

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

CANADIAN NATIONAL TRAINING CURRICULUM

ICS ORIENTATION

Module 1 I-100



**REFERENCE TEXT
OCTOBER 2002**

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**MODULE 1
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PREFACE

This Canadian version was developed after the need was identified by the National Training Working Group, (comprised of member agencies of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre) for an incident management system that not only harmonized operations across Canada, but was consistent with US agencies. The primary modifications made to the Canadian Curriculum are in the areas of agency specific terminology, i.e. FAA to Transport Canada, use of metric measurement and in the site support elements to reflect Canadian usage of Emergency Operations Centres.

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Greg Vaughan – Ontario
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The original US curriculum was developed by an interagency steering group and a contract consultant. The original curriculum was sponsored by the U.S. National Wildfire Coordination Group, and development was directed and supported by the U.S. National Interagency Fire Center, Division of Training. The Steering Group was represented by several application areas (Search & Rescue, Law Enforcement, Structural Fire, Wildfire, etc.) which guided the work of the contractor in the development of this package.

STUDENT INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION TO REFERENCE TEXT

ICS Orientation is designed to help you learn the principles of the Incident Command System and to briefly acquaint you with the basic ICS structure and terminology.

To measure how well you received and retained this information, there will be a self study examination covering all the course material.

We hope you will have a good learning experience which helps you accomplish your job more effectively.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

ICS Orientation is intended for personnel assigned to an incident or event who have a minimum requirement for understanding ICS. This module reviews the ICS organization, basic terminology, and common responsibilities. It will provide enough information about the Incident Command System to enable you to work in a support role at an incident or event, or to support an incident from an off-site location.

This module may also be used as a pre-course study program by personnel who will be continuing their training with additional modules.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This is an orientation for entry-level personnel assisting at an incident or event, persons working in support roles, and off-incident personnel who require a minimum of ICS orientation.

SUGGESTED PREREQUISITE MODULES

This is the first of seventeen modules of the ICS National Training Curriculum. No prerequisites are necessary.

There are other ICS National Training Curriculum materials which will help you understand this course material more easily. You may wish to obtain copies of the following documents:

- ICS Glossary
- ICS Position Descriptions & Responsibilities

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this self-study module, you should be able to do the following:

1. List the five major organizational activities within the Incident Command System and explain their primary functions.
2. Give the titles, and explain the duties of Command and General Staff members.
3. Match organizational units to appropriate Operations, Planning, Logistics, or Finance Sections.
4. Match supervisory titles with appropriate levels within the organization.
5. Describe the terms used to name major incident facilities, and state the function of each.
6. Describe what an Incident Action Plan is and how it is used at an incident.
7. Describe how span of control functions within the incident organization and in the use of resources.
8. Describe the common responsibilities (general instructions) associated with incident or event assignments.
9. Describe several applications for the use of ICS.

