

Lesson 7: Planning

Lesson Overview

This lesson provides an overview of the planning aspects of incident operations.

Upon completion of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify the concepts of planning.
- Differentiate between deliberate and crisis action planning.
- Identify the phases of the FEMA incident action planning process.
- Identify the role of the incident action plan (IAP).
- Describe how an Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) supports incident response.
- Describe the importance of incident objectives.
- Discuss the specifics of planning utilizing the Planning “P” process.

Concepts of Planning

The goal of all planning efforts is maintaining situational awareness and a common operating picture. Both individuals and organizations at all levels of response have a responsibility to contribute to and use reliable information as a part of the incident response efforts.

The specific concepts of planning are based on the principles and tenets of National Incident Management System (NIMS), National Response Framework (NRF), and the Incident Management and Support Keystone (IMSK)—and addressed at a tactical level in the FEMA IAP Guide.

As you previously learned in this course, FEMA doctrine is designed to guide and standardize FEMA activities. The IMSK guides the development of procedural documents for FEMA incident action planning in FEMA-coordinated incidents.

Planning is a key concept of the IMSK, specifically concepts 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20.

Deliberate vs. Crisis Action Planning

FEMA recognizes two primary categories of operational planning:

- Deliberate planning
- Crisis action planning

Functional Plans

Functional plans are important crisis action planning products. Functional plans address particular operational or functional issues, such as interim housing, power restoration, demobilization, and continuity of operations. These plans are not confined to the current operational period, but may address a single operational period or multiple operational periods.

A functional plan typically includes six sections:

- Situation
- Mission
- Execution
- Administration
- Resources and funding
- Oversight, coordinating instructions, and communications

Incident Action Planning

Incident action planning is a step-by-step progressive procedure to develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP) at the incident level. This process requires collaboration and participation among all incident management leaders and their staffs from across the whole community.

The IAP contains general objectives reflecting the strategy for managing an incident, which may include the identification of operational resources and assignments, attachments that provide direction, and important information for management of the incident for the operational period.

The incident action planning process is often depicted as the “Planning P” which is depicted here. Note at the center of the process is ongoing situational awareness.

Incident Action Planning Process

The incident action planning process is built on the following phases:

Phase 1: Understand the Situation

Effective actions during Phase 1 may mean the difference between a successfully managed incident and one in which effective incident management is achieved slowly or not at all. Phase 1 focuses on initial actions that must take place prior to the first operational period.

While many important tasks must be accomplished during this initial period, efforts focus on gaining an understanding of the situation and establishing initial incident priorities. Gaining an understanding of the situation includes gathering, recording, analyzing, and displaying information regarding the magnitude, complexity, and potential impact of the incident. This is essential to develop and implement an effective IAP.

This is also when the initial IMAT meeting is conducted to ensure that incident management personnel understand Unified Coordination Group (UCG) expectations for the incident and initial strategies, and plans for integrating other UCG members into the IMAT.

Establishing initial incident priorities is generally done by high level authorities such as the Governor of the affected State and the FEMA Regional Administrator (RA).

Phase 2: Establish Incident Objectives

During Phase 2, the UCG establishes incident objectives and provides the guidance necessary to achieve these objectives.

Incident objectives drive the incident organization as it conducts response, recovery, and mitigation activities. The UCG establishes these objectives based on incident priorities, informed by situational awareness, leader's intent, and delegations of authority.

Phase 3: Develop the Plan

After the Command and General Staff (C&GS) Meeting, staff in the Operations Section and other supporting C&GS elements begin operational planning for the next operational period. This process includes developing strategies to accomplish incident objectives and tactics for the employing and directing of resources. During this process staff also identify additional resources and capabilities that are required to accomplish objectives. Based on the strategies and tactics, Operations and other sections develop work assignments and define logistical requirements which lead to preparing, reviewing, and approving the Operational Planning Worksheets (FEMA-ICS 215).

Phase 4: Prepare and Disseminate the Plan

Phase 4 begins when the Planning Section receives the approved Operational Planning Worksheets (FEMA-ICS 215) from the Operations Section at the conclusion of the Operations Tactics Meeting. It ends with the Planning Meeting. The Planning Section (Planning Support Unit Leader) is responsible for completing the appropriate IAP forms and assembling the IAP. Other sections contribute key information and supporting documents.

Phase 5: Execute, Evaluate, and Revise the Plan

Once the IAP has been distributed and the Operations Briefing concluded, the plan is executed. As field personnel perform their assignments as outlined in the plan, supervisors assess the progress and the effectiveness of the work. This assessment often requires field visits to observe progress. Individuals, crews, and task forces inform their supervisors of the status of assignments. The Operations Section personnel, in turn, keep the Planning Situation Unit apprised.

Incident Action Plan (IAP)

The IAP is a written plan that sets forth the incident objectives and reflects the tactics necessary to manage an incident during an operational period. It addresses many critical areas across the whole community. The IAP provides essential information regarding incident organization, work assignments, resources, and safety—all of which are driven by the incident objectives.

