ICS100 – Intro to Incident Command System Study Guide

The ICS Overview introduces you to:

• The background and development of ICS
• ICS as the standard for emergency management across the country
• ICS as interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible
• Applications of ICS

The Incident Command System (ICS)

An incident is an occurrence, either caused by humans or a natural phenomenon that requires action by emergency service personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or the environment.

Examples of incidents include:

• Fire, both structural and wildfire.
• Hazardous materials incidents.
• Search and rescue missions.
• Oil spills.
• Natural disasters.
• Terrorist/WMD events.
• Planned events, such as parades or political rallies, just to name a few.

Because of today's budget constraints and limited staffing of local, State, and Federal agencies, it's not possible for any one agency to handle all the management and resource needs for the increasing numbers of incidents nationwide. Local, State, and Federal agencies must work together in a smooth, coordinated effort under the same management system.

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.

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

This system represents organizational "best practices," and has become the standard for emergency management across the country.
History of the Incident Command System (ICS)

The Incident Command System (ICS) was developed in the 1970s following a series of catastrophic fires in California's urban interface. Property damage ran into the millions, and many people died or were injured. The personnel assigned to determine the causes of this disaster studied the case histories and discovered that response problems could rarely be attributed to lack of resources or failure of tactics. What were the lessons learned?

Surprisingly, studies found that response problems were far more likely to result from inadequate management than from any other single reason.

Weaknesses in incident management were often due to:

• Lack of personnel accountability, including unclear chains of command and supervision.
• Poor communication due to both inefficient uses of available communications systems and conflicting codes and terminology.
• Lack of an orderly, systematic planning process.
• No common, flexible, pre-designed management structure that enables commanders to delegate responsibilities and manage workloads efficiently.
• No predefined methods to integrate interagency requirements into the management structure and planning process effectively.

A poorly managed incident response can be devastating to our economy, the food supply, and our health and safety. With so much at stake, we must effectively manage our response efforts. The Incident Command System, or ICS, allows us to do so. ICS is a proven management system based on successful business practices. This course introduces you to ICS and the vital role that you can play.

ICS Features

In this course, you will learn about the following ICS features:

• ICS Organization
• Incident Action Plan
• Incident Facilities
• Span of Control
• Common Responsibilities

Five Major Management Functions

There are five major management functions that are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops. These functions apply whether you are handling a routine emergency, organizing for a major non-emergency event, or managing a response to a major disaster. The five major management functions are:
Management Function Descriptions

Below is a brief description of each ICS function:

- **Incident Command**: Sets the incident objectives, strategies, and priorities and has overall responsibility at the incident or event.
- **Operations**: Conducts tactical operations to carry out the plan. Develops the tactical objectives and organization, and directs all tactical resources.
- **Planning**: Prepares and documents the Incident Action Plan to accomplish the objectives, collects and evaluates information, maintains resource status, and maintains documentation for incident records.
- **Logistics**: Provides support, resources, and all other services needed to meet the operational objectives.
- **Finance/Administration**: Monitors costs related to the incident. Provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analyses.

Developing Incident Objectives

The initial step in the incident action planning process is to develop the incident objectives. The IC must develop incident objectives within a short timeframe after assuming command. After the incident objectives are clear, strategies and tasks to achieve the objectives can begin to be developed. Some objectives will change over the course of an incident. Some objectives will be achieved and new objectives will be developed. Strategies will also change.

The incident objectives are always documented as part of the record of the incident.

Organizational Flexibility

The ICS organization reflects the principle of management by objectives. Every incident has different requirements. The organizational structure should reflect only what is required to meet and support planned incident objectives.

The size and structure of the current organization is determined by the incident objectives. Each activated element must have a person in charge of it. As objectives are achieved, resources that are no longer needed should be reassigned or demobilized.
Unity and Chain of Command

In the Incident Command System:

- **Unity of Command or Accountability** means that every individual is accountable to only one designated supervisor.

- **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.

These ICS principles are used to communicate direction and maintain management control. These principles do not apply to the exchange of information. Although orders must flow through the chain of command, members of the organization may directly communicate with each other to ask for or share information.

ICS team members work within the ICS position descriptions and follow the designated chain of command, regardless of their non-emergency positions or everyday administrative chain of command.