DELIVERY METHOD

This module is self-paced

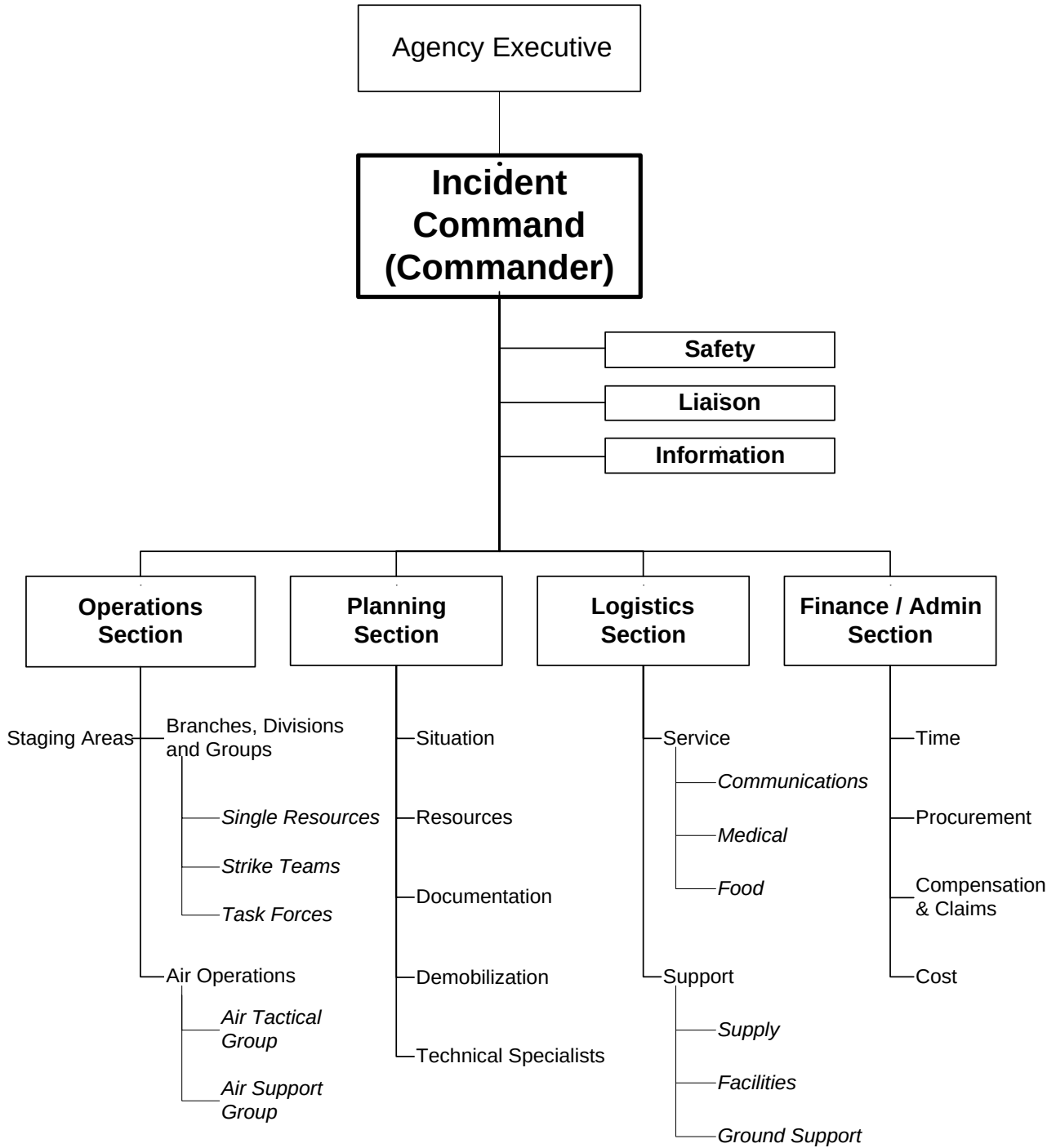
TESTING

For successful completion of this course, you must receive a minimum of 70% average score on the final exam.

A self-study examination is located at the back of the module.

DURATION

This module can be completed in two to four hours of self-paced study time.



ICS ORIENTATION

I. Introduction

The Incident Command System is used to manage an emergency incident or a non-emergency event. It can be used equally well for both small and large situations.

The system has considerable internal flexibility. It can grow or shrink to meet differing needs. This makes it a very cost-effective and efficient management system. The system can be applied to a wide variety of emergency and non-emergency situations. Listed below are some examples of the kinds of incidents and events that can use the ICS:

APPLICATIONS FOR THE USE OF THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

- Fires, HAZMAT, and multicasualty incidents
- Multijurisdiction and multi-agency disasters
- Wide-area search and rescue missions
- Pest eradication programs
- Oil spill response and recovery incidents
- Single and multi-agency law enforcement incidents
- Air, rail, water, or ground transportation accidents
- Planned events; e.g., celebrations, parades, concerts
- Private sector emergency management programs
- Provincial or local major natural hazards management

ICS has a number of features which will be covered in this module. Major areas to be covered include:

- ICS Organization
- Incident Facilities
- The Incident Action Plan
- Span of Control
- Common Responsibilities
- Applications

II. ICS Organization

Every incident or event has certain major management activities or actions that must be performed. Even if the event is very small, and only one or two people are involved, these activities will still always apply to some degree.

