Incident Command System:
Overview

The coordination of tasks, agencies and personnel is necessary to ensure an effective and efficient emergency response. This is accomplished through the use of the Incident Command System (ICS). This handout will review basic ICS terminology.

Incident Command System (ICS)

ICS is the standardized on-scene incident management system used to coordinate emergency responses, including animal health emergencies. The structure is flexible and adaptable, allowing for the cooperation of multiple agencies and jurisdictions.

ICS Structure

ICS is organized in a modular, top-down fashion that contains five functional arms.

Incident Commander – Overall responsibility for managing the incident, sets incident objectives, determines strategies and establishes priorities

Command Staff – Assists the Incident Commander

➤ **Safety Officer** – Oversees working conditions and personnel safety

➤ **Liaison Officer** – Primary contact for other agencies involved in response

➤ **Public Information Officer** – Supplies information to stakeholders, including media

General Staff – Carries out specific functions; led by a Section Chief

➤ **Operations Section**– Performs operations/tasks to meet response goals

➤ **Planning Section**– Collects, evaluates, and distributes information; documents incident

➤ **Logistics Section**– Provides resources, including personnel, materials, facilities, and services

➤ **Finance and Administration Section**– Monitors and tracks incident costs
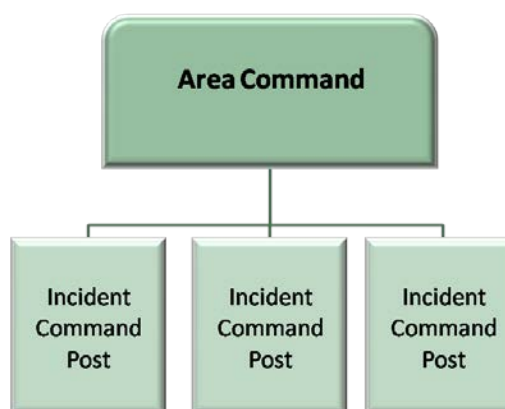
Incident Action Plan

➤ Oral or written plan of incident goals to provide direction, task assignments, communication methods, and injured personnel procedures.

ICS Position Titles

Organizational Level	Title
Incident Command	Incident Commander
Command Staff	Officer
General Staff/Sections	Chief
Branch	Director
Division/Group	Supervisor
Unit	Leader
Strike Team/Task Force	Leader

Area Command

Adaptation of basic ICS structure used when large complex responses or multiple Incident Command Posts are needed.

