ICS 200 – Lesson 3: ICS Organization

Lesson Overview

The **ICS Organization** lesson provides information on ICS organizational structure, initial organizational development at an incident, organizational expansion and contraction, and transfer of command.

This lesson should take approximately **45** minutes to complete. **Remember, you must complete the entire lesson to receive credit.**

Lesson 3 Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

• Explain how the incident organization expands or contracts to meet operational needs of the incident.
• Match organizational positions with appropriate ICS sections.
• Describe the use of Branches, Divisions, and Groups within the Operations Section, and provide supervisory titles associated with each level.
• List the types of information communicated during the transfer of command.

Roaring River Flood: Scenario Update

• Assessments have been finalized.
• Incident objectives have been established and tactical operations are beginning for the next operational period.
• There is a need to expand the organization to manage and support the incident response operations.

The rain has finally ended, and the river crested earlier than forecasted. The assessments confirm the early estimates of the damage. The Incident Commander has set the incident objectives for the next operational period.

Veterinarian teams have been dispatched. Their first priority is to euthanize the suffering animals.

The next objective is to identify suitable places to relocate stranded but otherwise healthy animals.

A third objective is to begin the disposal operation of dead animals. Since it will take several days to complete this operation, the disposal teams will first target sites closest to population centers.

The Plant Protection and Quarantine Branch objectives are to set traps, in order to locate the fruit flies, to eradicate the fruit flies, and to control the movement of host material.

The top priority for the Food Safety Inspection Service Branch is to ensure that the contaminated food processing plants are brought back online, in compliance with all health and safety regulations.

Given the scope of these incident objectives, the Incident Commander must secure additional resources and expand the organization.

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Key Organizational Terms

Key ICS organizational terms include:

- **Incident Commander:** The Incident Commander is the individual responsible for overall management of the incident.
- **Command Staff:** The Command Staff consists of the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, and Liaison Officer. They report directly to the Incident Commander.
- **Officer:** Officer is the ICS title for the personnel responsible for the Command Staff positions of Safety, Liaison, and Information.
- **General Staff:** The General Staff are assigned functional authority for Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration. The General Staff also report directly to the Incident Commander.
- **Section:** A Section is the organizational level with responsibility for a major functional area of the incident (e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration).
- **Section Chief:** Chief is the ICS title for individuals responsible for functional sections: Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration
- **Branch:** A Branch is the organizational level having functional or geographic responsibility for major parts of the Operations or Logistics functions.
- **Branch Director:** Branch Director is the ICS title for individuals responsible for supervision of a Branch.
- **Division/Group:** Divisions are used to divide an incident geographically. Groups are used to divide an incident functionally.
- **Division/Group Supervisor:** Supervisor is the ICS title for individuals responsible for a Division or Group.
- **Strike Team:** A Strike Team is a specified combination of the same kind and type of resources with common communications and a Leader.
- **Task Force:** A Task Force is a combination of single resources assembled for a particular tactical need with common communications and a Leader.
- **Unit:** A Unit is the organizational element having functional responsibility for a specific incident planning, logistical, or financial activity.
- **Task Force/Strike Team/Unit Leader:** Leader is the ICS title for an individual responsible for a Task Force, Strike Team, or functional Unit.
- **Resources:** Resources are personnel and equipment available, or potentially available, for assignment to incidents. Resources may be described by kind and type (e.g., ground, water, air, etc.) and may be used in tactical, support, or overhead capacities at an incident.

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Organizational Terminology: The ICS Organizational Chart

