



## **The National Incident Management System**

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Established on February 28, 2003, President Bush issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive – 5. HSPD-5 directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop and administer a National Incident Management System. NIMS provides a constant nationwide template to enable all governmental, private-sector, and non-governmental organizations to work together during national incidents.

NIMS is a comprehensive, national approach to incident management that is applicable at all jurisdictional levels and across function disciplines. The intent is:

- Be applicable across a full spectrum of potential incidents and hazard scenarios, regardless of size or complexity.
- Improve coordination and cooperation between public and private entities in a variety of domestic incident management activities.

Governor Napolitano’s Executive Order 2005-08, “Designation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the Basis for all Incident Management in Arizona” established NIMS as the State standard for incident management thereby requiring State agencies having a role to prevent, prepare for, respond to, or recovery from emergencies and disasters to become NIMS compliant.

On August 15, 2005, Dr. Peter Likins, President of the University of Arizona issued the “Designation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the Basis for All Incident Management at the University of Arizona.

### **NIMS Concepts and Principles**

NIMS is based on an appropriate balance of flexibility and standardization

1. Flexibility - NIMS provides a consistent, flexible, and adjustable national framework within which government and private can work together to manage domestic incidents, regardless of their

cause, size, location, or complexity. This flexibility applies across all phases of incident management; prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.

2. Standardization - NIMS provides a set of standardized organizational structures such as the Incident Command System (ICS), multiagency coordination systems, and public information systems, as well as requirements for processes, procedures, and systems designated to improve interoperability.

## **NIMS Components**

NIMS is comprised of several components that work together as a system to provide a national framework for preparing for, preventing, responding to, and recovering from domestic incidents. These components include:

- **Command and Management** – standard incident command structures based on three key organization operating systems:
  - **The ICS** – defines the operating characteristics, interactive management components, and structure of incident management and emergency response organizations engaged throughout the life cycle of an incident.
  - **Multiagency Coordination Systems** – These define the operating characteristics, interactive management components, and organizational structure of supporting incident management entities engaged in the Federal, State, local, tribal, and regional levels through mutual-aid agreements and other assistance arrangements.
  - **Public Information Systems** – These refer to processes, procedures, and systems for communicating timely and accurate information to the public during crisis or emergency situations.
- **Preparedness**
  - **Planning** – Describes how personnel, equipment, and other resources are used to support incident management and emergency response activities.
  - **Training** – includes standard courses on multiagency incident command and management, organizational structure, and operational procedures; discipline-specific and agency-specific incident management courses; and courses on the integration and use of supporting technologies.

- **Exercises** – Organization and personnel must participate in realistic exercises – including multidisciplinary, multijurisdictional, and multisector interaction – to improve integration and interoperability.
- **Personnel Qualification and Certification** – to identify and publish national-level standards and measure performance against these standards to ensure that incident management and emergency responder personnel are appropriately qualified and officially certified to perform NIMS-related functions.
- **Equipment Acquisition and Certification** – A critical component of operational preparedness is the acquisition of equipment that will perform to certain standards, including capability to be interoperable with similar equipment used by other jurisdictions.
- **Mutual Aid** – agreements are the means for one jurisdiction to provide resources, faculties, services, and other required support to another jurisdiction during an incident.
- Publications Management – refers to forms and forms standardization.
- **Publication Management** – refers to forms and form standardization, developing publication materials, administering publications – including establishing naming and numbering conventions, managing the publication and promulgation of documents, and exercising control over sensitive documents, and revising documents as necessary.
- **Resource Management** – standardized mechanisms and established requirements for processes to describe, inventor, mobilize, dispatch, track, and recover resources over the life cycle of an incident.
- **Communications and Information Management** – a standardized framework for communications, information management (collection, analysis, and dissemination), and information sharing at all levels of incident management.
  - **Incident Management Communications**– ensure that effective, interoperable communications processes, procedures, and systems exist to support a wide variety of incident management activities across agencies and jurisdictions.

