

# COMPONENT IV: COMMAND AND MANAGEMENT

The NIMS components discussed previously—Preparedness, Communications and Information Management, and Resource Management—provide a framework to facilitate clear response authority, resource acquisition, and effective management during incident response. The Incident Command System (ICS), Multiagency Coordination System (MACS), and Public Information are the fundamental elements of incident management. These elements provide standardization through consistent terminology and established organizational structures. Emergency management and incident response refer to the broad spectrum of activities and organizations providing effective and efficient operations, coordination, and support. Incident management, by distinction, includes directing specific incident operations; acquiring, coordinating, and delivering resources to incident sites; and sharing information about the incident with the public. Taken together, these elements of Command and Management are the most visible aspects of incident management, typically executed with a sense of urgency. This component describes the systems used to facilitate incident Command and Management operations.

## A. INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

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Most incidents are managed locally and are typically handled by local communications/dispatch centers and emergency management/response personnel<sup>19</sup> within a single jurisdiction. The majority of responses need go no further. In other instances, incidents that begin with a single response within a single jurisdiction rapidly expand to multidisciplinary, multijurisdictional levels requiring significant additional resources and operational support. ICS provides a flexible core mechanism for coordinated and collaborative incident management, whether for incidents where additional resources are required or are provided from different organizations within a single jurisdiction or outside the jurisdiction, or for complex incidents with national implications (such as an emerging infectious disease or a bioterrorism attack). When a single incident covers a large geographical area, multiple local emergency management and incident response agencies may be required. The responding “agencies” are defined as the governmental agencies, though in certain circumstances nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private-sector organizations may be included. Effective cross-jurisdictional coordination using processes and systems is absolutely critical in this situation.

ICS is a widely applicable management system designed to enable effective, efficient incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure. ICS is a fundamental form of management established in a standard format, with the purpose of enabling incident managers to identify the key concerns associated with the incident—often under urgent conditions—without sacrificing attention to any component of the command system.

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<sup>19</sup> Emergency management/response personnel include Federal, State, territorial, tribal, substate regional, and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, private-sector organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, and all other organizations and individuals who assume an emergency management role.

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ICS is used to organize on-scene operations for a broad spectrum of emergencies from small to complex incidents, both natural and manmade. The field response level is where emergency management/response personnel, under the command of an appropriate authority, carry out tactical decisions and activities in direct response to an incident or threat. Resources from the Federal, State, tribal, or local levels, when appropriately deployed, become part of the field ICS as prescribed by the local authority.

As a system, ICS is extremely useful; not only does it provide an organizational structure for incident management, but it also guides the process for planning, building, and adapting that structure. Using ICS for every incident or planned event helps hone and maintain skills needed for the large-scale incidents.

ICS is used by all levels of government—Federal, State, tribal, and local—as well as by many NGOs and the private sector. ICS is also applicable across disciplines. It is normally structured to facilitate activities in five major functional areas: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration. Intelligence/Investigations is an optional sixth functional area that is activated on a case-by-case basis.

Acts of biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear terrorism may present unique challenges for the traditional ICS structure. Incidents that are not site specific, are geographically dispersed, or evolve over longer periods of time will require extraordinary coordination among all participants, including Federal, State, tribal, and local governments, as well as NGOs and the private sector.

### 1. MANAGEMENT CHARACTERISTICS

ICS is based on 14 proven management characteristics, each of which contributes to the strength and efficiency of the overall system.

#### a. Common Terminology

ICS establishes common terminology that allows diverse incident management and support organizations to work together across a wide variety of incident management functions and hazard scenarios. This common terminology covers the following:

##### **(1) Organizational Functions**

Major functions and functional units with incident management responsibilities are named and defined. Terminology for the organizational elements is standard and consistent.

##### **(2) Resource Descriptions**

Major resources—including personnel, facilities, and major equipment and supply items—that support incident management activities are given common names and are “typed” with respect to their capabilities, to help avoid confusion and to enhance interoperability.<sup>20</sup>

##### **(3) Incident Facilities**

Common terminology is used to designate the facilities in the vicinity of the incident area that will be used during the course of the incident.

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<sup>20</sup> See page 41, Component III, Resource Management, Identifying and Typing Resources.

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### b. Modular Organization

The ICS organizational structure develops in a modular fashion based on the size and complexity of the incident, as well as the specifics of the hazard environment created by the incident. When needed, separate functional elements can be established, each of which may be further subdivided to enhance internal organizational management and external coordination. Responsibility for the establishment and expansion of the ICS modular organization ultimately rests with Incident Command, which bases the ICS organization on the requirements of the situation. As incident complexity increases, the organization expands from the top down as functional responsibilities are delegated. Concurrently with structural expansion, the number of management and supervisory positions expands to address the requirements of the incident adequately.

### c. Management by Objectives

Management by objectives is communicated throughout the entire ICS organization and includes:

- Establishing incident objectives.
- Developing strategies based on incident objectives.
- Developing and issuing assignments, plans, procedures, and protocols.
- Establishing specific, measurable tactics or tasks for various incident management functional activities, and directing efforts to accomplish them, in support of defined strategies.
- Documenting results to measure performance and facilitate corrective actions.

### d. Incident Action Planning

Centralized, coordinated incident action planning should guide all response activities. An Incident Action Plan (IAP) provides a concise, coherent means of capturing and communicating the overall incident priorities, objectives, strategies, and tactics in the context of both operational and support activities.

Every incident must have an action plan. However, not all incidents require written plans. The need for written plans and attachments is based on the requirements of the incident and the decision of the Incident Commander (IC) or Unified Command (UC). Most initial response operations are not captured with a formal IAP. However, if an incident is likely to extend beyond one operational period, become more complex, or involve multiple jurisdictions and/or agencies, preparing a written IAP will become increasingly important to maintain effective, efficient, and safe operations.

### e. Manageable Span of Control

Span of control is key to effective and efficient incident management. Supervisors must be able to adequately supervise and control their subordinates, as well as communicate with and manage all resources under their supervision. The type of incident, nature of the task, hazards and safety factors, and distances between personnel and resources all influence span-of-control considerations.

#### Examples of Manageable Span of Control

In ICS, the span of control of any individual with incident management supervisory responsibility should range from 3 to 7 subordinates, with 5 being optimal. During a large-scale law enforcement operation, 8 to 10 subordinates may be optimal.

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### **f. Incident Facilities and Locations**

Various types of operational support facilities are established in the vicinity of an incident, depending on its size and complexity, to accomplish a variety of purposes. The IC will direct the identification and location of facilities based on the requirements of the situation. Typically designated facilities include Incident Command Posts, Bases, Camps, Staging Areas, mass casualty triage areas, point-of-distribution sites, and others as required.

### **g. Comprehensive Resource Management**

Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date picture of resource utilization is a critical component of incident management and emergency response. Resources to be identified in this way include personnel, teams, equipment, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment or allocation. Resource management is described in detail in Component III.

### **h. Integrated Communications**

Incident communications are facilitated through the development and use of a common communications plan and interoperable communications processes and architectures. The ICS 205 form is available to assist in developing a common communications plan. This integrated approach links the operational and support units of the various agencies involved and is necessary to maintain communications connectivity and discipline and to enable common situational awareness and interaction. Preparedness planning should address the equipment, systems, and protocols necessary to achieve integrated voice and data communications.

### **i. Establishment and Transfer of Command**

The command function must be clearly established from the beginning of incident operations. The agency with primary jurisdictional authority over the incident designates the individual at the scene responsible for establishing command. When command is transferred, the process must include a briefing that captures all essential information for continuing safe and effective operations.

### **j. Chain of Command and Unity of Command**

Chain of command refers to the orderly line of authority within the ranks of the incident management organization. Unity of command means that all individuals have a designated supervisor to whom they report at the scene of the incident. These principles clarify reporting relationships and eliminate the confusion caused by multiple, conflicting directives. Incident managers at all levels must be able to direct the actions of all personnel under their supervision.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Concepts of "command" and "unity of command" have distinct legal meanings for military forces and operations. For military forces, command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense to the Commander of the combatant command to the commander of the forces. The "Unified Command" concept utilized by civil authorities is distinct from the military chain of command.

