

# INCIDENT COMMAND OPERATIONS

## A. Purpose and Scope:

To effectively manage the performance of fire department units, personnel, and resources at emergency incidents in a controlled and safe manner, utilizing a Unified Command Structure. This guideline was developed using the procedures set forth by the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

## B. Terminology:

1. The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standard, on-scene, all-hazard incident management system. ICS allows users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the needs of single or multiple incidents.
2. Incident Commander (IC): Person who assumes overall command of all operations at an incident. The I.C. will be a professional manager directing all fire ground operations.
3. Command: The radio designation for the IC to be used throughout the incident in place of the respective radio call number, regardless if command transfers from one individual to another.
4. Command Post (CP): A **stationary** position designated by the Incident Commander where coordination and control of manpower and equipment takes place. The CP will be given a geographical location.
5. Incident Command Aide: Person used to assist the IC at the command post.
6. Unified Command: A unified team effort which allows all agencies with responsibilities for an incident, to manage the incident by a common set of strategies and objectives.
7. Incident Action Plan (IAP): Contains general control objectives reflecting the overall incident strategy and specific action plans for the next operational period.
8. Section Chief: The head of each of the sections will be called Chief.
9. Branches: An organizational level between Divisions/Groups and the IC, Operations or Logistics. At large scale or complex incidents the number of divisions and or groups may create a significant span-of-control problem.

When this occurs, consideration should be given to the implementation of branches.

10. Divisions: Responsible for operations in a specified geographical area of an incident.
11. Groups: Responsible for a specified functional assignment.
12. Single Resources: Engine, Truck, Rescue and other types of companies with an apparatus, assembled for an assignment and having a crew leader. Designation for the Single Resource will be task specific I.E. Fire Attack, Search & Rescue, Ventilation, Salvage, Overhaul, RIT, etc.
13. Branch/Division/Group Officers: Assigned by the IC to manage specific geographical areas of the incident or specific fire ground functions.
14. Level I Staging: Units staged in their direction of travel, uncommitted, approximately one or two blocks from the scene with an identified water supply.
15. Level II Staging: A formal staging area where companies report. Designated by Command.
16. Administrative Chief: The Chief of the department and Deputy Chief's.

#### C. ICS Functional Areas:

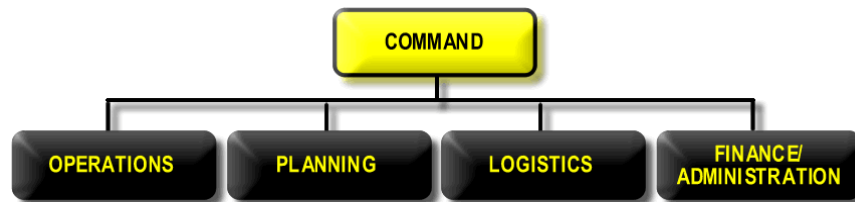
##### 1. Incident Commander

The Incident Commander (IC) is the individual who is in charge of and has ultimate responsibility for the overall management of emergency scene activities.

Responsibilities of the IC include:

- a. Assess incident priorities
- b. Determine incident goals and objectives
- c. Develop and revise Incident Action Plan (IAP)
- d. Develops appropriate ICS
- e. Assess resource needs and utilization
- f. Coordinates overall activities
- g. Serves as the ultimate Incident Safety Officer
- h. Coordinates with outside agencies
- i. Authorizes the release of information

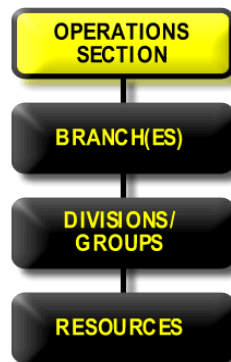
- j. Assures all section Chief's and Command Staff wear the appropriate identifying command vests.



**INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM: COMMAND STAFF & GENERAL STAFF**

2. Operations Section:

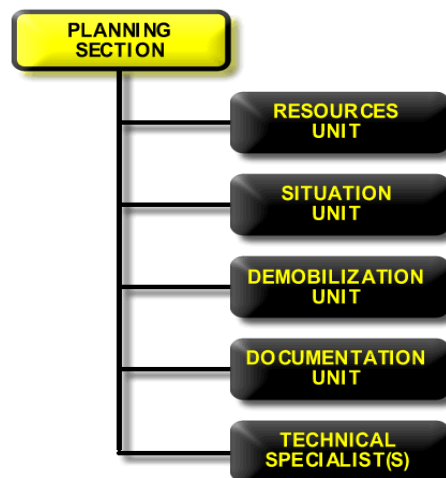
The Operations Section is responsible for the direction and coordination of all tactical operations at an incident. For most events, the IC serves the role of the Operations Chief. The Operations Section may be implemented with a complex incident having major demands in one or more of the remaining functional areas.



**MAJOR ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENTS OF OPERATIONS SECTION**

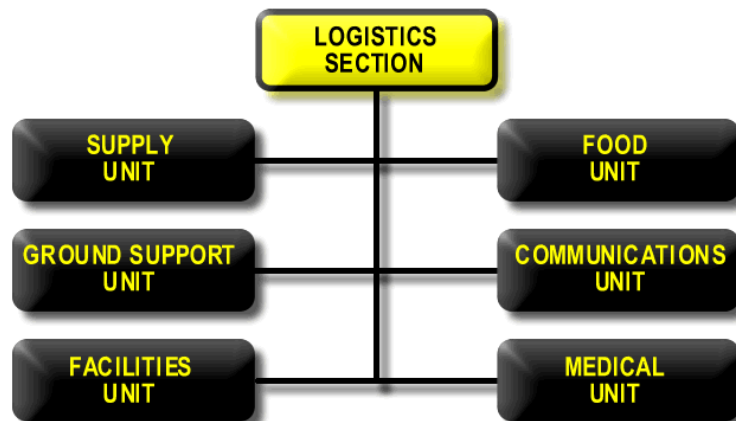
3. Planning Section:

The Planning Section is responsible for gathering, assimilating, analyzing, and processing information about the incident status and resources. The Planning Section Chief goal is to plan ahead of current events and to identify the need for resources before they are needed



4. Logistics Section:

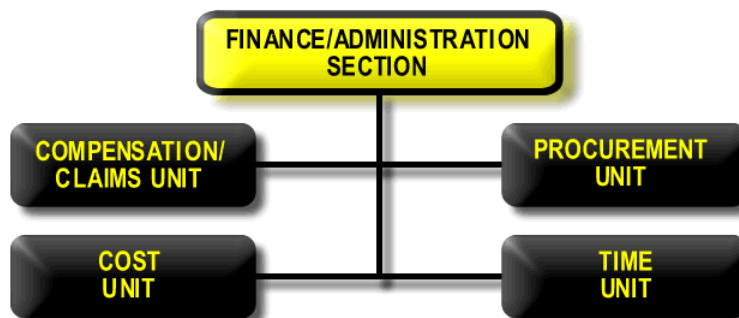
The Logistics Section is the support mechanism for the organization. The Logistics Section Chief provides facilities, services materials and support systems to all organizational components involved in the incident.



**LOGISTICS SECTION ORGANIZATION**

5. Finance/Administration Section:

The Finance/Administration Section Chief is responsible for tracking all incident costs and evaluating the financial considerations of the incident, and provides guidance to the IC on financial issues.



**FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION SECTION ORGANIZATION**

D. Command Staff:

Command Staff positions are established to assume responsibility for key activities that are not a part of the line organization. Four specific Staff positions exist:

1. Incident Safety Officer
2. Information Officer
3. Liaison Officer
4. Incident Command Aide

Additional positions might be required depending upon the nature and location of the incident or requirements established by the IC.

1. Safety Officer

- a. The Safety Officer's (SO) function is to manage the safety of all personnel and to relieve the IC of direct involvement in this responsibility. The safety officer should remain mobile and continually evaluate the incident condition. The SO should not only identify problems and potential problems, but should make suggestions to minimize them. The SO has the authority to bypass the chain of command when it is necessary to correct unsafe acts immediately. The IC should always be informed of these corrective actions.
- b. **It shall not be the responsibility of the SO to redirect strategic or tactical operations unless an immediate life safety concern is noted.**
- c. A single SO would be designated in a Unified Command structure.
- d. The SO also is responsible for assessing responder rehabilitation needs.

