

ICS-100: Introduction to ICS for Healthcare/Hospitals Lesson 2 Summary

Lesson Overview

The **ICS Features and Principles** lesson introduces you to:

- ICS management principles.
- ICS key features.
- Common ICS responsibilities.

Lesson 2 Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe the basic features of ICS.
- Identify the principle ICS facilities.
- Identify facility map symbols.
- Describe common responsibilities for responding to an incident.
- List individual accountability responsibilities.
- Describe common mobilization and demobilization responsibilities.

ICS Features

As you learned in the previous lesson, ICS is based on proven management principles, which contribute to the strength and efficiency of the overall system.

ICS principles are implemented through a wide range of management features including the use of common terminology and clear text, and a modular organizational structure.

ICS emphasizes effective planning, including management by objectives and reliance on an Incident Action Plan.

ICS helps ensure full utilization of all incident resources by:

- Maintaining a manageable span of control.
- Establishing predesignated incident locations and facilities.
- Implementing resource management practices.
- Ensuring integrated communications.

The ICS features related to command structure include chain of command and unity of command, as well as unified command and transfer of command. Formal transfer of command occurs whenever leadership changes.

Through accountability and mobilization, ICS helps ensure that resources are on hand and ready.

And, finally, ICS supports responders and decision makers by providing the data they need through effective information management.

This lesson covers each of these ICS features in detail.

Common Terminology and Clear Text

The ability to communicate within the ICS is absolutely critical. An essential method for ensuring the ability to communicate is by using common terminology and clear text.

A critical part of any effective incident management system is for all communications to be in plain English. That is, **use clear text. Do not use radio codes, organization-specific codes, or jargon.**

For example, many hospitals use color-coded standard operating procedures (SOPs) for specific types of incidents, such as code pink for a baby abduction. Such procedures do **not** comply with the "plain speak" guidance of ICS.

ICS establishes common terminology allowing diverse incident management and support entities to work together. Common terminology helps to define:

- **Organizational Functions:** Major functions and functional units with incident management responsibilities are named and defined. Terminology for the organizational elements involved is standard and consistent.
- **Resource Descriptions:** Major resources (personnel, facilities, and equipment/ supply items) are given common names and are "typed" or categorized by their capabilities. This helps to avoid confusion and to enhance interoperability.
- **Incident Facilities:** Common terminology is used to designate incident facilities.
- **Position Titles:** ICS management or supervisory positions are referred to by titles, such as Officer, Chief, Director, Supervisor, or Leader.

Each of the above areas will be covered in more detail in this and the remaining lessons.

Modular Organization

The ICS organizational structure develops in a top-down, modular fashion that is based on the size and complexity of the incident, as well as the specifics of the hazard environment created by the incident. As incident complexity increases, the organization expands from the top down as functional responsibilities are delegated.

The ICS organizational structure is flexible. When needed, separate functional elements can be established and subdivided to enhance internal organizational management and external coordination. As the ICS organizational structure expands, the number of management positions also expands to adequately address the requirements of the incident.

In ICS, only those functions or positions necessary for a particular incident will be filled.

Management by Objectives

During the NIMS compliance process, ICS will be incorporated in the organization's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for priority hazards. This guidance is used in the early phases to "start" the response to an event. As part of that initial response phase, ICS is implemented through identifying an initial Incident Commander, who identifies objectives to guide response activities. This is how the incident action planning process begins. The process consists of the following steps:

- Step 1: Understand organization policy and direction.
- Step 2: Assess incident situation.
- Step 3: Establish incident objectives.
- Step 4: Select appropriate strategy or strategies to achieve objectives.
- Step 5: Perform tactical direction (applying tactics appropriate to the strategy, assigning the right resources, and monitoring their performance).
- Step 6: Provide necessary followup (changing strategy or tactics, adding or subtracting resources, etc.).

This "management by objectives" approach is used to communicate functional actions throughout the entire ICS organization.

Reliance on an Incident Action Plan (IAP)

In ICS, considerable emphasis is placed on developing effective Incident Action Plans.