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### k. Unified Command

In incidents involving multiple jurisdictions, a single jurisdiction with multiagency involvement, or multiple jurisdictions with multiagency involvement, Unified Command allows agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional authorities and responsibilities to work together effectively without affecting individual agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.

### l. Accountability

Effective accountability of resources at all jurisdictional levels and within individual functional areas during incident operations is essential. To that end, Check-In/Check-Out, Incident Action Planning, Unity of Command, Personal Responsibility, Span of Control, and Resource Tracking are the principles of accountability, which must be adhered to.<sup>22</sup>

### m. Dispatch/Deployment

Resources should respond only when requested or when dispatched by an appropriate authority through established resource management systems. Resources not requested must refrain from spontaneous deployment to avoid overburdening the recipient and compounding accountability challenges.

### n. Information and Intelligence Management

The incident management organization must establish a process for gathering, analyzing, assessing, sharing, and managing incident-related information and intelligence.

## 2. INCIDENT COMMAND AND COMMAND STAFF

Incident Command is responsible for overall management of the incident. Overall management includes Command Staff assignments required to support the command function. The Command and General Staffs are typically located at the Incident Command Post (ICP).

### a. Incident Command

The command function may be conducted in one of two general ways:

#### **(1) *Single Incident Commander***

When an incident occurs within a single jurisdiction and there is no jurisdictional or functional agency overlap, a single IC should be designated with overall incident management responsibility by the appropriate jurisdictional authority. (In some cases where incident management crosses jurisdictional and/or functional agency boundaries, a single IC may be designated if agreed upon.) Jurisdictions should consider designating ICs for established Incident Management Teams (IMTs).

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<sup>22</sup> The principles of accountability are individually defined in the glossary.

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The designated IC will develop the incident objectives on which subsequent incident action planning will be based. The IC will approve the IAP and all requests pertaining to ordering and releasing incident resources.

### **(2) Unified Command**

UC is an important element in multijurisdictional or multiagency incident management. It provides guidelines to enable agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively. As a team effort, UC allows all agencies with jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility for the incident to jointly provide management direction through a common set of incident objectives and strategies and a single IAP. Each participating agency maintains its authority, responsibility, and accountability.

UC functions as a single integrated management organization, which involves:

- Co-located command at the ICP.
- One Operations Section Chief to direct tactical efforts.
- A coordinated process for resource ordering.
- Shared planning, logistical, and finance/administration functions, wherever possible.
- Coordinated approval of information releases.

All agencies in the UC structure contribute to the process of:

- Selecting objectives.
- Determining overall incident strategies.
- Ensuring that joint planning for tactical activities is accomplished in accordance with approved incident objectives.
- Ensuring the integration of tactical operations.
- Approving, committing, and making optimum use of all assigned resources.

The exact composition of the UC structure will depend on the location(s) of the incident (i.e., which geographical jurisdictions or organizations are involved) and the type of incident (i.e., which functional agencies of the involved jurisdiction(s) or organization(s) are required). The designation of a single IC for some multijurisdictional incidents, if planned for in advance, may be considered in order to promote greater unity of effort and efficiency.

#### **Advantages of Using Unified Command**

- **A single set of objectives is developed for the entire incident.**
- **A collective approach is used to develop strategies to achieve incident objectives.**
- **Information flow and coordination are improved between all jurisdictions and agencies involved in the incident.**
- **All agencies with responsibility for the incident have an understanding of joint priorities and restrictions.**
- **No agency's legal authorities will be compromised or neglected.**
- **The combined efforts of all agencies are optimized as they perform their respective assignments under a single IAP.**

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The designated agency officials participating in the UC represent different legal authorities and functional areas of responsibility and use a collaborative process to establish, identify, and rank incident priorities and to determine appropriate objectives consistent with the priorities. Agencies that are involved in the incident but lack jurisdictional responsibility or authorities are defined as supporting and/or assisting agencies. They are represented in the command structure and effect coordination on behalf of their parent agency through the Liaison Officer. Jurisdictional responsibilities of multiple incident management officials are consolidated into a single planning process that includes:

- Responsibilities for incident management.
- Incident objectives.
- Resource availability and capabilities.
- Limitations.
- Areas of agreement and disagreement between agency officials.

Incidents are managed under a single collaborative approach that includes:

- Common organizational structure.
- Single Incident Command Post.
- Unified planning process.
- Unified resource management.

Under UC, the IAP is assembled by the Planning Section and is approved by the UC. A single individual, the Operations Section Chief, directs the tactical implementation of the IAP. The Operations Section Chief will usually come from the organization with the greatest jurisdictional involvement. UC participants will agree on the designation of the Operations Section Chief.

UC works best when the participating members of the UC co-locate at the ICP and observe the following practices:

- Select an Operations Section Chief for each operational period.
- Keep each other informed of specific requirements.
- Establish consolidated incident objectives, priorities, and strategies.
- Establish a single system for ordering resources.
- Develop a consolidated written or oral IAP to be evaluated and updated at regular intervals.
- Establish procedures for joint decisionmaking and documentation.

### b. Command Staff

In an incident command organization, the Command Staff typically includes a Public Information Officer, a Safety Officer, and a Liaison Officer, who report directly to the IC/UC and may have assistants as necessary (see Figure 4). Additional positions may be required,

#### Comparison of Single IC and UC

##### Single Incident Commander:

The IC is solely responsible (within the confines of his or her authority) for establishing incident objectives and strategies. The IC is directly responsible for ensuring that all functional area activities are directed toward accomplishment of the strategy.

##### Unified Command:

The individuals designated by their jurisdictional or organizational authorities (or by departments within a single jurisdiction) must jointly determine objectives, strategies, plans, resource allocations, and priorities and work together to execute integrated incident operations and maximize the use of assigned resources.

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depending on the nature, scope, complexity, and location(s) of the incident(s), or according to specific requirements established by the IC/UC.

### ***(1) Public Information Officer***

The Public Information Officer is responsible for interfacing with the public and media and/or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements. The Public Information Officer gathers, verifies, coordinates, and disseminates accurate, accessible, and timely information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest for both internal and external audiences. The Public Information Officer may also perform a key public information-monitoring role. Whether the command structure is single or unified, only one Public Information Officer should be designated per incident. Assistants may be assigned from other involved agencies, departments, or organizations. The IC/UC must approve the release of all incident-related information. In large-scale incidents or where multiple command posts are established, the Public Information Officer should participate in or lead the Joint Information Center (JIC) in order to ensure consistency in the provision of information to the public.

### ***(2) Safety Officer***

The Safety Officer monitors incident operations and advises the IC/UC on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel. The ultimate responsibility for the safe conduct of incident management operations rests with the IC/UC and supervisors at all levels of incident management. The Safety Officer is, in turn, responsible to the IC/UC for the systems and procedures necessary to ensure ongoing assessment of hazardous environments, including the incident Safety Plan, coordination of multiagency safety efforts, and implementation of measures to promote emergency responder safety as well as the general safety of incident operations. The Safety Officer has immediate authority to stop and/or prevent unsafe acts during incident operations. It is important to note that the agencies, organizations, or jurisdictions that contribute to joint safety management efforts do not lose their individual identities or responsibility for their own programs, policies, and personnel. Rather, each contributes to the overall effort to protect all responder personnel involved in incident operations.

### ***(3) Liaison Officer***

The Liaison Officer is Incident Command's point of contact for representatives of other governmental agencies, NGOs, and the private sector (with no jurisdiction or legal authority) to provide input on their agency's policies, resource availability, and other incident-related matters. Under either a single-IC or a UC structure, representatives from assisting or cooperating agencies and organizations coordinate through the Liaison Officer. Agency and organizational representatives assigned to an incident must have the authority to speak for their parent agencies or organizations on all matters, following appropriate consultations with their agency leadership. Assistants and personnel from other agencies or organizations, public or private, involved in incident management activities may be assigned to the Liaison Officer to facilitate coordination.