- **Information Management** – processes, procedures, and systems help ensure that information, including communications and data, flows effectively through commonly accepted architecture supporting numerous agencies and jurisdictions responsible for managing or directing domestic incidents.
- **Supporting Technologies** – technology and technological systems provide supporting capabilities essential to implementing and continuously refining NIMS. These include voice and data communications, information management systems and data display systems.
- **Ongoing Management and Maintenance** – this component established an activity to provide strategic direction for and oversight of NIMS, supporting both routine review and the continuous refinement of the system and its components over the long term.

## **Incident Command System (ICS)**

ICS is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operation within a common organizational structure, designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management. It is used to organize both near-term and long-term field-level operations for a broad spectrum of emergencies from small to complex incidents, both natural and man-made.

Every incident is staffed with an Incident Commander. Whatever function is not retained by the Incident Commander is delegated to one of the following functions described below.

## **Incident Commander (IC)**

The Incident Commander is normally the first person at the scene, with the most knowledge of the incident. The individual retains the incident command function until there is a transfer of command. The Incident Commander is not selected or assumes command based on rank or position.

All management decisions concerning the incident are coordinated through the IC. All personnel ultimately report through the chain of command to the IC.

## **Transfer of Command**

A transfer of command occurs when:

- A more qualified person assumes command.
- The incident situation changes over time, resulting in a legal requirement to change command.
- There is normal turnover of personnel on extended incidents.
- The incident response is concluded and responsibility is transferred.

When there is a transfer of command, a notification shall be made to all personnel, indicating who the new IC is and the time of command transfer.

*NIMS requires that field command and management function be performed in accordance with a standard set of ICS organizations, doctrine and procedures.*

## **ICS Features**

- Modular and Scalable – the structure is based on the size and complexity of the incident.
- ICS sets the stage for efficient and efficient incident management response.
- Common Terminology – everyone is speaking the same language without use of codes or respective jargon.
- Measureable Objectives – to ensure fulfillment of incident management goals. Objective setting begins at the top and is communicated throughout the entire organization.
- Organizational Resources – personnel, facilities, equipment and supplies and requires “typing” by capability.
- Management Span of Control – Maintaining adequate span of control throughout the ICS organization is critical. Effective span of control may vary from three (3) to seven (7), and a ration of one supervisor to five (5) reporting elements is recommended.
- Chain of Command - there is an orderly line of authority within ranks of the organization.
- Unity of Command - means that every individual is accountable to only one designated supervisor to whom they report at the scene of an incident.
- Accountability – effective accountability at all jurisdictional levels and within individual functional areas during an incident is

essential. To that end, ICS requires check in for all responders, regardless of agency affiliation, usually at the *Staging Area* where all resources/personnel are staged waiting for assignment and deployment.

## **Incident Action Plans (IAP)**

Incident Action Plans (IAPs) provide a coherent means to communicate the overall incident objectives in the context of both operation and support activities. IAPs are developed for operational periods that are usually 12 hours long, or move into a change of shift.

IAPs depend on *management by objectives* to accomplish response tactics. These objectives are communicated through the organization and are used to:

- Develop and issue assignment, plans, procedures, and protocols.
- Direct efforts to attain the objectives in support of define strategic objectives.
- Results are always documented and fed back into planning for the next operational period.

## **The Command Function**

The command function may be conducted in two general ways:

1. ***Single Command IC*** – When an incident occurs within a single jurisdiction and there is no jurisdictional or functional agency overlap, a single IC should be designated with overall incident management responsibility by the appropriate authority. (In some cases in which management crosses jurisdictional and/or functional agency boundaries, a single IC may be designated if all parties agree to such an option.)
2. ***Unified Command (UC)*** is an important element in multi-jurisdictional or multi-agency domestic incident management. It provides guidelines to enable agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively. As a team, the Unified Command overcomes much of the inefficiency and duplication of effort that can occur when agencies from different functional and geographic jurisdictions, or agencies at different levels of government, operate without a common system or organizational framework. The primary difference between the

single command structure and the UC structure is that in a single command structure, the IC is solely responsible for establishing incident management objectives and strategies. In a UC structure, the individuals designated by their jurisdictional authorities jointly determine objectives, plans, and priorities and work together to execute them.