The organization of the Incident Command System is built around five major management activities:

COMMAND

SETS OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES, HAS OVERALL
RESPONSIBILITY AT THE INCIDENT OR EVENT

OPERATIONS

CONDUCTS TACTICAL OPERATIONS TO CARRY OUT THE PLAN
DEVELOPS THE TACTICAL OBJECTIVES, ORGANIZATION, AND
DIRECTS ALL RESOURCES

PLANNING

DEVELOPS THE ACTION PLAN TO ACCOMPLISH THE
OBJECTIVES, COLLECTS AND EVALUATES INFORMATION,
MAINTAINS RESOURCE STATUS

LOGISTICS

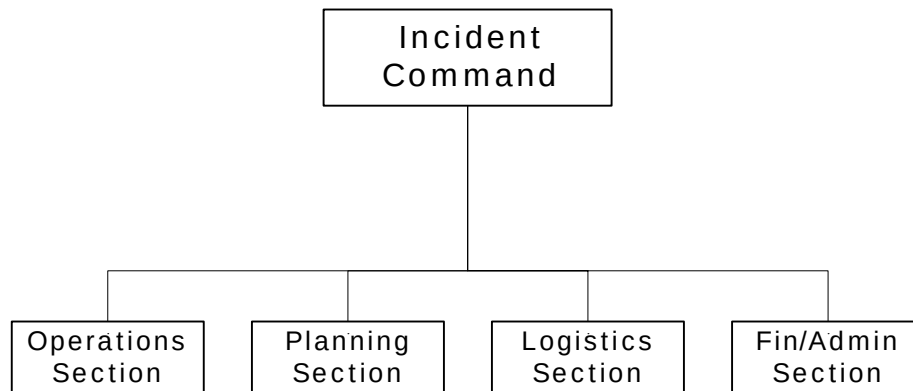
PROVIDES SUPPORT TO MEET INCIDENT NEEDS, PROVIDES
RESOURCES AND ALL OTHER SERVICES NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE
INCIDENT

FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION

MONITORS COSTS RELATED TO INCIDENT, PROVIDES ACCOUNTING,
PROCUREMENT, TIME RECORDING, AND COST ANALYSES

These five major management activities are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops. They apply whether you are handling a routine emergency, organizing for a major event, or managing a major response to a disaster.

On small incidents, these major activities may all be managed by one person, the Incident Commander (IC). Large incidents usually require that they be set up as separate Sections within the organization as shown below.



Each of the primary ICS Sections may be sub-divided as needed. The ICS organization has the capability to expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident.

A basic ICS operating guideline is that the person at the top of the organization is responsible until the authority is delegated to another person. Thus, on smaller situations where additional persons are not required, the Incident Commander will directly manage all aspects of the incident organization.

Now we will look at each of the major functional entities of the ICS organization starting with the Incident Commander and the Command Staff.

A. Incident Commander and the Command Staff

Incident Commander

The Incident Commander is the person in charge at the incident and must be fully qualified to manage the incident. As incidents grow in size or become more complex, a more highly qualified Incident Commander may be assigned by the responsible jurisdiction or agency. The Incident Commander may have one or more deputies from the same agency or from other agencies or jurisdictions. Deputies must always be as qualified as the person for whom they work.

The Incident Commander may assign personnel for both a Command Staff and a General Staff. The Command Staff provides Information, Safety, and Liaison services for the entire organization. The General Staff are assigned major functional authority for Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.

Initially, assigning tactical resources and overseeing operations will be under the direct supervision of the Incident Commander. As incidents grow, the Incident Commander may delegate authority for performance of certain activities to others as required.

Taking over command at an incident always requires that there be a full briefing for the incoming Commander, and notification that a change in command is taking place.

Command Staff

In addition to the primary incident response activities of Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration, the Incident Commander has responsibility for several other important services. Depending on the size and type of an incident or event, it may be necessary to designate personnel to handle these additional activities.

Persons filling these positions are designated as the Command Staff and are called Officers. There is only one Command Staff position for each of these functions. The Command Staff does not have deputies. However, each of these positions may have one or more assistants if necessary. On large incidents or events, it is not uncommon to see several assistants working under Command Staff Officers.

THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM COMMAND STAFF

- Information Officer
- Safety Officer
- Liaison Officer

Information Officer – The Information Officer will be the point of contact for the media, or other organizations seeking information directly from the incident or event. Although several agencies may assign personnel to an incident or event as Information Officers, there will only be one Incident Information Officer. Others will serve as assistants.

Safety Officer – This individual monitors safety conditions and develops measures for assuring the safety of all assigned personnel.

Liaison Officer – On larger incidents or events, representatives from other agencies (usually called Agency Representatives) may be assigned to the incident to coordinate their agency's involvement. The Liaison Officer will be their primary contact.

B. The General Staff

The people who perform the four major activities of Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Finance/Administration are designated as the General Staff.