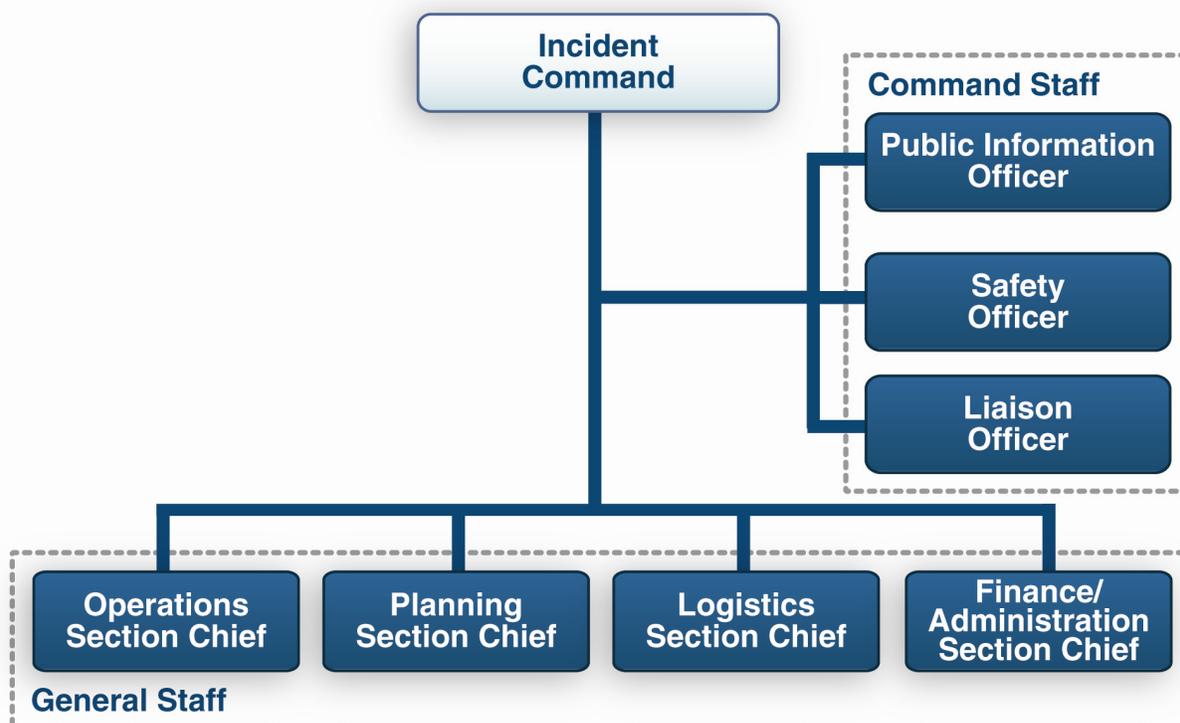
### ***(4) Additional Command Staff***

Additional Command Staff positions may also be necessary, depending on the nature and location(s) of the incident or specific requirements established by Incident Command. For example, a legal counsel might be assigned to the Planning Section as a technical specialist or directly to the Command Staff to advise Incident Command on legal matters, such as

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emergency proclamations, the legality of evacuation and quarantine orders, and legal rights and restrictions pertaining to media access. Similarly, a medical advisor might be designated to provide advice and recommendations to Incident Command about medical and mental health services, mass casualty, acute care, vector control, epidemiology, or mass prophylaxis considerations, particularly in response to a bioterrorism incident. In addition, a special needs advisor might be designated to provide expertise regarding communication, transportation, supervision, and essential services for diverse populations in the affected area.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 4. Incident Command System: Command Staff and General Staff**



### c. Incident Command Organization

The incident Command and Management organization is located at the ICP. Incident Command directs operations from the ICP, which is generally located at or in the immediate vicinity of the incident site. Typically, one ICP is established for each incident. As emergency management/response personnel deploy, they must, regardless of agency affiliation, report to and check in at the designated Staging Area, Base, Camp, or location and notify the IC/UC to receive an assignment in accordance with the procedures established by the IC/UC.

<sup>23</sup> See Tab 3, Section F, for more information on technical specialists.

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### 3. GENERAL STAFF

The General Staff is responsible for the functional aspects of the incident command structure. The General Staff typically consists of the Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Section Chiefs. The Section Chiefs may have one or more deputies assigned, with the assignment of deputies from other agencies encouraged in the case of multijurisdictional incidents. The functional Sections are discussed more fully below.

#### a. Operations Section

This Section is responsible for all tactical activities focused on reducing the immediate hazard, saving lives and property, establishing situational control, and restoring normal operations. Lifesaving and responder safety will always be the highest priorities and the first objectives in the IAP.

Figure 5 depicts the organizational template for an Operations Section. Expansions of this basic structure may vary according to numerous considerations and operational factors. In some cases, a strictly functional approach may be used. In other cases, the organizational structure will be determined by geographical/jurisdictional boundaries. In still others, a mix of functional and geographical considerations may be appropriate. ICS offers flexibility in determining the right structural approach for the specific circumstances of the incident at hand.

**Figure 5. Major Organizational Elements of Operations Section**



#### **(1) Operations Section Chief**

The Operations Section Chief is responsible to Incident Command for the direct management of all incident-related tactical activities. The Operations Section Chief will establish tactics for the assigned operational period. An Operations Section Chief should be

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designated for each operational period, and responsibilities include direct involvement in development of the IAP.

### **(2) Branches**

Branches may be functional, geographic, or both, depending on the circumstances of the incident. In general, Branches are established when the number of Divisions or Groups exceeds the recommended span of control. Branches are identified by the use of Roman numerals or by functional area.

### **(3) Divisions and Groups**

Divisions and/or Groups are established when the number of resources exceeds the manageable span of control of Incident Command and the Operations Section Chief. Divisions are established to divide an incident into physical or geographical areas of operation. Groups are established to divide the incident into functional areas of operation. For certain types of incidents, for example, Incident Command may assign evacuation or mass-care responsibilities to a functional Group in the Operations Section. Additional levels of supervision may also exist below the Division or Group level.

### **(4) Resources**

Resources may be organized and managed in three different ways, depending on the requirements of the incident.

- **Single Resources:** Individual personnel or equipment and any associated operators.
- **Task Forces:** Any combination of resources assembled in support of a specific mission or operational need. All resource elements within a Task Force must have common communications and a designated leader.
- **Strike Teams:** A set number of resources of the same kind and type that have an established minimum number of personnel. All resource elements within a Strike Team must have common communications and a designated leader.

The use of Task Forces and Strike Teams is encouraged, when appropriate, to optimize the use of resources, reduce the span of control over a large number of single resources, and reduce the complexity of incident management coordination and communications.

## **b. Planning Section**

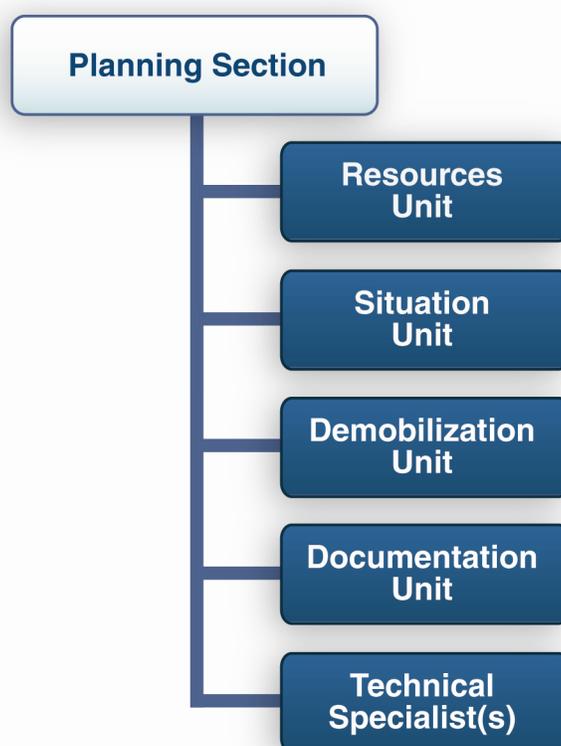
The Planning Section collects, evaluates, and disseminates incident situation information and intelligence to the IC/UC and incident management personnel. This Section then prepares status reports, displays situation information, maintains the status of resources assigned to the incident, and prepares and documents the IAP, based on Operations Section input and guidance from the IC/UC.

