THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM ORGANIZATION

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This unit will help you understand the ICS organization and how it expands and contracts to meet the needs of an incident. The unit will use a scenario to illustrate how the Incident Commander:

- Sizes up the incident.
- Identifies contingencies.
- Determines response objectives.
- Identifies needed resources.
- Builds a plan and organizational structure.
- Takes action.

The unit also will define and describe *single resources, Divisions, Branches, Groups, Units, Strike Teams,* and *Task Forces,* and will explain how operational periods are determined, when and how transfer of command takes place, and how IAPs are developed.

OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

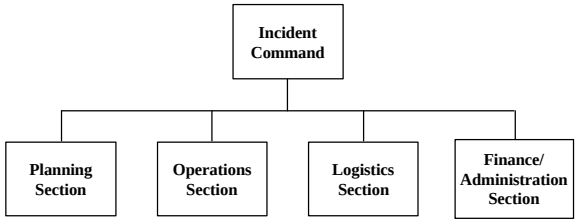
- Describe the use of Branches, Divisions, Groups, and Units and identify the position titles associated with each level.
- Explain how the ICS organization expands or contracts to meet the operational needs of an incident.
- Prepare a transfer-of-command briefing using ICS Form 201.
- Use an Incident Briefing Form (ICS Form 201) to develop an ICS organization appropriate to a small incident.

TIME

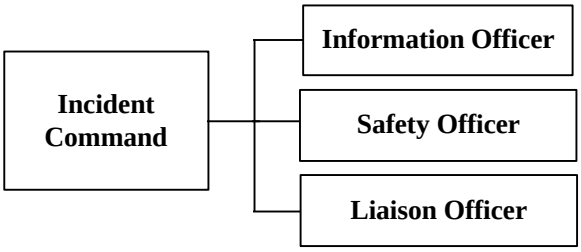
Completion of this unit should take approximately 2 hours.

THE ICS ORGANIZATION

In Unit 1, you learned about the basic ICS organization that is shown in the figure below.



As you can see by reviewing the figure above, the basic ICS organization includes *Command Staff* and *General Staff.* At small incidents, both the Command Staff and General Staff positions may be filled by one individual, the *Incident Commander*. As an incident expands, however, the Incident Commander may need to assign the Command Staff positions of *Information Officer, Safety Officer,* and *Liaison Officer,* as shown in the figure below.



He or she also may assign *Section Chiefs* for the Planning, Operations, Logistics, and the Finance/Administration Sections.

Often, an incident may escalate beyond the Section Chiefs' effective span of control. The next section will describe when and how the ICS organization can be expanded to meet any incident situation.

Expanding the ICS Organization

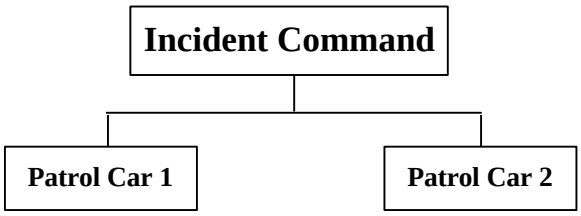
ICS is capable of handling both small- and large-scale incidents. In other words, ICS is expandable from very small, routine operations into a larger organization that is capable of responding to very large incidents that cover many square miles or involve multiple communities or States. Although many incidents will never require the activation of any of the four sections, others will require some or all of the sections to be established.

Expanding the ICS Organization
(Continued)

The scenario presented throughout this section will illustrate how the ICS structure can be expanded. Note, however, that *every incident is somewhat unique* and will expand differently.

Scenario: The Centerville police have received a complaint of a group of about 10 teenagers and young adults gathering at a house on Locust Street. The caller stated that the group is disrupting traffic and shouting obscenities at pedestrians. The house is a multifamily dwelling in a neighborhood of single-family homes and townhomes. The police department has dispatched two patrol cars to the scene to follow up on the complaint.

In this scenario, the police department has dispatched two patrol cars, or *single resources*, to the scene of a complaint. When the police officers arrive at the scene, the senior officer will assume the role of the Incident Commander. At this point in the scenario, the ICS organization would assume the structure shown in the next figure.



Definition

Single Resources. An individual, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified work supervisor that can be used at an incident.

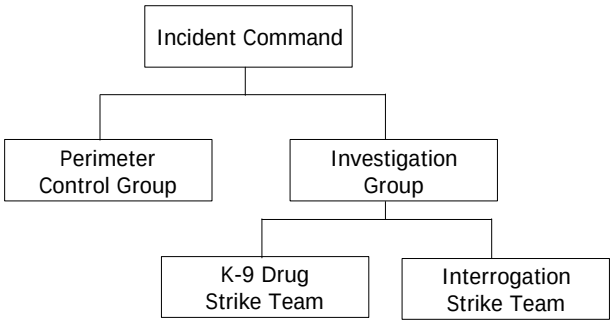
Expanding the ICS Organization *(Continued)*

As the incident unfolds, however, the ICS structure will change as described in the next segment of the scenario.