<p style="text-align: center;">THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM GENERAL STAFF</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operations Section Chief• Planning Section Chief• Logistics Section Chief• Finance/Administration Section Chief
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Each of the General Staff may have a deputy, or more than one if necessary. The role of the deputy position is flexible. The deputy can work with the primary position, work in a relief capacity, or be assigned specific tasks. Deputies should always be as qualified as the person for whom they work.

In large events, especially where multiple agencies or jurisdictions are involved, the use of deputies from other agencies can greatly increase interagency coordination.

At the Section level, the person in charge will be designated as a Chief. For example, in the Logistics Section, the person in charge will always be called the Logistics Section Chief.

Within the ICS organization, there are a number of organizational elements which can be activated as necessary. Each of the major Sections has the ability to expand internally to meet the needs of the situation.

Let's start with the Operations Section of the ICS organization.

1. Operations Section

The Incident Commander will determine the need for a separate Operations Section at an incident or event. Until Operations is established as a separate Section, the IC will have direct control of tactical resources.

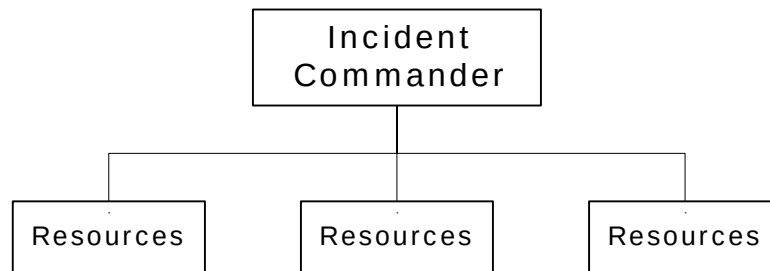
When activating an Operations Section, the IC will assign an individual as the Operations Section Chief. The Operations Section Chief will develop and manage the Operations Section to accomplish the incident objectives.

There is only one Operations Section Chief for each operational period. That person is normally (but not always) from the jurisdiction or agency which has the greatest involvement either in terms of resources assigned or area of concern. The Operations Section Chief may have deputies from the same agency, or from other agencies or jurisdictions. Using deputies from other agencies often helps in the coordination of actions.

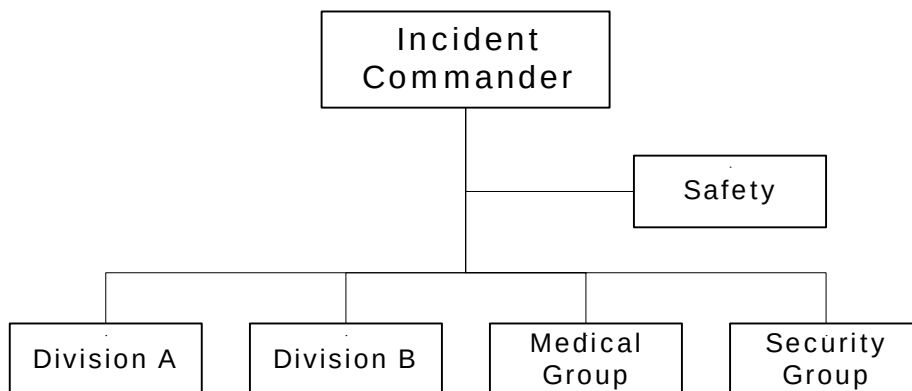
Within the Operations Section, two additional levels of organization can be used as necessary. These are Divisions and/or Groups, and Branches.

Divisions

The Operations organization usually develops from the bottom up. This is due to the need to expand supervision as more and more resources are applied. For example, the Incident Commander or the Operations Section Chief on an incident may initially work with only a few single resources.



As more resources are added to the incident, another layer of organization may be needed within the Operations Section to maintain proper span of control (see page 23). Normally, this will be done at the Division or Group level as shown below.



The goal is to keep the organization as simple and as streamlined as possible, and not to overextend the span of control.

A Division is established to divide an incident geographically. How that will be done will be determined by the needs of the incident. Divisions covering an area on the ground are usually labeled by letters of the alphabet. Within a building, divisions are often designated by floor numbers. The important thing to remember about ICS divisions is that they describe some geographical area related to incident operations.

Groups

Groups are established to describe functional areas of operation. The kind of group to be established will be determined by the needs of an incident. For example, in an earthquake incident with widespread structural damage, search and rescue activity would be organized geographically, using divisions.

A specialized resource team, using dogs or electronic equipment in an earthquake or a salvage group in a maritime incident may be designated as functional groups. Groups will work wherever they are needed, and will not be assigned to any single division.