As shown in Figure 6, the Planning Section is comprised of four primary Units, as well as a number of technical specialists to assist in evaluating the situation, developing planning options, and forecasting requirements for additional resources. Within the Planning Section, the following primary Units fulfill functional requirements:

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- **Resources Unit:** Responsible for recording the status of resources committed to the incident. This Unit also evaluates resources committed currently to the incident, the effects additional responding resources will have on the incident, and anticipated resource needs.
- **Situation Unit:** Responsible for the collection, organization, and analysis of incident status information, and for analysis of the situation as it progresses.
- **Demobilization Unit:** Responsible for ensuring orderly, safe, and efficient demobilization of incident resources.
- **Documentation Unit:** Responsible for collecting, recording, and safeguarding all documents relevant to the incident.
- **Technical Specialist(s):** Personnel with special skills that can be used anywhere within the ICS organization.

**Figure 6. Planning Section Organization**



The Planning Section is normally responsible for gathering and disseminating information and intelligence critical to the incident, unless the IC/UC places this function elsewhere. The Planning Section is also responsible for assembling the IAP. The IAP includes the overall incident objectives and strategies established by Incident Command. In the case of a UC, the IAP must adequately address the mission and policy needs of each jurisdictional agency, as well as interaction between jurisdictions, functional agencies, and private organizations. The IAP also addresses tactics and support activities required for the planned operational period, generally 12 to 24 hours.

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The IAP should incorporate changes in strategies and tactics based on lessons learned during earlier operational periods. A written IAP is especially important when:

- Resources from multiple agencies and/or jurisdictions are involved;
- The incident will span several operational periods;
- Changes in shifts of personnel and/or equipment are required; or
- There is a need to document actions and decisions.

The IAP will typically contain a number of components, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Sample IAP Outline**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Normally Prepared By</b>
Incident Objectives (Form: ICS 202)	Incident Commander
Organization Assignment List or Chart (Form: ICS 203)	Resources Unit
Assignment List (Form: ICS 204)	Resources Unit
Incident Radio Communications Plan (Form: ICS 205)	Communications Unit
Medical Plan (Form: ICS 206)	Medical Unit
Incident Maps	Situation Unit
General Safety Message/Site Safety Plan	Safety Officer
<b>Other Potential Components (incident dependent)</b>	
Air Operations Summary	Air Operations
Traffic Plan	Ground Support Unit
Decontamination Plan	Technical Specialist
Waste Management or Disposal Plan	Technical Specialist
Demobilization Plan	Demobilization Unit
Site Security Plan	Law Enforcement, Technical Specialist, or Security Manager
Investigative Plan	Law Enforcement
Evidence Recovery Plan	Law Enforcement
Evacuation Plan	As required
Sheltering/Mass Care Plan	As required
Other (as required)	As required

### c. Logistics Section

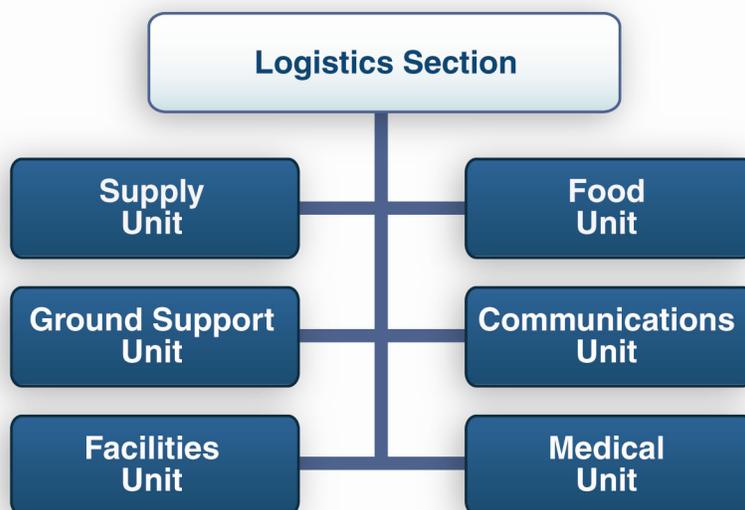
The Logistics Section (see Figure 7) is responsible for all service support requirements needed to facilitate effective and efficient incident management, including ordering

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resources from off-incident locations. This Section also provides facilities, security (of the incident command facilities and personnel), transportation, supplies, equipment maintenance and fuel, food services, communications and information technology support, and emergency responder medical services, including inoculations, as required. Within the Logistics Section, six primary Units fulfill functional requirements:

- **Supply Unit:** Orders, receives, stores, and processes all incident-related resources, personnel, and supplies.
- **Ground Support Unit:** Provides all ground transportation during an incident. In conjunction with providing transportation, the Unit is also responsible for maintaining and supplying vehicles, keeping usage records, and developing incident Traffic Plans.
- **Facilities Unit:** Sets up, maintains, and demobilizes all facilities used in support of incident operations. The Unit also provides facility maintenance and security services required to support incident operations.
- **Food Unit:** Determines food and water requirements, plans menus, orders food, provides cooking facilities, cooks, serves, maintains food service areas, and manages food security and safety concerns.
- **Communications Unit:** Major responsibilities include effective communications planning as well as acquiring, setting up, maintaining, and accounting for communications equipment.
- **Medical Unit:** Responsible for the effective and efficient provision of medical services to incident personnel.

**Figure 7. Logistics Section Organization**



### d. Finance/Administration Section

A Finance/Administration Section is established when the incident management activities require on-scene or incident-specific finance and other administrative support services. Some of the functions that fall within the scope of this Section are recording personnel time, maintaining vendor contracts, administering compensation and claims, and conducting an overall cost analysis for the incident. If a separate Section is established, close coordination

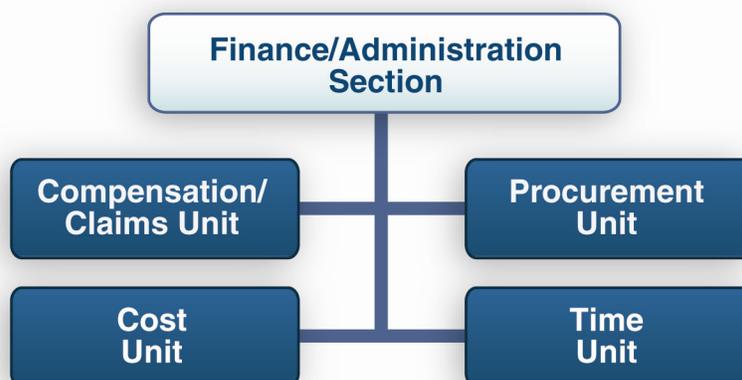
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with the Planning Section and Logistics Section is also essential so that operational records can be reconciled with financial documents.

The Finance/Administration Section is a critical part of ICS in large, complex incidents involving significant funding originating from multiple sources. In addition to monitoring multiple sources of funds, the Section Chief must track and report to Incident Command the accrued cost as the incident progresses. This allows the IC/UC to forecast the need for additional funds before operations are negatively affected. Figure 8 illustrates the basic organizational structure for a Finance/Administration Section. When such a Section is established, the depicted Units may be staffed as required. Within the Finance/Administration Section, four primary Units fulfill functional requirements:

- **Compensation/Claims Unit:** Responsible for financial concerns resulting from property damage, injuries, or fatalities at the incident.
- **Cost Unit:** Responsible for tracking costs, analyzing cost data, making estimates, and recommending cost savings measures.
- **Procurement Unit:** Responsible for financial matters concerning vendor contracts.
- **Time Unit:** Responsible for recording time for incident personnel and hired equipment.

**Figure 8. Finance/Administration Section Organization**



### e. Intelligence/Investigations Function

The collection, analysis, and sharing of incident-related intelligence are important elements of ICS. Normally, operational information and situational intelligence are management functions located in the Planning Section, with a focus on three incident intelligence areas: situation status, resource status, and anticipated incident status or escalation (e.g., weather forecasts and location of supplies). This information and intelligence is utilized for incident management decisionmaking. In addition, technical specialists in the Planning Section may be utilized to provide specific information that supports tactical decisions.

