# *UNIT 1: OVERVIEW OF THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM AND THE INCIDENT COMMANDER*
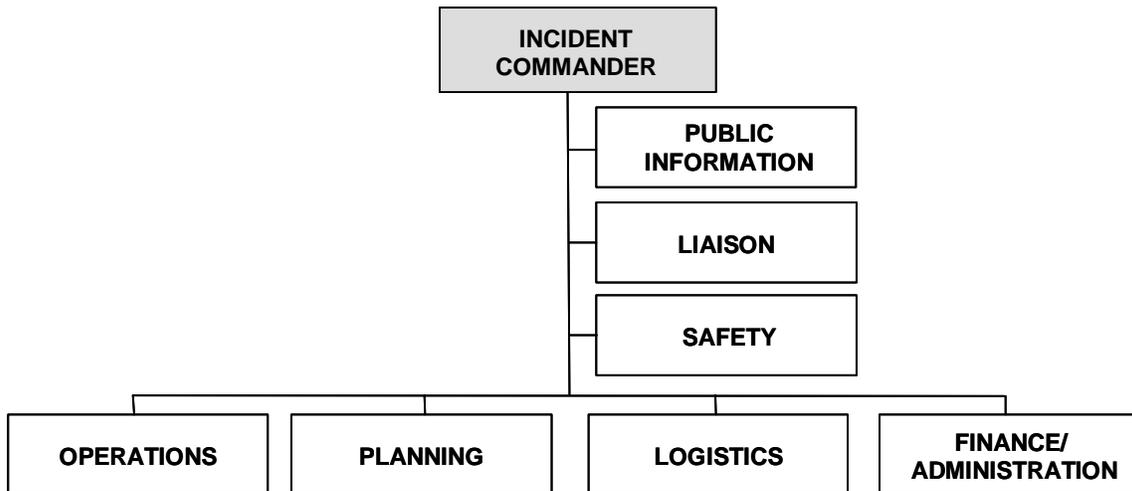
## OVERVIEW

This unit will provide you with a brief overview of the Incident Command System (ICS) and its functional elements. Topics include: common responsibilities applicable to all Incident Command System personnel, use of Multi-Agency Coordination Systems (MACS), the concepts of Area Command and Incident Management Teams (IMT's), incident objectives, and related strategies and tactics.

The importance of the role of the Incident Commander (IC) at large/complex incidents cannot be overstated. A review of the Incident Commander Position Checklist in the Field Operations Guide (ICS 420-1) provides insight into the impact that the Incident Commander has on decisions that are made and actions that are taken from the beginning of the incident until its conclusion. The need for accurate assessments of existing and potential incident conditions, timely decisions on what actions must be taken, and the development of an effective organizational structure are keys to success in managing large/complex emergency incidents effectively.

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## UNIT 1 OBJECTIVES

1.  Distinguish between a simple and complex incident.

2.  Recognize the common responsibilities that are applicable to all personnel.

4.  Define Area Command, Incident Management Team (IMT), and Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS).

5.  Distinguish between Single Command, Unified Command, and Multi-Jurisdiction incidents.

6.  Identify the Action Steps in the command sequence and the corresponding actions.

7.  Recognize responsibilities of the Incident Commander that apply on large/complex incidents.

8.  Differentiate between incident objectives, strategy, and tactics.

9.  Recognize the ICS Forms the Incident Commander is responsible to have completed.

## INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

### Origins of the Incident Command System

The Incident Command System (ICS) was first developed in the 1970's for management of large wildland fire incidents. The success of the ICS in wildland fire incidents led to its adaptation to other types of large-scale and complex emergencies. The continued use of ICS by emergency response agencies throughout the country has led to its nationwide acceptance as an "all-risk" system. "All-risk" system means that the ICS can be applied to any type of emergency incident. It has proved to be adaptable to any type of emergency incident regardless of size, type, agencies involved, or number of resources required.



ICS IS AN
"ALL RISK"
SYSTEM

Even after thirty years of application, training, and promotion there has not been "one" standard Incident Command System that has been used by all agencies. The problems associated with the absence of a National system are present at every natural and man-made disaster that involves multi-agency and Federal involvement. This became especially clear in the wake of September 11th. Recognizing the importance of having a National system and how critical it was to the mission of safeguarding our country, the President tasked the Department of Homeland Security to undertake the difficult task of creating a *single, comprehensive approach to incident management . . . to ensure that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work efficiently and effectively together.* Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 gave direction and outlined the expected outcomes for this project. After a long and arduous process, the National Incident Management System (NIMS) was developed. The NIMS uses ICS as the main command/management component; there are several

other aspects of the NIMS that could affect local response to major and/or complex incidents. It is important to be familiar with this document and the guidelines it provides. The entire NIMS document can be viewed and/or downloaded from:

http://www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/NIMS-90-web/pdf

### Functional Elements of ICS

The ICS is based on functional elements that can be used selectively depending on the specifics of the incident. The ICS organization has five major functional elements:

- Command;
- Operations;
- Planning;
- Logistics; and
- Finance/Administration.

These functional elements will be reviewed during this course.

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 **Activity 1.1**

List the common responsibilities that are applicable to all personnel.

**HINT:** Turn to Chapter 1 in the Field Operations Guide (ICS 420-1) and read the material on: COMMON RESPONSIBILITIES and UNIT LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES.

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## SIMPLE VERSUS LARGE/COMPLEX INCIDENTS

The *Command and General Staff Functions in the Incident Command System* course focuses on the need for effective management of large/complex emergency incidents. These incidents are different from the simple incidents that fire departments respond to on a regular basis. Simple incidents require a minimum amount of resources, do not require an involved strategy, are managed with a limited command structure, and are brought under control in a relatively short time. Some examples of routine incidents are:

- a small structure or outdoor fires;
- motor vehicle accidents; and
- requests for emergency medical assistance.