Divisions and Groups can be used together on an incident. Divisions and Groups are at an equal level in the organization. One does not supervise the other. When a functional group is working within a division on a special assignment, division and group supervisors must closely coordinate their activities. Division and group supervisors always report to the Incident Commander unless the Operations Section Chief and/or Branch Director positions have been established. Deputies are not used at the Division and Group level.

Branches

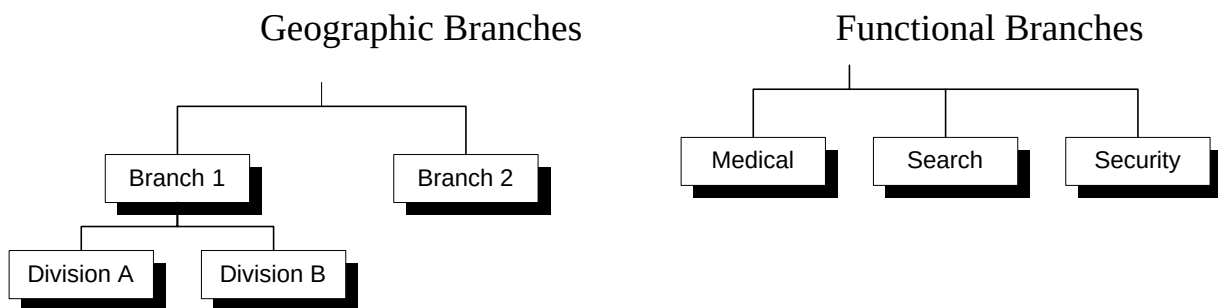
On some incidents, it may be necessary to establish another level of organization within the Operations Section called Branches.

There are generally three reasons to use Branches on an incident or an event.

1. Span of Control (see page 23) – If the number of Divisions and Groups exceeds the recommended Span of Control, another level of management is necessary. Span of Control will be discussed in more detail later in this module.

2. Need for a Functional Branch Structure – Some kinds of incidents have multiple disciplines involved, e.g., police, fire, search and rescue, and medical, that may create the need to set up incident operations around a functional branch structure.
3. Multijurisdictional Incidents – In some incidents it may be better to organize the incident around jurisdictional lines. In these situations, Branches may be set up to reflect differences in the agencies involved. For example, in flooding, earthquake, or wildfire incidents, provincial, county, and city property all could be simultaneously affected. One way of organizing operations in these kinds of incidents is to designate a separate Branch for each of the agencies involved.

Various kinds of Branch alignments are shown below.



Each branch that is activated will have a Branch Director. Deputies may be used at the Branch level.

There are two other parts of the Operations Section that you may need to understand.

Air Operations

If established separately at an incident, Air Operations will be activated at the Branch level within the Operations Section. Usually this is done on incidents which may have complex needs for the use of aircraft in both tactical and logistical operations.

Staging Areas

Staging Areas may be established wherever necessary to temporarily

locate resources awaiting assignment. Staging Areas and the resources within them will always be under the control of the Operations Section Chief. Staging Areas will be discussed later under incident facilities.

Summary

There is no one “best” way to organize an incident. The organization should develop to meet the functions required. The characteristics of the incident and the management needs of the Incident Commander will determine what organization elements should be established. The incident organization may change over time to reflect the various phases of the incident.

2. Planning Section

Planning Section Chief

- Resources Unit
- Situation Unit
- Documentation Unit
- Technical Specialists

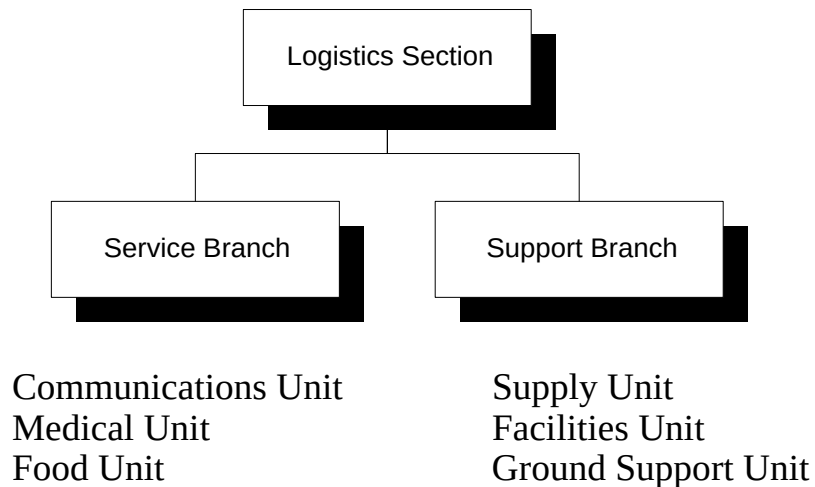
Briefly stated, the major activities of the Planning Section are to:

- Collect, evaluate, and display information about the incident.
- Develop Incident Action Plans for each operational period, conduct long-range planning, and develop plans for demobilization at the end of the incident.
- Maintain resource status information on all equipment and personnel assigned to the incident.
- Maintain incident documentation.