Incident management organizations must also establish a system for the collection, analysis, and sharing of information developed during intelligence/investigation efforts. Some incidents require intelligence and investigative information, which is defined in either of two ways. First, it is defined as information that leads to the detection, prevention, apprehension, and prosecution of criminal activities or the individuals involved, including

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terrorist incidents. Second, it is defined as information that leads to determination of the cause, projection of spread, assessment of impact, or selection of countermeasures for a given incident (regardless of the source) such as public health events, disease outbreaks, or fires with unknown origins.

ICS allows for organizational flexibility, so the Intelligence/Investigations Function can be embedded in several different places within the organizational structure.

- **Within the Planning Section:** This is the traditional placement for this function and is appropriate for incidents with little or no investigative information requirements nor a significant amount of specialized information.
- **As a Separate General Staff Section:** This option may be appropriate when there is a significant intelligence/investigations component to the incident for criminal or epidemiological purposes or when multiple investigative agencies are involved. A separate Intelligence/Investigations Section may be needed when highly specialized information requiring technical analysis is both critical and time sensitive to lifesaving operations (e.g., chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear incidents) or when there is a need for classified intelligence.
- **Within the Operations Section:** This option may be appropriate for incidents that require a high degree of linkage and coordination between the investigative information and the operational tactics that are being employed.
- **Within the Command Staff:** This option may be appropriate for incidents with little need for tactical information or classified intelligence and where supporting Agency Representatives are providing real-time information to the IC/UC.

The mission of the Intelligence/Investigations Function is to ensure that all investigative and intelligence operations, functions, and activities within the incident response are properly managed, coordinated, and directed in order to:

- Prevent/deter additional activity, incidents, or attacks.
- Collect, process, analyze, and appropriately disseminate intelligence information.
- Conduct a thorough and comprehensive investigation.
- Identify, process, collect, create a chain of custody for, safeguard, examine/analyze, and store all probative evidence.
- Determine source or cause and control spread and impact, in the investigation of emerging incidents (fire, disease outbreak, etc.).

The Intelligence/Investigations Function has responsibilities that cross all interests of departments involved during an incident; however, certain functions remain specific to law enforcement response and mission areas. Two examples of these are to expeditiously identify and apprehend all perpetrators, and to successfully prosecute all defendants.

Regardless of how the Intelligence/Investigations Function is organized, a close liaison will be maintained, and information will be transmitted to Incident Command, the Operations Section, and the Planning Section. However, classified information requiring a security clearance, sensitive information, or specific investigative tactics that would compromise the investigation will be shared only with those who have the appropriate security clearance or a need to know.

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The Intelligence/Investigations Function can be organized in a variety of ways. The following are examples of Groups that may be activated if needed:

- **Investigative Operations Group:** Responsible for overall investigative effort.
- **Intelligence Group:** Responsible for obtaining unclassified, classified, and open source intelligence.
- **Forensic Group:** Responsible for collection and integrity of forensic evidence, and in incidents of a criminal nature, the integrity of the crime scene.
- **Investigative Support Group:** Responsible for ensuring that required investigative personnel are made available expeditiously and that the necessary resources are properly distributed, maintained, safeguarded, stored, and returned, when appropriate.

Other Groups may be created to handle the following responsibilities: ensuring that missing or unidentified persons and human remains are investigated and identified expeditiously and that required notifications are made in a timely manner. These responsibilities include the collection of ante mortem information and exemplars in a family assistance center.

### 4. INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

An IMT is an incident command organization made up of the Command and General Staff members and other appropriate personnel in an ICS organization and can be deployed or activated, as needed. National, State, and some local IMTs have formal certification and qualification, notification, deployment, and operational procedures in place. In other cases, IMTs are formed at an incident or for specific events. The level of training and experience of the IMT members, coupled with the IMT's identified formal response requirements and responsibilities, are factors in determining an IMT's type, or level.

### 5. INCIDENT COMPLEX: MULTIPLE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT WITHIN A SINGLE ICS ORGANIZATION

#### a. Description

An Incident Complex refers to two or more individual incidents located in the same general area that are assigned to a single IC or a UC. When an Incident Complex is established over several individual incidents, the general guideline is that the previously identified incidents become Branches within the Operations Section of the IMT. This provides greater potential for future expansion if required. Each Branch thus has the increased flexibility to establish Divisions or Groups. Additionally, because Divisions and Groups may already have been established at each of the incidents, the same basic structure can be propagated. If any of the incidents within a complex has the potential to become a large-scale incident, it is best to establish it as a separate incident with its own ICS organization.

The following are examples where a complex may be appropriate:

- An earthquake, tornado, flood, or other situation where many separate incidents are occurring in close proximity.
- Several similar incidents are occurring in close proximity to one another.
- One incident underway with an IMT assigned, with other smaller incidents occurring in the same area.

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A complex may be managed under a single IC or a UC. The following are additional considerations for the use of a complex:

- The incidents are close enough to be managed by the same IMT.
- A combined management approach could achieve some staff or logistical support economies.
- The number of overall incidents within the jurisdiction requires consolidations wherever possible to conserve staff and reduce costs.
- A single Incident Command can adequately provide Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration activities to the complex.

## 6. AREA COMMAND

### a. Description

Area Command is an organization to oversee the management of multiple incidents handled individually by separate ICS organizations or to oversee the management of a very large or evolving incident engaging multiple IMTs. An Agency Administrator/Executive or other public official with jurisdictional responsibility for the incident usually makes the decision to establish an Area Command. An Area Command is activated only if necessary, depending on the complexity of the incident and incident management span-of-control considerations.

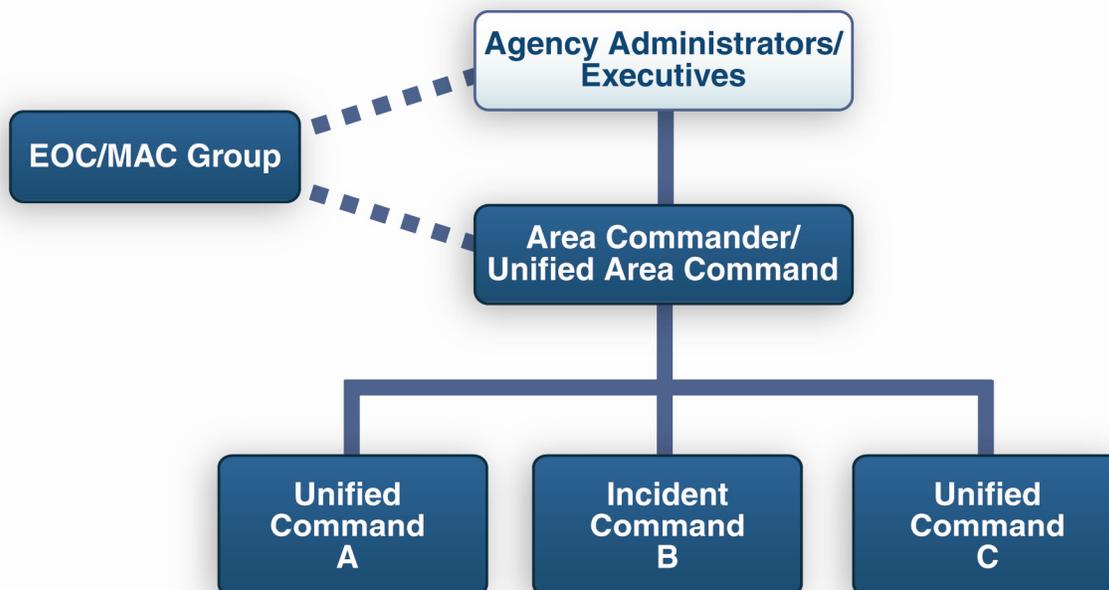
Area Commands are particularly relevant to incidents that are typically not site specific, are not immediately identifiable, are geographically dispersed, and evolve over longer periods of time (e.g., public health emergencies, earthquakes, tornadoes, civil disturbances, and any geographic area where several IMTs are being used and these incidents are all requesting similar resources). Incidents such as these, as well as acts of biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear terrorism, require a coordinated intergovernmental, NGO, and private-sector response, with large-scale coordination typically conducted at a higher jurisdictional level. Area Command is also used when a number of incidents of the same type in the same area are competing for the same resources, such as multiple hazardous material incidents, spills, or fires.