The graphic below shows a generic organizational chart with associated key terms. Key ICS titles are associated with the person assigned to each managerial level.
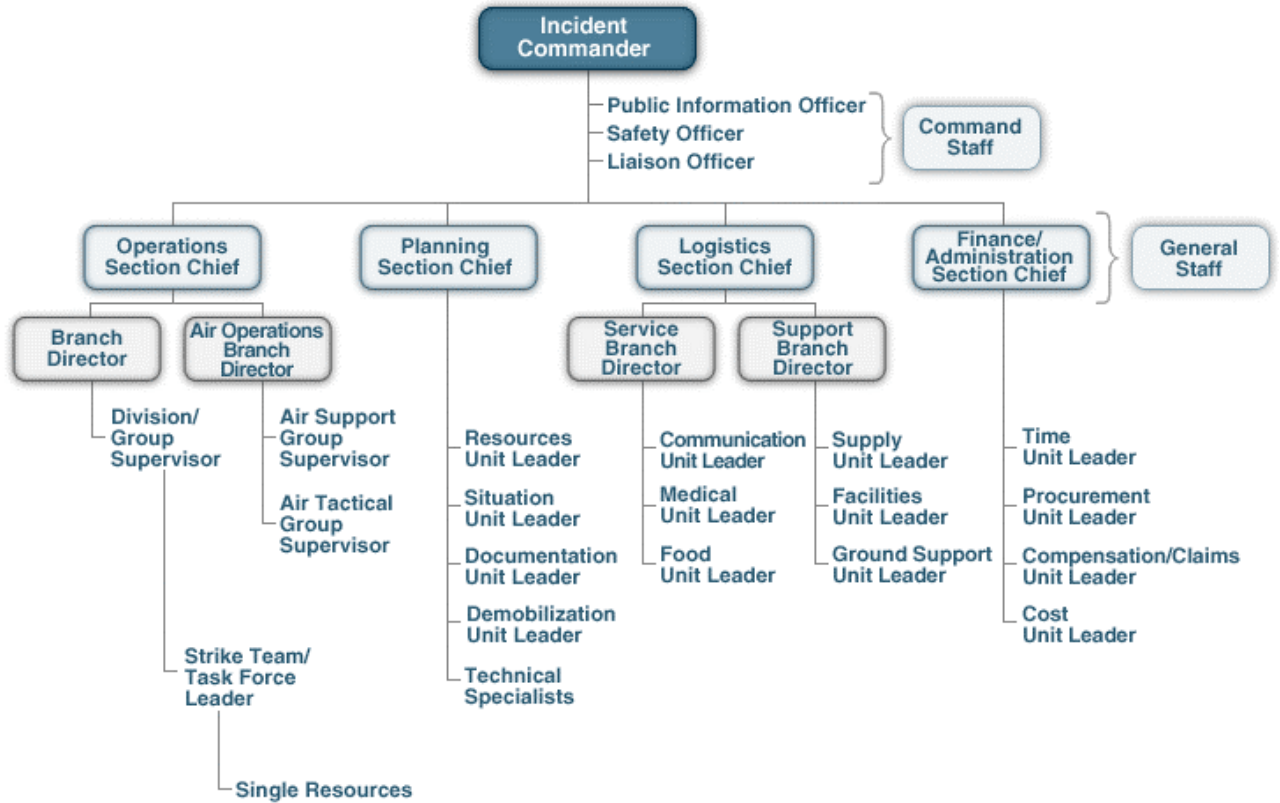
ICS Organizational Chart

The ICS organizational chart is a graphic representation of the incident, including:

- Positions and functions activated.
- Chain of command.
- Reporting relationships.
- Responsibilities delegated.
- Information flow.

Using a graphical representation is a simple yet valuable information tool. Therefore, it is important to maintain the standard terminology and layout of the organizational chart as you apply ICS on incidents.

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ICS—A Flexible System

Standardization of the organizational chart and terms does not limit its flexibility. A key principle of ICS is its flexibility. The ICS organization may be expanded easily from a very small operation for routine incidents into a larger organization capable of handling catastrophic events.

There are no hard and fast rules for expanding the ICS organization. Many incidents will never require the activation of the entire General Staff. Others will require some members of the staff, or all of them. Experienced Incident Commanders can predict workloads and potential staffing needs, regardless of the kind of incident.

Incident Commander

"Most USDA incidents never get as big as the Roaring River Flood, so I don't usually need an organization with all the positions activated. ICS is like a management toolbox: I just take out whatever tool I need to do the job. To do that, though, I have to know what all those tools do!"

Organizing the Incident Command

As you know, the Incident Commander has the overall responsibility for the management of the incident. Even if other functions are not filled, an Incident Commander will always be designated.

After establishing command, the Incident Commander will consult with Agency Administrators to determine the type of command that is required for the incident. The Incident Commander will then identify the initial organization and staffing for the incident.

Types of Command

The Incident Commander knows that the command function may be carried out in two ways:

* As a **single command** in which the Incident Commander will have complete responsibility for incident management.
* As a **unified command** in which responding agencies and/or jurisdictions with responsibility for the incident share incident management.

Single Command

Under a single command, one person—the Incident Commander—has responsibility for managing the entire incident, as directed and delegated by the Agency Administrator.

Although the Incident Commander consults with other authorities as necessary, he or she approves the Incident Action Plan and makes the final decisions on the response.

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Unified Command

If a Unified Command is needed, Incident Commanders representing agencies or jurisdictions that share responsibility for the incident manage the response from a single Incident Command Post.