The Planning Section is also the initial place of check-in for any Technical Specialists assigned to the incident. Depending on their assignment, Technical Specialists may work within the Planning Section, or be reassigned to other incident areas.

Several Planning Section Units may be established. Duties of each unit are covered in other modules. Not all of the Units may be required, and they will be activated based upon need. Planning

3. Logistics Section



The Logistics Section is responsible for all of the services and support needs of an incident, including obtaining and maintaining essential personnel, facilities, equipment, and supplies.

The Incident Commander will determine the need to establish a logistics Section on the incident. This is usually determined by the size of the incident, complexity of support, and how long the incident may last. Once the IC determines that there is a need to establish a separate Logistics function, an individual will be assigned as the Logistics Section Chief.

Six functional units can be established within the Logistics Section. If necessary, a two-branch structure can be used to facilitate span of control. The titles of the units are self-descriptive. Detailed duties of each unit are covered in other modules. Not all of the units may be required, and they will be established based upon need. Branches and Units in the Logistics Section are shown above.

4. Finance/Administration Section

Finance/Administration Section Chief

- Time Unit
- Procurement Unit
- Compensation/Claims Unit
- Cost Unit

The IC will determine if there is a need for a Finance/Administration Section, and designate an individual to perform that role. If no Finance Section is established, the IC will perform all finance functions.

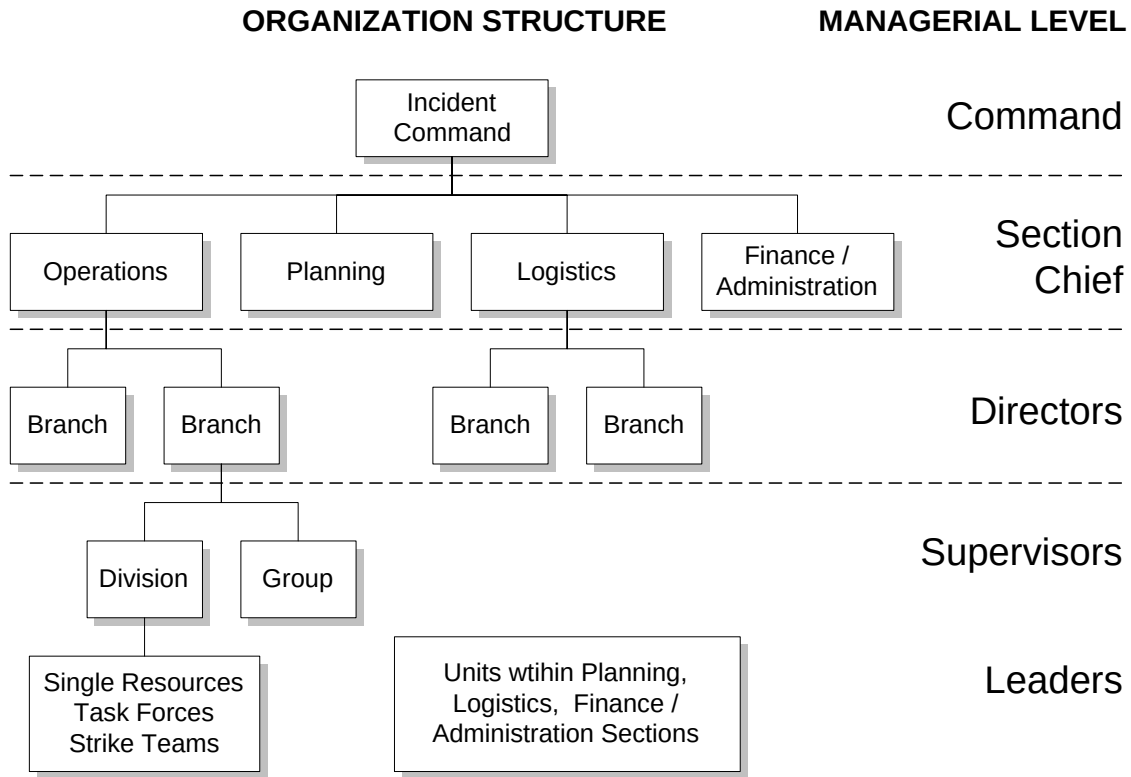
The Finance/Administration Section is set up for any incident that may require on-site financial management. More and more, larger incidents are using a Finance/Administration Section to monitor costs.