Incident objectives drive response and recovery activities and answer the question of what must be accomplished. Good incident objectives:

- Are concise and stated in the form of a command
- Begin with an action verb (but not “continue” or “maintain”)
- Provide actionable guidance for the Operations Section
- Address incident operations not administrative and internal support activities

IAPs: At All Echelons of an Incident

Because Incident Command System (ICS) is the basis for managing FEMA incident-level activities, all incidents to which FEMA responds require the use of the ICS incident action planning process. All

members of the UCG and the command and general staff on FEMA incidents play specific and essential parts in the process. This includes not just FEMA staff, but also State and Federal interagency partners who are active in incident management.

Those involved in FEMA response and recovery must recognize that it will, in all probability, not be the only incident action planning process being executed. As illustrated below, FEMA and the State jointly develop one IAP at the incident level but FEMA's other partners—local and municipal organizations—will develop their own IAPs to guide the actions of their first responders. For a catastrophic incident there could be hundreds of concurrent incident action planning processes taking place. The joint IAP that the State and Federal incident management personnel develop must support all local IAPs and synchronize all of those at the State and Federal level.

Incident Strategic Plan (ISP)

Another product of crisis action planning is the Incident Strategic Plan (ISP)—a written document that provides overall direction for incident management and specifies milestones to be accomplished over time. It outlines the goals, operational priorities, and desired end-state that enable the UCG to determine where they are in the life cycle of the incident and when goals have been achieved.

Longer-term goals form the foundation of the ISP, laying out where the UCG wants response and recovery operations to be at selected times along a complete incident timeline. The UCG develops and approves these goals that are based on input from the command and general staff. The command and general staff then develop the milestones and estimated workload and staffing requirements.

Advanced Operational Plan (AOP)

An Advanced Operational Plan (AOP), another crisis action planning product, estimates requirements and anticipates activities over multiple operational periods (typically three to seven days beyond the current operational period). An AOP also identifies and quantifies anticipated short-term critical resource requirements for operations (such as initial response resources, specialized teams, and aviation assets).

The AOP is based on and supports incident objectives and priorities, and complements incident action planning. It includes short-term milestones that facilitate timely ordering to ensure that resources are available when needed. Additionally, the AOP provides a mechanism to synchronize other planning efforts beyond the current operational period, captures procedures derived from deliberate plans, and identifies future resource requirements that may take longer to provide—or that will not be needed until later in the incident.

Types of Support Plans: National and Regional

This lesson has described deliberate planning and the many forms of crisis action planning that occur at the incident level. Parallel to those incident level planning activities, the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) and Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) engage in incident-specific planning in the form of the National Support Plan (NSP) and the Regional Support Plan (RSP).

NSP

What is the NSP?

The NSP helps to integrate incident support efforts at the national-level including response, recovery, and mitigation activities. The NSP provides a snapshot of the NRCS objectives and activities for the day. The NSP is developed each day to aid in:

- Jointly developing a single NRCS understanding of incident objectives, requirements, and constraints as well as leadership priorities and other national-level considerations.
- Integrating all stakeholders' capabilities and expertise to address incident objectives, requirements, constraints, leadership priorities, and other national-level considerations.
- Proposing NRCS objectives (and tasks, if appropriate) for the next day.
- Tracking and updating the status of the objectives and tasks from the previous NSP.
- Identifying and providing information on other pertinent activities by NRCS elements.

For leadership, it provides a to-do list of what must get accomplished that day. It also helps to ensure national-level efforts address incident objectives and the priorities of leadership at all levels. The NSP's iterative process provides the NRCS with an operational tempo.

What are the characteristics of the NSP?

The NSP:

- Is primarily intended to inform the individuals assigned to the NRCS.
- Is a tool that shows the who, what, when and where of NRCS activities.
- Is not a situation report.
- Describes specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound objectives and leadership priorities for the NRCS.
- May include specific supporting tasks—if included, tasks map back to NSP objectives and priorities.
- Describes significant constraints, and functional plans that address constraints and support NRCS objectives and priorities.

RSP

What is the RSP?

The RSP describes the mobilization of Federal resources to support the incident from the regional level, as needed.

It provides a concise and coherent means of capturing and communicating the overall incident priorities, objectives, and tasks that will occur during a specific period of time in the context of response support activities from the RRCS.

What are the characteristics of the RSP?

The RSP:

- Is a forward-looking document intended to provide decision makers and RRCS with a snapshot of the coming operational period.
- Includes a summary of the objectives for the RRCS and incidents being supported.
- Lists non-routine or “by exception” tasks the RRCS must accomplish.
- Includes a daily schedule.

Who is the intended audience for the RSP?

The intended audience for the RSP includes:

- Individuals working in the NRCC, RRCC, State EOCs, and the Regional Watch Center.
- Unified coordination staff.
- Other planning partners.

Lesson Summary

Let’s summarize what you have learned in this lesson:

- The concepts of planning are based on the principles and tenets of the NIMS, NRF, and FEMA’s IMSK and IAP Manual.
- Deliberate planning is accomplished under non-emergency conditions, whereas crisis action planning is associated with an actual or potential accident.
- IAPs, ISPs, NSPs, RSPs, and functional plans are all types of incident planning.
- The IAP is a written plan that sets forth the incident objectives and reflects the tactics necessary to manage an incident during an operational period.
- There are five phases in the planning process.
- The initial IMAT meeting is conducted during the first phase in order to set expectations and plans for the incident.

Now that you have learned about the types of planning and the planning process, you will learn about the resource requirements process and management in the next lesson.