### **Advantages of Using Unified Command**

- A single set of objectives is developed for the entire incident.
- A collective approach is used to develop strategies to achieve incident objectives.
- Information flow and coordination is improved between all jurisdictions and agencies involved in the incident.
- All agencies with responsibility for the incident have an understanding of joint priorities and restrictions.
- No agency's legal authorities will be compromised or neglected.
- The combined efforts of all agencies are optimized as they perform their respective assignments under a single Incident Action Plan.

### **ICS Command Staff**

Command comprises the Incident Commander (IC) and Command Staff. Command staff positions are established to assign responsibility for key activities not specifically identified in the General Staff functional elements. These positions may include;

- **Public Information Officer (PIO)**
  - Is responsible for interfacing with the public and media and/or other agencies with incident-related information. The PIO develops accurate and complete information on the incident cause, size, and current situation; resources committed and other matters of general interest for both internal and external consumption.
- **Safety Officer (SO)**
  - Monitors incident operations and advised the IC on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel. The ultimate responsibility for the safe conduct of incident management operations rests with the IC or UC and supervisors at all levels of incident management. The SO has emergency

authority to stop and/or prevent unsafe acts during incident operations. The SI, Operations Section Chief, and Planning Section Chief must coordinate closely regarding operational safety and emergency responder health and safety issues.

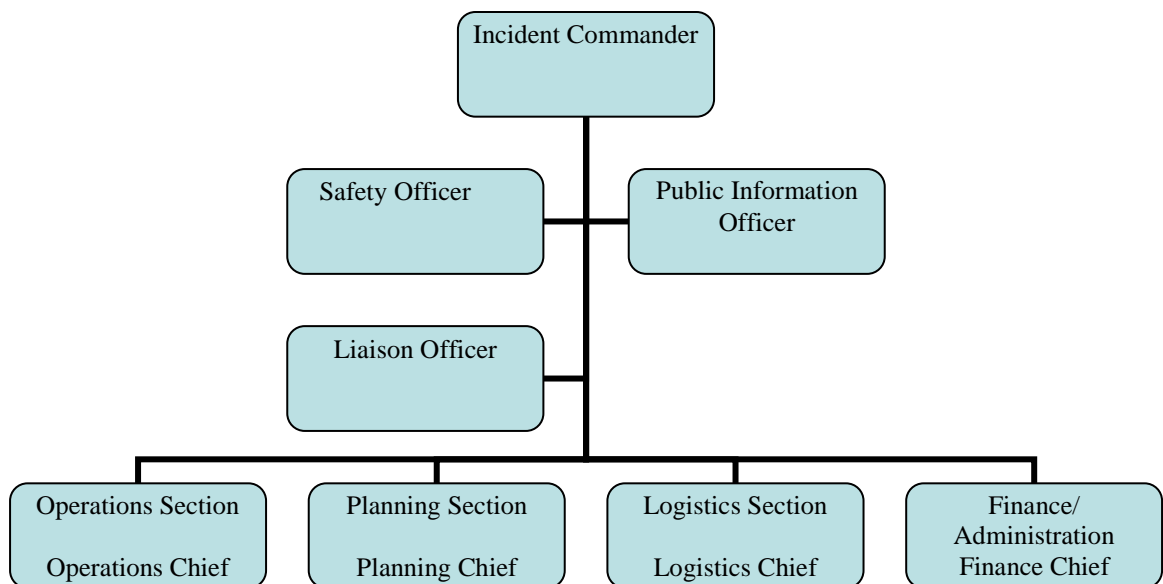
- **Liaison Officer (LNO)**

- Is the point of contact for representative of other governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and/or private entities. In either a single or UC structure, representatives from assisting or cooperating agencies and organizations coordinate through the LNO. Agency and/or organizational representatives assigned to an incident must have the authority to speak for the parent agencies and/or organizations on all matters, following appropriate consultations with their agency leadership.

## General Staff

The General Staff includes incident management personnel who represent the major functional elements of the ICS, including the Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, and Finance/Administration Section Chief. Command Staff and General Staff must continually interact and share vital information and estimates of the current and future situation and develop recommended courses of action for consideration by the IC.