An Incident Action Plan (IAP) can be an oral or written plan. It reflects the overall strategy for managing an incident within a prescribed timeframe called an **Operational Period**. An IAP includes the identification of operational resources and assignments and may include attachments that provide additional direction.

At the simplest level, all Incident Action Plans must have four elements:

- What do we want to do and how are we going to do it?
- Who is responsible for doing it?
- How do we communicate with each other?
- What is the procedure if incident personnel are injured?

Written Incident Action Plan

All levels of a growing organization must have a clear understanding of the tactical actions for the next operational period. It is recommended that written plans be used whenever:

- Oral plans could result in the miscommunication of critical information.
- Two or more jurisdictions or disciplines are involved.
- Large changes of personnel occur by operational periods.
- Personnel are working across more than one operational period.
- There is a full activation of the ICS organization.
- The incident has important legal, political, or public ramifications.
- Complex communication issues arise.
- A written record of actions taken is needed for historical or administrative needs.

Written Incident Action Plans are required for all HazMat incidents. In addition, the Incident Commander may direct the organization to develop a written Incident Action Plan at any time.

Documenting the Plan

In ICS, an Incident Briefing Form is used to record initial actions and list assigned and available resources. For example, during initial actions, the outgoing Incident Commander would brief the incoming Incident Commander using the Initial Briefing Form, ICS-201, during the transition meeting. As incidents grow in complexity and/or size, ICS provides a format and a systematic process for the development of a written Incident Action Plan.

Four essential elements of a plan are:

- Incident Objectives (ICS 202)
- Organization Assignment List (ICS 203)
- Division Assignment List(s) (ICS 204)
- Supporting Documents

Developing Incident Objectives

The initial step in the incident action planning process is to develop the incident objectives. The Incident Commander must develop incident objectives within a short timeframe after assuming command. After the incident objectives are clear, strategies and tasks to achieve the objectives can begin to be developed. Some objectives will change over the course of the incident. Some objectives will be achieved and new objectives will be developed. Strategies will also change.

The Incident Objectives are documented and displayed in ICS Form 202.

Manageable Span of Control

Another basic ICS feature concerns the supervisory structure of the organization.

Span of control pertains to the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can manage effectively during emergency response incidents or special events. Maintaining an effective span of control is particularly important on incidents where safety and accountability are a top priority.

Span of control is the key to effective and efficient incident management. The type of incident, nature of the task, hazards and safety factors, and distances between personnel and resources all influence span of control considerations.

Maintaining adequate span of control throughout the ICS organization is very important.

Effective span of control on incidents may vary from three (3) to seven (7), and a **ratio of one (1) supervisor to five (5) reporting elements is recommended.**

If the number of reporting elements falls outside of these ranges, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There may be exceptions, usually in lower-risk assignments or where resources work in close proximity to each other.

Predesignated Incident Locations and Facilities

Incident activities may be accomplished from a variety of operational locations and support facilities. Facilities will be identified and established by the Incident Commander depending on the requirements and complexity of the incident or event.

It is important to know and understand the names and functions of the principal ICS facilities.

Incident Facilities

The **Incident Command Post**, or ICP, is the location from which the Incident Commander oversees all incident operations. There is generally only one ICP for each incident or event, but it may change locations during the event. Every incident or event must have some form of an ICP. It may be located in a vehicle, trailer, tent, or within a building. The ICP will be positioned outside of the present and potential hazard zone but close enough to the incident to maintain command. It will be designated by the name of the incident, e.g., City General ICP.

Staging Areas are temporary locations at an incident where personnel and equipment are kept while waiting for tactical assignments. A **Labor Pool** is a specific type of staging area for medical and non-medical personnel within the ICS application for healthcare organizations. The resources in the Staging Area/Labor Pool are **always** in available status. Staging Areas/Labor Pools should be located close enough to the incident for a timely response, but far enough away to be out of the immediate impact zone. There may be more than one Staging Area/Labor Pool at an incident. Staging Areas/Labor Pools can be co-located with the ICP, Helibases, or Helispots.

