Module 3 - Incident Command System - ICS

Objectives
- Explain the benefits and key roles of an Incident Command System (ICS)
- List five functions of the ICS

Overview

The Incident Command System (ICS) is the system used to *command, control,* and *coordinate* the efforts of individual agencies as they work towards the common goal of stabilizing an emergency in an effort to protect life, property and the environment. ICS uses principles that have been proven to improve efficiency and effectiveness and applies these principles to emergency response.

ICS and Volunteer Responders

- The ICS system establishes who has authority and what role they fulfill in an emergency or disaster situation. Most responders will find this system more rigid than what they are used to. The main goals are establishing control, coordinating communication and ensuring safety. This section provides the overall principles of the ICS system; in an actual response situation it is essential that you follow the chain of command on-site.

Benefits of ICS

The following are some of the key benefits for using ICS:

- Establishes a predictable chain of command
- Provides a manageable span of control
- Clearly delineates roles and responsibilities
- Uses standard or common terminology to ensure clear communication
- Manages all communications at a scene through a common plan

---

Common Problems in Emergencies

During emergencies, problems often occur because facility and management systems that work well on a day-to-day basis cannot effectively meet the additional needs.

Many problems involve communications including:

- Lack of accurate facts and information
- Failure to share the right amount of information
- Overload or failure of communications equipment
- Miscommunication with the media or the public

Other problems may include:

- Lack of clearly defined leadership and chain of command
- Large groups of volunteers arriving without being asked to do so
- Large numbers of news media and others seeking information

Emergency Operations Center - EOC

An Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is generally the physical location where administrators and supervisors gather during an emergency to make decisions about response activities. Before an emergency, the room or area that will serve as the EOC will be set up with needed supplies, allowing the emergency team to act quickly when an actual event occurs.
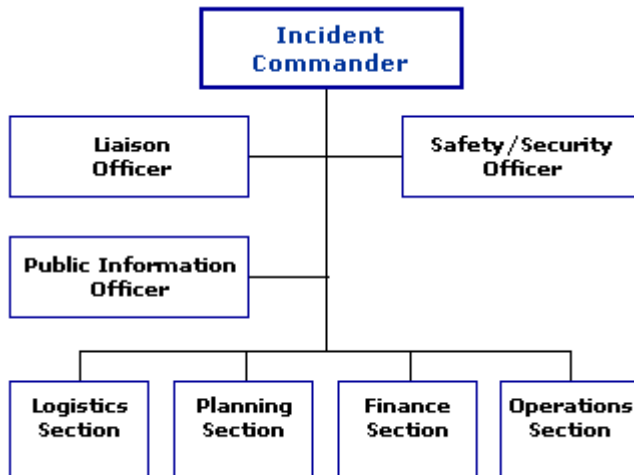
Each facility or emergency site will have a procedure for activating its EOC. Once activated, the incident management team will report to the EOC and work together to manage the situation. A fully functional EOC may have the following functional areas: command, operations, planning, logistics and finance.

ICS Organizational Structure

ICS divides an emergency response into five manageable functions essential for emergency response operations: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance and Administration.

The basic structure of ICS is the same regardless of the type of emergency. The ICS structure will reflect the magnitude of the event; depending on the size of the event, all positions may not be filled.

The **Incident Commander** (IC) or the **Unified Command** (UC) is responsible for all aspects of the response, including developing incident objectives and managing all incident operations.

The **Public Information Officer's** role is to develop and release information about the incident to the news media, incident personnel, and other appropriate agencies and organizations.

The **Liaison Officer's** role is to serve as the point of contact for assisting and coordinating activities between the IC/UC and various agencies and groups. This may include Congressional personnel, local government officials, and criminal investigating organizations and investigators arriving on the scene.

The **Safety Officer's** role is to develop and recommend measures to the IC/UC for assuring personnel health and safety and to assess and/or anticipate hazardous and unsafe situations. The Safety Officer also develops the Site Safety Plan, reviews the Incident Action Plan for safety implications, and provides timely, complete, specific, and accurate assessment of hazards and required controls.