Scenario Update: As the police reviewed, or *sized up* the situation, they saw what appeared to be drug activity at the scene. They observed 12 persons outside the structure but were unsure how many additional persons may have been inside. They determined that they would require the following additional resources before taking additional action:

- 1 drug K-9 unit.
- 6 police officers to keep traffic and pedestrians from the area (perimeter control).
- 6 additional officers to assist with questioning and, if necessary, arrests.

The sizeup of the incident indicates a need for additional resources at the scene. The addition of these resources is still within a reasonable span of control. The ICS organization does expand, and a possible expanded structure is shown in the next figure.



Expanding the ICS Organization
(Continued)

As you can see from the graphic, the Incident Commander has determined that it is not necessary to activate an Operations Section or assign an Operations Section Chief at this time. But the incident is continuing to escalate.

Organization Terminology

At each level in the ICS organization, individuals with primary responsibility positions (also known as overhead personnel) have distinctive titles, as shown below:

Primary Position	Title	Support Position
Incident Commander	Incident Commander	Deputy
Command Staff	Officer	Assistant
Section	Chief	Deputy
Branch	Director	Deputy
Division/Group	Supervisor	N/A
Strike Team/Task Force	Leader	N/A
Unit	Leader	Manager
Single Resource	Use Unit Designation	N/A

Definitions

Division. The organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area. The Division level is the organizational level between Single Resources, Task Forces or Strike Teams, and the Branch level.

Branch. An organizational level having functional or geographic responsibility for major parts of incident operations. The Incident Commander may establish *geographic Branches* to resolve span-of-control issues—or may establish *functional Branches* to manage specific functions (e.g., law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, etc.). A Branch is managed by a *Branch Director.*

Group. The organizational level having responsibility for a specified *functional* assignment at an incident (e.g., perimeter control, evacuation, fire suppression, etc.). A Group is managed by a *Group Supervisor*.

Definitions
(Continued)

Section. The organizational level with responsibility for a major functional area of the incident. The Section is located organizationally between Branches and the Incident Commander.

Sizeup. Problem identification and an assessment of the possible consequences. Initially, sizeup is the responsibility of the first officer to arrive at the scene. Sizeup continues throughout the response to update continuously the answers to the following questions:

- What is the nature of the incident (i.e., what happened)?
- What hazards are present?
- How large an area is affected?
- How can the area be isolated?
- What location would make a good Staging Area (if one is needed)?
- What entrance and exit routes and safe routes would be good for the flow of rescue personnel and equipment?

Continuous sizeup helps the Incident Commander identify contingencies (things that could happen), identify resource needs, and determine how to deploy resources.

Strike Team. A group of resources of the same size and type (e.g., three drug K-9 teams, five patrol units, etc.). A Strike Team is managed by a *Strike Team Leader*

Task Force. A combination of single resources assembled for a particular operational need, with common communications and a leader.

Expanding the ICS Organization *(Continued)*

Scenario Update: The requested resources have arrived at the incident site. After establishing a perimeter, 10 police officers moved in to detain and question the suspects. Upon seeing the officers, the suspects scattered and began running away from the scene, and the officers pursued them on foot.

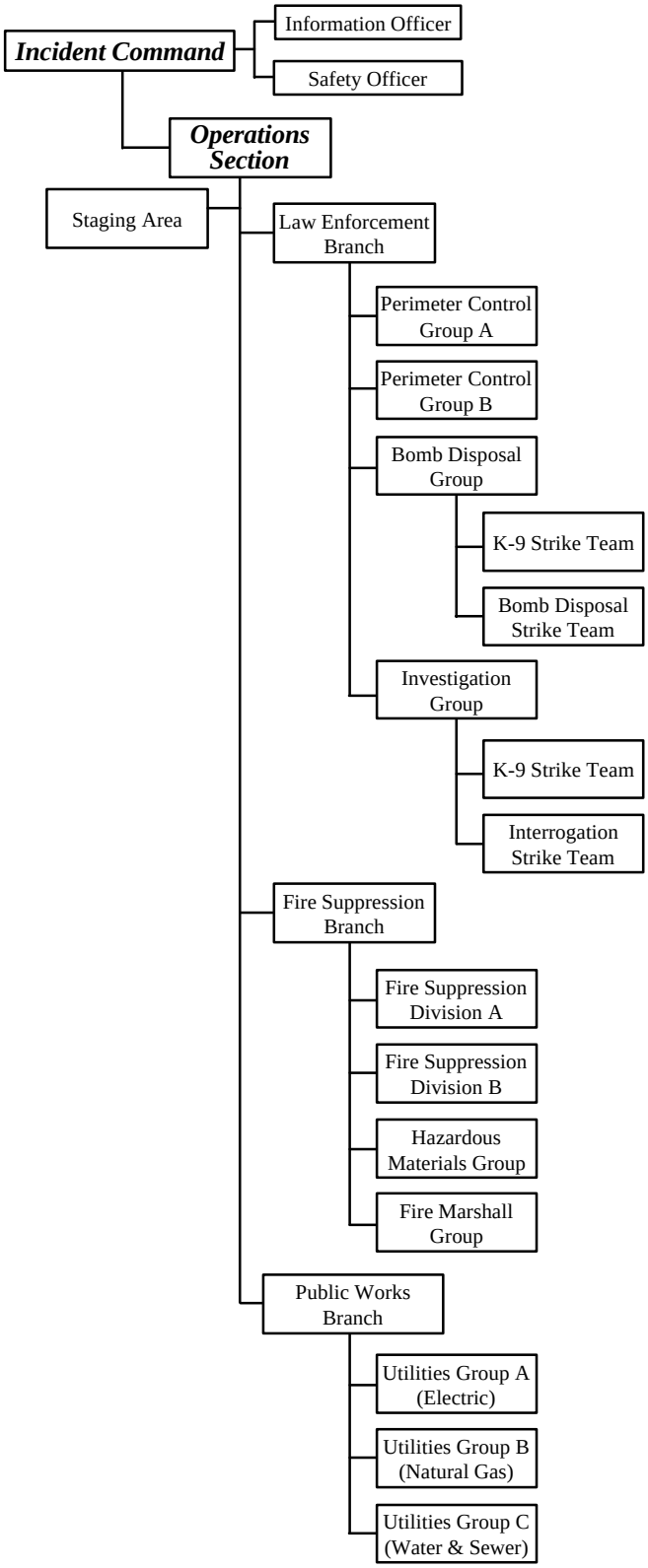
The K-9 Strike Team entered the structure and discovered not only drugs, drug paraphernalia, and drug-making equipment—but they also discovered a cache of automatic weapons and ammunition, high explosives, chemicals for making bombs, and several bombs that already were assembled. Given the situation, the K-9 team immediately exited the structure and reported their findings to the Investigation Group Supervisor.