Under a Unified Command, a single, coordinated Incident Action Plan will direct all activities. The Incident Commanders will supervise a single Command and General Staff organization and speak with one voice.

Roaring River Flood: Command Staff

Based on the damage assessment and the Incident Action Plan, the Incident Commander appoints the following Command Staff officers:

- **Public Information Officer**: This incident has gained a great deal of media attention, and the organization has important information to share with the public, so a Public Information Officer will be required.
- **Safety Officer**: Many response personnel will be working with hazardous chemicals and in potentially hazardous conditions, so a Safety Officer is a must.
- **Liaison Officer**: Given that State and local efforts are ongoing, and that several additional Federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, have sent representatives to the scene, a Liaison Officer is desirable.
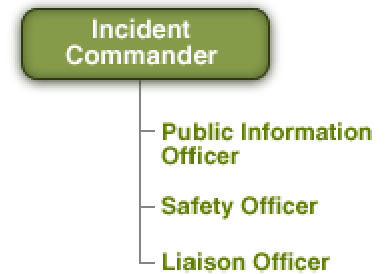
Deputies

The Incident Commander may have one or more deputies. An individual assuming a deputy role must be equally capable of assuming the primary role. Therefore, a Deputy Incident Commander must be able to assume the Incident Commander's role.

Following are three reasons to designate deputies:

- To perform specific tasks as requested by the Incident Commander.
- To perform the Incident Command function in a relief capacity (e.g., to take over the next operational period).
- To represent an assisting agency that may share jurisdiction or have jurisdiction in the future.

At this time, no deputies are assigned to the Roaring River Flood incident.

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Roaring River Flood: General Staff

Based on the assessments and the Incident Action Plan, the Incident Commander appoints the Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Section Chiefs.
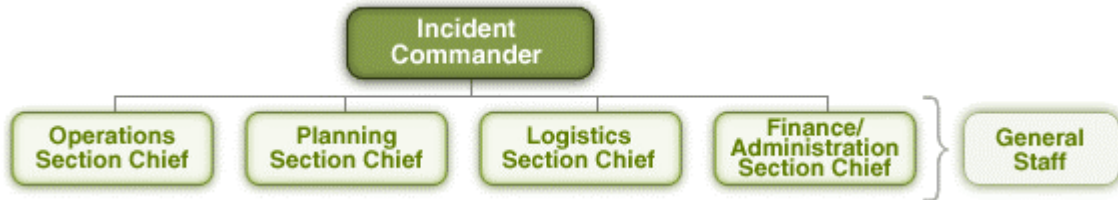
ICS Management Functions: Review

The ICS management functions include:

- **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.

Roaring River Flood: Operations Section Chief

The Operations Section Chief is responsible for the direction and coordination of all incident tactical operations. The Operations Section can be organized in a variety of ways depending upon the:

- Nature of the incident.
- Agencies involved.
- Incident objectives and strategies.

Consideration of these factors will help the Operations Section Chief determine which Branches, Divisions, or Groups to establish.

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Review: Branches, Divisions, and Groups

Branches

If the number of Divisions or Groups exceeds the span of control, it may be necessary to establish another level of organization, called a Branch, within the Operations Section. The person in charge of each Branch is designated as a Director. Deputies may also be used at the branch level. While span of control is a common reason to establish Branches, Branches are also used on multidiscipline and multijurisdictional incidents.

Divisions

Divisions are a common method of organizing tactical operations at an incident.   Divisions **always** refer to geographically defined areas (e.g., the area around a stadium, the inside or floors of a building, or individual plants or facilities).

Divisions are managed by Division Supervisors. Division Supervisors do not have deputy positions.

Groups

Another common method of organizing operations at an incident is to establish functional Groups. As the name implies, this form of organization deals not with geographic areas, but with functional activity.

Groups, like Divisions, are managed by Supervisors. There are no Group Supervisor deputy positions.

Divisions and Groups work at the same level in the organization. Divisions do not work for Groups, or vice versa.

Roaring River Flood: Operations Section Expansion

The Operations Section Chief knows that the number of resources and tactical complexity of operations will exceed her span of control. She needs to establish additional managerial levels in order to support the activities of the Operations function.

Operations Section Chief

"This is a big incident for USDA and will involve several agencies so I'll need all the organizational elements in Operations in order to maintain an acceptable span of control. Our incident objectives are to:
- Euthanize suffering animals;
- Identify relocation sites;
- Begin the disposal operation;
- Set traps to locate the fruit flies;
- Eradicate the fruit flies;
- Control the movement of host material; and
- Ensure that the contaminated food processing plants are brought back online in compliance with all health and safety regulations.