2. Information Officer:

- a. The Information Officer's function is to interface with the media and other appropriate agencies. The Information Officer normally will be the point of contact for the media and governmental agencies desiring information. Only one Information Officer would be designated for a single or Unified Command structure. Assistants may be assigned from other involved agencies or departments.
- b. Provide a "Media Area" away from the CP where all the media representatives are directed to report.

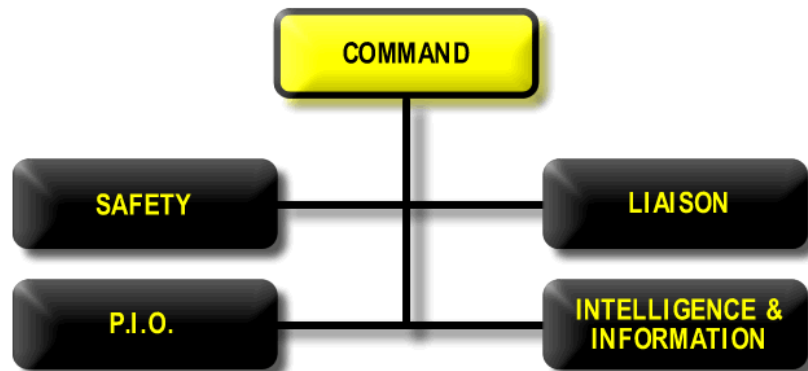
- c. Frequent briefings are important in order to maintain control of media representatives, satisfy their need for information, and maintain our need for good, effective public relations.

3. Liaison Officer:

The Liaison Officer's function is to be a point of contact for representatives from other agencies. In a single command structure, assisting agency representatives would coordinate through the Liaison Officer. Under a Unified Command structure, representatives from agencies not involved in the Unified Command would coordinate through the Liaison Officer.

4. Incident Command Aide:

An Incident Commander Aide may be established by the Incident Commander. It will be the responsibility of the Incident Commander Aide to report to the Command Post (CP) and assist the Incident Commander as directed.



E. Procedure:

1. Establishing Command: The first arriving member at the scene shall assume "Command," establish a command post, and remain in command until relieved by a higher ranking or designated officer or until the incident is terminated:

**Note: This does not restrict any company from making an attack without an established water supply and passing command on to the next arriving unit. Command shall only be passed a single time on a single incident.**

Initial responsibilities of Command may include:

- a. Establish command and transmit a size-up. Example: *Engine-61 on location, have fire showing from the roof of a two-story residence, assuming Command.*
- b. Evaluate and manage the risk to personnel
- c. Establish the overall incident strategy and associated tactics
- d. Assign resources specific tasks
- e. Maintain overall command

Additional responsibilities may include:

- a. Assign Divisions/Groups as needed to maintain effective span of control.
- b. Collect and record information concerning responding and staged companies including personnel from support agencies.
- c. Locate a Level II staging area.
- d. Review plan of action and revise if necessary.
- e. Request and assign additional units as necessary.
- f. Terminate the emergency and return companies to service.

## 2. Three Modes of Command

### a. Investigation Mode:

Fire apparatus arrives on location. The first arriving unit proceeds to investigate the situation.

### b. Offensive Mode

First arriving unit on location establishes command. That unit begins an offensive attack with or without an established water supply. The first arriving unit maintains command until the next unit arrives at the incident scene.

### c. Defensive Mode:

First arriving unit on location establishes command. That unit begins a Defensive attack with or without an established water supply. The first arriving unit maintains command until the next unit arrives at the incident scene.

## 3. Command Positioning:

- a. The Incident Commander must remain at the Command Post and manage the incident from that position.
- b. The IC should utilize the command worksheet at all ICS incidents.

4. Transfer of Command:

- a. The first arriving member to arrive on the scene will assume and retain Command until relieved by a higher-ranking officer.
- b. Transfer of Command is preferably accomplished by face-to-face contact. Command may be transferred in this manner as many times as needed.

5. Staging:

The objective of staging is to maintain control and coordination at the Incident by holding companies uncommitted until they receive specific assignments.