The Investigation Group Supervisor reported the status to the Incident Commander. Based on the information contained in the Incident Status Summary (ICS Form 209), the Incident Commander requested the following additional resources:

- 6 patrol cars to assist with perimeter control.
- 6 patrol cars to assist with evacuations in the areas adjacent to the structure.
- 2 bomb squads.
- 1 hazardous materials unit.
- 1 fire battalion for possible fire suppression activities.
- 2 ambulances (assigned to Staging Area).

As a *contingency*, the Incident Commander also requested support from the Public Works Department and utility companies to turn off all utilities to the structure.

Based on the new situation sizeup, the Incident Commander has identified additional resource requirements. These additional resources will require creation of the Operations Section to maintain an effective span of control. The expanded ICS structure is shown in the figure on the next page.


Incident Command
Information Officer
Safety Officer
Operations Section
Staging Area
Law Enforcement Branch
Perimeter Control Group A
Perimeter Control Group B
Bomb Disposal Group
K-9 Strike Team
Bomb Disposal Strike Team
Investigation Group
K-9 Strike Team
Interrogation Strike Team
Fire Suppression Branch
Fire Suppression Division A
Fire Suppression Division B
Hazardous Materials Group
Fire Marshall Group
Public Works Branch
Utilities Group A (Electric)
Utilities Group B (Natural Gas)
Utilities Group C (Water & Sewer)

Expanding the ICS Organization
(Continued)

As shown in the graphic on page 2-7, the Incident Commander has established two new positions within the Command Staff: Safety Officer and Information Officer. The Incident Commander also has expanded the General Staff with the assignment of an Operations Section Chief.

To maintain an effective span of control within the Operations Section, the Operations Section Chief also has established several positions, including a Fire Branch Director, and a Public Works Branch Director. The Law Enforcement Branch has been expanded further to accommodate the additional resources required for perimeter control, evacuation, and explosive removal and disposal. The Operations Section Chief has also established a Public Works Branch to accommodate resources dispatched from the utility companies.

Note that, at this time, the Incident Commander has opted to retain control of the planning function.

Definition

Contingency. Determining what *could* happen. Because emergency events are unplanned and involve danger, risk, and confusion, the Incident Commander must consider *any possible developments* in addition to the current situation during the planning process.

Expanding the ICS Organization
(Continued)

Scenario Update: When all requested resources had arrived and the utilities had been turned off, the bomb disposal unit entered the structure to remove and dispose of the bombs. In the process of removing the bombs, one exploded, causing a partial structure collapse, which trapped the bomb disposal team, and ignited a fire in the structure and two adjacent structures.