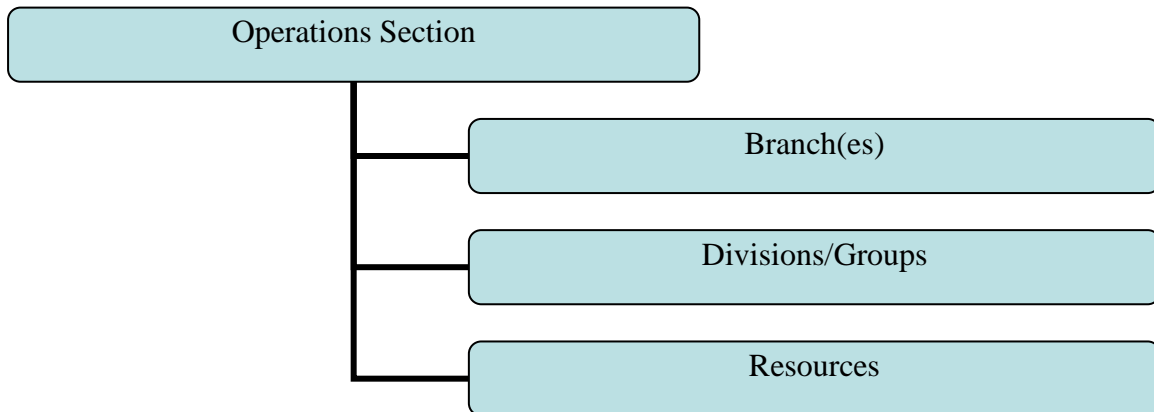
### Basic ICS Structure



## Operations Section

This section is responsible for all activities focused on reduction of the immediate hazard, saving lives and property establishing situational control, and restoration of normal operations.

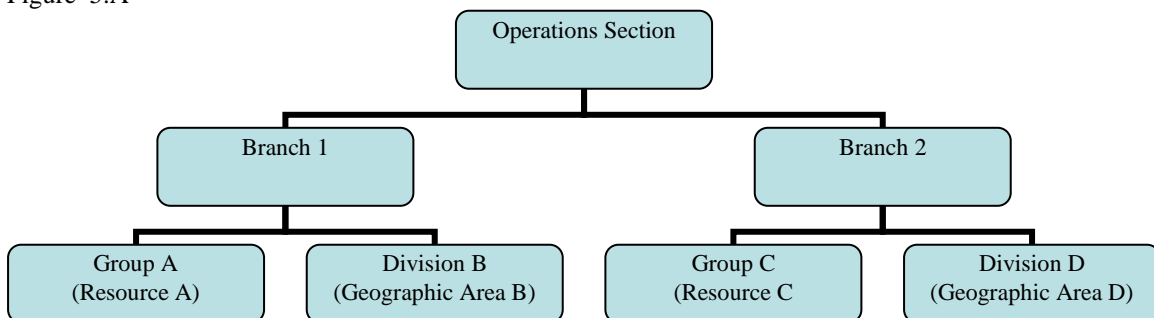
Further expansions of this basic structure will vary according to other numerous considerations and operational factors.



## Divisions and Groups

Division and groups are established when the number of resources exceeds the Operational Section Chief's manageable span of control. Divisions demarcate physical or geographical areas of operation within the incident area. Groups demarcate functional areas of operation for the incident. (See figure 5.A below)

Figure 5.A



The use of the two terms is necessary, because *division* always refers to a geographical assignment and *group* always refers to a functional assignment. Both divisions and groups may be used in a single incident if there is justification for their use and if proper coordination can be effected.

