

ICS 100 – Lesson 2: ICS Organization: Part I

Lesson Overview

The **ICS Organization: Part I** lesson introduces you to the:

- Organizational structure of ICS.
- Five major management functions.
- Principle of span of control.
- Use of position titles.
- Roles and responsibilities of the Incident Commander and Command Staff.

This lesson should take approximately **30 minutes** to complete. **Remember, you must complete the entire lesson to receive credit.**

ICS Organization

There is no correlation between the ICS organization and the administrative structure of any single agency or jurisdiction. This is deliberate, because confusion over different position titles and organizational structures has been a significant stumbling block to effective incident management in the past.

For example, the Department of Agriculture has an Office of Communication. This office has no relationship to the position of Communication Unit Leader in ICS, which is responsible for the hardware that the ICS organization uses to communicate.

Performance of Management Functions

Every incident or event requires that certain management functions be performed. The problem must be identified and assessed, a plan to deal with it developed and implemented, and the necessary resources procured and paid for.

Even if an incident is very small, and only one or two people are involved, these management functions still will apply to some degree.

ICS 100 – Lesson 2: ICS Organization: Part I

Five Major Management Functions

There are five major management functions that are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops. These functions apply whether you are handling a routine emergency, organizing for a major nonemergency event, or managing a response to a major disaster. The five major management functions are:

- Incident Command
- Operations
- Planning
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration



Management Function Descriptions

Below is a brief description of each ICS function:

- **Command:** Sets incident objectives and priorities and has overall responsibility at the incident or event.
- **Operations:** Conducts tactical operations to carry out the plan. Develops the tactical assignments and organization, and directs all tactical resources.
- **Planning:** Prepares and documents the Incident Action Plan to accomplish the incident objectives, collects and evaluates information, maintains resource status, and maintains documentation for incident records.
- **Logistics:** Provides support, resources, and all other services needed to meet the incident objectives.
- **Finance/Administration:** Monitors costs related to the incident. Provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analyses.

Activity

The ICS Management Functions can be applied to something as common as planning a vacation. For each ICS Management Function, list the vacation activities that you would perform.

Management Function	Vacation Activity
Command	Establish a budget and select the destination.
Operations	Select the method of travel, determine the route to the destination, and operate the vehicle.
Planning	Find the most expedient route to the destination, determine whether there is any current road construction or other obstacles, and determine how many miles will be traveled.
Logistics	Arrange for vehicle, fuel, lodging, and food.
Finance/Administration	Pay for the trip.

ICS 100 – Lesson 2: ICS Organization: Part I

Organizational Structure – Incident Commander

On small incidents and events, one person, the Incident Commander, may accomplish all five management functions. In fact, the Incident Commander is the only position that is always staffed in ICS applications. However, large incidents or events may require that these functions be set up as separate **Sections** within the organization.

Organizational Structure—ICS Sections

Each of the primary ICS Sections may be subdivided as needed. The ICS organization has the capability to expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident.

A basic ICS operating guideline is that the person at the top of the organization is responsible until the authority is delegated to another person. Thus, on smaller incidents when these additional persons are not required, the Incident Commander will personally accomplish or manage all aspects of the incident organization.

ICS Span of Control

Another basic operating guideline concerns the supervisory structure of the organization.

Span of control pertains to the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can manage effectively on emergency response incidents. Maintaining an effective span of control is particularly important on incidents where safety and accountability are a top priority.

Maintaining Span of Control

Maintaining adequate span of control throughout the ICS organization is very important.

Effective span of control on incidents may vary from three to seven, and **a ratio of one supervisor to five reporting elements is recommended.**

If the number of reporting elements falls outside of these ranges, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There may be exceptions, usually in lower-risk assignments or where resources work in close proximity to each other.

ICS 100 – Lesson 2: ICS Organization: Part I

ICS Position Titles

To maintain span of control, the ICS organization can be divided into many levels of supervision. At each level, individuals with primary responsibility positions have distinct titles. Using specific ICS position titles serves three important purposes:

- Titles provide a common standard all users. For example, if one agency uses the title Branch Chief, another Branch Manager, etc., this lack of consistency can cause confusion at the incident.
- The use of distinct titles for ICS positions allows for filling ICS positions with the most qualified individuals rather than by rank.
- Standardized position titles is useful when requesting qualified personnel. For example, in ordering personnel, it is important to know if the positions needed are Unit Leaders, clerks, etc.

Supervisory Position Titles

The titles for all supervisory levels of the organization are shown in the table below.

