

The ICS Organizational Structure

This presentation is based on the FEMA ICS-100 on-line course and is used with permission of the Harris County Texas ARES group.

Last week, I went over the basics of ICS. This week, I will describe the basic organizational structure of ICS. ICS is a modular organization that is based on the size and complexity of the incident.

By definition, any ICS has an Incident Commander. The Incident Commander is ultimately responsible for the incident in question. The other positions within ICS can be delegated by the Incident Commander to subordinates if the situation warrants. In a small incident such as the dumpster fire example last week, then the Incident Commander will not have to delegate responsibilities but in a multi jurisdictional event, then the Incident Commander will delegate responsibilities to subordinates. The Incident Commander can change during the course of the incident due to either a more qualified person arrives on scene, the incident situation changes over time, a jurisdictional change mandates a change who is responsible for the incident, or the Incident Commander needs downtime due to the time span of the event. Command can change only if the outgoing Incident Commander briefs the incoming Incident Commander on the situation AND notification has taken place that the change in command is occurring.

The Incident Commander in a full implementation of ICS will have three Command Staff members and four General Staff members. Remember that only required positions are filled.

The three Command Staff members are Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer and Safety Officer. All Command Staff members have "Officer" in the title. The Public Information Officer is responsible for all media concerns, including press releases pertaining to the incident and consults with the Planning Section Chief with regards to the incident situation. The Liaison Officer handles all liaison activities between the incident and other agencies. The Safety Officer is responsible for the safety of all incident personnel and works with the Operations Section Chief to insure safety of responders and advises Incident Commander on safety concerns.

The General Staff members are responsible for the four Sections within ICS. The first section is the Operations Section. This section develops and implements strategy and tactics to carry out the incident objectives contained in the Incident Action Plan. All Incident Commands require an Incident Action Plan (IAP). This IAP may be either oral or written unless it is either a HazMat response (SARA, Superfund Appropriations and Reauthorization Act, requires a written IAP) or when required by either local or state law. The Operations Section also organizes, assigns, and supervises tactical field resources and is one of the first organizations assigned to the incident. This section expands from

the bottom up and possesses the most incident resources. The Operations Section can be further subdivided to maintain proper Span of Control by Divisions and Groups. To remember the difference between Divisions and Groups, you DIVIDE an incident by geography and GROUP an incident by areas of operation. Divisions and Groups are managed by Supervisors and can be used simultaneously. For example, you can subdivide a ground fire response by geography (Divisions) and have an Air Attack Group responsible for the air operations for the entire fire. Divisions and Groups can be further subdivided by Branches when Span of Control is exceeded and Branches are managed by a Branch Director.

The next Section is the Planning Section. This unit is responsible for the IAP, maintaining resource status, provides documentation resources and prepares the demobilization plan, among other responsibilities. The Planning Section is subdivided into four Units. The Resources Unit is responsible for checking in incoming resources and maintaining the status of all resources. The Resource Unit plays a significant role in the preparation of the IAP. The Situation Unit is responsible for keeping track of the situation including situation maps and Situation Reports (SITREPS). The Documentation Unit maintains the written IAP and also provides duplication services and archives incident related documentation. Finally, the Demobilization Unit provides the Demobilization Plan so that resources are released from the incident in an orderly, safe, and cost-effective manner.

The third Section is the Logistics Section. This section is responsible for providing services and support to responders. The Logistics Section is divided into two Branches, Service and Support. The Service Branch has three Units, Communications, Medical, and Food. The Communications Unit is responsible for adequate communications for the incident and prepares and supports the Incident Communications Plan. We are in this unit in ICS. The Medical Unit develops the Medical Plan, provides medical treatment for responders and prepares procedures for a Mass Casualty Incident or MCI. The Food Unit provides potable water, food and the equipment and supplies for food service facilities. The Support Branch has three Units, Supply, Facilities, and Ground Support. The Supply Unit handles all supplies used in an incident including the determination of type and amount, procurement, distribution, and inventory. The Facilities Unit sets up and maintains facilities including management, and provides facility security and maintenance such as sanitation and lighting. The Ground Support Unit provides the transportation for an incident. This also includes documentation of the fueling and maintenance of ground resources. The final Section is the Finance and Administration Section. This section is responsible for the financial affairs of the incident. This section is divided into four Units. The first unit is the Time Unit. This Unit is responsible for timekeeping of all incident personnel. The second unit is the Procurement Unit. This unit is responsible for financial matters such as vendor contracts, leases, and fiscal agreements. The third unit is the Compensation Claims Unit. This unit is responsible for the workers compensation claims stemming from an incident related injury or illness. The final unit is the Cost Unit. This unit keeps track of the costs associated with the incident and also provides cost estimates, analysis and makes cost savings recommendations.