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Because the response will be functional and will involve multiple disciplines, I'll begin by appointing Branch Directors and a Staging Area Manager."

Roaring River Flood: Air Operations Branch

As seen in the organizational chart, the Operations Section Chief appointed an Air Operations Branch Director for this incident. The Air Operations Branch will be used for both aerial reconnaissance and spraying fruit flies.

The Air Operations Branch Director established Air Attack and Air Support Groups and appointed Supervisors for each group.
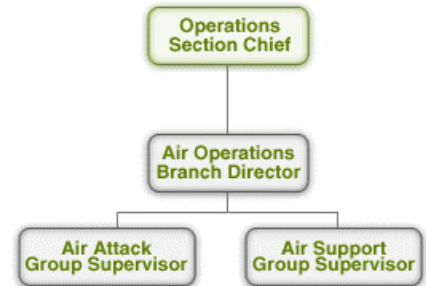
Roaring River Flood: Staging Area

The Operations Section Chief also appointed a Staging Area Manager. A staging area is a location identified at an incident where resources can be placed while awaiting a tactical assignment.

A Manager is assigned to each staging area and reports to the Operations Section Chief, or to the Incident Commander if the Operations Section Chief has not been designated.
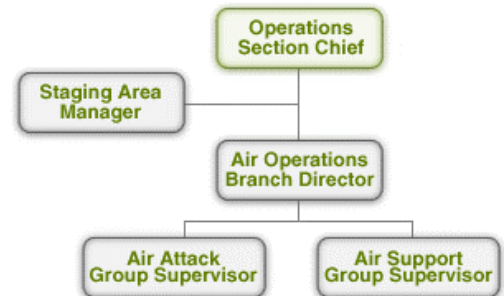
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Roaring River Flood: Additional Operations Branches

As shown in the organizational chart below, the Operations Section Chief has added the Veterinary Services Branch, Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) Branch, and Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Branch. Each branch was established because it will assume different tactical assignments and require a large number of resources. As the incident expands, it may be necessary to reorganize the Operations Section.
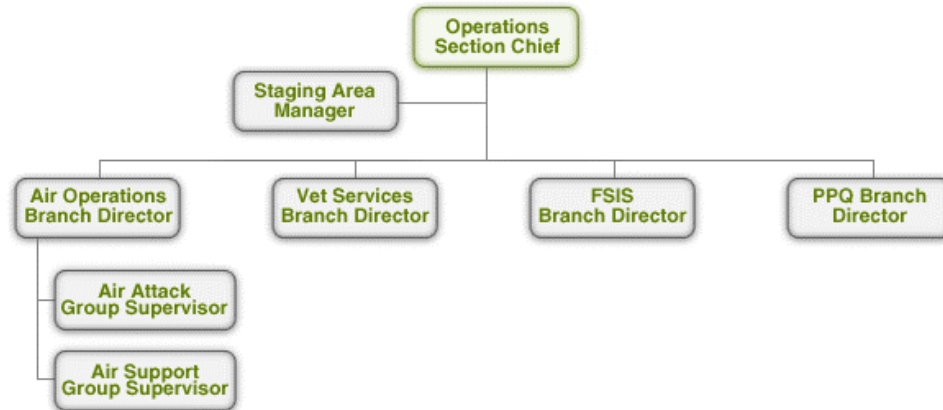
Roaring River Flood: Vet Services Branch

The Operations Section Chief relies on the Branch Directors and Group Supervisors to determine what additional resources are necessary for this incident.

The Vet Services Branch Director decided to divide into three functional Groups with each being managed by a Supervisor. The Groups are composed as follows:
- Euthanasia Group - 3 Strike Teams
- Disposal Group - 5 Task Forces
- Relocation Group - 5 Task Forces

Vet Services Branch Director

"There have been a lot of livestock losses and injuries as a result of this flood. We have three major tasks to accomplish. Task number one is to euthanize the severely injured livestock. So far, it looks like about 10 head of cattle, 7 horses, and 30 chickens.

Next, we need to relocate about 500 head of cattle and 8 horses. Our final task will be to dispose of animal carcasses, including: 50 head of cattle, 10 horses, 400 sows, and about 2,500 piglets. We're still gathering reports on poultry, but it looks like the total dead will be at least 100,000.