Unified Command

Adaptation of basic ICS structure to incorporate representatives from multiple agencies when a response spans multiple jurisdictions. This serves to facilitate information flow and eliminate duplication.
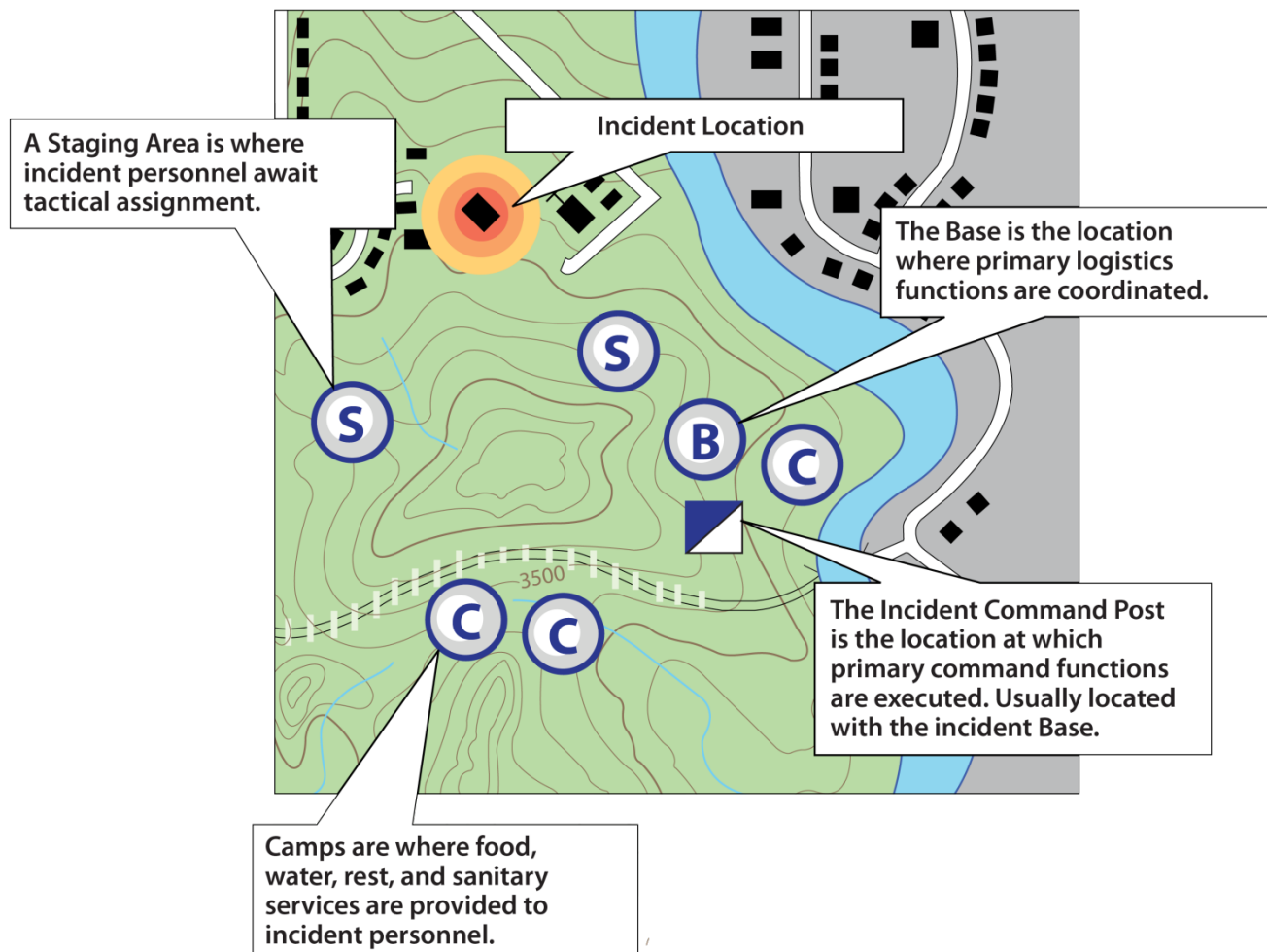
ICS Facilities Terminology

Locations within in the response area also have standardized terminology.