In smaller incidents, the organizational structure for incident management may consist of command and single resources. A single resource is an individual, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified work supervisor that can be used at an incident. However, as incidents expand, the chain of command is established through an organizational structure that can consist of several layers.

Span of Control

**Span of control** pertains to the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can manage effectively during emergency response incidents or special events. Maintaining an effective span of control is particularly important on incidents where safety and accountability are a top priority.

Maintaining adequate span of control throughout the ICS organization is very important. Effective span of control on incidents may vary from three (3) to seven (7), and a **ratio of one (1) supervisor to five (5) reporting elements is recommended**.

If the number of reporting elements falls outside of these ranges, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There may be exceptions, usually in lower-risk assignments or where resources work in close proximity to each other.

Common Terminology and Clear Text

The ability to communicate within the ICS is absolutely critical. An essential method for ensuring the ability to communicate is by using standard or common terminology.
A critical part of an effective multi-agency incident management system is for all communications to be in plain English. That is, use clear text. Do not use radio codes, agency-specific codes, or jargon.

Applying Common Terminology

In ICS, common terminology and designations are applied to:

- **Organizational Elements:** Each ICS organizational element (e.g., Sections, Divisions and/or Groups, Branches) has a specified title.
- **Resources:** Some resources have common designations based on their kind and type. Many resources are also classified by type to indicate their capabilities (e.g., types of helicopters, trucks, heavy equipment, etc.).
- **Facilities:** Standard ICS facilities have specific names. Consistent names clarify the activities that take place at a specific facility, and what members of the organization can be found there (examples: Command Post, Staging Areas).
- **Position Titles:** ICS management or supervisory positions are referred to by titles such as Officer, Chief, Director, Supervisor, etc.

**Integrated Communications: Elements**

Effective ICS communications includes three elements:

1. Procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally.
2. The "hardware" systems used to transfer information.
3. Planning for the use of all available communications frequencies and resources.

**Integrated Communications: Planning**

Every incident needs a Communications Plan. The plan can be simple and stated orally, or it can be complex and written. For example, an Incident Communications Plan may be a component of the written Incident Action Plan.
An awareness of available communications resources, combined with an understanding of incident requirements, will enable the Communications Unit Leader to develop an effective Communications Plan.

**Integrated Communications: Modes**

It is not unusual for the communications needs on large incidents to outstrip available resources.

Some incidents are conducted entirely without radio support. In such situations, other communications resources—cell phones, alpha pagers, e-mail, secure phone lines, etc.—may be used as the only communication methods for the incident.

**Integrated Communications: Networks**

At a minimum, any communication network must:

- Link supervisory personnel within the Operations Section to each other and to the Incident Commander.
- Provide the ability to communicate among resources assigned to tactical elements such as Branches, Divisions/Groups, and ground-to-air and air-to-air assets.
- Provide a link to the rest of the organization for resource status changes, logistical support, etc.

**Organizational Terminology: The ICS Organizational Chart**

The graphic below shows a generic organizational chart with associated key terms. Key ICS titles are associated with the person assigned to each managerial level.
ICS Organizational Components

Section: The organizational levels with responsibility for a major functional area of the incident (e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration). The person in charge of each Section is designated as a Chief.

Branch: Used when the number of Divisions or Groups extends the span of control. Can be either geographical or functional. The person in charge of each Branch is designated as a Director.

Division: Used to divide an incident geographically. The person in charge of each Division is designated as a Supervisor.

Group: Used to describe functional areas of operations. The person in charge of each Group is designated as a Supervisor.

Task Force: A combination of mixed resources with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Task Force Leader.

Strike Team: A set number of resources of the same kind and type with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Strike Team Leader.
**Single Resource:** May be individuals, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified supervisor that can be used at an incident.

**Avoid Combining ICS Positions**

It is important to avoid combining ICS positions. However, one person may be assigned more than one function on the incident organizational chart.

Positions should not be combined within the organization, however, because problems could be created later if the merged positions have to separate.