To complete these tasks I'm going to organize my Branch into three functional Groups: Euthanasia, Disposal, and Relocation. Our operation has to happen fast because of the health risks involved if the dead animals are not disposed of quickly. To cover an area this size with this number of affected animals, I'll need at least three Euthanasia Strike Teams, five Disposal Task Forces, and five Relocation Task Forces. Not all of my resources have arrived yet, but I do have enough to get the Euthanasia Strike Teams in the field."

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Roaring River Flood: FSIS Branch

The Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) Branch has one major task: to ensure that the contaminated food processing plants are brought back online, in compliance with all health and safety regulations.

Because there are five food processing plants, the FSIS Branch Director divided staff resources geographically. Each plant is a Division. Each Division includes a Compliance Officer as Division Supervisor.

FSIS Branch Director

"We're lucky because only five processing facilities were affected. It's going to take a lot to clean up the facilities and get them into compliance.

My Branch has one major task: to ensure that the contaminated food processing plants are brought back online in compliance with all health and safety regulations.

Since there are five food processing plants, it makes sense to divide my job geographically and make each plant a Division. I'm also going to assign Compliance Officers as the Division Supervisors for each plant."

Roaring River Flood: PPQ Branch

The release of tens of thousands of fruit flies from the damaged research facility poses a great challenge for the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Branch.

The PPQ Branch's overall incident tasks are to:
1) Identify the extent of the fruit fly infestation, and
2) Eradicate the fruit flies.
3) Regulate the movement of host material.

The PPQ Branch Director has organized the Branch into two kinds of functional Groups. The Groups are composed as follows:

- Survey and Identification Group – 4 Strike Teams
- Control Group – 3 Strike Teams
- Regulatory Group – 2 Strike Teams

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PPQ Branch Director

"We have a big problem here. Tens of thousands of fruit flies were released from the damaged research facility, and we're not sure where they are or what their reproductive capabilities are. Our overall incident tasks are to: 1) set traps to locate fruit flies, 2) eradicate the fruit flies, and 3) control the movement of host material.

To accomplish these tasks, I'm going to organize my Branch into three kinds of functional Groups: one Survey and Identification Group, one Control Group, and one Regulatory Group. This incident will take a lot of PPQ resources.

We need accurate maps very quickly, so we'll need the Planning Section to get on that right away. We also need to survey the area to locate and identify the flies, so we'll need three Survey Strike Teams and one Identification Strike Team. We have a good idea of the area to cover, as fruit flies can only reach a limited area. To be safe, we'll survey 4½ miles in each direction from the facility—that's 81 square miles.

Then, after we've identified where the flies are, we'll need at least 3 Control Strike Teams for spraying. I'll need to work with the Air Operations Branch for aerial spraying as well. One concern is that we can't be sure that we've taken care of the problem until the fruit flies have gone through three life cycles. That will take nearly 4 months—and we can't begin trapping and spraying until water levels recede.

Finally, all movement of host material in and out of the affected area must be monitored and controlled to ensure that the fruit flies do not escape containment. I'm going to assign a Regulatory Group, which will include 2 Strike Teams of regulatory officials."

Roaring River Flood: Operations Section Full Expansion

With the assignment of personnel to each of the branches, the Operations Section has reached full expansion. The organizational chart shows the full staffing of the Operations Section.
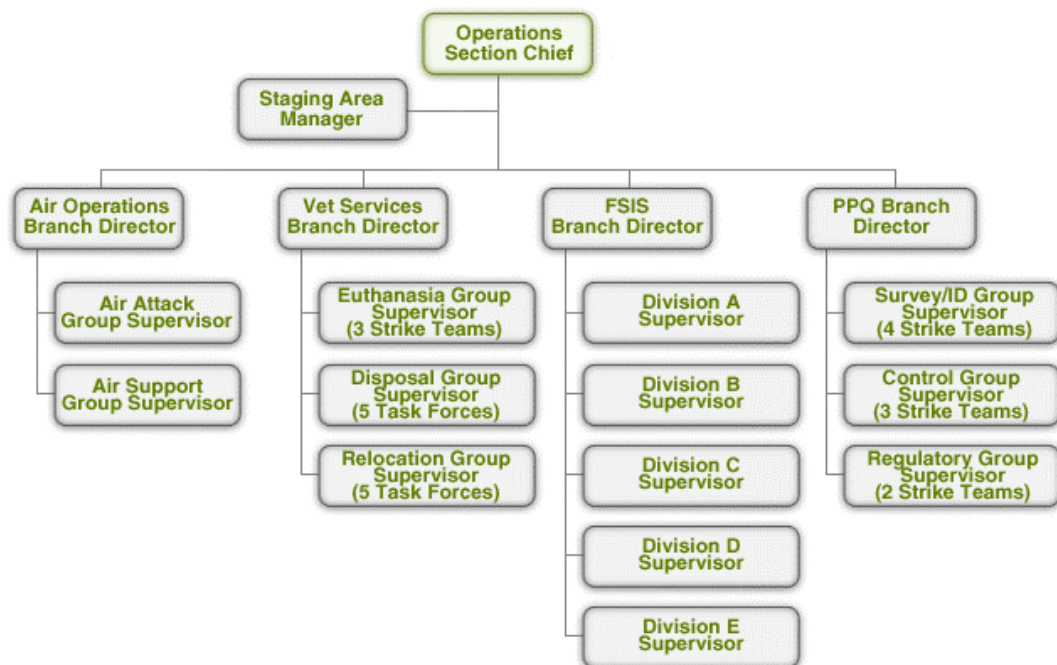
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Roaring River Flood: Expanding the Remaining Sections