## Resources

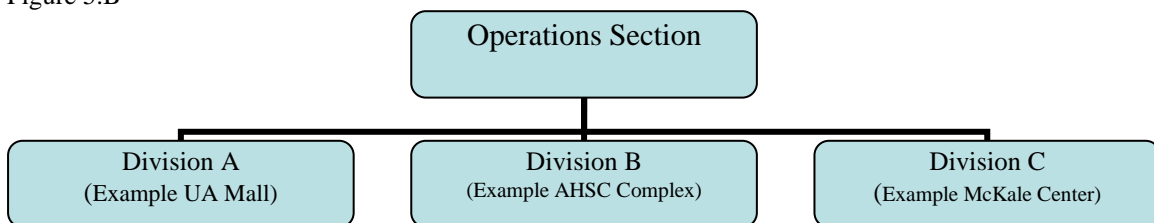
Resources refer to the combination of personnel and equipment required to enable incident management operations. Resources may be organized and managed in three different ways depending on requirements of the incident:

1. **Single Resources** – are individual personnel and equipment items and the operations associated with them.
2. **Task Forces** – is any combination of resources assembled in support of a specific mission or operational need. All resource elements within a Task Force must have a common communication and designated leader.
3. **Strike Teams** – are a set of number of resources of the same kind and type that have an established minimum number of personnel. The use of Strike Teams and Task Forces is encouraged, wherever possible, to optimize the use of resources, reduce span of control over large number of single resources, and reduce the complexity of incident management coordination and communications.

## Geographical Division

The best way to create geographical division is to divide an area according to natural separations to terrain or other prominent geographical features, such as UA Mall, AHSC complex, etc. When geographical features are used for determining boundaries, the size of the division should correspond to appropriate span-of-control guidelines. See Figure 5.B

Figure 5.B

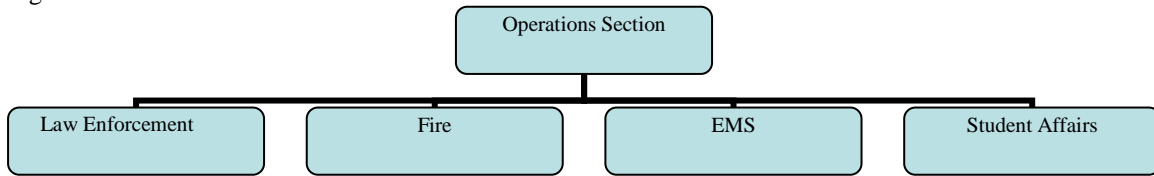


As additional types of resources are added to the organization, resources should be assigned to a division structure.

## Functional Groups

Functional groups can best be used to describe areas of like activity (e.g., law enforcement, EMS, Fire, Student Affairs) See figure 5.C

Figure 5.C

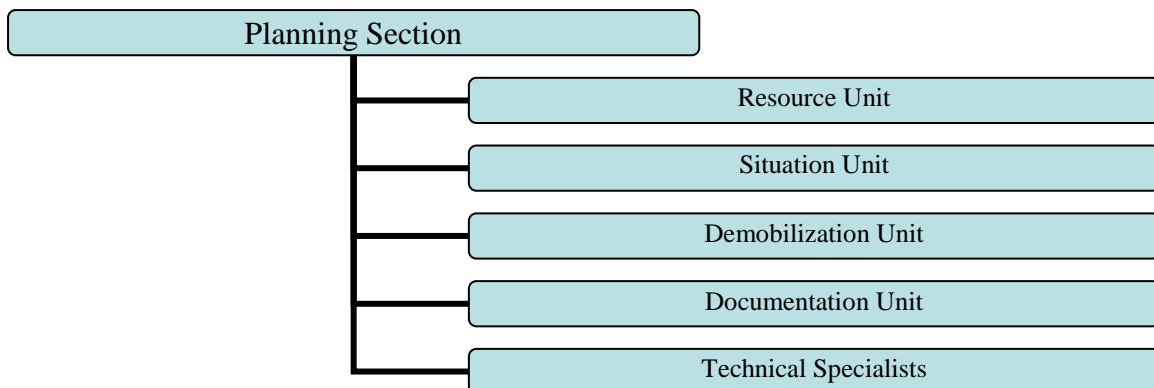


## Planning Section

The planning Section collects, evaluates and disseminates incident situation information and intelligence to the IC or UC and incident management personnel, prepares status reports, displays situation information, maintains status of resources assigned to the incident, and develops and documents the IAPD based on guidance from the IC or UC.