**Position Titles**

The use of specific position titles in ICS serves three important purposes:

1. Titles provide a common organizational language for multi-agency use at an incident. For example, confusion can arise if one agency uses the title Branch Chief, another Branch Manager, another Branch Officer, etc.
2. The use of distinct titles for ICS positions allows a distinction to be made between the administrative position and rank of the individual and the ICS position. This allows for filling ICS positions with the most qualified individuals rather than by rank.
3. The lack of standardization of position titles can also confuse the ordering process when requesting qualified personnel. For example, when ordering personnel to fill unit positions, common titles and associated qualifications ensure that qualified personnel will be acquired.

**ICS Section Chiefs and Deputies**

The person in charge of each Section is designated as a Chief. Section Chiefs have the ability to expand their Section to meet the needs of the situation. Each of the Section Chiefs may have a Deputy, or more than one, if necessary. The Deputy:

- May assume responsibility for a specific portion of the primary position, work as relief, or be assigned other tasks.
- Must be qualified to the same ICS level as the person for whom he or she works.

In large incidents, especially where multiple disciplines or jurisdictions are involved, the use of Deputies from other organizations can greatly increase interagency coordination.

Responsibility for Incident Command

Frequently, command does not stay with the initial Incident Commander. A primary principle of ICS is the ability to transfer command to the most experienced and qualified person as the Incident Commander, regardless of that employee's agency.

Establishment of Command

The first arriving authority at the scene, who has jurisdiction for the incident, establishes incident command and identifies the initial Incident Command Post (ICP). The initial Incident Commander will also:

- Establish needed authorizations and delegations of authority. These agreements provide the Incident Commander with the authority needed to manage the incident. Most often, these authorizations or delegations of authority are included in agency operating plans, local mutual aid agreements, Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), and/or local interagency operating plans.
- Begin establishing incident facilities. The next priority is to establish the incident facilities, beginning with the Incident Command Post.
- Develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP) for each operational period.

Transfer of Command

The process of moving the responsibility for incident command from one Incident Commander to another is called transfer of command.

If a transfer of command is to take place, the initial Incident Commander will remain in charge until transfer of command is accomplished. Command may transfer to more qualified or more experienced personnel from the same agency, or be transferred to the employee of another responsible agency.
More qualified persons arriving at an incident may:

- Assume command (according to agency guidelines).
- Maintain command as it is.
- Request a more qualified or more experienced Incident Commander.

**Reasons to Transfer Command**

Transfer of command begins with a transition meeting. The outgoing Incident Commander briefs the incoming Incident Commander on the extent of damage, probable response needs, and resources on-scene and their locations. The briefing may also include safety concerns that the new Incident Commander should be aware of.

Both the outgoing and incoming Incident Commanders will agree on a date and time when the transfer of command will be effective.

Command also may be transferred when:

- A more qualified person is available to assume command.
- A jurisdiction or agency is legally required to take command.
- Changing command makes good sense.
- The incident complexity changes.
- There is turnover of personnel on long or extended incidents.
- Personal emergencies or other issues require a transfer of command.
- Agency Administrators direct a change in command.

**Transfer of Command Procedures**

One of the main features of ICS are procedures to transfer command with minimal disruption. These procedures may be used anytime personnel in supervisory positions change.

Three key procedures should be followed, whenever possible:

- The transfer should be face to face.
- The transfer should include a complete briefing.
- The effective date and time of the transfer is announced to all affected personnel.

**Transfer of Command Briefing**

A transfer of command briefing should always take place. The briefing should include the following critical information:

- Situation status.
- Incident objectives and priorities (Incident Action Plan).
- Current organization.
- Resource assignments.
- Resources en route and/or ordered.
- Facilities established.
- Communications Plan.
- Prognosis, concerns, and related issues.
- Introduction of Command Staff and General Staff.

**Avoid "Falling Through the Cracks"

It is critical to keep information from "falling through the cracks" during changes of incident command. One important information tool is an Incident Briefing Form. Your agency may have other tools for this purpose. Whether or not your agency uses a specific form, you should have some mechanism to ensure that important information does not get lost.

**Types of Command

The Incident Commander knows that the command function may be carried out in two ways:

- As a Single Command, in which the Incident Commander will have complete responsibility for incident management.
- As a Unified Command, in which responding agencies and/or jurisdictions with responsibility for the incident share incident management.

**Incident

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<tr>
<th>Single Command</th>
<th>Unified Command</th>
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**Review

The ICS management functions include:

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