As the Operations Section expands, the Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Sections must expand to support it. It is common for organizations to need one support person for every three people in Operations. While the organization expands, an effective span of control must be maintained.

Incident Commander

"It'll be a challenge for the other Sections to keep pace with the Operations Section's needs, but I want to be sure that the folks in the field have everything they need to do their jobs. The span of control is an important thing for me to keep an eye on as the organization expands. My goal is to maintain a one-to-five supervisory ratio."

Planning Section

The Planning Section is responsible for:

- Collecting and evaluating incident situation information.
- Preparing situation status reports.
- Displaying situation information.
- Maintaining status of resources.
- Preparing and documenting the Incident Action Plan.
- Preparing and archiving incident-related documentation.

Each of these responsibilities will be assigned to a unit under the Planning Section. In addition, information and intelligence functions are traditionally located in the Planning Section.

Information and Intelligence Functions

The analysis and sharing of information and intelligence is an important component 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 (i.e., surveillance), weather information, geospatial data, structural designs, toxic contaminant levels, utilities and public works data, etc., that may come from a variety of different sources.

Traditionally, information and intelligence functions are located in the Planning Section. However, in exceptional situations, the IC may need to assign the information and intelligence functions to other parts of the ICS organization. In any case, information and intelligence must be appropriately analyzed and shared with personnel, designated by the Incident Commander, who have proper clearance and a "need-to-know" to ensure that it supports decision-making.

The intelligence function may be organized in one of the following ways:
- Within the Command Staff. This option may be most appropriate in incidents with little need for tactical intelligence or classified intelligence, and where the intelligence is provided by supporting Agency Representatives, through real-time reach-back capabilities.
- As a Unit within the Planning Section. This option may be most appropriate in incidents with some need for tactical intelligence, and where a law enforcement entity is not a member of the Unified Command.
- As a Branch within the Operations Section. This option may be most appropriate in incidents with a high need for tactical intelligence (particularly classified intelligence), and where law enforcement is a member of the Unified Command.

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Information and Intelligence Functions (continued)

- As a separate General Staff Section, which may be most appropriate in those instances where an incident is heavily influenced by intelligence factors, or where there is a need to manage and/or analyze a large volume of classified or highly sensitive intelligence or information. This option is particularly relevant to a terrorism incident, where intelligence plays a crucial role throughout the incident lifecycle.

Regardless of how it is organized, the information and intelligence functions are also responsible for developing, conducting, and managing information-related security plans and operations as directed by the Incident Commander. These can include information security and operational security activities, as well as the complex task of ensuring that sensitive information of all types (e.g., classified information, law enforcement sensitive information, proprietary information, or export controlled information) is handled in a way that not only safeguards the information, but also ensures that it gets to those who need access to it in order to effectively and safely conduct their missions. The information and intelligence functions also have the responsibility for coordinating information- and operational-security matters with public awareness activities that fall under the responsibility of the Public Information Officer, particularly where such public awareness activities may affect information or operations security.

Planning Section Units

The following organizational chart shows the Planning Section units.

- **Resources Unit:** Conducts all check-in activities and maintains the status of all incident resources. The Resources Unit plays a significant role in preparing the written Incident Action Plan.
- **Situation Unit:** Collects and analyzes information on the current situation, prepares situation displays and situation summaries, and develops maps and projections.
- **Documentation Unit:** Provides duplication services, including the written Incident Action Plan. Maintains and archives all incident-related documentation.
- **Demobilization Unit:** Assists in ensuring that resources are released from the incident in an orderly, safe, and cost-effective manner.
- **Technical Specialists** (individuals with skills or knowledge that may be of use to the Incident Management Team) may also be assigned to the Planning Section.