Smaller incidents may also require certain Finance/Administration functions. For example, the Incident Commander may establish one or more units of the Finance/Administration Section for such things as procuring special equipment, contracting with a vendor, or for making cost estimates of alternative strategies.

The Finance Section may establish four units as necessary. Duties of each unit are covered in other modules. Not all of the units may be required, and they will be established based upon need.

C. Organization Terminology

At each level in the ICS organization, individuals with primary responsibility positions have distinctive titles, as shown below.



D. Incident Facilities

Facilities will be established depending on the kind and complexity of the incident or event. It is important to know and understand the names and functions of the principal ICS facilities. Not all of those listed below will necessarily be used.



Incident Command Post (Name)



Staging Areas (Name)



Base (Name)



Camp (Name)



Helibase (Name)



Helispot (Number or Name)

H-2

Each of the facilities is briefly described below:

- **Incident Command Post** – The location from which the Incident Commander oversees all incident operations. There is only one ICP for each incident or event. Every incident or event must have some form of an Incident Command Post.
- **Staging Areas** – Locations at which resources are kept while awaiting incident assignment. Most large incidents will have a Staging Area, and some incidents may have several. Staging Areas will be managed by a Staging Area Manager who reports to the Operations Section Chief or to the Incident Commander if an Operations Section has not been established.

- **Base** – The location at the incident at which primary service and support activities are performed. Not all incidents will have a Base. There will only be one Base for each incident.
- **Camps** – Incident locations where resources may be kept to support incident operations. Camps differ from Staging Areas in that essential support operations are done at Camps, and resources at Camps are not always immediately available for use. Not all incidents will have camps.
- **Helibase** – A location in and around an incident area, at which helicopters may be parked, maintained, fueled, and equipped for incident operations. Very large incidents may require more than one Helibase.
- **Helispots** – Helispots are temporary locations where helicopters can land and load and off-load personnel, equipment, and supplies. Large incidents may have several Helispots.

E. Incident Action Plan

Every incident must have an oral or written action plan. The purpose of the plan is to provide all incident supervisory personnel with direction for future actions. Action plans which include the measurable tactical operations to be achieved are always prepared around a time-frame called an Operational Period.

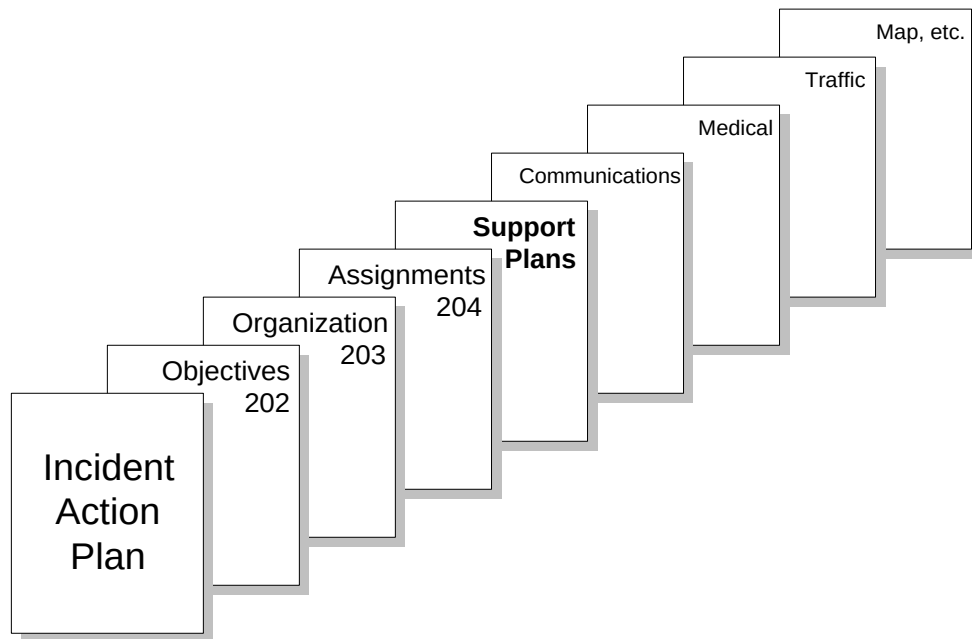
Operational Periods can be of various lengths, but should be no longer than twenty-four hours. Twelve-hour Operational Periods are common on many large incidents. It is not unusual, however, to have much shorter Operational Periods covering, for example, two- or four-hour time periods. The length of an Operational Period will be based on the needs of the incident, and these can change over the course of the incident.

