
Appendix A: Glossary

Area Command (Unified Area Command). An organization established (1) to oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being handled by an ICS organization or (2) to oversee the management of large or multiple incidents to which several Incident Management teams have been assigned. Area Command has the responsibility to set overall strategy and priorities, allocate critical resources according to priorities, ensure that incidents are properly managed, and ensure that objectives are met and strategies followed. Area Command becomes Unified Area Command when incidents are multijurisdictional. Area Command may be established at an EOC facility or at some location other than an ICP.

Catastrophic Incident. Any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, and/or government functions. A catastrophic event could result in sustained national impacts over a prolonged period of time; almost immediately exceeds resources normally available to State, local, tribal, and private-sector authorities in the impacted area; and significantly interrupts governmental operations and emergency services to such an extent that national security could be threatened. All catastrophic events are Incidents of National Significance.

Chain of Command. A series of command, control, executive, or management positions in hierarchical order of authority.

Command Staff. In an incident management organization, the Command Staff consists of the Incident Command and the special staff positions of Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer, and other positions as required, who report directly to the Incident Commander. They may have an assistant or assistants, as needed.

Emergency. As defined by the Stafford Act, an emergency is “any occasion or instance for which, in the determination of the President, Federal assistance is needed to supplement State and local efforts and capabilities to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in any part of the United States.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support domestic incident management activities normally takes place. An EOC may be a temporary facility or may be located in a more central or permanently established facility, perhaps at a higher level of organization within a jurisdiction.

Emergency Responder. Includes Federal, State, local, and tribal emergency public safety, law enforcement, emergency response, emergency medical (including hospital emergency facilities), and related personnel, agencies, and authorities.

Emergency Support Function (ESF). A grouping of government and certain private-sector capabilities into an organizational structure to provide the support, resources, program implementation, and services that are most likely to be needed to save lives, protect property and the environment, restore essential services and critical infrastructure, and help victims and communities return to normal, when feasible, following domestic incidents. The ESFs serve as the primary operational-level mechanism to provide assistance to State, local, and tribal governments or to Federal departments and agencies conducting missions of primary Federal responsibility.

Evacuation. Organized, phased, and supervised withdrawal, dispersal, or removal of civilians from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas, and their reception and care in safe areas.

First Responder. Local and nongovernmental police, fire, and emergency personnel who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, including emergency response providers as defined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101), as well as emergency management, public health, clinical care, public works, and other skilled support personnel (such as equipment operators) who provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations. First responders may include personnel from Federal, State, local, tribal, or nongovernmental organizations.

Hazard. Something that is potential dangerous or harmful, often the root cause of an unwanted outcome.

Hazard Mitigation. Any cost-effective measure that will reduce the potential for damage to a facility from a disaster event.

Incident. An occurrence or event, natural or human-caused, that requires an emergency response to protect life or property. Incidents can, for example, include major disasters, emergencies, terrorist attacks, terrorist threats, wildland and urban fires, floods, hazardous materials spills, nuclear accidents, aircraft accidents, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, tropical storms, war-related disasters, public health and medical emergencies, and other occurrences requiring an emergency response.

Incident Action Plan. An oral or written plan containing general objectives reflecting the overall strategy for managing an incident. It may include the identification of operational resources and assignments. It may also include attachments that provide direction and important information for management of the incident during one or more operational periods.

Incident Command Post (ICP). The field location at which the primary tactical-level, on-scene incident command functions are performed. The ICP may be collocated with the incident base or other incident facilities and is normally identified by green rotating or flashing lights.

Incident Command System (ICS). A standardized on-scene emergency management construct specifically designed to provide for the adoption of an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating with a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. ICS is used for all kinds of emergencies and is applicable to small as well as large and complex incidents. ICS is used by various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private, or organized field-level incident management operations.

Incident Commander (IC). The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site.

Incident of National Significance. Based on criteria established in HSPD-5 (paragraph 4), an actual or potential high-impact event that requires a coordinated and effective response by and appropriate combination of Federal, State, local, tribal, nongovernmental, and/or private-sector entities to save lives and minimize damage, and provide the basis for long-term community recovery and mitigation activities.

Joint Field Office (JFO). A temporary Federal facility established locally to provide a central point for Federal, State, local, and tribal executives with responsibility for incident oversight, direction, and/or assistance to coordinate protection, prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery actions effectively. The JFO will combine the traditional functions of the JOC, the FEMA DFO, and the JIC within a single Federal facility.

Joint Information Center (JIC). A facility established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities. The JIC is the central point of contact for all news media at the scene of the incident. Public information officials from all participating agencies should collocate at the JIC.

Joint Information System (JIS). Integrates incident information and public affairs into a cohesive organization designed to provide consistent, coordinated, timely information during a crisis or incident operations. The mission of the JIS is to provide a structure and system for developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages; developing, recommending, and executing public information plans and strategies on behalf of the IC; advising the IC concerning public affairs issues that could affect a response effort; and controlling rumors and inaccurate information that could undermine public confidence in the emergency response effort.

Joint Operations Center (JOC). The JOC is the focal point for all Federal investigative law enforcement activities during a terrorist or potential terrorist incident or any other significant criminal incident, and is managed by the SFLEO. The JOC becomes a component of the JFO when the NRP is activated.

Jurisdiction. A range or sphere of authority. Public agencies have jurisdiction at an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authorities. Jurisdictional authority at an incident can be political or geographical (e.g., city, county, tribal, State, or Federal boundary lines) or functional (e.g., law enforcement, public health).