When incidents are of different types and/or do not have similar resource demands, they are usually handled as separate incidents or are coordinated through an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or Multiagency Coordination Group (MAC Group). If the incidents under the authority of the Area Command span multiple jurisdictions, a Unified Area Command should be established (see Figure 9). This allows each jurisdiction to have appropriate representation in the Area Command.

Area Command should not be confused with the functions performed by MACS: Area Command oversees management coordination of the incident(s), while a MACS element, such as a communications/dispatch center, EOC, or MAC Group, coordinates support.

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Figure 9. Chain of Command and Reporting Relationships



The dotted line connecting EOC/MAC Group with the Agency Administrators/Executives and Area Commander/Unified Area Command represents the coordination and communication link between an EOC/MAC Group and the Command structure.

### b. Responsibilities

For incidents under its authority, an Area Command has the following responsibilities:

- Develop broad objectives for the impacted area(s).
- Coordinate the development of individual incident objectives and strategies.
- (Re)allocate resources as the established priorities change.
- Ensure that incidents are properly managed.
- Ensure effective communications.
- Ensure that incident management objectives are met and do not conflict with each other or with agency policies.
- Identify critical resource needs and report them to the established EOC/MAC Groups.
- Ensure that short-term “emergency” recovery is coordinated to assist in the transition to full recovery operations.

### B. MULTIAGENCY COORDINATION SYSTEMS

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Multiagency coordination is a process that allows all levels of government and all disciplines to work together more efficiently and effectively. Multiagency coordination occurs across the different disciplines involved in incident management, across jurisdictional lines, or across levels of government.

**MACS is a system . . .  
not simply a facility.**

Multiagency coordination can and does occur on a regular basis whenever personnel from different agencies interact in such activities as preparedness, prevention, response, recovery, and mitigation. Often, cooperating agencies develop a MACS to better define how they will work together and to work together more efficiently; however, multiagency coordination can take place without established protocols. MACS may be put in motion regardless of the location, personnel titles, or organizational structure. MACS includes planning and coordinating resources and other support for planned, notice, or no-notice events. MACS defines business practices, standard operating procedures, processes, and protocols by which participating agencies will coordinate their interactions. Integral elements of MACS are dispatch procedures and protocols, the incident command structure, and the coordination and support activities taking place within an activated EOC. Fundamentally, MACS provide support, coordination, and assistance with policy-level decisions to the ICS structure managing an incident.

Written agreements allow agencies within the system to conduct activities using established rules and are often self-defined by the participating organizations. A fully implemented MACS is critical for seamless multiagency coordination activities and essential to the success and safety of the response whenever more than one jurisdictional agency responds. Moreover, the use of MACS is one of the fundamental components of Command and Management within NIMS, as it promotes scalability and flexibility necessary for a coordinated response.

#### 1. DEFINITION

The primary function of MACS is to coordinate activities above the field level and to prioritize the incident demands for critical or competing resources, thereby assisting the coordination of the operations in the field. MACS consists of a combination of elements: personnel, procedures, protocols, business practices, and communications integrated into a common system. For the purpose of coordinating resources and support between multiple jurisdictions, MACS can be implemented from a fixed facility or by other arrangements outlined within the system.

In some instances, MACS is informal and based on oral agreements between jurisdictions, but usually it is more formalized and supported by written agreements, operational procedures, and protocols. The formal process, where issues are addressed before an incident occurs, is the preferred and recommended approach, as it streamlines the coordination function. While ad hoc arrangements between jurisdictions may result in effective multiagency coordination on relatively minor incidents, coordination on larger, more complex incidents is most successful when it takes place within a planned and well-established system.

Figure 10 illustrates an overview of MACS as it transitions over the course of an incident. The graphic shows how an incident begins, with the on-scene single command; as it grows

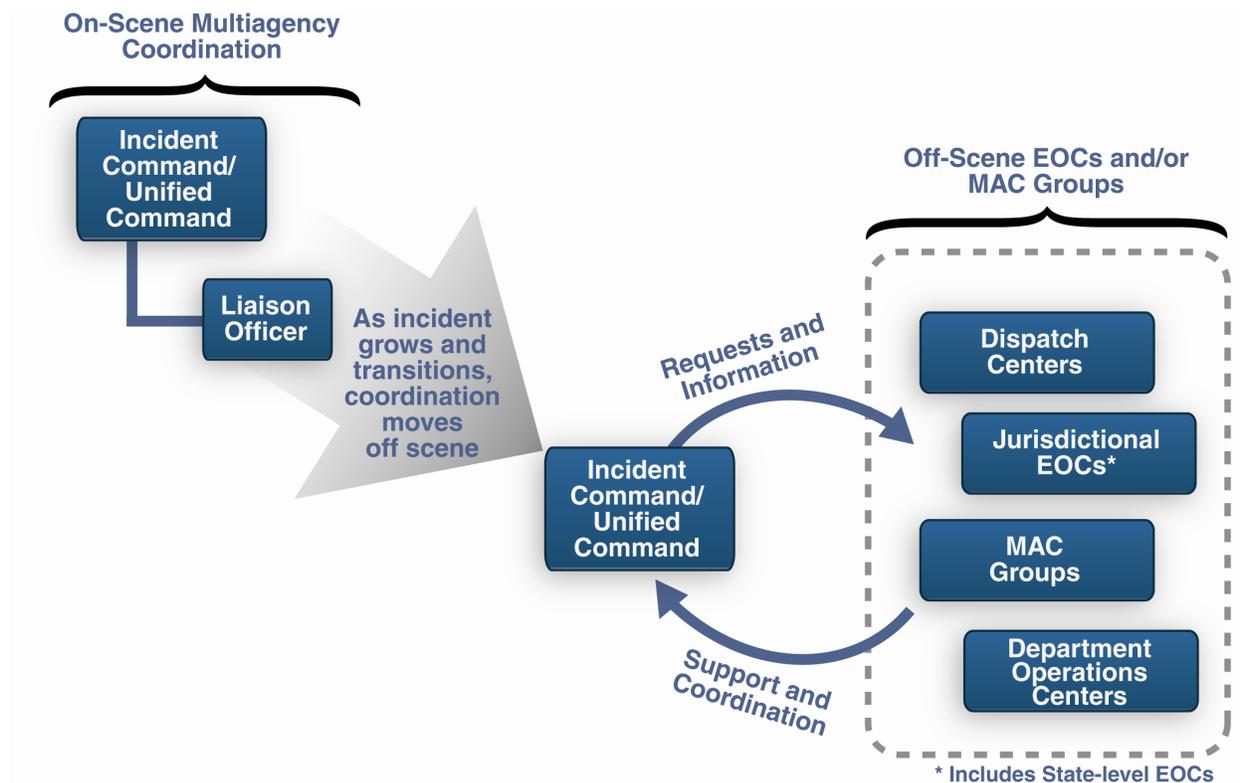
## COMPONENT IV: COMMAND AND MANAGEMENT

in size and complexity, potentially developing into a Unified Command, the incident may require off-scene coordination and support.

### 2. SYSTEM ELEMENTS

MACS includes a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, and procedures integrated into a common system with responsibility for coordination of resources and support to emergency operations.

**Figure 10. Multiagency Coordination System (MACS)**



#### a. Facilities

The need for location(s)—such as a communications/dispatch center, EOC, city hall, virtual location—to house system activities will depend on the anticipated functions of the system.

#### b. Equipment

To accomplish system activities, equipment (such as computers and phones) must be identified and procured.

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### c. Personnel

Typical personnel include Agency Administrators/Executives, or their appointed representatives, who are authorized to commit agency resources and funds in a coordinated response effort. Personnel can also be authorized representatives from supporting agencies, NGOs, and the private sector who assist in coordinating activities above the field level.

### d. Procedures

Procedures include processes, protocols, agreements, and business practices that prescribe the activities, relationships, and functionality of the MACS. Identifying the interactive communications activities and associated implementation plans are critical components of the system.

## 3. EXAMPLES OF SYSTEM ELEMENTS

The two most commonly used elements of the Multiagency Coordination System are EOCs and MAC Groups.