Organizational Level	Title	Support Position
Incident Command	Incident Commander	Deputy
Command Staff	Officer	Assistant
General Staff (Section)	Chief	Deputy
Branch	Director	Deputy
Division/Group	Supervisor	N/A
Unit	Leader	Manager
Strike Team/Task Force	Leader	Single Resource Boss

ICS 100 – Lesson 2: ICS Organization: Part I

ICS Organizational Components

Sections: The organizational levels with responsibility for a major functional area of the incident (e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration). The person in charge of each Section is designated as a Chief.

Divisions: Used to divide an incident geographically. The person in charge of each Division is designated as a Supervisor.

Groups: Used to describe functional areas of operations. The person in charge of each Group is designated as a Supervisor.

Branches: Used when the number of Divisions or Groups extends the span of control. Can be either geographical or functional. The person in charge of each Branch is designated as a Director.

Task Forces: A combination of mixed resources with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Task Force Leader.

Strike Teams: A set number of resources of the same kind and type with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Strike Team Leader.

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

Roles and Responsibilities

You should now be familiar with the basic ICS organizational structure, the five major management functions, and the principle of span of control.

In this section, you'll learn about the expansion of the ICS organization and the roles and responsibilities of the **Incident Commander and Command Staff**.

Incident Commander's Overall Role

The Incident Commander has overall responsibility for managing the incident. The Incident Commander must be fully briefed and should have a written delegation of authority. Initially, assigning tactical resources and overseeing operations will be under the direct supervision of the Incident Commander.

ICS 100 – Lesson 2: ICS Organization: Part I

Incident Commander

“My job is to provide the overall leadership for incident response. I am able to delegate my authority to others to manage the ICS organization. Like any other organization, I have bosses too. I take general direction and receive my delegation of authority from the responsible agency or jurisdiction administrator or administrators, and I am accountable to them. It’s important to note that these agency or jurisdiction administrators may or may not include my real-life boss. For example, the jurisdiction administrators for an incident might include Department of Agriculture agency heads as well as representatives from State and local government.

It’s also important that my staff knows that they have the authority of their positions, even if it’s not the same authority that they have at home.”

Incident Commander Responsibilities

In addition to having overall responsibility for managing the entire incident, the Incident Commander:

- Has responsibility for ensuring incident safety, providing information services to internal and external stakeholders, and establishing and maintaining liaison with other agencies participating in the incident.
- May have one or more Deputies from the same agency or from other agencies or jurisdictions. Deputy Incident Commanders must be as qualified as the Incident Commander.

Incident Commander

“As the Incident Commander, I am responsible for all activities and functions until I staff them. So, one of the first things I do is assess my need for staff. I know that for an incident that is both complex and long-term, I will need more staff. In addition, I may decide that I need a Deputy.

Also, I establish incident objectives for the organization based on the direction given by agency directors. The type of plan depends on the magnitude of the incident. During a complex incident, I’ll direct my staff to develop a written Incident Action Plan. The beauty of ICS is that you can tailor your organization to match the need.”

Selecting and Changing Incident Commanders

As incidents expand in size, change in jurisdiction or discipline, or become more complex, command may change to a more experienced Incident Commander.

Rank, grade, and seniority are not the factors used to select the Incident Commander. The Incident Commander is always a highly qualified individual trained to lead the incident response.

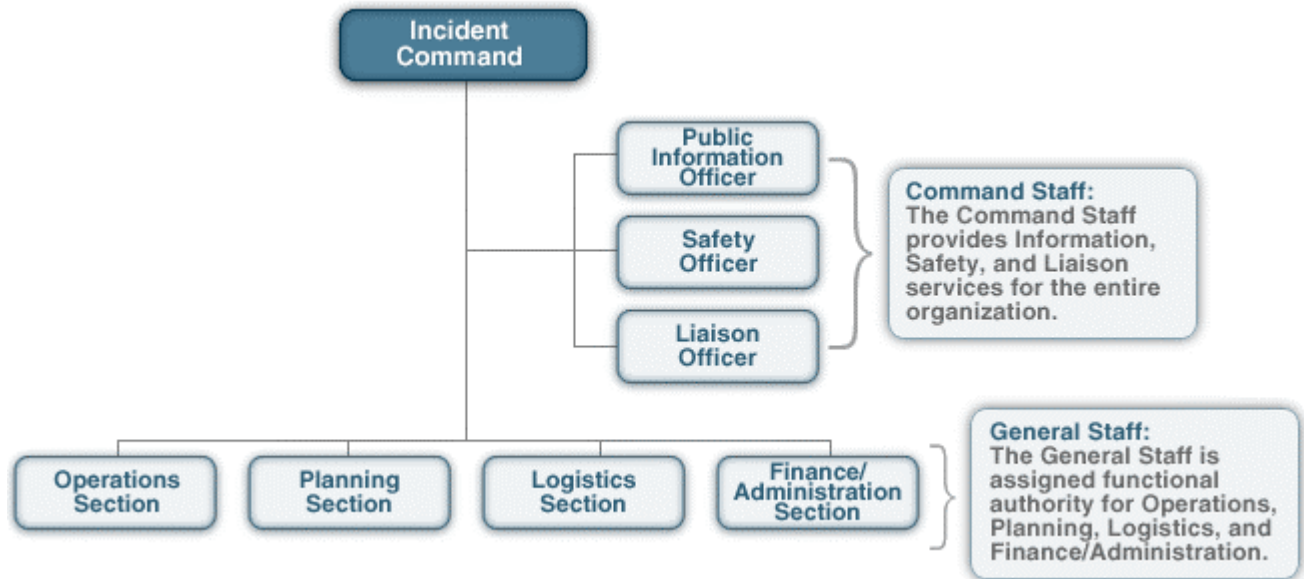
Transfer of command at an incident always requires that there be a full briefing for the incoming Incident Commander and notification to all personnel that a change in command is taking place.