A **Helibase** is the location from which helicopter-centered air operations are conducted, mainly for field operations. Helibases are generally used on a more long-term basis and include such services as fueling and maintenance. The Helibase is usually designated by the name of the incident (e.g., Trail Creek Helibase).

Helispots are more relevant to hospitals and healthcare organizations. Helispots may be either fixed, pre-constructed locations (such as a hospital's helipad) or temporary locations adjacent to the healthcare facility, where helicopters can safely land and take off. Multiple helispots may be used.

For large incidents involving multiple organizations and government agencies, there may also be an **Emergency Operations Center (EOC)**. The EOC is a multi-agency coordination center that provides support and coordination to the on-scene responders.

Incident Facilities Map Symbols

In ICS, it is important to be able to identify the map symbols associated with the basic incident facilities. The map symbols used to represent each of the principle ICS facilities are:

Incident Command Post



On a map, the ICP location appears as a green and white square.

Staging Area



On a map, the Staging Area appears as a circle with an S in it.

Helibase and Helispot



H-3

Resource Management

ICS resources can be factored into two categories:

- **Tactical Resources:** Personnel and major items of equipment that are available or potentially available to the Operations function on assignment to incidents are called tactical resources.
- **Support Resources:** All other resources required to support the incident. Food, communications equipment, tents, supplies, and fleet vehicles are examples of support resources.

Tactical resources are always classified as one of the following:

- **Assigned:** Assigned resources are working on an assignment under the direction of a Supervisor.
- **Available:** Available resources are assembled, have been issued their equipment, and are ready for immediate assignment.
- **Out-Of-Service:** Out-of-service resources are not ready for available or assigned status.

Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date picture of resource utilization is a critical component of resource management.

Resource management includes processes for:

- Categorizing resources.
- Ordering resources.
- Dispatching resources.
- Tracking resources.
- Recovering resources.

It also includes processes for reimbursement for resources, as appropriate.

Integrated Communications

The use of a common communications plan is essential for ensuring that responders can communicate with one another during an incident. Communication equipment, procedures, and systems must operate across jurisdictions (interoperability).

Developing an integrated voice and data communications system, including equipment, systems, and protocols, must occur prior to an incident.

Effective ICS communications include three elements:

- **Modes:** The "hardware" systems that transfer information.
- **Planning:** Planning for the use of all available communications resources.
- **Networks:** The procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally.

Additional Information: Integrated Communications

Integrated Communications: Modes

It is not unusual for the communications needs on large incidents to outstrip available radio frequency resources.

Some incidents are conducted entirely without radio support. In such situations, other communications resources—cell phones, alpha pagers, e-mail, secure phone lines, etc.—may be used as the only communication methods for the incident.

Integrated Communications: Planning

Every incident needs a Communications Plan. The plan can be simple and stated orally, or it can be complex and written. An Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS Form 205) is a component of the written Incident Action Plan.

An awareness of available communications resources, combined with an understanding of incident requirements, will enable the Communications Unit Leader to develop an effective Communications Plan.

Integrated Communications: Networks

At a minimum, any communication network must:

- Link supervisory personnel within the Operations Section to each other and to the Incident Commander.
- Provide the ability to communicate among resources assigned to tactical elements such as Branches, Divisions/Groups, and ground-to-air and air-to-air assets.
- Provide a link to the rest of the organization for resource status changes, logistical support, etc.

Chain of Command and Unity of Command

In the Incident Command System:

- **Chain of command** means that there is an orderly line of authority within the ranks of the organization, with lower levels subordinate to, and connected to, higher levels.
- **Unity of command** means that every individual is accountable to only one designated supervisor to whom they report during an incident.

The principles clarify reporting relationships and eliminate the confusion caused by multiple, conflicting directives. Incident managers at all levels must be able to control the actions of all personnel under their supervision. These principles do not apply to the exchange of information. Although orders must flow through the chain of command, members of the organization may directly communicate with each other to ask for or share information.