The planning for an Operational Period must be done far enough in advance to ensure that requested resources are available when the Operational Period begins.

Large incidents which involve a partial or full activation of the ICS organization should have a written Incident Action Plan. Incidents extending through an Operational Period should also have a written

Incident Action Plan to ensure continuity due to personnel changes. The decision to have a written action plan will be made by the Incident Commander.

Several forms have been developed to help in preparing the Incident Action Plan. They will be discussed in other modules.



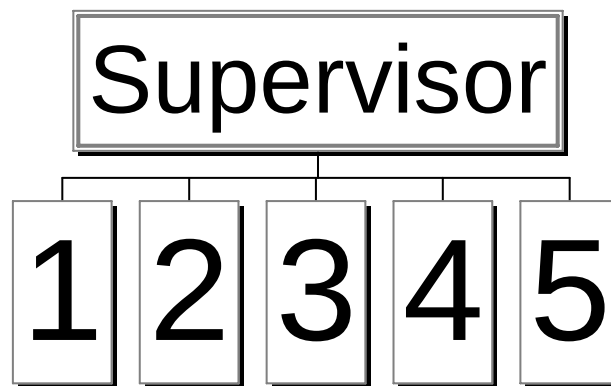
Essential elements in any written or oral Incident Action Plan are:

- Statement of Objectives – Appropriate to the overall incident.
- Organization – Describes what parts of the ICS organization will be in place for each Operational Period.
- Assignments to Accomplish the Objectives – These are normally prepared for each Division or Group and include the strategy, tactics, and resources to be used.
- Supporting Material – Examples can include a map of the incident, communications plan, medical plan, traffic plan, etc.

The Incident Action Plan must be made known to all incident supervisory personnel. This can be done through briefings, by distributing a written plan prior to the start of the Operational Period, or by both methods.

F. Span of Control

Span of Control means how many organizational elements may be directly managed by another person. Maintaining adequate Span of Control throughout the ICS organization is very important. Effective Span of Control may vary from three to seven, and a ratio of one to five reporting elements is recommended. If the number of reporting elements falls outside of those ranges, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There will be exceptions; for example in some applications specially trained hand crews may utilize a larger Span of Control.



G. Common Responsibilities

There are certain common responsibilities or instructions associated with an incident assignment that everyone assigned to an incident should follow. Following these simple guidelines will make your job easier and result in a more effective operation.

1. Receive your incident assignment from your organization. This should include, at a minimum, a reporting location and time, likely length of assignment, brief description of assignment, route information, and a designated communications link if necessary. Different agencies may have additional requirements.

2. Bring any specialized supplies or equipment required for your job. Be sure you have adequate personal supplies to last you for the expected stay.
3. Upon arrival, follow the Check-in procedure for the incident. Check-in locations may be found at:
 - Incident Command Post (at the Resources Unit)
 - Staging Areas
 - Base or Camps
 - Helibases
 - Division or Group Supervisors (for direct assignments)
4. Radio communications on an incident should use clear text, that is no radio codes. Refer to incident facilities by the incident name, for example, Rossmoor Command Post, or 42nd Street Staging Area. Refer to personnel by ICS title, for example, Division C, not numeric code or name.
5. Obtain a briefing from your immediate supervisor. Be sure you understand your assignment.
6. Acquire necessary work materials, locate, and set up your work station.
7. Organize and brief any subordinates assigned to you.
8. Brief your relief at the end of each Operational Period and, as necessary, at the time you are demobilized from the incident.
9. Complete required forms and reports and give them to your supervisor or to the Documentation Unit before you leave.
10. Demobilize according to plan.

III. Conclusion

The information you have learned through this short self-study module will provide you with enough general background to understand the principles and primary organizational elements of the ICS.

You are encouraged to expand your understanding of ICS by taking other modules or courses.

Please complete the self-study examination included in your package.