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Roaring River Flood: Planning Section

The Planning Section Chief for the Roaring River Flood has established all four units and has assigned Technical Specialists for this incident. The information and intelligence functions are being handled by the Situation Unit.
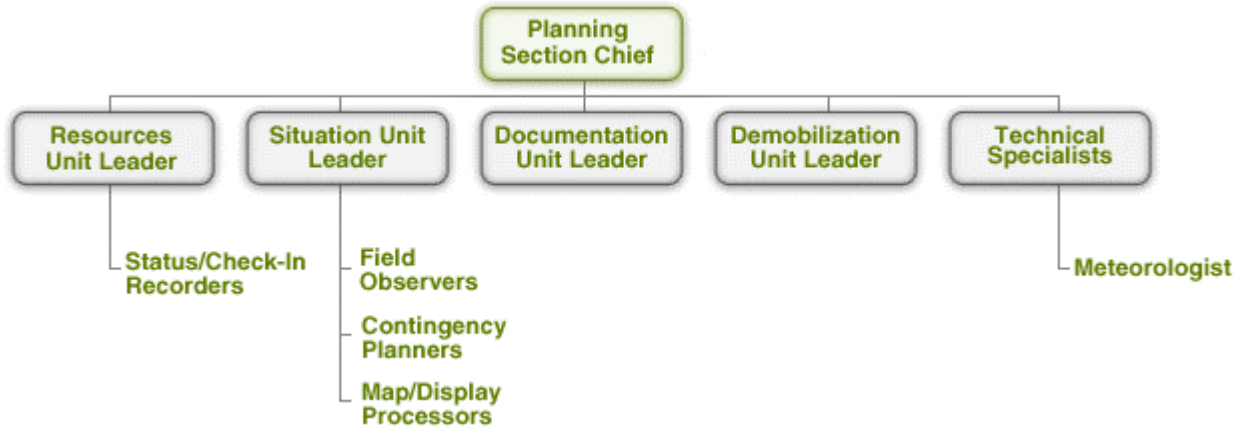
Logistics Section

The Logistics Section is responsible for providing services and support to meet all incident or event needs. This section:

- Handles everything from setting up and maintaining the on-site computer network, to providing hotel rooms and food for response personnel, to providing security at the incident facilities.
- Supports personnel and resources **directly assigned** to the incident. For example, the Medical Unit would care only for incident personnel and would not care for community members injured in the flood.

Early recognition of the need for a Logistics Section can reduce time and money spent on an incident.

Logistics Section Branches

Logistics personnel may be organized into the following Branches:

- Service Branch.
- Support Branch.

A Director manages each Branch. Each Branch may have up to three Units assigned to it based upon need. Unit Leaders report to their Branch Director.

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Logistics Service Branch

The Logistics Service Branch can be staffed to include a:

- **Communications Unit:** Develops the Communication Plan, distributes and maintains communications equipment, and manages the Incident Communications Center.
- **Medical Unit:** Develops the Medical Plan, and provides first aid and light medical treatment for personnel assigned to the incident.
- **Food Unit:** Supplies the food and potable water for all incident personnel.


Logistics Support Branch

The Logistics Support Branch can be staffed to include a:

- **Supply Unit:** Orders personnel, equipment, and supplies. The Unit stores and distributes supplies, and services nonexpendable equipment. All resource orders are placed through the Supply Unit.
- **Facilities Unit:** Sets up and maintains required facilities to support the incident. Provides managers for the Incident Base and Camps. Also responsible for facility security.
- **Ground Support Unit:** Provides transportation and maintains and fuels vehicles assigned to the incident.