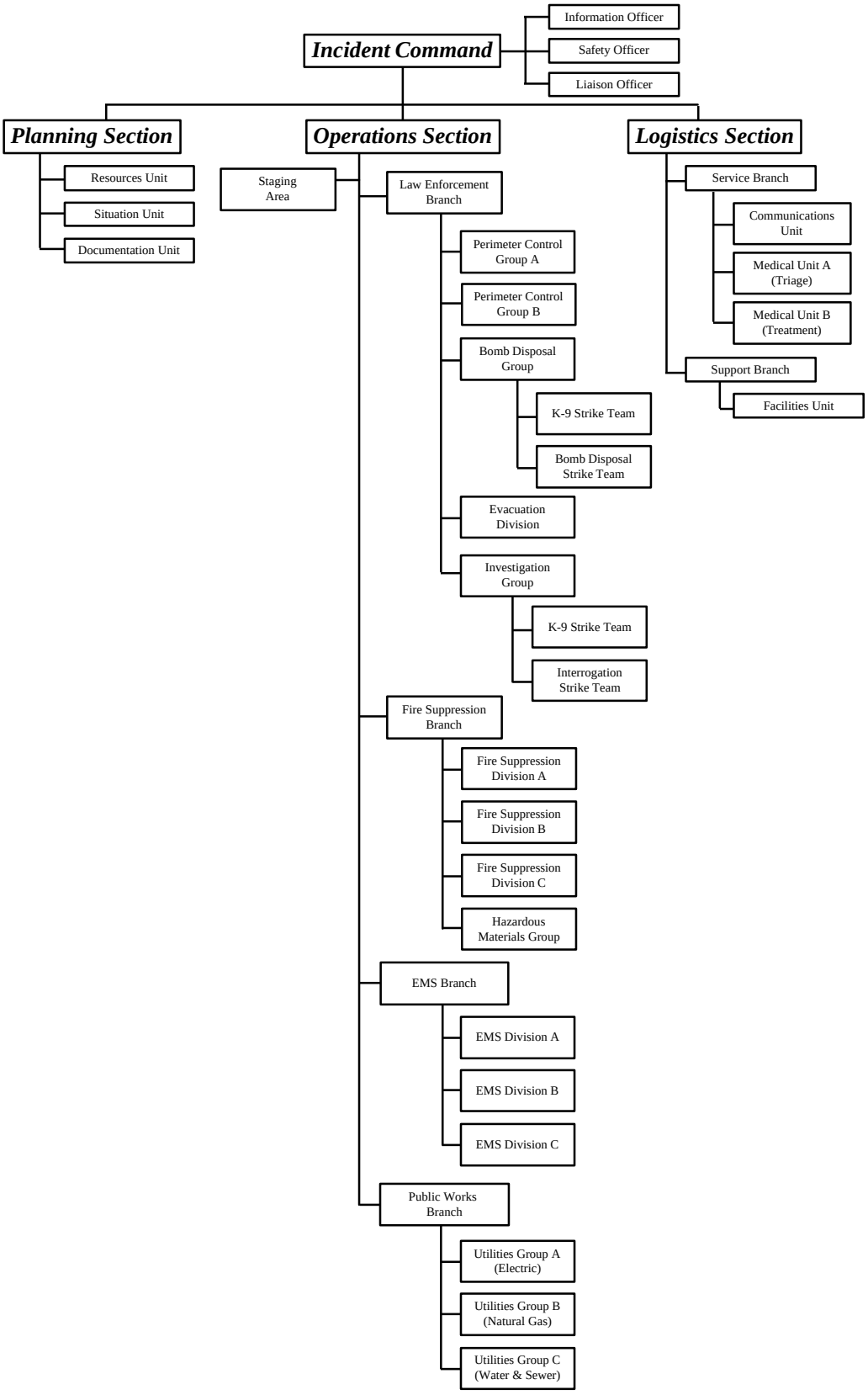
Fortunately the Incident Commander established an area for EMS to set up triage, treatment, and transportation (Casualty Collection Point).

With the extent of the bomb disposal injuries unknown at the time, fire suppression units began working to extinguish the fire and the EMS Units prepared to move in. As the heat from the fire grew more intense, the other bombs began exploding, raining flaming debris on other parts of the structure and on other adjacent structures.

To address the deteriorating situation, the Incident Commander quickly completed another sizeup and determined that additional resources would be required, including:

- Additional fire suppression units.
- Additional EMS units.
- Planning and logistics support.

The incident suddenly has grown dramatically in complexity. To address immediate needs and possible contingencies, the Incident Commander has requested significant additional resources. The ICS structure will expand accordingly, as shown in the figure on the next page.


Incident Command
Information Officer
Safety Officer
Liaison Officer
Planning Section
Resources Unit
Situation Unit
Documentation Unit
Operations Section
Staging Area
Law Enforcement Branch
Perimeter Control Group A
Perimeter Control Group B
Bomb Disposal Group
K-9 Strike Team
Bomb Disposal Strike Team
Evacuation Division
Investigation Group
K-9 Strike Team
Interrogation Strike Team
Fire Suppression Branch
Fire Suppression Division A
Fire Suppression Division B
Fire Suppression Division C
Hazardous Materials Group
EMS Branch
EMS Division A
EMS Division B
EMS Division C
Public Works Branch
Utilities Group A (Electric)
Utilities Group B (Natural Gas)
Utilities Group C (Water & Sewer)
Logistics Section
Service Branch
Communications Unit
Medical Unit A (Triage)
Medical Unit B (Treatment)
Support Branch
Facilities Unit

Expanding the ICS Organization (Continued)

The Command Staff is now expanded fully with the addition of a Liaison Officer. Although the Incident Commander has not determined the need for a Finance/Administration Section, he has expanded the General Staff to include Planning and Logistics Sections. Within the Planning Section, additional resources will include:

- A *Situation Unit,* which will continue the sizeup and analysis functions for the incident.
- A *Resources Unit,* which will analyze the incident status in the context of determining what resources are necessary and how they should be deployed. This unit is responsible for establishing all incident check-in activities.
- A *Documentation Unit,* which will document the incident as it progresses and prepare after-action reports.

