

# Operational Planning Cycle

## The Planning P: Overview and Initial Response

---



Incident planning is a critical component for an effective animal health emergency response, ensuring measurable objectives are established, resource needs are identified, and response activities are synchronized and communicated to responders and stakeholders. This Just-In-Time handout overviews the Operational Planning Cycle using the Planning P and discusses actions and ICS forms to be completed during Phase 1 of the Planning P.

### What is the Operational Planning Cycle?

---

The **Operational Planning Cycle** provides a consistent, structured approach for developing response objectives, strategies, and tactics and for communicating them clearly to responders and stakeholders. It is used in all animal disease emergency responses because it is a widely recognized and proven planning framework for emergency responders across disciplines.

The purpose of the planning cycle is to establish timelines for completing primary activities and objectives, necessary for developing the **Incident Action Plan (IAP)**. The cycle is repeated every operational period. The process provides a mechanism for regular, consistent information sharing with leadership and stakeholders throughout the response.

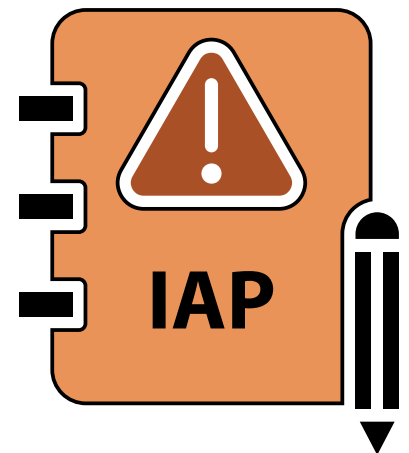
The **Operational Period** is a designated time frame in which tactical objectives are to be accomplished and reevaluated. Common lengths for animal disease responses are 12 or 24 hours. When response situations are relatively stable, the operational period may be extended for multiple days.

[\*\*ICS Form 230 CG: Daily Meeting Schedule\*\*](#) should be used to ensure standardized meetings and agendas are followed during the operational planning cycle.

### Incident Action Plan

---

- All animal disease emergency responses will have an IAP; ideally, in written form.
- Command and General Staff will meet during each operational period to determine and outline the actions needed for incident response.
- At its most basic level, the IAP 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., support, weather, challenges or constraints, safety issues).



## The Planning P

**The Planning P** is a visual representation of the actions needed during the Operational Planning Cycle. It serves as a framework for the routine scheduling of key meetings and briefings held during each operational period, as well as for completing the corresponding ICS forms for the Incident Action Plan.

There are five phases in the Operational Planning Period.

- **Phase 1: Initial Response** is represented by the stem of the P. This phase occurs only once during the initial hours of a response, before the operational period. The goal is to understand the situation.

The remaining phases make up the loop – sometimes called the “O” or operational portion of the P. These actions are continually repeated for each operational period throughout the response.

- **Phase 2:** Establish incident objectives during the Command and General Staff Meeting.
- **Phase 3:** Develop the plan for the operational period during the Tactics meeting.
- **Phase 4:** Prepare the IAP (after the Planning Meeting) and prepare to disseminate it.
- **Phase 5:** Execute the IAP following an Operations Briefing. A new operational period begins, and the plan is evaluated for progress and revised as needed during the next cycle.