Local Government. A county, municipality, city, town, township, local public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments (regardless of whether the council of governments is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law), regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government; an Indian tribe or authorized tribal organization or, in Alaska, a Native Village or Alaska Regional native Corporation; or a rural community, unincorporated town or village, or other public entity.

Major Disaster. As defined by the Stafford Act, any natural catastrophe (including any hurricane, tornado, storm, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, or drought) or, regardless of cause, any fire, flood, or explosion, in any part of the United States, which in the determination of the President, causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance under this act to supplement the efforts and available resources of States, local governments, and disaster relief organizations in alleviating the damage, loss, hardship, or suffering caused thereby.

Multiagency Command Center (MACC). An interagency coordination center established by DHS/USSS during National Special Security Events (NSSEs) as a component of the JFO. The MACC serves as the focal point for interagency security planning and coordination, including the coordination of all NSSE-related information from other intra-agency centers (e.g., police command posts, Secret Service security rooms) and other interagency centers (e.g., intelligence operations centers, Joint Information Centers).

Multiagency Coordination Entity. An entity that functions within a broader multiagency coordination system. It may establish priorities among incidents and associated resource allocations, resolve conflicting agency policies, and provide strategic guidance and direction to support incident management activities.

Multiagency Coordination System. A system that provides the architecture to support coordination for incident prioritization, critical resource allocation, communications systems integration, and information coordination. The components of multiagency coordination systems include facilities, equipment, EOCs, specific multiagency coordination entities, personnel, procedures, and communications. The systems assist agencies and organization to integrate the subsystems of NIMS fully.

Multijurisdictional Incident. An incident requiring action from multiple agencies that each have jurisdiction to manage certain aspects of an incident. In ICS, these incidents will be managed under a Unified Command.

Mutual Aid Agreement. A written agreement between agencies, organizations, and/or jurisdictions to assist one another on request by furnishing personnel, equipment, and/or expertise in a specified manner.

National. Of a nationwide character, including the Federal, State, local, and tribal aspects of governance and policy.

National Incident Management System (NIMS). A system, mandated by HSPD-5, that provides a consistent, nationwide approach for Federal, State, local, and tribal governments; the private sector; and NGOs to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. To provide for interoperability and compatibility among Federal, State, local, and tribal capabilities, NIMS includes a core set of concepts, principles, and terminology. HSPD-5 identifies these as ICS; multiagency coordination systems; training; identification and management of resources (including systems for classifying types of resources); qualification and certification; and the collection, tracking, and reporting of incident information and incident resources.

National Special Security Event (NSSE). A designated event that, by virtue of its political, economic, social, or religious significance, may be the target of terrorism or other criminal activity.

Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs). Nonprofit entities that are based on the interests of their members, individuals, or institutions and that are not created by a government, but may work cooperatively with government. NGOs serve a public purpose, not a private benefit. Examples of NGOs include faith-based charity organizations and the American Red Cross.

Preparedness. The range of deliberate, critical tasks and activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the operational capability to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents. Preparedness is a continuous process involving efforts at all levels of government and between government and private-sector and nongovernmental organizations to identify threats, determine vulnerabilities, and identify required resources.

Prevention. Actions taken to avoid an incident or to intervene to stop an incident from occurring. Prevention involves actions taken to protect lives and property. It involves applying intelligence and other information to a range of activities that may include such countermeasures as deterrence operations; heightened inspections; improved surveillance and security operations; investigations to determine the full nature and source of a threat; public health and agricultural surveillance and testing processes; immunizations, isolation, or quarantine; and, as appropriate, specific law enforcement operations aimed at deterring, preempting, interdicting, or disrupting illegal activity and apprehending potential perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

Private Sector. Organizations and entities that are not part of any governmental structure. Private-sector organizations include for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, formal and informal structures, commerce and industry, private emergency response organizations, and private voluntary organizations (PVOs).

Public Information Officer (PIO). A member of the Command Staff responsible for interfacing with the public and media or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements.

Recovery. The development, coordination, and execution of service- and site-restoration plans for impacted communities and the reconstitution of government operations and services through individual, private-sector, nongovernmental, and public assistance programs that: identify needs and define resources; provide housing and promote restoration; address long-term care and treatment of affected persons; implement additional measures for community restoration; incorporate mitigation measures and techniques, as feasible; evaluate the incident to identify lessons learned; and develop initiatives to mitigate the effects of future incidents.

Resources. Personnel and major items of equipment, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment to incident operations and for which status is maintained. Resources are described by kind and type and may be used in operational support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at an EOC.

Response. Activities that address the short-term, direct effects of an incident. Response includes immediate actions to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs. Response also includes the execution of emergency operations plans and of incident mitigation activities designed to limit the loss of life, personal injury, property damage, and other unfavorable outcomes. As indicated by the situation, response activities include: applying intelligence of other information to lessen the effects or consequences of an incident, increased security operations; continuing investigations into the nature and source of the threat; ongoing public health and agricultural surveillance and testing processes; immunizations, isolation, or quarantine; and specific law enforcement operations aimed at preempting, interdicting, or disrupting illegal activity, and apprehending actual perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

State. Any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and any possession of the United States. (As defined in section 2(14) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Public Law 107-296, 116 Stat. 2135, et seq. (2002).)

Terrorism. Any activity that (1) involves an act that (a) is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources; and (b) is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any State or other subdivision of the United States; and (2) appears to be intended (a) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (b) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (c) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.

Unified Command. An application of ICS used when there is more than one agency with incident jurisdiction or when incidents cross political jurisdictions. Agencies work together through the designated members of the Unified Command to establish their designated Incident Commanders at a single Incident Command Post to establish a common set of objectives and strategies for a single Incident Action Plan.