Within the Logistics Section, a Service Branch has been established to accommodate the Communications Unit and a Medical Unit (triage and treatment of responders). A Support Branch also has been established to accommodate a Facilities Unit, which will be responsible for setting up and maintaining the Staging Area.

As you can see, the ICS structure is set up to accommodate additional expansion, if and when it becomes necessary. But what happens when the incident is under control and begins to unwind? The next section will illustrate how the ICS structure contracts as an incident nears its conclusion.

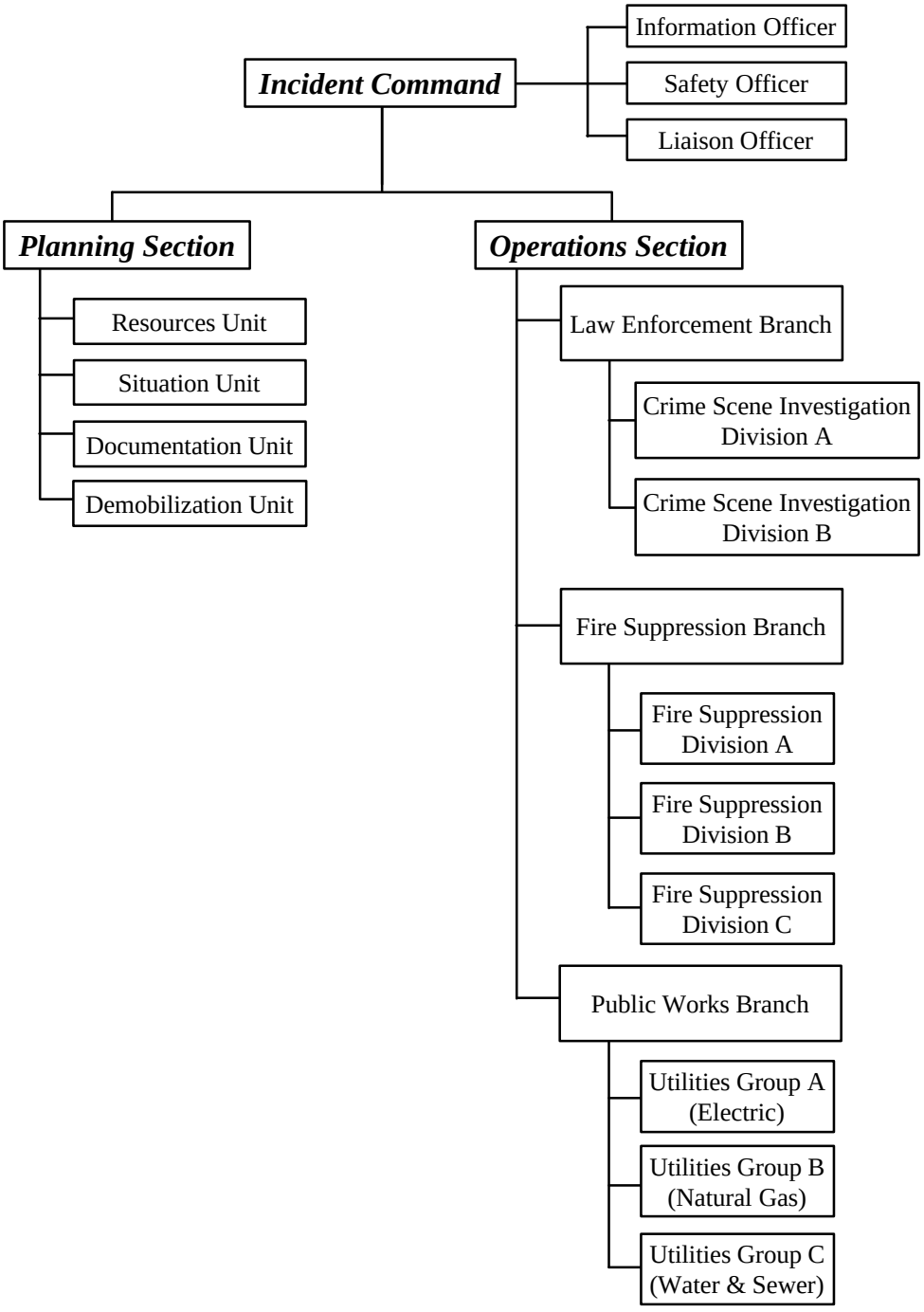
Contracting the ICS Organization

Scenario Update: Firefighters at the scene were able to control the fires within the first hour. As a result of the explosion, two members of the Bomb Disposal Unit were killed. Several firefighters were injured by debris from the blast, and several others were overcome by smoke or suffered minor injuries.