ICS 100 – Lesson 2: ICS Organization: Part I

Expanding the Organization

As incidents grow, the Incident Commander may delegate authority for performance of certain activities to the Command Staff and the General Staff.

- **Command Staff:** The Command Staff provide information, safety, and liaison services for the entire organization.
- **General Staff:** The General Staff are assigned functional authority for Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.



Command Staff

Depending upon the size and type of incident or event, it may be necessary for the Incident Commander to designate personnel to provide information, safety, and liaison services for the entire organization. In ICS, these personnel make up the Command Staff and consist of the:

- **Public Information Officer**, who serves as the conduit for information to internal and external stakeholders, including the media or other organizations seeking information directly from the incident or event.
- **Safety Officer**, who monitors safety conditions and develops measures for assuring the safety of all assigned personnel.
- **Liaison Officer**, who serves as the primary contact for supporting agencies assigned to an incident.

ICS 100 – Lesson 2: ICS Organization: Part I

Meet the Command Staff

Public Information Officer

“I report directly to the Incident Commander and advise him or her on issues related to information dissemination and media relations. I am the primary contact for anyone who wants information about the incident and our response to it. I serve both an external audience through the media, and an internal audience including both incident staff and agency personnel. It’s very important for me to coordinate with other information staff to ensure that we do not issue confusing or conflicting information. Since the Planning Section is gathering intelligence and other information pertinent to the incident, I get a lot of my information from them. Accurate information is essential. In the end, the Incident Commander will approve all information that I release. During a complex incident, I will probably need several Assistant Public Information Officers to help me.”

Safety Officer

“My job is to make sure everyone does the job safely and gets home in one piece. I advise the Incident Commander on issues regarding incident safety, but I would like to emphasize that safety is everyone’s responsibility. I work very closely with Operations to make sure that our people in the field are as safe as possible under the circumstances, including wearing appropriate protective equipment and implementing the safest tactical options. I conduct risk analyses and implement hazard mitigation measures. I normally do this through the planning process, but I do have the authority to stop any unsafe activity that I observe. While a lot of my attention is focused on Operations, I am also concerned about safety for the rest of the organization. I minimize other employee risk by promoting safe driving habits, eliminating tripping hazards, ensuring safe food handling, things like that. I spend a lot of time out of the command post looking at what’s going on. During a complex incident, I will need quite a few assistants to be my eyes and ears.”

Liaison Officer

“I’m the go between. I assist the Incident Commander by gathering information about agencies that are supporting our efforts on this incident. The Incident Commander’s time is devoted to managing the incident, so my job is to serve as a facilitator for cooperating and assisting agencies if they are not represented in the command. I provide briefings to agency representatives and work with them to address their questions and concerns about the operation. I ask agency representatives about restrictions on their resources that may impact how we can use them or special support requirements that they might have. I also ask about availability of any other specialized resources they might have that may prove useful. What I don’t do is try to coordinate their tactical activities. Operations needs to do that. During a complex incident, I may have a lot of agency representatives, but I can usually handle the job myself.”

ICS 100 – Lesson 2: ICS Organization: Part I

Lesson Summary

You have completed the **ICS Organization: Part I** lesson. The lesson addressed the:

- Organizational structure of ICS.
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- Principle of span of control.
- Use of position titles.
- Roles and responsibilities of the Incident Commander and Command Staff.
- Selection and transfer of Incident Commanders.

The next lesson will provide an introduction to the General Staff and the expansion and contraction of the ICS organization.