The **Operations** Staff is responsible for all operations directly applicable to the primary mission of the response.

The **Planning** Staff is responsible for collecting, evaluating, and disseminating the tactical information related to the incident, and for preparing and documenting Incident Action Plans (IAPs).

The **Logistics** Staff is responsible for providing facilities, services, and materials for the incident response.

The **Finance and Administrative** Staff is responsible for all financial, administrative, and cost analysis aspects of the incident.

What this Means for You

If you are activated, you will need to follow the chain of command that has been set up through ICS. You may not be working for your day-to-day supervisor and you may be working at a different location. You will be assigned to appropriate tasks based upon your skills and what is needed. You may not be doing your usual job; someone else may be fulfilling it. You should do what you are assigned to do and only what you

are assigned. The most important thing for you to remember is to follow the chain of command and do as you are told.

National Incident Management System - NIMS

ICS is part of the National Incident Management System also called NIMS.

NIMS was developed in 2004 by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) under the direction of the president. NIMS integrates effective practices in emergency preparedness and response into a *nationwide* framework to enable all government, private-sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together during domestic incidents.

» The following courses may be taken online and are recommended but not required for all individuals involved in emergency response:

IS-100.b, Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS 100

IS-700.a, National Incident Management System (NIMS), an Introduction

Hospital Incident Command System - HICS

The Hospital Emergency Incident Command System (HICS) is an emergency management system used to help health-care facilities and hospitals coordinate their own response to emergencies. It is a flexible system that sets up a chain of command, defines roles and responsibilities and helps coordinate efforts with other emergency responders in the community.

The link for the HICS course is http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is100HCb.asp

References and Resources

IS-100.b, Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS 100
FEMA
http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS100b.asp

IS-700.a, National Incident Management System (NIMS), an Introduction
FEMA
http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700a.asp

Incident Command System

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)

National Incident Management System
FEMA
http://www.fema.gov/nims/

Summary

- The Incident Command System (ICS) is the system used to *command, control,* and *coordinate* the efforts of individual agencies as they work towards the common goal of stabilizing an emergency in an effort to protect life, property and the environment.
- Key benefits for using ICS:
    - Establishes a predictable chain of command
    - Provides a manageable span of control
    - Clearly delineates roles and responsibilities
    - Uses standard or common terminology to ensure clear communication
    - Manages all communications at a scene through a common plan

Test Your Knowledge

3.1	**The Incident Command System (ICS) requires that** ☐ 1. when you are activated, you will be doing the job you usually do to avoid confusion or mistakes ☐ 2. If you are activated, you should do what you are assigned and offer to help anyone needing assistance ☐ 3. An ICS system controls, commands, and coordinates towards the goal of stabilizing an emergency. ☐ 4. Each state designs an ICS that will account for regional differences rather than copy the National Incident Management System. ☐ 5. All ICS systems are part of the Hospital Emergency Incident Command System (HICS)

3.2	**Match the ICS function with the correct definition.** **ICS FUNCTION** ☐ Incident Commander ☐ Operations Staff

	☐ Finance and Administrative Staff ☐ Planning Staff ☐ Logistics Staff **DEFINITIONS** A. Responsible for collecting, evaluating, and disseminating the tactical information related to the incident. B. Responsible for all aspects of the response, including developing incident objectives and managing all incident operations. C. Responsible for providing facilities, services, and materials for the incident response. D. Responsible for all operations directly applicable to the primary mission of the response. E. Responsible for all fiscal, clerical, and cost analysis aspects of the incident.
3.3	**What are characteristics of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC)?** ☐ 1. Non-health professional volunteers are not allowed in the EOC because they cannot lead efforts. ☐ 2. All facilities or emergency sites must use the same procedure when they activate their EOC. ☐ 3. The location of the room that will serve as the EOC will not be disclosed until it is activated. ☐ 4. The EOC is a physical location where administrators and supervisors gather to make decisions. ☐ 5. A fully operational EOC requires only the core functional areas of command and operations.

Correct Answers

3.1: 3

3.2: 1-B, 2-D, 3-E, 4-A, 5-C

3.3: 4