### a. Emergency Operations Center

EOCs may be organized by major discipline (e.g., fire, law enforcement, or emergency medical services); by emergency support function (e.g., transportation, communications, public works and engineering, or resource support); by jurisdiction (e.g., city, county, or region); or, more likely, by some combination thereof. ICPs need good communication links to EOCs to ensure effective and efficient incident management.

Often, agencies within a political jurisdiction will establish coordination, communications, control, logistics, etc., at the department level for conducting overall management of their assigned resources. Governmental departments (or agencies, bureaus, etc.) or private organizations may also have operations centers (referred to here as Department Operations Centers, or DOCs) that serve as the interface between the ongoing operations of that organization and the emergency operations it is supporting. The DOC may directly support the incident and receive information relative to its operations. In most cases, DOCs are

#### An EOC is activated:

- To support the on-scene response during an escalating incident by relieving the burden of external coordination and securing additional resources.

#### An EOC is:

- A physical location.
- Staffed with personnel trained for and authorized to represent their agency/discipline.
- Equipped with mechanisms for communicating with the incident site and obtaining resources and potential resources.
- Managed through protocols.
- Applicable at different levels of government.

#### An EOC consists of:

- Personnel and equipment appropriate to the level of incident.

#### An EOC is used:

- In varying ways within all levels of government and the private sector.
- To provide coordination, direction, and support during emergencies.

#### An EOC may:

- Facilitate MACS functions and may be needed to support Area Command, IC, or UC when resource needs exceed local capabilities.

#### An EOC does not:

- Command the on-scene level of the incident.

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physically represented in a combined agency EOC by authorized agent(s) for the department or agency.

EOCs may be staffed by personnel representing multiple jurisdictions and functional disciplines and a wide variety of resources. For example, a local EOC established in response to a bioterrorism incident would likely include a mix of law enforcement, emergency management, public health, and medical personnel (local, State, or Federal public health officials and possibly representatives of health care facilities, emergency medical services, etc.).

The physical size, staffing, and equipping of an EOC will depend on the size of the jurisdiction, resources available, and anticipated incident management workload. EOCs may be organized and staffed in a variety of ways. Regardless of its specific organizational structure, an EOC should include the following core functions: coordination; communications; resource allocation and tracking; and information collection, analysis, and dissemination.

Upon activation of a local EOC, communications and coordination must be established between Incident Command and the EOC. ICS field organizations must also establish communications with the activated local EOC, either directly or through their parent organizations. Additionally, EOCs at all levels of government and across functional agencies must be capable of communicating appropriately with other EOCs, including those maintained by private organizations. Communications between EOCs must be reliable and contain built-in redundancies. The efficient functioning of EOCs most frequently depends on the existence of mutual aid agreements and joint communications protocols among participating agencies.

### **b. MAC Group**

Typically, Agency Administrators/Executives, or their designees, who are authorized to represent or commit agency resources and funds are brought together to form MAC Groups. MAC Groups may also be known as multiagency committees, emergency management committees, or as otherwise defined by the system. Personnel assigned to the EOC who meet the criteria for participation in a MAC Group may be asked to fulfill that role.

A MAC Group does not have any direct incident involvement and will often be located some distance from the incident site(s). In many cases a MAC Group can function virtually to accomplish its assigned tasks.

A MAC Group may require a support organization for its own logistics and documentation needs; to manage incident-related decision support information such as tracking critical resources, situation status, and intelligence or investigative information; and to provide public information to the news media and public. The number and skills of its personnel will vary by incident complexity, activity levels, needs of the MAC Group, and other factors identified through agreements or by preparedness organizations. A MAC Group may be established at any level (e.g., national, State, or local) or within any discipline (e.g., emergency management, public health, critical infrastructure, or private sector).

## **4. PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF MACS**

The Multiagency Coordination System should be both flexible and scalable to be efficient and effective. MACS will generally perform common functions during an incident; however,

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not all of the system's functions will be performed during every incident, and functions may not occur in any particular order.

### **a. Situation Assessment**

This assessment includes the collection, processing, and display of all information needed. This may take the form of consolidating situation reports, obtaining supplemental information, and preparing maps and status boards.

### **b. Incident Priority Determination**

Establishing the priorities among ongoing incidents within the defined area of responsibility is another component of MACS. Typically, a process or procedure is established to coordinate with Area or Incident Commands to prioritize the incident demands for critical resources. Additional considerations for determining priorities include the following:

- Life-threatening situations.
- Threat to property.
- High damage potential.
- Incident complexity.
- Environmental impact.
- Economic impact.
- Other criteria established by the Multiagency Coordination System.

### **c. Critical Resource Acquisition and Allocation**

Designated critical resources will be acquired, if possible, from the involved agencies or jurisdictions. These agencies or jurisdictions may shift resources internally to match the incident needs as a result of incident priority decisions. Resources available from incidents in the process of demobilization may be shifted, for example, to higher priority incidents.

Resources may also be acquired from outside the affected area. Procedures for acquiring outside resources will vary, depending on such things as the agencies involved and written agreements.

### **d. Support for Relevant Incident Management Policies and Interagency Activities**

A primary function of MACS is to coordinate, support, and assist with policy-level decisions and interagency activities relevant to incident management activities, policies, priorities, and strategies.

### **e. Coordination With Other MACS Elements**

A critical part of MACS is outlining how each system element will communicate and coordinate with other system elements at the same level, the level above, and the level below. Those involved in multiagency coordination functions following an incident may be responsible for incorporating lessons learned into their procedures, protocols, business practices, and communications strategies. These improvements may need to be coordinated with other appropriate preparedness organizations.

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### f. Coordination With Elected and Appointed Officials

Another primary function outlined in MACS is a process or procedure to keep elected and appointed officials at all levels of government informed. Maintaining the awareness and support of these officials, particularly those from jurisdictions within the affected area, is extremely important, as scarce resources may need to move to an agency or jurisdiction with higher priorities.

### g. Coordination of Summary Information

By virtue of the situation assessment function, personnel implementing the multiagency coordination procedures may provide summary information on incidents within their area of responsibility as well as provide agency/jurisdictional contacts for media and other interested agencies.

## 5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A MAC GROUP AND AREA COMMAND

MAC Groups are often confused with Area Command (as defined earlier in Component IV). Table 6 highlights some of the primary differences between the two.

**Table 6. Differences Between a MAC Group and Area Command**

MAC Group	Area Command
Off-scene coordination and support organization with no direct incident authority or responsibility.	Management function of ICS with oversight responsibility and authority of IMTs assigned at multiple incidents. Area Command may be established as Unified Area Command.
Members are Agency Administrators/ Executives or designees from the agencies involved or heavily committed to the incident.	Members are the most highly skilled incident management personnel.
Organization generally consists of multiagency coordination personnel (including Agency Administrators/Executives), MAC Group coordinator, and an intelligence and information support staff.	Organization generally consists of an Area Commander, Assistant Area Commander—Planning, and Assistant Area Commander—Logistics.
Members are Agency Administrators/ Executives or designees.	Authority for specific incident(s) is delegated from the Agency Administrator/Executive.
Allocates and reallocates critical resources through the communications/dispatch system by setting incident priorities.	Assigns and reassigns critical resources allocated to it by MACS or the normal communications/dispatch system organization.
Makes coordinated decisions at the Agency Administrator/Executive level on issues that affect multiple agencies.	Ensures that incident objectives and strategies are complementary between IMTs.

## **C. PUBLIC INFORMATION**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Public Information consists of the processes, procedures, and systems to communicate timely, accurate, and accessible information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation to the public, responders, and additional stakeholders (both directly affected and indirectly affected). Public information must be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations; among Federal, State, tribal, and local governments; and with NGOs and the private sector. Well-developed public information, education strategies, and communications plans help to ensure that lifesaving measures, evacuation routes, threat and alert systems, and other public safety information are coordinated and communicated to numerous audiences in a timely, consistent manner.

