

SPILL RESPONSE MANAGEMENT: INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM



Incident Command System (ICS) provides a standardized organizational structure for the on-scene command, control and coordination of an emergency response. Originally developed in the 1970s to combat wildfires in California, ICS is flexible and easily expandable to deal with any type or level of emergency. It is fully interchangeable—anyone trained in ICS should be able to fill any role within the system.

WHEN IS ICS USED?

ICS is used globally by all levels of government as well as by many nongovernmental and private sector organizations. British Columbia was the first Canadian province to adopt ICS when, in 1995, the Provincial Emergency Program adopted it and included its principles in the development of the BC Emergency Response Management System.

Incident Command System can be used to manage small or large incidents, from house fires and utility outages to major car accidents or chemical spills. It is also used to organize short- and long-term field-level response operations for a broad spectrum of emergencies, from planned events and natural disasters to acts of terror.

HOW DOES ICS WORK?

ICS is designed to be used from the very first stages of an emergency response, offering predefined management hierarchy, processes, terminology and protocols. It is especially useful for incident resource management and organizing field-level operations. This common approach enables organizations using ICS to integrate their response with other organizations that are also using ICS. It also enables anyone trained in ICS to participate in a response that uses the ICS model. An ICS response typically operates in 12- or 24-hour operational periods.



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ICS STRUCTURE

The ICS organization is structured to coordinate activities in five major functional areas: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance/Administration. These components are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops, and each can be divided into smaller functions as needed.

This structure enables incident managers to identify the key concerns associated with the incident—often under urgent conditions. It ensures quick and effective resource commitment and minimizes the disruption to the normal operating policies and procedures of the responding organizations. It lends consistency to operations and provides direction during a response.

ICS PROCESS

1. Establish command
2. Determine objectives, strategies and tactics
3. Organize the site
4. Manage resources
5. Develop appropriate ICS organization
6. Develop, review and modify the Incident Action Plan
7. Manage additional facilities
8. Manage additional resources

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The scale of an incident will determine the size and scope of the ICS organization as well as the amount of sections and staff needed to manage the response. In smaller incidents, the five components may be managed by one person, the Incident Commander. Larger incidents usually require that each component, or section, is set up separately and scaled according to the incident's changing needs.

Command Staff

The Command Staff is assigned to carry out staff functions needed to support the Incident Commander. Command Staff positions are established to assign responsibility for key activities not specifically identified in the General Staff functional elements. These positions include interagency liaison, incident safety, and public information.

Command (Incident Commander)

- Initially taken by the first trained responder to arrive on the scene
- Responsible for managing all tactical resources and response operations
- Command may transfer, based on who has primary authority for overall control of the incident
- There will always be an Incident Commander, regardless of incident type or size

Unified Command

- Established to manage multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional events
- Allows all agencies with jurisdiction for an incident to establish a common set of objectives and strategies
- Unified Command does not involve losing agency authority, responsibility or accountability. Rather, it provides improved understanding of other agencies' legal requirements, plans, priorities and restrictions, and facilitates coordination of all agency activities to ensure an efficient and appropriate response to an incident.
- Unified Command allows for:
 - o A single integrated incident organization
 - o Co-located, shared facilities
 - o A single planning process and development of an Incident Action Plan
 - o Shared operations, planning, logistical and finance/administration functions
 - o A coordinated process for resource ordering



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Safety Officer

- Monitors safety conditions and develops measures for ensuring the safety of all assigned personnel
- Corrects unsafe situations via chain of command
- May stop activity if personnel are in imminent danger

Liaison Officer

- On larger incidents, representatives from cooperating or assisting agencies may be assigned to the incident to coordinate their agency's involvement. The Liaison Officer serves as their primary contact with the response.

Public Information Officer

- Serves as the point of contact for the media or other organizations seeking information directly from the incident or event
- There should be only one Information Officer. Others will serve as support staff. A Joint Information Centre may be established if the scale of the incident necessitates it.

General Staff

The General Staff is responsible for the functional aspects of the incident command structure, and typically consists of the Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance/Administration sections.

Operations

- Directs and coordinates all tactical operations to meet incident objectives
- Determines resources required by the section
- Assists Command in developing objectives and strategies for the incident
- Requests/releases resources via Command

Planning

- Collects, evaluates and displays incident information
- Prepares the Incident Action Plan and maintains incident-related documentation
- Conducts long-range planning and develops demobilization plans
- Maintain status of all resources assigned to the incident
- Maintains incident documentation

Logistics

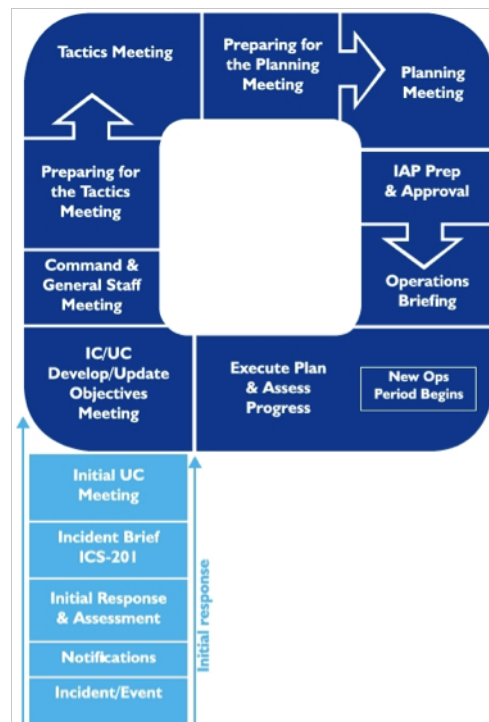
- Responsible for all the services and support needs of an incident, including obtaining and maintaining essential personnel, facilities, equipment and supplies

Finance/Administration

- This section is set up for any incident that may require on-site financial management
- Responsible for tracking incident-related costs, personnel and equipment records, and administering procurement contracts associated with the incident
- Monitors and tracks claims for insurance or government funds

THE PLANNING P

For more complex incidents, ICS provides a detailed planning process for transitioning from the initial reactive phase of a response—when predefined emergency response plans are being implemented—to the proactive phases, where broader plans need to be developed to manage protracted, sustained responses. This process, called the Planning P (see below), aims to create an Incident Action Plan for every operational period. This detailed planning process continues until the response is complete.



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Sources

BC Emergency Management System | gov.bc.ca
U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency | fema.gov
Response Consult