Roaring River Flood: Logistics Section

Because of the complexity of the Roaring River Flood incident, the Logistics Section Chief has established both Branches and all six Units. The organizational chart shows the full staffing of the Logistics Section.
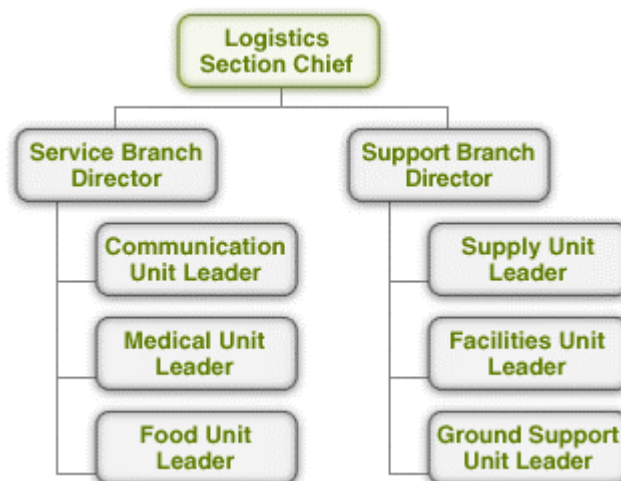
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Finance/Administration Section

The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for monitoring incident-related costs, and administering any necessary procurement contracts. The following four Units may be established in the Finance/Administration Section:
- Time Unit
- Cost Unit
- Procurement Unit
- Compensation/Claims Unit

A Unit Leader is assigned to manage each Unit.

Finance/Administration Section Units

The Finance/Administration Section includes the Time, Cost, Procurement, and Compensation/Claims Units.

- **Time Unit:** Ensures that all personnel time on the event is recorded.
- **Cost Unit:** Collects all cost information and provides cost estimates and cost savings recommendations.
- **Procurement Unit:** Processes administrative paperwork associated with contract services.
- **Compensation/Claims Unit:** Combines two important functions:
- **Compensation** is responsible for seeing that all documentation related to workers compensation is correctly completed. Also, Compensation maintains files of injuries and/or illnesses associated with the incident.
- **Claims** handles the investigation of all claims involving damaged property associated with or involved in the incident.

Roaring River Flood: Finance/Administration Section

The Roaring River Flood Finance/Administration Section Chief has established all four units for the Roaring River incident. The organizational chart shows the full staffing of the Finance/Administration Section.

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Avoid Combining ICS Positions

It is important to avoid combining ICS positions. However, one person may be assigned more than one function on the incident organization chart. Positions should not be combined within the organization, however, because problems could be created later if the merged positions have to separate.

Predicting Incident Workloads

Incident workload patterns are predictable throughout the life of the incident. For example:

- In the Planning Section, the Resources and Situation Units will be busy in the initial phases of an incident, while the main workload for the Documentation and Demobilization Units will come later.
- In Logistics, the Supply and Communication Units do the bulk of the early work in an incident.

The arrival of the media and agency representatives is always a good indication of increasing complexity for the Command Staff.

Roaring River Flood: Transferring Command

The Roaring River Flood Incident Commander has just been notified of a family emergency. The commander plans to return home for the next 3 days. A new Incident Commander will assume leadership during this period.

Incident Commander

"I was just notified that my father is critically ill. I plan to leave this evening to join other family members at the hospital. My plan is to transfer command to a new Incident Commander during my absence. When I return, I may assume command again but will need to be brought up to speed."

Transfer of Command Procedures

One of the main features of ICS are procedures to transfer command with minimal disruption. These procedures may be used anytime personnel in supervisory positions change.

Three key procedures should be followed, whenever possible:

- The transfer should be face to face.
- The transfer should include a complete briefing.
- The effective date and time of the transfer is announced to all affected personnel.

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Transfer of Command Procedures (continued)

Command may be transferred when:

- A more qualified person is available to assume command.
- A jurisdiction or agency is legally required to take command.
- Changing command makes good sense.
- The incident complexity changes.
- There is turnover of personnel on long or extended incidents.
- Personnel are called home for any reason.
- Agency Administrators direct a change in command.

The Transfer-of-Command Briefing

A transfer-of-command briefing should **always** take place. The briefing should include the following critical information:

- Situation status
- Incident objectives and priorities (Incident Action Plan)
- Current organization
- Resource assignments
- Resources en route and/or ordered
- Facilities established
- Communications Plan
- Prognosis, concerns, and related issues
- Introduction of Command Staff and General Staff

Avoid "Falling Through the Cracks"

It is critical to keep information from "falling through the cracks" during changes of incident command. One important information tool is ICS Form 201, Incident Briefing Form. Your agency may have other tools for this purpose. Whether your agency uses ICS Form 201 or another form, you should have some mechanism to ensure that important information does not "get lost."

Lesson Summary

You have completed the **ICS Organization** lesson. This lesson provided information on ICS organizational structure, initial organizational development at an incident, organizational expansion and contraction, and transfer of command.

The next lesson discusses resource management, descriptions of the kinds of incident resources, and a discussion of how resources are procured.