As the responders gained control of the situation, several events occurred:

- To assist with demobilization, the Planning Section Chief established a Demobilization Unit.
- The perpetrators were arrested and transported to jail.
- Unexploded ordnance and equipment were removed from the structure and transported from the scene.
- Drugs and drug-making paraphernalia were removed and transported from the scene.
- When it was safe to reenter the area, the Perimeter Control and Evacuation Groups were demobilized.
- As personnel and equipment were released, the Staging Area was demobilized.
- As casualties were transported to local hospitals, the Support Branch and Facilities Unit were demobilized.

With the incident under control, the Incident Commander has determined that some units are no longer needed and can be *demobilized.* To ensure that all personnel are debriefed and equipment is released to its controlling agencies, a Demobilization Unit is established under the Planning Section. After the personnel described in the scenario above are released, the ICS organization looks like that shown in the next figure.


Incident Command
Information Officer
Safety Officer
Liaison Officer
Planning Section
Resources Unit
Situation Unit
Documentation Unit
Demobilization Unit
Operations Section
Law Enforcement Branch
Crime Scene Investigation Division A
Crime Scene Investigation Division B
Fire Suppression Branch
Fire Suppression Division A
Fire Suppression Division B
Fire Suppression Division C
Public Works Branch
Utilities Group A (Electric)
Utilities Group B (Natural Gas)
Utilities Group C (Water & Sewer)

Contracting the ICS Organization *(Continued)*

Gradual demobilization of personnel and equipment will continue, with perhaps an occasional addition of additional operational resources, such as Crime Scene Investigation Divisions, until the incident is reduced to its most simple form—only the Incident Commander (who may be several persons removed from the original Incident Commander) and critical personnel remain on the scene.

The next section will describe how and when a change of command takes place and the key points that must be included in a transfer-of-command briefing.

TRANSFER OF COMMAND

As described earlier in this unit, the senior person among the initial responders to an incident becomes the Incident Commander. As an incident escalates, however, it may be necessary to transfer command of the incident to a more experienced person—or to an Incident Commander that is designated by local ordinance or State law. When transfer of command is necessary, the transfer must be made as efficiently as possible and in person, whenever possible.

To transfer command, the person being relieved must brief the incoming Incident Commander to provide information about:

- The incident conditions (e.g., the current situation, objectives, priorities, hazards, resource needs, etc.).
- The IAP and its current status.
- Safety considerations and concerns.
- Deployment and assignment of operating units and personnel.

The outgoing Incident Commander also should review the command board, which shows resource status and deployments, with the incoming Incident Commander, and Dispatch (and other designated persons) must be advised of the command change.

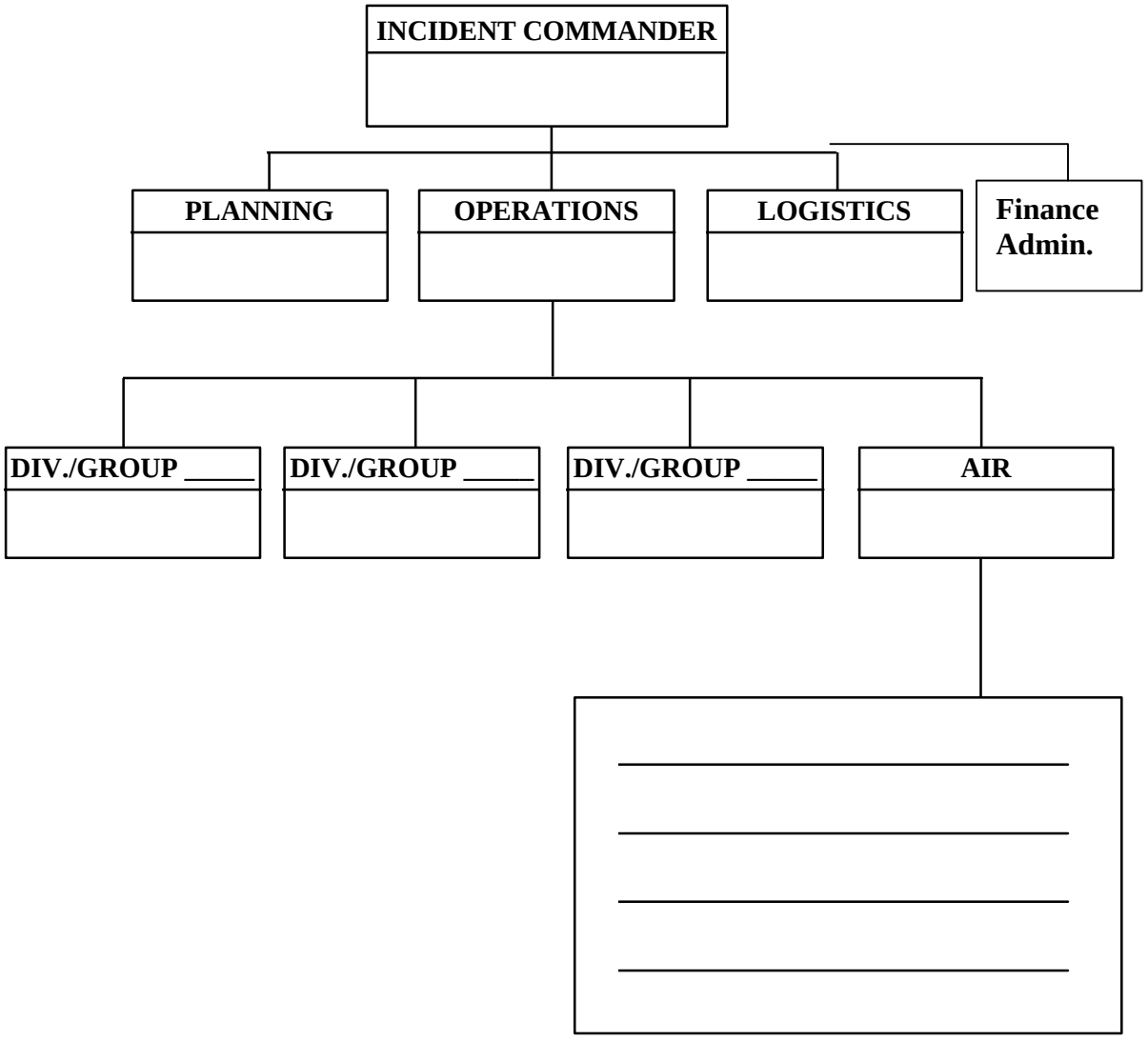
To facilitate briefing preparation, ICS experts strongly recommend the use of the Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201, NFES 1325) shown on pages 2-14 through 2-17. The form provides for a concise record of the:

- Incident area.
- Current actions being undertaken by responding agencies.
- Current ICS organization.
- Current resource needs and deployment.

INCIDENT BRIEFING	**1. INCIDENT NAME**	**2. DATE PREPARED**	**3. TIME PREPARED**
4. MAP SKETCH			
ICS 201 (12/93) NFES 1325	**PAGE 1**	**5. PREPARED BY (NAME AND POSITION)**	

6. SUMMARY OF CURRENT ACTIONS		
ICS 201 (12/93) **NFES 1325**	**PAGE 2**	

7. CURRENT ORGANIZATION



ICS 201 (12/93) **NFES 1325**	**PAGE 3**	

8. RESOURCES SUMMARY				
RESOURCES ORDERED	**RESOURCES IDENTIFICATION**	**ETA**	**ON SCENE ✓**	**LOCATION/ASSIGNMENT**
ICS 201 (12/93) NEFS 1325	**PAGE 4**			

INCIDENT ACTION PLANS

The Incident Commander is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of an IAP. For simple incidents, the IAP may be prepared by the Incident Commander and may not be written. In more complex incidents, the IAP will be a written document that is developed by the Planning Section under the direction of the Incident Commander.

IAPs are always based on incident needs and the ICS organization. They must be flexible and must be reevaluated constantly.

IAPs are developed for specified time periods. These time periods, called *operational periods*, are determined by the needs of the incident. In rapidly escalating or very complex incidents, the operational periods should be shorter to allow for rapid response to changing events. In smaller, less complex incidents, the operational periods should be longer but usually do not exceed 12 hours.

UNIT SUMMARY

This unit covered the ICS organization and demonstrated with a scenario how the organization:

- Expands as incidents escalate or become more complex.
- Contracts as incidents wind down.

Initially, the Incident Commander may not fill all Command and General Staff functions. As an incident becomes more complex, however, the organization also can expand to include S*ections, Branches, Divisions, Groups,* and *units.* Expansion takes place functionally and at levels that the Incident Commander determines are necessary. Additional layers may be added to the organization to reflect the changing needs of the incident and to maintain an effective span of control. As incident activities wind down, the Incident Commander will determine that some personnel and equipment are no longer required and will *demobilize* them. Again, the organization will contract functionally as determined by the current needs of the incident.

The senior person among the initial responders to an incident becomes the Incident Commander. As an incident escalates, it may be necessary to transfer command—perhaps several times. When transfer of command becomes necessary, the outgoing Incident Commander must brief the incoming Incident Commander, providing him or her with critical information about the incident, including:

- Incident conditions.
- The IAP and its current status.
- Safety considerations and concerns.
- Deployment and assignment of operating units and personnel.

The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201, NFES 1325) has been developed and proven invaluable for transfer-of-command briefings.

The Incident Commander is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of an IAP, which will be prepared by the Planning Section when that Section is staffed. In less complex incidents, the IAP may be oral or written, but for more complex incidents, it always should be written.

IAPs are developed for operational periods, which are determined by the needs of the incident. In rapidly escalating or very complex incidents, the operational periods should be shorter to allow for rapid response to changing events. In less complex incidents, the operational periods should be longer but should not exceed 12 hours.

