

E-PME  *Enlisted*
PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Incident Command System (ICS) 4.G.05

Learning Objective(s): **EXPLAIN** the basic structure of the Incident Command System.

Why You Need to Know This

Incident Command System, commonly known as “ICS” is a systematic approach used by the Coast Guard for emergency management response. ICS provides a flexible and scalable command structure applicable to a wide variety of emergency responses such as an oil spill, search and rescue cases or planned events such as marine events. ICS does not follow military rank structure, but rather an established nationally recognized position-based structure. As a Coast Guard member you will be required to complete a variety of ICS training courses, including ICS-100 and ICS-700. As you gain more experience in the Coast Guard you will complete additional training to prepare you to fulfill a variety of ICS positions.

This lesson will provide you with the information you need to know in regards to the basic structure of the Incident Command System.

Topics Covered

This section will cover the following topics:

- ICS and NIIMS Defined
- Three Main Purposes of ICS
- History of ICS
- ICS and NIIMS Advantages
- ICS Organizational Structure
 - ICS Command Staff
 - ICS General Staff
 - Key ICS Positions
- Incident Action Plan

At the end of this lesson you will be required to participate in a learning activity. You are encouraged to first review the learning activity and the sign off requirements located in the “**For You and Your Supervisor**” section of this lesson. Reviewing this information before you begin the lesson will allow you to take proper notes and focus on key learning points.

National Inter-agency Incident Management System (NIIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) Defined

National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) is a standardized response management system. It is an “all hazard–all risk” approach to managing crisis response operations as well as non-crisis events. ICS is only one facet of NIMS. NIMS integrates existing best practices into a consistent nationwide approach to domestic incident management that is applicable at all jurisdictional levels (state, federal, local or tribal) and across all functional disciplines in an all-hazards context. ICS is organizationally designed to accommodate responses or events of varying size or complexity.

The principles of this on-site management system can be applied to all types of incidents, such as floods, hurricanes, search and rescue, law enforcement, oil spills and hazardous substances releases, and to planned events such as marine parades. ICS overlays, but does not replace, existing Coast Guard response organizational structures.

Three Main Purposes of ICS

The three main purposes of ICS include:

- Ensure the safety of responders and others
- Achievement of tactical objectives
- Efficient use of resources

History of ICS

The concept of ICS was developed more than thirty years ago, in the aftermath of a devastating California wildfire of 1970. Over the course of 13 days, 16 lives were lost, 700 structures were destroyed and over one-half million acres were burned. The overall cost and loss associated with these fires totaled \$18 million per day. Although all of the responding agencies cooperated to the best of their ability, numerous problems with communication and coordination hampered effectiveness. As a result, Congress mandated that the U.S. Forest Service design a system that would make a quantum jump in the capabilities of Southern California wild land fire protection agencies to effectively coordinate interagency action and to allocate suppression resources in dynamic, multiple-fire situations. The system that was developed was ICS.

By 1981, ICS was widely used throughout Southern California by the major fire agencies. It wasn't long before the Coast Guard quickly saw the value of ICS in maritime operations and adopted the framework for response and planning operations.

NIMS ICS Advantages

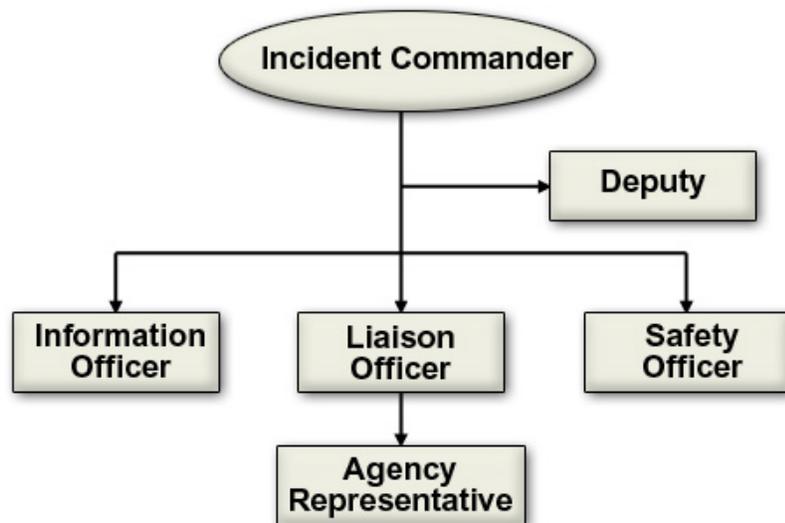
NIMA ICS provides a consistent and systematic approach guiding government agencies at all levels, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations to work seamlessly to prepare for, prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life or property and harm to the environment.

NIIMS ICS advantages to the Coast Guard include:

- **Flexible.** NIIMS ICS is a flexible, standardized response management system that allows for the growth of response management expertise at all levels of Coast Guard command
- **Increased support & pre-response planning.** NIIMS ICS provides for an increased support of trained personnel during major incidents
- **All hazard-all risk.** NIIMS ICS applies to any response situation (“all hazard–all risk”)
- **Expansion/contraction.** NIIMS ICS is organizationally flexible and capable of expanding and contracting to meet responses or events of varying size or complexity.
- **Autonomy.** NIIMS ICS maintains autonomy for each agency participating in the response yet allows all to speak the same language

Organizational Structure: ICS Command Staff

The basic organizational structure of the ICS Command Staff is depicted in the following diagram:



**Organizational
Structure: ICS
Command Staff
(Continued)**

The ICS Command Staff roles and responsibilities are listed below:

- **Incident Commander.** The Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for the overall management of the incident. The IC is selected by qualifications and experience. On most incidents, the command activity is carried out by a single IC.
 - **Incident Commander Deputy.** The IC may have a deputy, either from the same agency or from an assisting agency. Deputies may also be assigned at section and branch levels of the ICS organization. Deputies must have the same qualifications as the IC to enable them to take over the IC position at any time.
 - **Information Officer.** The Information Officer (IO) is responsible for developing and releasing information about the incident to the news media, incident personnel, and other appropriate agencies and organizations.
 - **Liaison Officer.** The Liaison Officer (LO) classification was established for incidents that are multi-jurisdictional, or involve several agencies. Only one LO is to be assigned for each incident operating under a Unified Command (UC) and for multi-jurisdiction incidents. The LO may have assistants if needed; the assistants may also represent assisting agencies or jurisdictions.
 - **Safety Officer.** The Safety Officer (SO) develops and recommends measures for assuring personnel safety, and assesses or anticipates hazardous and unsafe situations. Only one SO is assigned for each incident. SOs may have assistants as needed. The assistants may also represent assisting agencies or jurisdictions. They may have specific responsibilities such as air operations, hazardous materials, etc.
 - **Agency Representative.** In many multi-jurisdiction incidents, an agency or jurisdiction may send a representative to assist in coordination efforts. He or she is NOT there on direct tactical assignment. The Agency Representative (AR) is assigned an incident from an assisting or cooperating agency. The AR is delegated the authority to make decisions on matters affecting that agency's participation at the incident. ARs report to the LO, or the IC in the absence of an LO.
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Organizational Structure: ICS General Staff

The basic organizational structure of the ICS General Staff is depicted in the following diagram:



The ICS General Staff roles and responsibilities are listed below:

- **Operations Section:** The Operations Section Chief conducts and manages operations to reach the incident objectives. The Operations Section Chief also establishes the tactics and directs all operational resources.
- **Planning Section:** The Planning Section Chief supports the incident action planning process by tracking resources, collecting/analyzing information, and maintaining documentation.
- **Logistics Section:** The Logistics Section Chief provides resources and needed services to support the achievement of the incident objectives.
- **Finance/Administration Section:** The Finance/Administration Section Chief monitors costs related to the incident. The Finance/Administration Section Chief also provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analyses.

Key ICS Positions

Coast Guard response personnel can come from any component of the Coast Guard (active duty, reserve, auxiliary, or civilian employees). Responders should have a basic understanding of ICS to ensure they can effectively operate within the ICS organization and properly use and understand the Incident Management Handbook (IMH).

Key ICS positions to be aware of include:

- **Staging Area Manager.** The Staging Area Manager is responsible for managing all activities within a staging area (the location where incident personnel and equipment are assigned awaiting tactical assignment).
 - **Branch Director.** The Branch Director is under the direction of the Operations Section Chief when activated. The Branch Director is responsible for implementing the portion of the Incident Action Plan (IAP) appropriate to the branches.
 - **Division/Group Supervisor.** The Division/Group Supervisor
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**Key ICS positions
(Continued)**

reports to the Operations Section Chief or Branch Director when activated. Division/Group Supervisors are responsible for the implementation of the assigned portion of the IAP, assignment of resources within the Division/Group, and reporting on the progress of control operations and status of resources within the Division/Group.

- **Strike Team/Task Force Leaders.** The Strike Team/Task Force Leader reports to a Division/Group Supervisor. They are responsible for performing tactical assignments assigned to the Strike Team or Task Force, reporting work progress, resources status, and other important information to a Division/Group Supervisor, and maintaining work records on assigned personnel.
- **Single Resource.** The Single Resource is the person in charge of a single tactical resource.
- **Air Support Group Supervisor.** The Air Support Group Supervisor is primarily responsible for supporting and managing helibase and helispot operations and maintaining liaison with fixed-wing air bases. This includes providing fuel and other supplies, maintenance and repair of helicopters, and retardant mixing and loading. Also includes keeping records of helicopter activity and providing enforcement of safety regulations.
- **Helibase Manager.** The Helibase Manager reports to the Air Support Group Supervisor. They are responsible for control of helicopters during landing and take-off and while on the ground.

**Incident Action Plan
(IAP)**

The IAP includes the overall incident objectives and strategies established by the Incident Command (IC) or the Unified Command (UC). The Planning Section is responsible for developing and documenting the IAP. In the case of UC, the IAP must adequately address the overall incident objectives, mission, operational assignments, and policy needs of each jurisdictional agency. This planning process is accomplished with productive interaction between jurisdictions, functional agencies, and private organizations. The IAP also addresses tactical objectives and support activities for one operational period, generally 12 to 24 hours. The IAP also contains provisions for continuous incorporation of "lessons learned" as identified by the Incident Safety Officer or incident management personnel as activities progress.

Learning Activity



To complete this learning objective you must access the ICS 100 online training through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Management Institute website, located at the following link: <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is100b.asp>

The course takes approximately three hours to complete, including a final exam. When you are done, print out the course completion certificate and show it to your supervisor. If you have already completed ICS 100, provide your supervisor with a copy your completed certificate.

For You and Your Supervisor

Completion of this task is noted by the FEMA EMI ICS-100 online course completion certificate, printable at the end of the course.

References

The references used to develop this lesson can be found at CG Directives (CG-612), www.uscg.mil/directives:

- Incident Command System, COMDTINST 3120.14
- Incident Management Handbook, COMDTPUB P3120.17A

The following reference can be found on the FEMA EMI webpage at:

- <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is100a.asp>
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