

Incident Command System

Overview



During an animal disease emergency, effective management of responders, activities, and resources is essential for an efficient response. This is achieved through the Incident Command System (ICS). This JIT handout provides an overview of basic ICS structure and terminology and serves as a supplement or review. It is not intended to replace training developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

What is ICS?

The Incident Command System is the on-site organizational hierarchy and framework used to manage and coordinate emergency responses. Some key aspects of ICS are:

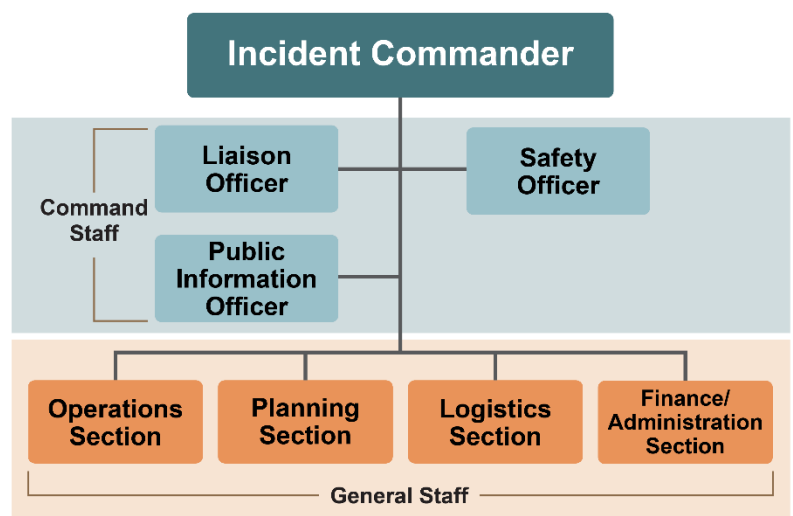
- **Common terminology:** ICS provides a standardized management approach and common language for communication.
- **Chain of command:** ICS designates supervisors and their responsibilities, and defines responder units to provide a clear understanding of the organization, roles, responsibilities, and chain of command during the response.
- **Incident action planning:** ICS provides an orderly, systematic planning process that fosters communication and cooperation among disciplines and agencies. Response objectives are determined and help guide strategies, issue assignments, and develop plans, procedures, and protocols with measurable outcomes.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** The ICS system is modular and can quickly expand or contract in size and complexity for the response, adapt to manage and coordinate multiple sites or jurisdictions, ensuring efficient, effective incident management across all sites.

Use of the Incident Command System is mandated by the National Incident Management System (NIMS) for all emergency responses.

Basic ICS Structure

The Incident Command System is a top-down system. It is normally organized into five main functional areas, each with specific duties. This is often referred to as the Incident Management Team (IMT).

- **Incident Command**, which includes the Incident Commander and their designated Command Staff.
- **General Staff**, which consists of four sections: Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance and Administration.



Incident Command

Incident Command is the on-site senior management team.



The **Incident Commander (IC)** is responsible for managing an incident. The IC sets incident objectives and establishes response strategies and priorities. This is the only ICS position that is always staffed. The IC is responsible for all incident objectives until delegated to Command or General Staff personnel.

During larger incidents, the IC may establish additional supervisory positions, the Command Staff.



The **Safety Officer** monitors and oversees working conditions of the incident and is responsible for developing procedures to keep personnel safe. The Safety Officer is allowed to stop any unsafe behavior or procedure.



The **Liaison Officer** serves as the primary point of contact for governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations involved in incident response.



The **Public Information Officer** interfaces and provides information to the public, media, and industry stakeholders regarding response activities.

Incident Command Modifications Based on the Situation

- **Unified Command** allows agencies with different legal, geographical, and functional authorities and responsibilities to work together effectively. Command is shared among designated representatives from the involved agencies. For example, the State Animal Health Official and the Federal Animal Health Official may use unified command to coordinate information and eliminate duplication.
- **Area Command** is used for large, complex responses or when multiple incidents place demands on shared resources. An Area Commander provides oversight, coordination, and strategic direction, while each site is managed by an Incident Commander and standard ICS structure.

General Staff

The General Staff includes four management sections, each responsible for specific tasks, duties, and personnel during the response. Each is led by a Section Chief (e.g., Operations Section Chief).



The **Operations Section** is responsible for performing various tasks needed to meet the response goals outlined in the Incident Action Plan. The Operations Section Chief (OSC) develops and organizes tactical assignments, manages field personnel, and directs all tactical resources.



The **Planning Section** supports the planning process by tracking resources, collecting and analyzing information, and maintaining documentation. The Planning Section Chief (PSC), develops and directs the preparation of the Incident Action Plan.



The **Logistics Section** provides support, resources, and needed services to meet the incident objectives. This may include supplies, facilities, transportation, communication, equipment maintenance, food, and medical services. This section is led by a Logistics Section Chief.



The **Finance and Administration Section** provides accounting, contracting, procurement, time recording, and cost analysis services. Personnel, led by a Finance and Administration Section Chief, manage all financial aspects associated with the incident.

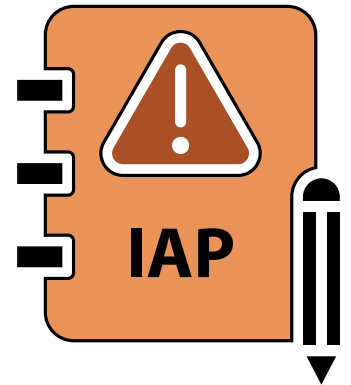
Depending on the size or scope of the response. Each section may break into additional segments to further distribute or perform specific response tasks.

Operational Planning

All animal disease emergency responses will have an **Incident Action Plan (IAP)**. The IAP should be in written form. Command and General Staff will meet during each operational period (typically every 12 or 24 hours) to determine and outline the actions needed for incident response.

At its most basic level, it should outline the goals and procedures required, identify who is responsible for various tasks, specify how communication will occur, and detail how responder health and safety procedures (e.g., care for injured personnel) will be implemented.

The IAP informs all response personnel of the incident objectives for the designated operational period, the specific resources needed, actions to take, and other operational information (e.g., weather, challenges or constraints, safety issues).



Other Terminology

Other common terminology used during a response includes:



The **Incident Command Post (ICP)** is where on-scene management occurs (i.e., location of the Incident Commander, Command and General Staff).



The **Staging Area** is the location where all resources (e.g., equipment, supplies, personnel, or teams needed to perform response activities) wait for incident assignment. There may be multiple Staging Areas during a response.



The **Base** is where primary service and support activities (e.g., logistics, finance/administrative) are performed. There is only one Base for each incident.



A **Camp** is the area where resources such as food, water, sleeping areas, and sanitary services are located. There may be multiple Camps for a response.

Additional Just-In-Time trainings describing the roles and responsibilities of each General Staff section and the Operational Planning Period are available on the [JIT website](#).

Full ICS training is available in the [FEMA ICS Resource Center](#). At a minimum, all responders should complete ICS-100 and ICS-200.



Additional [Just-In-Time training resources](#) can be found on the [CFSPH website](#).

Developed through funding from the USDA National Animal Health Preparedness and Response Program and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.