Level I Staging:

- a. Units will park in their direction of travel one or two blocks from the scene until assigned by command.
- b. Will automatically be in effect at all box alarm, or greater, assignments.
- c. Command must be kept advised of all resources on the scene. When Level I Staging on a multiple alarm fire, units shall report their company designation and location to Command.

Level II Staging:

This level of staging will apply to large, complex incidents requiring an on-scene reserve of companies and involves formal staging in an area designated by Command. When Command formally announces "Level II Staging" and the location, all companies that have not been given an assignment will report to the staging area.

- a. Command Staff officers and support assistance such as arson, utility representatives, rehab. etc., will report directly to the Command Post. Ambulances will report to the staging area.
- b. Command may designate a staging officer to coordinate and manage the staging area. The radio designation for the staging officer will be "Staging". This officer will conduct all communication between Staging and Command. All companies will respond to the designated staging area and report in person to the staging officer.

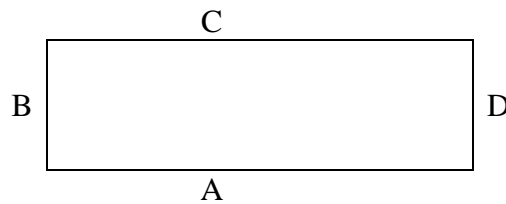


- c. When requested by Command, the staging officer will verbally assign companies to report to specific sectors. The staging officer will then advise Command of the specific units assigned.
- d. The staging officer's responsibilities may include:
  1. Coordinate with the police department to control access into the staging area
  2. Maintain a log of available companies in the staging area.
  3. Keep command advised periodically of the number of companies still available in staging.

6. Divisions/Groups:

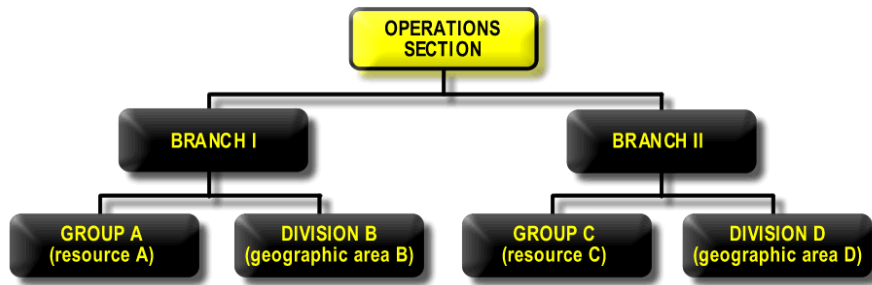
Reduces the span of control by dividing the incident into more management segments and are usually composed of two or more single resource teams.

- a. For geographical division purposes, structures may be lettered clockwise, starting from the designated front of the building.  
Example:



**Designated Front of Building**

- b. A division may be but not limited to:
  1. A side of a building
  2. One floor of a building
  3. A portion of one floor
  4. The total interior
  5. A geographical area
- c. A group may be but not limited to:
  1. Search & Rescue
  2. Fire Attack
  3. Salvage
  4. Overhaul
  5. Ventilation
  6. RIT



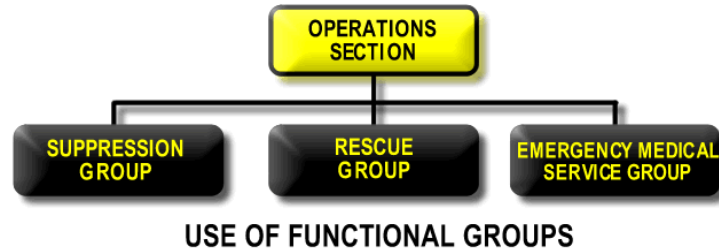
**DIVISIONS AND GROUPS**

d. Division/Group Officers:

1. Assigned by Command and will use a “division/group designation” in radio communications.
2. Will be in command and control of all companies assigned to them.
3. Will keep Command informed of their working conditions
4. Will request additional resources as needed from **Command** only.
5. Will have overall responsibility for safety and accountability of all members assigned to them.
6. Will monitor the activities of the members assigned in order that they are sent to rehab when it is necessary.
7. Will inform Command of any companies ready for reassignment.
8. All communication from the divisions/groups will be through their officer.