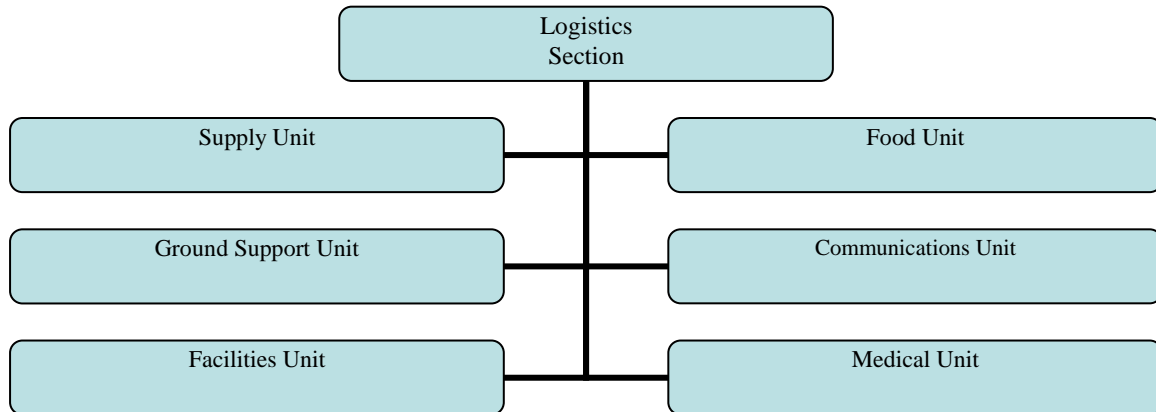
The Planning Section is also responsible for developing and documenting the IAP. The IAP includes overall incident objective and strategies established by the IC or UC. The IAPD must adequately address the mission and policy needs of each jurisdictional agency, as well as interaction between jurisdictions, functional agencies and private organizations. The IAP also addresses tactical objectives and support activities required for the operations period, usually 12-24 hour. The IAP also contains provisions for continuous incorporation of “lessons learned” as incident management activities progress. An IAP is especially important when:

- Resources from multiple agencies and/or jurisdictions are involved;
- Multiple jurisdictions are involved;
- The incident will effectively span several operational periods
- Changes in shifts of personnel and/or equipment are required;
- There is a need to document actions and/or decisions.



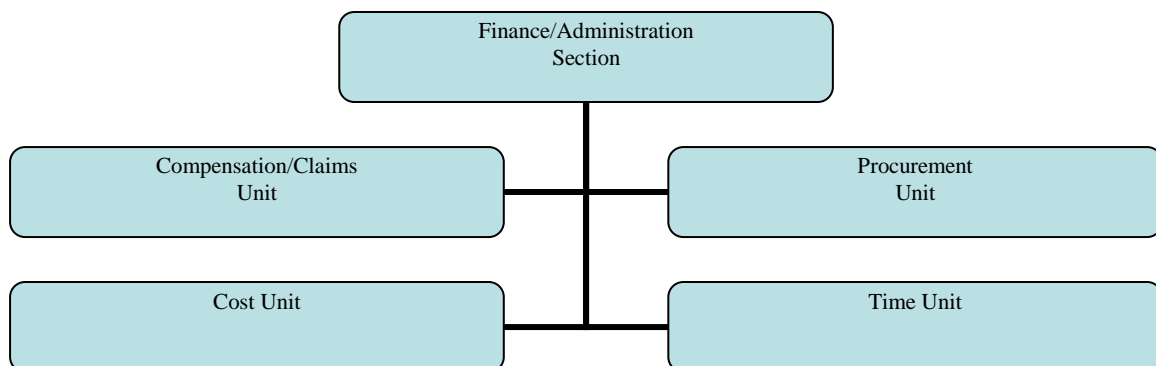
## Logistics Section

The Logistics Section is responsible for all support requirements needed to facilitate effective and efficient incident management, including ordering resources from off-incident locations. It also provides facilities, transportation, supplies, equipment maintenance and fuel, food services, communications and information technology support, and emergency responder medical services, including inoculations, as required.



## Finance/Administration Section

A Finance/Administration Section is established when the agency(s) involved in incident management activities require(s) finance and other administrative support services. Not all incidents will require a separate Finance/Administration Section. In cases that require one specific function, e.g., cost analysis, this service may be provided by a technical specialist in the Planning Section.