The command function may be carried out in two ways:

- As a **Single Command** in which the Incident Commander has complete responsibility for incident management. For example, a Single Command would be used when a hospital is managing an influx of patients resulting from a nearby passenger train derailment.
- As a **Unified Command** in which hospitals and non-healthcare organizations with responsibility for the incident share incident management. For example, a Unified Command structure would be used when a fire department was assisting a hospital with the evacuation of patients and employees as a result of severe damage to the building. Under such circumstances, the Unified Command would include the hospital and the fire department.

Transfer of Command

The process of moving the responsibility for incident command from one Incident Commander to another is called **Transfer of Command**. Transfer of Command may take place when:

- A more qualified person assumes command.
- Changing command makes good sense, e.g., an Incident Management Team takes command of an incident from a local jurisdictional unit due to increased incident complexity.
- There is normal turnover of personnel on long or extended incidents, i.e., to accommodate work/rest requirements.
- The incident response is concluded and incident responsibility is transferred back to the home agency.

The transfer of command process always includes a transfer of command briefing, which may be oral, written, or a combination of both. The briefing covers such topics as the current situation, response needs, and available resources.

Accountability

Effective accountability during incident operations is essential at all jurisdictional levels and within individual functional areas. Accountability refers to one's personal choice and willingness to contribute to the outcome of an incident. Individuals must abide by their organization's policies and guidelines and any applicable local, tribal, State, or Federal rules and regulations. The following guidelines must be adhered to:

- **Check-In:** All responders, regardless of organization affiliation, must report in to receive an assignment in accordance with the procedures established by the Incident Commander.
- **Incident Action Plan:** Response operations must be directed and coordinated as outlined in the IAP.

- **Unity of Command:** Each individual involved in incident operations will be assigned to only one supervisor.
- **Span of Control:** Supervisors must be able to adequately supervise and control their subordinates, as well as communicate with and manage all resources under their supervision.
- **Resource Tracking:** Supervisors must record and report resource status changes as they occur.

Mobilization

At any incident or event, the situation must be assessed and response planned. Resources must be organized, assigned, and directed to accomplish the incident objectives. As they work, resources must be managed to adjust to changing conditions.

Managing resources safely and effectively is the most important consideration at an incident. Therefore, personnel and equipment should respond only when requested or when dispatched by an appropriate authority.

Information and Intelligence Management

The analysis and sharing of information and intelligence is an important component of ICS. The incident management organization must establish a process for gathering, sharing, and managing incident-related information and intelligence.

Intelligence includes not only national security or other types of classified information, but also other sensitive, operational information that may come from a variety of different sources, such as:

- Risk assessments.
- Medical intelligence (i.e., surveillance).
- Weather information.
- Geospatial data.
- Structural designs.
- Toxic contaminant levels.
- Utilities and public works data.

For example, hospitals and healthcare systems may receive intelligence from government agencies pertaining to a scheduled high-profile event, such as government officials visiting a hospital. Or hospitals may exchange public health intelligence and information with other organizations to track cases of an e-coli outbreak.

Common Responsibilities

You should now be familiar with the core system features of ICS. In this section, you'll learn about your responsibilities.

The next screens review the **common responsibilities associated with ICS assignments**. You will receive additional training and guidance on your specific duties.

General Guidelines – Lengthy Assignments

Many internal or local incidents last only a short time, and may not require travel. However, sometimes healthcare professionals and hospital personnel may need to respond to a more lengthy assignment away from home. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, many healthcare professionals deployed to the affected area to help treat victims.

Below are general guidelines for incidents requiring extended stays or travel:

- Determine appropriate travel authorizations.
- Familiarize yourself with travel and transportation arrangements.
- Determine your return mode of transportation (if possible).
- Determine payroll procedures (at incident or through home agency).
- If you are going on a foreign assignment, be sure to take your passport.
- Assemble a travel kit containing any special technical information (e.g., maps, manuals, contact lists, and reference materials).
- Prepare personal items needed for your estimated length of stay, including medications, cash, credit cards, etc.
- Ensure that family members know your destination and how to contact you.