NEXT STEPS

If you believe that you have mastered the information included in this unit, complete the Self-Check Exercise that begins on the next page. When you have completed the Self-Check Exercise, compare your answers with those provided following the Self-Check-Exercise. If you answered all of the questions correctly, continue to Unit 3. If you answered any questions incorrectly, review the appropriate section(s) of this unit to ensure that you have learned the material. Then, proceed to Unit 3.

UNIT 2: SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

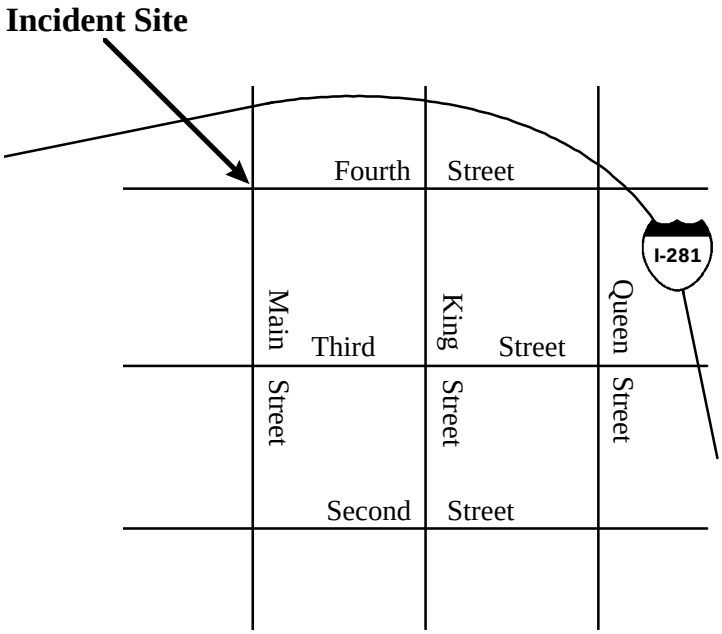
Instructions: Use the Self-Check Exercise to test how well you learned the material presented in Unit 2. When you complete the exercise, check your answers against those in the Answer Key following this Self-Check Exercise. If you answered any questions incorrectly, be sure to review the corresponding section of the unit before proceeding to Unit 3.

Read the scenario below, and refer to it to complete the Incident Briefing Form on the pages that follow.

Scenario:

This is the eighth day in a row of extremely low temperatures. The 9-1-1 center has received several calls complaining of low water pressure in a four-block area of town. The dispatcher knew that Engine Company 13 was returning from a call and was in the area, so she diverted it to the scene.

Upon arriving at the intersection of Fourth and Main, the firefighters observe water spouting from a broken water main. The flow of water is creating two serious problems. It is reducing water pressure to the area dramatically, and it is creating extremely icy conditions in the area of Fourth and Main. (A map of the area is shown below.)



Assuming command, the Fire Captain radioed dispatch to request that a public works crew be dispatched to turn off the water, spread ice melt material, and begin repairs and that four patrol cars be dispatched to control traffic in the area. The Captain then assigned several firefighters to control traffic as an interim measure. Finally, realizing that this incident would be the primary responsibility of public works and law enforcement, the Captain began preparing a transfer-of-command briefing using ICS 201.

Dispatch notified the Fire Captain that the police units were dispatched and had an estimated time of arrival (ETA) of between 5 and 10 minutes. Dispatch had also notified Public Works. Repair crews should be at the scene within 45 minutes.

Assume that you are the Fire Captain.

UNIT 2: SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

Read the scenario update, and answer the questions that follow it.

Scenario Update:

A Police Sergeant has arrived at the scene, followed shortly by two public works trucks. The sergeant immediately deploys police officers to major intersections, then consults with the Public Works Crew Chief.

The Crew Chief explains that the water main involved is 12 inches in diameter. It will take the remainder of the afternoon and most of the night to repair the damage. It also will require a considerable amount of equipment, which the Crew Chief is about to request.

It is already late afternoon, and the temperature is dropping into the high teens. The wind is gusting to 20 miles per hour.

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1. In this incident, both the police and public works would establish an ICP.

   a. True
   b. False

2. It is apparent that the Police Sergeant is the Incident Commander at this point in the scenario. Is that appropriate? Why or why not?

3. What is perhaps the major planning consideration for this incident?

4. It is nearly time for the afternoon rush hour, and the incident site is a heavily traveled route. What **Command Staff** position should the Incident Commander activate to ensure that commuters are aware of the situation?

   a. Safety Officer
   b. Operations Section Chief
   c. Information Officer
   d. Liaison Officer

5. To control resources as they arrive, the Incident Commander activates the Operations Section, establishes a Staging Area, and appoints a Staging Area Manager. Using information from the scenario and the update, draw the organizational structure as it currently exists.

1. **b. False (Page 2-8)**

2. **It may be appropriate for the Police Sergeant to retain command, depending on State law and local ordinance. However, assuming that it is permissible, it may be preferable for the sergeant to transfer command to the Public Works Crew Chief because it is public works that will have the major role in this incident. (Page 2-13)**

3. **The cold weather**

4. **c. Information Officer (Page 2-8)**

5.