

## Incident Command System 14-4.02-K

KNOW the basic organization structure of the incident Command System, as presented in the E-PME Study Guide.

***Incident Command System*** National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) is a standardized response management system. It is an “all hazard–all risk” approach to managing crisis response operations as well as non-crisis events.

ICS is organizationally flexible and capable of expanding and contracting to accommodate responses or events of varying size or complexity. While several versions of ICS are used by other organizations, the Coast Guard has adopted the NIIMS version.

The principles of this on-site management system can be applied to all types of incidents, such as floods, hurricanes, search and rescue (SAR), law enforcement, oil spills and hazardous substances releases, and to planned events such as marine parades.

ICS overlays, but does not replace, existing Coast Guard response organizational structures.

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***SAR Operations*** SAR operations must be carried out in accordance with the National Search and Rescue Plan, which adopts international SAR terminology and procedures of the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual, other pertinent documents used worldwide, and the interagency National Search and Rescue Supplement. These documents have their basis in international law that U.S. SAR services are obligated to follow.

Coast Guard personnel with SAR responsibilities should receive sufficient ICS training to enable them to carry out their respective duties during events where ICS is being used. These events include salvage, body recovery, pollution response, investigation, or other operations that are sometimes closely associated with SAR.

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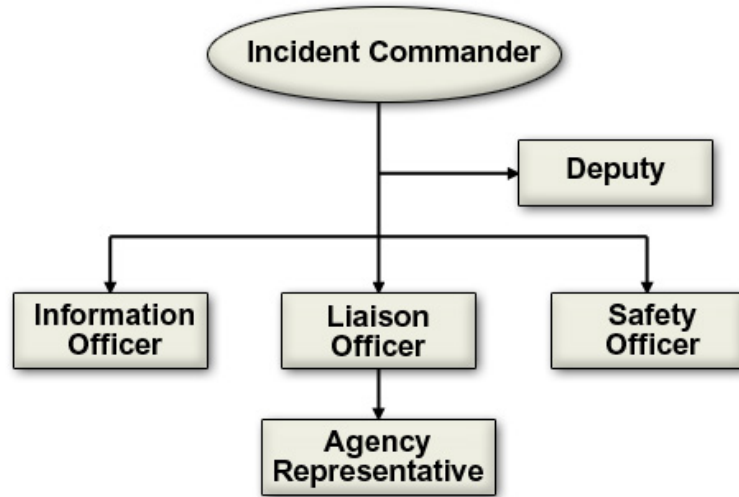
*NIIMS ICS  
Advantages*

The adoption of NIIMS ICS provides the Coast Guard with many advantages:

- **Flexible.** NIIMS ICS is a flexible, standardized response management system that will allow for the cultivation of response management expertise at all levels of Coast Guard command.
  - **Increased support.** NIIMS ICS provides for an increased support of trained personnel during major incidents.
  - **Public domain.** NIIMS is a “public domain” system that allows unrestricted distribution by commanding officers to improve the capabilities of and unify the local response community into a more effective organization.
  - **All hazard all risk.** NIIMS ICS applies to any response situation (“all hazard–all risk”).
  - **Expansion/contraction.** NIIMS ICS is organizationally flexible and capable of expanding and contracting to accommodate responses or events of varying size or complexity.
  - **Autonomy.** NIIMS ICS maintains autonomy for each agency participating in the response.
  - **Pre-response planning tool.** NIIMS ICS serves as an invaluable tool to prepare ahead for incidents and meet Coast Guard missions with minimal risk to personnel, equipment, and property.
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## ***Organizational Structure***

The basic organizational structure of the ICS is depicted in the following flowchart. This flowchart portrays the ICS Command Staff organization.



- **Incident Commander.** The Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for the overall management of the incident. The IC is selected by qualifications and experience. On most incidents, the command activity is carried out by a single IC.
- **Incident Commander Deputy.** The Incident Commander (IC) may have a deputy, either from the same agency or from an assisting agency. Deputies may also be assigned at section and branch levels of the ICS organization. Deputies must have the same qualifications as the IC to enable them to take over the IC position at any time. The responsibilities of the IC Deputy are many.
- **Information Officer.** The Information Officer (IO) is responsible for developing and releasing information about the incident to the news media, incident personnel, and other appropriate agencies and organizations.
- **Liaison Officer.** The Liaison Officer (LO) classification was established for incidents that are multi-jurisdictional, or involve several agencies. Only one LO is to be assigned for each incident operating under a Unified Command (UC) and for multi-jurisdiction incidents. The LO may have assistants if needed; the assistants may also represent assisting agencies or jurisdictions.