General Guidelines – Roles and Authorities

It is important to understand your role and responsibilities during an emergency. Prior to an event, you should discuss with your supervisor how your organizational unit supports the overall response effort. If you are assigned a role in the organization's ICS structure, then:

- Review your emergency assignment. Know who you will report to and what your position will be.
- Establish a clear understanding of your decision-making authority.
- Determine communications procedures for contacting your headquarters or home office (if necessary).
- Identify purchasing authority and procedures.

Check-In at the Incident: Activities

Check-in officially logs you in at the incident. The check-in process and information helps to:

- Ensure personnel accountability.
- Track resources.
- Prepare personnel for assignments and reassignments.
- Locate personnel in case of an emergency.
- Establish personnel time records and payroll documentation.
- Plan for releasing personnel.
- Organize the demobilization process.

Check-In at the Incident: Locations

Check in only once. Check-in locations may be found at several incident facilities, including:

- Incident Command Post.
- Staging Area/Labor Pool.
- Helibase.
- Division/Group Supervisor (for direct assignment).

Note that these locations may not all be activated at every incident.

Healthcare providers reporting to support another healthcare institution should always bring copies of their licenses and competency folders.

Initial Incident Briefing

After check-in, locate your incident supervisor and obtain your initial briefing. The briefing information helps you plan your tasks and communicate with others.

Briefings received and given should include:

- Current situation assessment.
- Identification of your specific job responsibilities.
- Identification of coworkers.
- Location of work area.
- Location of Staging Area/Labor Pool.
- Identification of eating and sleeping arrangements, as appropriate.
- Procedural instructions for obtaining additional supplies, services, and personnel.
- Operational periods/work shifts.
- Required safety procedures and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as appropriate.

Incident Recordkeeping

All incidents require some form of recordkeeping. Requirements vary depending upon the organizations involved and the nature of the incident. Detailed information on using ICS forms will be covered in other training sessions.

Below are general guidelines for incident recordkeeping:

- Print or type all entries.
- Enter dates by month/day/year format.
- Use military 24-hour time.
- Enter date and time on all forms and records. Use local time.
- Fill in all blanks. Use N/A as appropriate.
- Section Chiefs and above assign recordkeeper (scribe).

If you are expected to be a supervisor:

- You must maintain a daily Unit Log (ICS-214), indicating the names of personnel assigned and a listing of the major activities that occurred during the operational periods to which you were assigned.
- You are expected to give briefings to your subordinates, adjacent forces, and replacement personnel.

Communications Discipline

Important considerations related to communications include:

- Observing strict radio/telephone procedures.
- Using plain English in all communications. Codes should not be used in radio transmissions. Limit the use of discipline-specific jargon, especially on interdisciplinary incidents.
- Limiting radio and telephone traffic to essential information only. Plan what you are going to say.
- Following procedures for secure communications as required.

Personal Conduct

Sexual harassment or discrimination of any type and the use of illegal drugs and/or alcohol are prohibited on all incidents. Report all such activities to your supervisor.

Often times, incident response can produce high stress situations. As part of your responsibilities, you may be required to interact with people who have been adversely affected by the incident. It is important to be patient and act in a professional manner at all times.

Incident Demobilization

Incident requirements for demobilization may vary considerably. General demobilization guidelines for all personnel are to:

- Complete all work assignments and required forms/reports.
- Brief replacements, subordinates, and supervisor.
- Evaluate the performance of subordinates.
- Follow incident and organization check-out procedures.
- Provide adequate followup contact information.
- Return any incident-issued equipment or other nonexpendable supplies.
- Complete postincident reports, critiques, evaluations, and medical followup.
- Complete all payment and/or payroll issues or obligations.

Lesson Summary

You have completed the **ICS Features & Principles** lesson. This lesson introduced:

- ICS management principles.
- ICS key features.
- Common ICS responsibilities.

The next lesson will provide an overview of the ICS organization and introduce the Incident Commander and Command Staff.