

**Basics of the  
Incident Command System  
(ICS)**

Many different organizations with different command structures and missions participate in the response to a disaster.

The ICS was created in 1970, in response to a series of wildfires in the United States, to allow different kinds of agencies (fire, medical, police), and/or multiple jurisdictions of similar agencies (firefighters from different areas) to work together effectively in response to a disaster.

ICS provides a common organizational structure and language to simplify communication among disaster responders.

It also establishes clear lines of authority and command.

The goal of the Incident Command System is to utilize disaster resources in the most efficient manner at the disaster scene, thus reducing death and disability.



*ICS allows different agencies to work together smoothly in response to a disaster*

# **KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE ICS STRUCTURE**

# Key Principle #1

- FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS, NOT TITLES  
determine the organizational hierarchy of the ICS structure.

## Key Principle #2

- The Incident Command System's organizational structure is MODULAR, and built around FIVE MAJOR MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES.

# Major Management Activities:

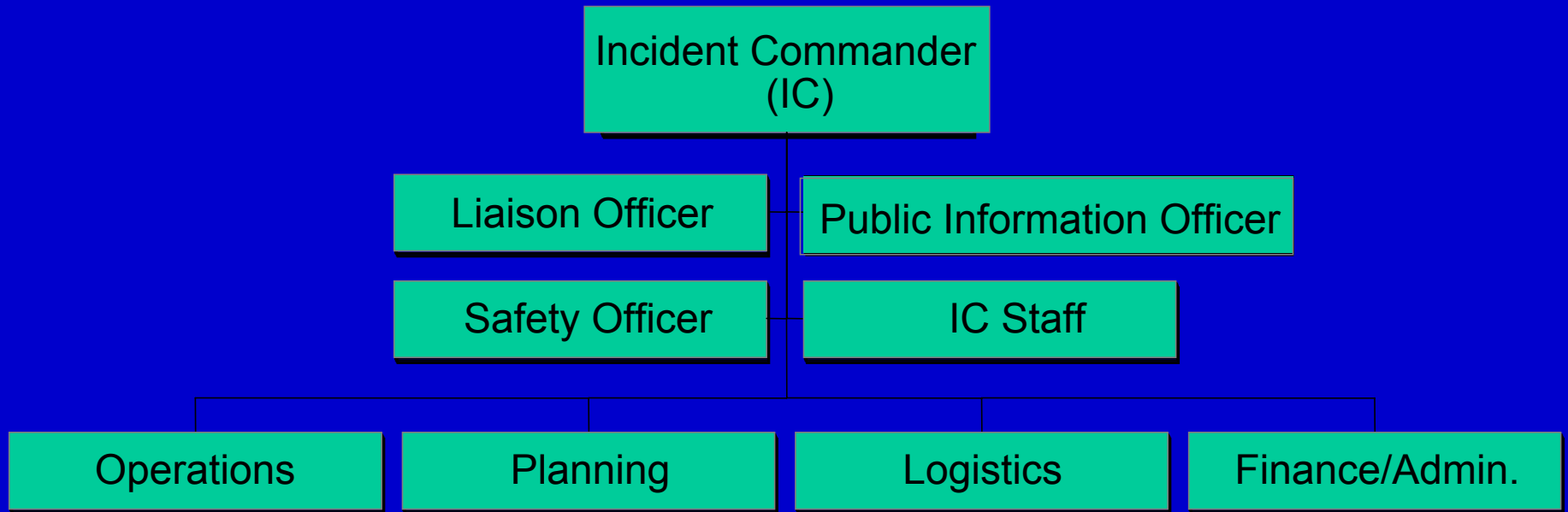
- Incident Command
- Operations
- Planning
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration

## Key Principle #3

- Structure of the ICS is the SAME regardless of the nature of the disaster.
- The DIFFERENCE is in the particular expertise of key personnel.

Not all management activities are used for every disaster.

# ICS Structure And Hierarchy



## Key Principle #4

- Identify Incident Commander and key leaders BEFORE an incident occurs.

- ICS MUST be implemented EARLY, before an incident gets out of control.

# Incident Commander (IC)

- Sets objectives and priorities
- Maintains overall responsibility for the disaster response

PHOTO

# Liaison Officer

- Coordinates efforts with other agencies and services

# Public Information Officer

- Deals with the press and the public

# Safety Officer

- Responsible for worker safety
- Additional resources added as needed
- Specialized skills match specific disasters

# Safety Officer

- Biological Incident → Infection Control Expert
- Chemical Incident → Hazmat Expert
- Radiation Incident → Expert in radiation detection and radiation exposure limits

# Operations Section

- Conducts operations to carry out the organizational plan
- Directs resources
- Oversees decontamination and waste control

# Planning Section

- Develops action plans
- Collects/evaluates information to monitor progress
- Maintains resource status

# Logistics Section

- Provides resources and support to meet incident needs

# Finance/Administration Section

- Monitors costs of the operation
- Provides accounting figures
- Legal Affairs

Photo

# Span of Control

- Each person within the command structure should supervise between three and seven persons.
- No one, including the Incident Commander (IC) should directly supervise more than 7 people.

# Emergency Operations Center

- OFF-SITE management for the incident
- Coordination point for the procurement of resources
- Site of interagency coordination of assets and resources
- Central Collection point for reports, data, etc.
- Ongoing Planning for the incident

The Incident Command System allowed integration of local, regional, and government assets at the disaster site of the World Trade Center Bombing



*ICS enabled public safety and medical staff to work together at Ground Zero, World Trade Center, after the September 11 bombing*

The ICS is a modular/adaptable system for all incidents and facilities regardless of size.

Good intentions alone do not constitute an effective disaster response.

The Incident Command System is designed to solve problems rapidly and utilize all disaster assets effectively to meet the challenges of today's complex disasters.