifesaving measures.
- Evacuation routes.
- Threat and alert system notices.
- Other public safety information.

Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer supports the incident command structure as a member of the Command Staff. Public Information Officers are able to create coordinated and consistent messages by collaborating to:

- Identify key information that needs to be communicated to the public.
- Craft messages conveying key information that are clear and easily understood by all, including those with special needs.
- Prioritize messages to ensure timely delivery of information without overwhelming the audience.
- Verify accuracy of information through appropriate channels.
- Disseminate messages using the most effective means available.

Joint Information System

The Joint Information System (JIS):

- Provides the mechanism to organize, integrate, and coordinate information to ensure timely, accurate, accessible, and consistent messaging across multiple jurisdictions and/or disciplines with nongovernmental organizations and the private sector.
- Includes the plans, protocols, procedures, and structures used to provide public information.

Federal, State, tribal, territorial, regional, or local Public Information Officers and established Joint Information Centers (JICs) are critical supporting elements of the JIS.

Joint Information Center

The Joint Information Center (JIC) is:

- A central location that facilitates operation of the Joint Information System.
- A location where personnel with public information responsibilities perform critical emergency information functions, crisis communications, and public affairs functions.

JICs may be established at various levels of government or at incident sites, or can be components of Multiagency Coordination Systems (e.g., MAC Groups or EOCs). A single JIC location is preferable, but the system is flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate virtual or multiple JIC locations, as required.

Unified Command

As an incident expands in complexity, **Unified Command** may be established. In a Unified Command, individuals designated by their jurisdictional or organizational authorities (or by departments within a single jurisdiction) work together to:

- Determine objectives, strategies, plans, resource allocations, and priorities.
- Execute integrated incident operations and maximize the use of assigned resources.

Advantages of Using Unified Command

In multijurisdictional or multiagency incident management, Unified Command offers the following advantages:

- A single set of objectives is developed for the entire incident.
- A collective “team” approach is used to develop strategies to achieve incident objectives.
- Information flow and coordination are improved between all jurisdictions and agencies involved in the incident.
- All agencies with responsibility for the incident have an understanding of joint priorities and restrictions.

- No agency’s legal authorities are compromised or neglected.
- The combined efforts of all agencies are optimized as they perform their respective assignments under a single Incident Action Plan.

Area Command

Area Command is an organization to oversee the management of multiple incidents handled individually by separate ICS organizations.



An Area Command is activated **only if necessary**, depending on the complexity of the incident and incident management span-of-control considerations.

Area Commands are particularly beneficial to incidents that are typically not site specific, are not immediately identifiable, are geographically dispersed, and evolve over longer periods of time (e.g., public health emergencies, earthquakes, tornadoes, civil disturbances). Incidents such as these, as well as acts of biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear terrorism, require a coordinated intergovernmental, nongovernmental, and private-sector response, with large-scale coordination typically conducted at a higher jurisdictional level. Area Command is also used when a number of incidents of the same type in the same area are competing for the same resources, such as multiple hazardous material spills or fires.

For incidents under its authority, an Area Command has the following responsibilities:

- Develop broad objectives for the impacted area(s).
- Coordinate the development of individual incident objectives and strategies.
- Allocate/reallocate resources as the established priorities change.
- Ensure that incidents are properly managed.
- Ensure effective communications.
- Ensure that incident management objectives are met and do not conflict with each other or with agency policies.
- Identify critical resource needs and report them to the established EOC/MAC Groups.
- Ensure that short-term “emergency” recovery is coordinated to assist in the transition to full recovery operations.

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