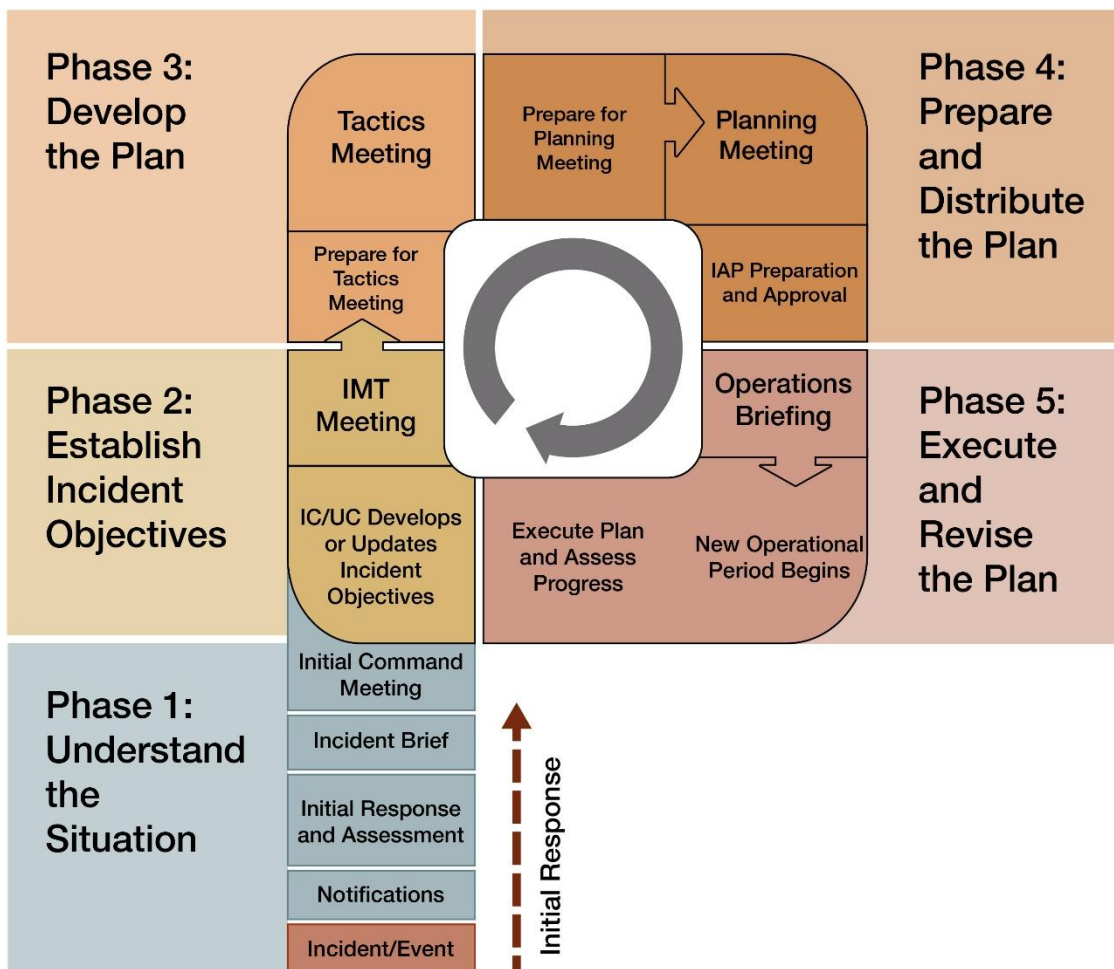


Figure 1. A diagram of the Planning P - phases and steps used to develop incident objectives, strategies, and tactics for the Incident Action Plan for each operational period.

## Phase 1: Understand the Situation [Initial Response]

---

Phase 1 occurs during the initial hours of a response, before the operational period. The goal is to understand the situation. Phase 1 consists of 5 steps represented in the stem of the P.

➤ **Occurrence of an incident/event:**

- This starts upon detection or report of a disease situation. This most commonly occurs when a producer reports abnormal morbidity or mortality, a private practitioner notifies the State or Federal Animal Health Official of an unusual situation, or a diagnostic laboratory reports a suspect or positive result.

➤ **Notification:**

- The State or Federal Animal Health Official will alert field veterinary staff, lab partners, epidemiologists, and industry liaisons. The Agriculture Emergency Plans are activated.

➤ **Initial response and assessment:**

- Information is quickly gathered and analyzed regarding the scale, size, complexity, and potential impacts of the incident. The Incident Commander (or Unified Command) quickly develops an initial plan and priorities, and incident management is organized.

➤ **ICS Form 201: Incident Briefing** can be used to gather basic information about the incident and the resources allocated to it. It should be prepared by the Incident Commander.

- It describes and records the total area of operation, the incident site, the area impacted, any health and safety hazards, and the resources needed. Current and planned objectives, actions, strategies, and tactics are determined, as is the ICS hierarchy to be used.
- If used, this form may also serve as a part of the permanent record of the initial response to the incident. Copies of the form should be given to the Situation Unit and the Resource Unit of the Planning Section.

➤ **Initial Command meeting.**

- The Incident Commander or Unified Command Personnel will set immediate incident objectives (e.g., contain spread within 24 hours), confirm lab testing status and priorities, identify initial Zones (e.g., infected, buffer, surveillance), and discuss initial communication needs for producers, veterinarians, and the public.

---

Find information describing the other planning phases on the Just-In-Time training website.

[A library of ICS forms is available on the FEMA website.](#) These downloadable documents help to guide response leadership during the various phases of the Operational Planning Period.

*This document serves as a supplement or review and is not meant to replace the extensive training provided through FEMA's ICS 300 Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents course. It is recommended that you review the ICS JIT factsheets to understand the terms used in this handout.*



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.



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY®  
College of Veterinary Medicine