### **2. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION AND COMPONENTS**

#### **a. Public Information Officer**

The Public Information Officer supports the incident command structure as a member of the Command staff. The Public Information Officer advises the IC/UC on all public information matters relating to the management of the incident. The Public Information Officer also handles inquiries from the media, the public, and elected officials; emergency public information and warnings; rumor monitoring and response; media relations; and other functions required to gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate accurate, accessible, and timely information related to the incident. Information on public health, safety, and protection is of particular importance. Public Information Officers are able to create coordinated and consistent messages by collaborating to:

- Identify key information that needs to be communicated to the public.
- Craft messages conveying key information that are clear and easily understood by all, including those with special needs.
- Prioritize messages to ensure timely delivery of information without overwhelming the audience.
- Verify accuracy of information through appropriate channels.
- Disseminate messages using the most effective means available.

#### **Roles of Public Information Officer**

**The Public Information Officer gathers, verifies, coordinates, and disseminates accurate, accessible, and timely information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest for both internal and external use.**

#### **b. Joint Information System**

The Joint Information System (JIS) provides the mechanism to organize, integrate, and coordinate information to ensure timely, accurate, accessible, and consistent messaging across multiple jurisdictions and/or disciplines with NGOs and the private sector. The JIS includes the plans, protocols, procedures, and structures used to provide public information. Federal, State, tribal, territorial, regional, or local Public Information Officers and

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established JICs are critical supporting elements of the JIS. Key elements include the following:

- Interagency coordination and integration.
- Gathering, verifying, coordinating, and disseminating consistent messages.
- Support for decisionmakers.
- Flexibility, modularity, and adaptability.

### c. Joint Information Center

The JIC is a central location that facilitates operation of the JIS, where personnel with public information responsibilities perform critical emergency information functions, crisis communications, and public affairs functions. JICs may be established at various levels of government or at incident sites, or can be components of Federal, State, tribal, territorial, regional, or local MACS (e.g., MAC Groups or EOCs). Depending on the requirements of the incident, an incident-specific JIC is typically established at a single, on-scene location in coordination with Federal, State, and local agencies, or at the national level if the situation warrants. Releases are cleared through the IC/UC, EOC/MAC Group, and/or Federal officials in the case of federally coordinated incidents to ensure consistent messages, avoid release of conflicting information, and prevent negative impact on operations. This formal process for releasing information ensures the protection of incident-sensitive information. Agencies may issue their own releases related to their policies, procedures, programs, and capabilities; however, these should be coordinated with the incident-specific JIC(s).

A single JIC location is preferable, but the system is flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate multiple physical or virtual JIC locations. For example, multiple JICs may be needed for a complex incident spanning a wide geographic area or multiple jurisdictions. In instances when multiple JICs are activated, information must be coordinated among all appropriate JICs; each JIC must have procedures and protocols to communicate and coordinate effectively with one another. Whenever there are multiple JICs, the final release authority must be the senior command, whether using Unified or Area Command structures. A national JIC may be used when an incident requires Federal coordination and is expected to be of long duration (e.g., weeks or months) or when the incident affects a large area of the country.

In light of the need for real-time communications, JICs can be organized in many ways, depending on the nature of the incident.

Table 7 identifies several types of JICs.

#### Possibility of a Virtual JIC

A JIC may involve real-time, constant links to other sites, thus creating a virtual JIC. All participants should be fully integrated and linked into the JIC so that it functions as a single-site operation.

Advantages include:

- Rapid establishment of the JIC functions.
- Access to expanded resources.
- Relationship building.

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**Table 7. Types of Joint Information Centers**

<b>Incident</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Optimal physical location for local and IC-assigned Public Information Officers to co-locate</li><li>• Easy media access is paramount to success</li></ul>
<b>Virtual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Established when physical co-location is not feasible</li><li>• Incorporates technology and communication protocols</li></ul>
<b>Satellite</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Smaller in scale than other JICs</li><li>• Established primarily to support the incident JIC</li><li>• Operates under the control of the primary JIC for that incident</li><li>• Is not independent of that direction</li></ul>
<b>Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supports wide-area multiple-incident ICS structures</li><li>• Could be established on a local or statewide basis</li><li>• Media access is paramount</li></ul>
<b>Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Established to support several incident JICs in multiple States</li><li>• Offers supplemental staff and resources outside of the disaster area</li></ul>
<b>National</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Established for long-duration incidents</li><li>• Established to support Federal response activities</li><li>• Staffed by numerous Federal departments and/or agencies</li><li>• Media access is paramount</li></ul>

### d. Organizational Independence

Organizations participating in incident management retain their independence. Incident Command and MACS are responsible for establishing and overseeing JICs, including processes for coordinating and clearing public communications. In the case of Unified Command, the departments, agencies, organizations, or jurisdictions that contribute to joint public information management do not lose their individual identities or responsibility for their own programs or policies. Rather, each agency/organization contributes to the overall unified message.

### e. Getting Information to the Public and Additional Stakeholders

The process of getting information to the public and additional stakeholders during an incident is an ongoing cycle that involves four steps.

#### (1) Gathering Information

Gathering information is the first step in the process of getting information to the public and additional stakeholders. Information is collected from:

- **On-Scene Command:** A source of ongoing, official information on the response effort.
- **On-Scene Public Information Officers:** Report to the JIC what they are observing and hearing at the incident from the news media, elected officials and their staff, and the public.

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- **Media Monitoring:** Used to assess the accuracy and content of news media reports. It also helps to identify trends and breaking issues.
- **News Media:** A valuable source of developing information and current issues.
- **Public and Elected/Appointed Officials:** Inquiries from elected/appointed officials, community leaders, and the general public point to the specific concerns of those in the affected areas.

### (2) Verifying Information

The next step in the process is to verify the accuracy of the information that has been collected, by consulting the following sources:

- **Other Public Information Officers in the JIC:** Comparing notes—especially with the lead Public Information Officer and Public Information Officers who are liaisons to the various assistance programs or response/recovery partners—is one way to verify information accuracy.
- **EOC Sources:** Including program leads, who should be asked to confirm information.
- **On-Scene Public Information Officers:** A valuable source for checking the accuracy of information reported to the EOC with reports from the news media, the offices of elected officials, and people on the scene.

### (3) Coordinating Information

The next step in the process is to coordinate with other Public Information Officers who are part of the JIS. These Public Information Officers include both those represented in the JIC and those working from another location who are part of the JIS. Coordinating information involves:

- **Establishing Key Message(s):** After gathering information from all sources, unified messages are crafted that address all informational needs and are prioritized according to the overall Federal, State, tribal, and local response/recovery strategy. The mission includes getting accurate, consistent information to the right people at the right time so they can make informed decisions.
- **Obtaining Approval/Clearance From Those With Authority:** Ensuring that the information is consistent, accurate, and accessible. The approval process should be streamlined, however, to ensure that the information is released in a timely manner.

### (4) Disseminating Information

The next step in the process is to disseminate information to the public and additional stakeholders. This step involves:

- **Using Multiple Methods:** In an emergency, there may not be many options. Phone calls and interviews might be the primary means of getting information to the news media. Personal visits or town meetings may be the most effective avenue for the public, elected/appointed officials, or other stakeholders. These outreach efforts can be supported by providing talking points and fliers to on-scene Public Information Officers.
- **Monitoring the Media:** Media monitoring is invaluable for ensuring that the message is understood by the news media and reported accurately and completely. Important inaccuracies should be addressed before they are reported incorrectly a second time.

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### **3. PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING**

Information communications strategies and planning are essential to all aspects of public information. Plans should include processes, protocols, and procedures that require the development of draft news releases; media lists; and contact information for elected/appointed officials, community leaders, private-sector organizations, and public service organizations to facilitate the dissemination of accurate, consistent, accessible, and timely public information. Public information communications should be a critical component of training and exercises.

### **D. RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COMMAND AND MANAGEMENT ELEMENTS**

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ICS, MACS, and Public Information have been described herein as separate elements of Command and Management within NIMS. However, NIMS relies on the relationships among these elements along with the elements themselves.

Some relationships are specifically defined. For example, an Area Command or Incident Command coordinates with Public Information on incident-specific public information through an incident Public Information Officer within the JIS. The relationship between Area Command or Incident Command and MACS is primarily defined by a communications link between Command and/or field-level personnel with resource management responsibilities and a particular staff position within multiagency coordination.

These relationships—along with other relationships among Command and Management elements that are not as clearly defined in advance—must be clearly defined and documented as each element evolves during an incident.