***Organizational  
Structure  
(continued)***

- **Safety Officer.** The Safety Officer (SO) develops and recommends measures for assuring personnel safety, and assesses or anticipates hazardous and unsafe situations. Only one SO is assigned for each incident. SOs may have assistants as needed. The assistants may also represent assisting agencies or jurisdictions. They may have specific responsibilities such as air operations, hazardous materials, etc.
  - **Agency Representative.** In many multi-jurisdiction incidents, an agency or jurisdiction may send a representative to assist in coordination efforts. He or she is NOT there on direct tactical assignment. The Agency Representative (AR) is assigned an incident from an assisting or cooperating agency. The AR is delegated the authority to make decisions on matters affecting that agency's participation at the incident. ARs report to the LO, or the IC in the absence of an LO.
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*Operations  
Organization*

The following operations organizational flowchart portrays where an air mission is involved.



- **Operations Section Chief.** The Operations Section Chief (OPS) is a member of the General Staff. He or she is responsible for the management of all operations directly applicable to the primary mission.
- **Staging Area Manager.** The Staging Area Manager is responsible for managing all activities within a staging area (the location where incident personnel and equipment are assigned awaiting tactical assignment).
- **Branch Director (up to 5).** The Branch Director is under the direction of the OPS when activated. He or she is responsible for implementing the portion of the Incident Action Plan (IAP) appropriate to the branches.

*Operations  
Organization  
(continued)*

- **Division/Group Supervisor (up to 25).** The Division/Group Supervisor reports to the OPS (or Branch Director when activated). He or she is responsible for the implementation of the assigned portion of the IAP, assignment of resources with the Division/Group, and reporting on the progress of control operations and status of resources within the Division/Group.
- **Strike Team/Task Force Leaders.** The Strike Team/Task Force Leader reports to a Division/Group Supervisor. He or she is responsible for performing tactical assignments assigned to the Strike Team or Task Force, reporting work progress, resources status, and other important information to a Division/Group Supervisor, and maintaining work records on assigned personnel.
- **Single Resource.** The Single Resource is the person in charge of a single tactical resource.
- **Air Operations Branch Director.** The Air Operation Branch Director (AIROPS) is ground-based and is primarily responsible for preparing the air operations portion of the IAP. The plan will reflect agency restrictions that have an impact on the operational capability or utilization of resources (e.g., night flying, hours per pilot). When the plan is approved, the Air Operation Branch Director is responsible for implementing strategic aspects that relate to the overall incident strategy and providing logistical support to helicopters operating on the incident.
- **Air Tactical Group Supervisor.** The Air Tactical Group Supervisor reports to the AIROPS. He or she is primarily responsible for the coordination of aircraft operations when fixed rotary-wing aircraft are operating on an incident. These coordination activities are performed while airborne.
- **Helicopter Coordinator.** The Helicopter Coordinator reports to the Air Tactical Group Supervisor. He or she is primarily responsible for coordinating tactical or logistical helicopter mission(s) at the incident. This can be airborne or on the ground operating from a high vantage point. Activation of this position is contingent upon the complexity of the incident and the number of assigned helicopters. There may be more than one Helicopter Coordinator assigned to an incident.
- **Air Tanker/Fixed-Wing Coordinator.** The Air Tanker/Fixed-Wing Coordinator reports to the Air Tactical Group Supervisor. He or she is primarily responsible for coordinating assigned air tanker operations at the incident. Activation of this position is contingent upon the need or upon the complexity of the incident.

***Operations  
Organization  
(continued)***

- **Air Support Group Supervisor.** The Air Support Group Supervisor reports to the AIROPS. He or she is primarily responsible for supporting and managing helibase and helispot operations and maintaining liaison with fixed-wing air bases. This includes providing fuel and other supplies, maintenance and repair of helicopters, and retardant mixing and loading. Also includes keeping records of helicopter activity and providing enforcement of safety regulations. These major functions are performed at helibases and helispots. Helicopters during landing and take-off and while on the ground are under the control of the Air Support Group's Helibase or Helispot Managers.
- **Helibase Manager.** The Helibase Manager reports to the Air Support Group Supervisor. He or she is responsible for control of helicopters during landing and take-off and while on the ground.
- **Fixed Wing Base Manager.** The Fixed Wing Base Manager is responsible for aircraft and landing strips in the area.
- **Helispot Manager.** The Helispot Manager reports to the Helibase Manager. He or she is responsible for activities involving the assigned helispot.

ICS organization may be developed to respond to a particular type of incident. For example, an incident-specific position involving Law Enforcement would be the Vessel Disposition Group Supervisor.

Coast Guard response personnel can come from any component of the Coast Guard (active duty, reserve, auxiliary, or civilian employees). Responders should have a basic understanding of ICS to ensure they can effectively operate within the ICS organization and properly use and understand the Incident Management Handbook.

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