## **Information and Intelligence Function**

The analysis and sharing of information and intelligence are important elements of ICS. In this context, intelligence includes not only national security or other types of classified information but also other operational information, such as risk assessments, medical intelligence, weather information, structural design, toxic containment levels, and utilities and public works data from a variety of different sources. In the university, community intelligence may come from Student Affairs, the Provost, Clubs/Organizations, etc.

Traditionally information and intelligence functions are located in the Planning Section. However, in exceptional situations, the IC may elect to assign this as its own Section.

## **Modular Extension**

The ICS organizational structure is modular, extending to incorporate all elements necessary for the type, size, scope and complexity of a given incident. The IC structural organization builds from the top down; responsibility and performance begin with the incident command element and the IC. When the need arises, four separate sections can be used to organize the staff. Each of these may have several subordinate units, or branches, depending on the management requirements of the incident. If one individual can simultaneously manage all major functions area, no further organization is required. If one or more of the functions requires independent management, an individual is assigned responsibility for that function.

The responding IC's initial management assignments will normally be one to more Section Chiefs to manage the major ICS functional areas (operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration). The Section Chiefs will further delegate management authority for their areas as required. If a Section Chief sees the need, he or she may establish branches or units (depending on the section). Similarly, each functional unit leader will further assign individual tasks within the unit as needed.

The modular concept described above is based on the following considerations:

- developing the form of the organization to match the function or task to be performed;

- staffing only the functional elements that are required to perform the task;
- observing recommended span-of-control guidelines;
- performing the function of any nonactivated organizational element at the next highest level; and
- deactivating organizational elements no longer required.

The table below describes the distinctive title assigned to each element of the ICS organization at each corresponding level, as well as the leadership title corresponding to each individual element.

Organizational Element	Leadership Position
Incident Command	Incident Commander (IC)
Command Staff	Officer
Section	Section Chief
Branch	Branch Director
Division and Groups*	Supervisors
Unit**	Unit Leader

- \*The hierarchical term *supervisor* is only used in the Operations Section.
- \*\* Unit Leader designation apply to the subunit of the Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Section

### **Incident Action Plan (IAP)**

The IAP includes the overall incident objectives and strategies established by the IC or UC. The Planning Section is responsible for developing and documenting the IAP. In the case of UC, the IAP must adequately address the overall incident objectives, mission, operational assignments, and policy needs of each jurisdictional agency. This planning process is accomplished with productive interaction between jurisdictions, functional agencies, and private organizations. The IAP also addresses tactical objectives and support activities for one operational period, generally 12 to 24 hours. The IAP also contains provisions for continuous incorporation of "lessons learned" as identified by the Incident Safety Officer or incident management personnel as activities progress.

Components	Normally Prepared By
Common Components	
Incident objectives	Incident Commander

Organizational List or chart	Resource Unit
Assignment List	Resource Unit
Communications Plan	Communications Unit
Logistics Plan	Logistics Unit
Responder Medical Plan	Medical Unit
Incident Map	Situation Unit
Health and Safety Plan	Safety Officer
Other Potential Components (Scenario dependant)	
Air operations	Air Operations
Traffic Plan	Ground Support Unit
Decontamination Plan	Technical Specialist
Waste Management/Disposal Plan	Technical Specialist
Demobilization Plan	Demobilization
Unit Operational Medical Plan	Technical Specialist
Evacuation Plan Technical Specialist	Technical Specialist
Investigative Plan	Law Enforcement Specialist
Site Security Plan	Law Enforcement Specialist
Evidence Recovery Plan	Law Enforcement Specialist
Other	As required

## Area Command

Area Command is activated only if necessary, depending on the complexity of the incident and span-of-control considerations. An area command is established either to oversee the management of multiple incidents that are being handled by separate ICS organizations or to oversee the management of a very large incident that involves multiple ICS organizations. It is important to note that Area Command does not have operational responsibilities. For incidents under its authority, the Area Command:

- Sets overall agency incident-related priorities;
- Allocates critical resources according to established priorities;
- Ensures that incidents are managed properly;
- Ensures effective communications;
- Ensures that incident management objectives are met and do not conflict with each other or with agency policies;

- Identifies critical resource needs and reports them to the Emergency Operations Center(s); Ensures that short-term emergency recovery is coordinated to assist in the transition to full recovery operations;
- Provides for personnel accountability and a safe operating environment.

**Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS)** are a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications integrated into a common framework for coordinating and supporting incident command. The primary function of MACS is to:

- Support incident management policies and priorities.
- Facilitate logistics support and resource tracking.
- Make resource allocations decisions based on incident management priorities.
- Coordinate interagency and intergovernmental issues regarding incident management policies, priorities, and strategies.
- Direct tactical and operational responsibility for the conduct of incident management activities rests with the Incident Command.

### **Emergency Operations Center (EOC)**

The EOC represents the physical location at which the coordination of informational and resources to support the incident management activities normally takes place. The Incident Command Post (ICP or CP) located at or in the immediate vicinity of an incident site, although primarily focused on the tactical on-scene response, may perform an EOC like function in smaller-scale incidents or during the initial phase of the response to larger, more complex events.

### **Public Information Systems**

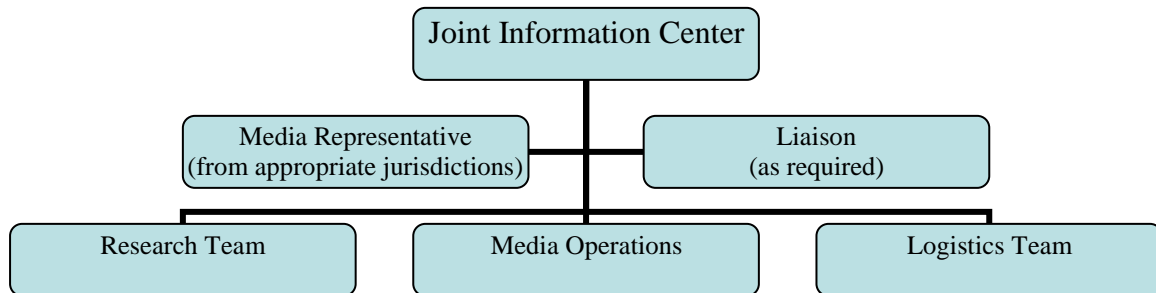
Systems and protocols for communicating timely and accurate information to the public are critical during crisis or emergency situations.

The Public Information Officer (PIO) supports the Incident Commander. Under ICS, the PIO is a key staff member supporting the incident command structure. The PIO represents and advised the Incident Command on all public information matters relating to the management of the incident. The PIO handles media and public inquiries, emergency public information and warnings, rumor monitoring and response, media monitoring, and other functions required to coordinate, clear with appropriate authorities, and

disseminate accurate and timely information related to the incident, particularly regarding information on public health and safety and protection. The PIO is also responsible for coordinating public information at or near the incident site and serving as the on-scene link to the Joint Information System (JIS). In a large-scale operation, the on-scene PIO serves as a field PIO with links to the Joint Information Center (JIC), which is typically collocated, with the federal, regional, State, local, or tribal EOC tasked with primary incident coordination responsibilities. The JIS provides the mechanism for integrating public information activities among JIC's, across jurisdictions, and with private-sector and nongovernmental organizations.

## Joint Information Center (JIC)

A JIC is a physical location where public affairs professional from organizations involved in incident management activities can collocate to perform critical emergency information, crisis communications, and public-affairs functions. The JIC must have the most current and accurate information regarding incident management.



## Joint Information System (JIS)

The JIS provides an organized, integrated and coordinated mechanism to ensure the delivery of understandable, timely, accurate, and consistent information to the public in a crisis. It includes the plans, protocols, and structures used to provide information to the public during incident operations, and encompass all public information operations related to an incident, including all Federal, State, local, tribal and private organization PIOs, staff, and JICs established to support an incident.

## **NIMS Document**

The complete National Incident Management System document can be found at: [http://www.nimsonline.com/nims 3 04/index.htm](http://www.nimsonline.com/nims_3_04/index.htm)