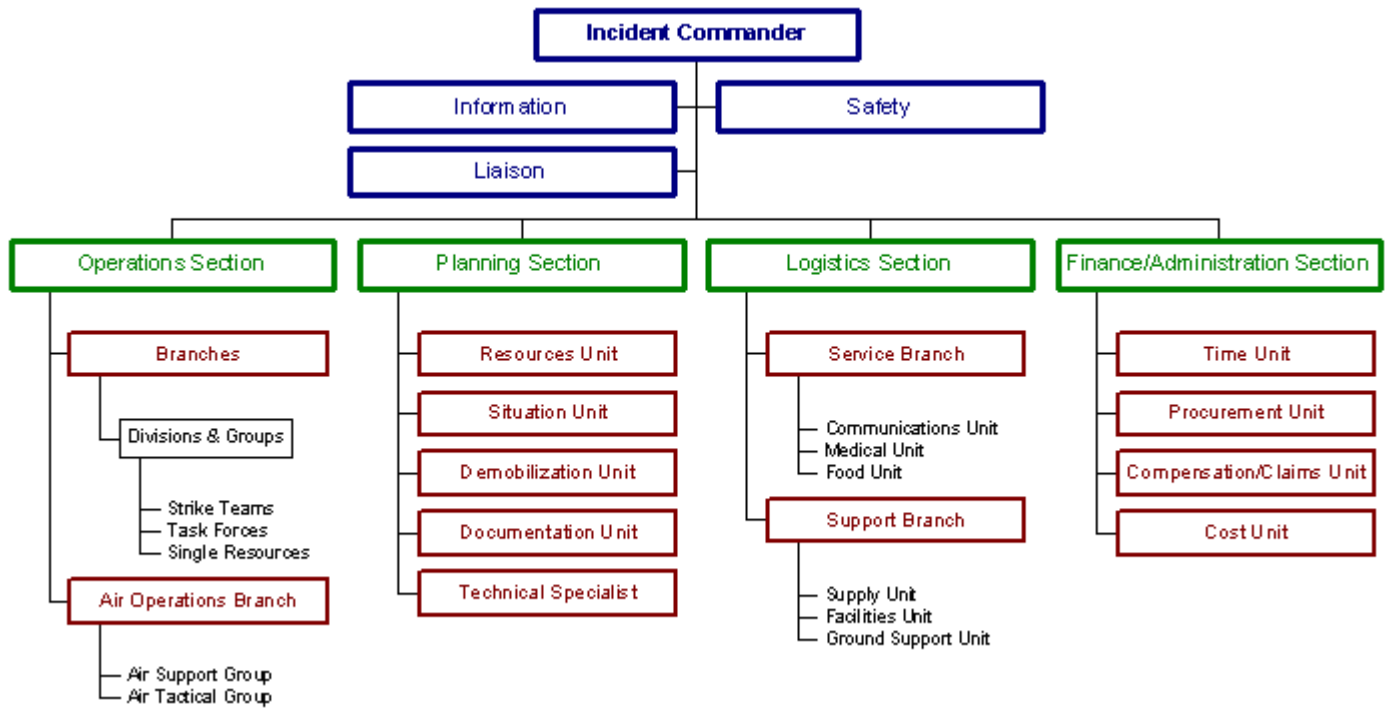


**USE OF GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS**



7. Single Resources are individual teams of two or more personnel assigned a specific task. These single resources will be designated according to their specific task and a number based on the number of teams assigned that similar functions such as attack team 1, attack team 2, search team 1, search team 2, search team 3, and vent team 1.
8. Communications:

Communication is essential. The single resource team officer should advise the I.C. of their location within a structure, their progress or lack of progress, and interior conditions. This communication should take place at regular intervals.



Courtesy the National Interagency Fire Center, <http://www.nifc.gov/index.html>

# THE TEN “COMMAND”-MENTS

1. I will assume and maintain command
2. I will position myself in the most appropriate location
3. I will continuously evaluate the situation
4. I will employ risk management
5. I will ensure accountability of personnel
6. I will establish communications procedures
7. I will match my tactics with my strategy
8. I will customize the emergency scene organization
9. I will review and revise activities as needed
10. I will ensure control by a single incident commander