Incident Command Post – Site where all operations are overseen; denoted by a square with blue and white triangles
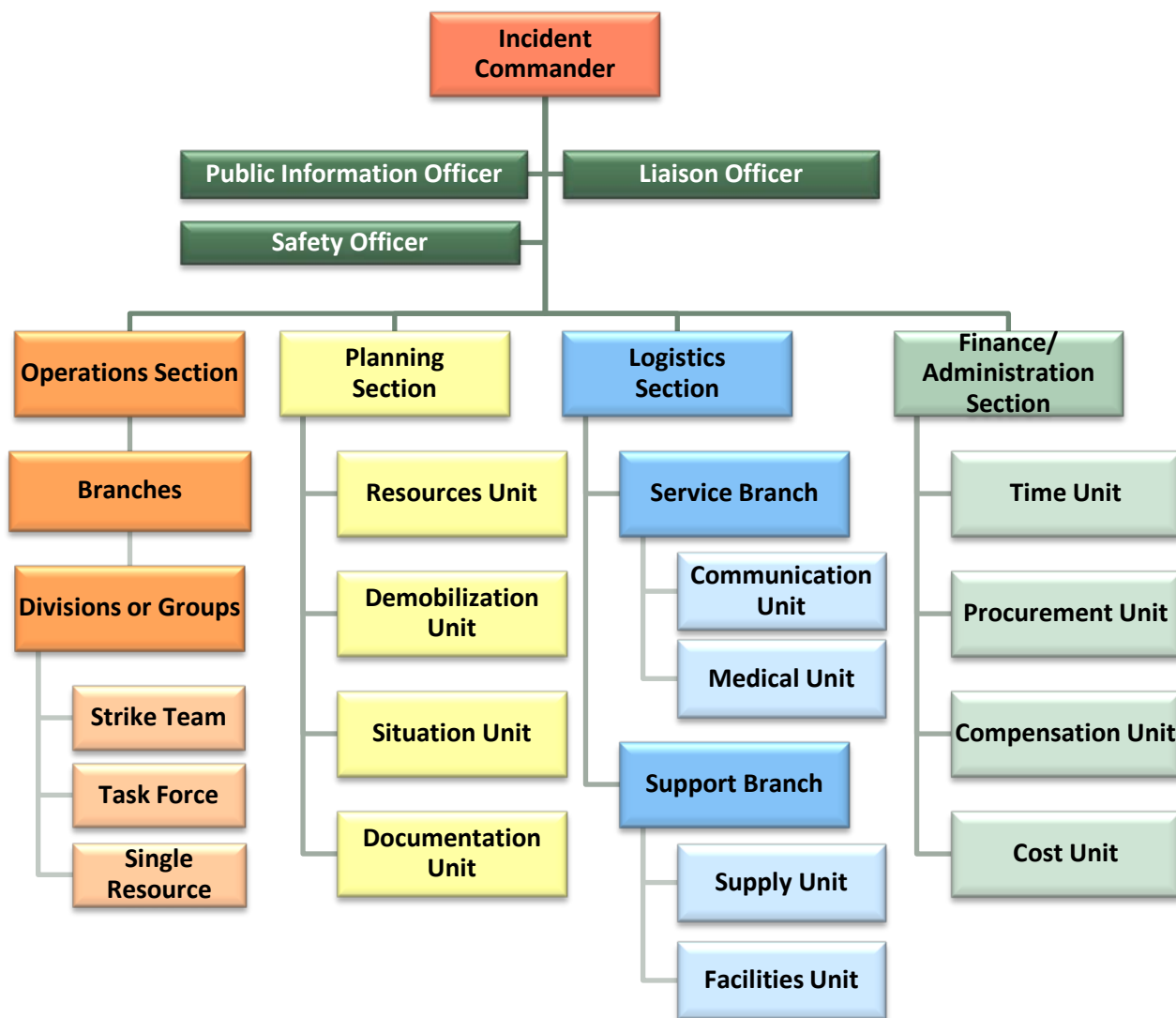
Staging Area – Where resources (e.g., personnel, equipment) are kept while waiting for incident assignment; denoted by a white circle with a "S" inside

Base – Where primary service and support activities (e.g., logistics, administration) are performed; denoted by a white circle with a "B" inside

Camp – Area where essential resources (e.g., food, water, sleeping areas) to support operations are kept; denoted by a white circle with a "C" inside

A Staging Area is where incident personnel await tactical assignment.

Incident Location

The Base is the location where primary logistics functions are coordinated.

The Incident Command Post is the location at which primary command functions are executed. Usually located with the incident Base.

Camps are where food, water, rest, and sanitary services are provided to incident personnel.

3500

Sample ICS Structure
For an Animal Health Emergency

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                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │    Incident     │
                          │   Commander     │
                          └─────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Public Information Officer│        │ Liaison Officer  │
   └──────────────────────────┘        └──────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────┐
   │  Safety Officer  │
   └──────────────────┘
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Operations Section	Planning Section	Logistics Section	Finance/ Administration Section
Branches	Resources Unit	Service Branch	Time Unit
Divisions or Groups	Demobilization Unit	Communication Unit	Procurement Unit
Strike Team	Situation Unit	Medical Unit	Compensation Unit
Task Force	Documentation Unit	Support Branch	Cost Unit
Single Resource		Supply Unit	
		Facilities Unit	

Additional Resources

USDA Foreign Animal Disease Preparedness (FAD PReP)
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth?1dmy&urile=wcm%3apath%3a%2Faphis_content_library%2Fsa_our_focus%2Fsa_animal_health%2Fsa_emergency_management%2Fct_fadprep

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Online Training: ICS-100.a; ICS-200.a; ICS-700.a
training.fema.gov/IS/

FEMA NIMS Basic: The Incident Command System
www.fema.gov/pdf/nims/NIMS_basic_incident_command_system.pdf

the Center for
Food Security
&Public Health
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY®
College of Veterinary Medicine

Just-In-Time training materials can be found at http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Emergency-Response/just-in-time-training.php