Large/Complex incidents typically are those that involve unusual conditions and require expanded resource commitments from a variety of emergency service and support agencies. Frequently they pose a high level of threat to the lives of both civilians and emergency service personnel; as well as to property within the community where they occur. The control of these types of emergencies requires a high level of management skill in the incident management organization.

Some examples of large/complex incidents are:

- an extensive amount of fire in a very large or special-purpose structure;
- fires involving, or threatening, multiple structures;
- fires that have, or potentially will, spread over a wide area;
- multi-casualty incidents;
- hazardous materials incidents, that endangers life, property, or the environment;
- civil disturbances; and
- mass transportation accidents.

It is critical to recognize that an incident has become, or has the potential to become, large/complex and to develop an incident management organization to manage the situation effectively. Also consider the fact that large/complex incidents do not occur exclusively in metropolitan areas that have sufficient resources to deal with these types of incidents. These incidents often occur in smaller communities where resources are limited and assistance is a long way off. When resources are limited, the potential for an incident to become large/complex must be identified early.

## Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS)

A Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS) is a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications integrated into a common system with responsibility for coordination of assisting agency resources and support to agency emergency operations.
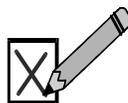
 Activity 1.2

List the functions of a Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS).

**HINT:** Turn to Chapter 2 in the Field Operations Guide (ICS 420-1) and read the material on: MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION SYSTEM.

## INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Large/Complex incidents that require the use of an expanded emergency management system can occur in any community.
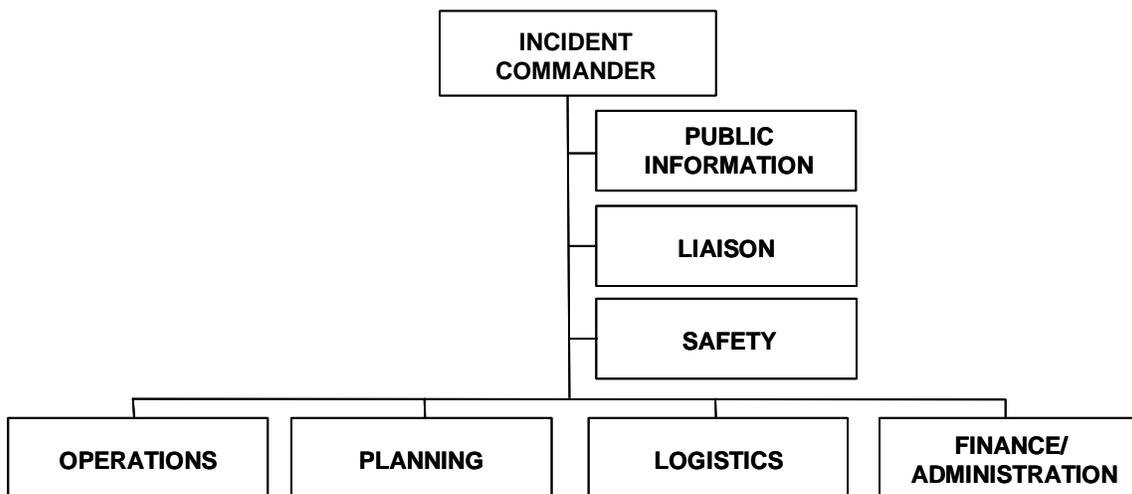
Fire service organizations that serve populated urban areas usually have sufficient personnel available to staff the command positions that are required to manage these types of incidents effectively. Smaller departments, when faced with the need for an expanded incident management system to deal with a major incident, may lack the readily available number of trained and experienced personnel for adequate staffing of the supervisory positions required.

A solution to this problem is to organize an Incident Management Team (IMT).

An IMT consists of fire service personnel and other specialized support personnel from other agencies who have the **expertise** to provide on-scene management and support for large/complex emergency situations.

IMT's can be assembled on a local, regional, or statewide basis. **They operate most effectively when the same team members plan, train, and operate together at the incident scene.** Familiarity of members with each other, concurrent training, and expertise developed through their previous experiences enhance the team's ability to organize and manage large/complex emergency incidents.

### Incident Management Teams Fill All General Staff and Command Staff Functions

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*Remember, it is necessary to have depth in each position. Personnel may be on annual or sick leave, or away on training when an incident occurs. Consider developing multiple teams having one on call at all times.*

In addition to filling General Staff and Command Staff functions, an IMT also should provide qualified personnel to staff the subordinate functions in each Section.

*One way this can be accomplished is by assigning various functions to personnel in the fire department organization. For example, the Training Bureau could staff the functions in the Planning Section, the Fire Marshal's Office personnel could staff the functions in the Logistics Section, and the budget staff could function as the Finance/Administration Section units.*

When ordered, IMT's usually are dispatched without regard to individual work schedules or assignments. IMT's operate under the direction of the agency within whose jurisdiction the incident has occurred. Tactical resources are provided by the agency in whose jurisdiction the incident is located, supplemented by tactical resources provided by other neighboring or mutual-aid agencies. Members of an IMT operate in cooperation with, and under the direction of, officials in the agency in whose jurisdiction the incident has occurred.

In some areas IMT's use members from both state and federal forestry firefighting agencies and rural fire departments to provide ICS management expertise and support in situations involving wildland fires that may threaten structures.

## IMT for a District or Regional Area

An alternative to maintaining permanent IMT's is to assemble teams as required from a pool of fire personnel who are qualified in one (or more) ICS Command and General Staff position. In these cases a complete team representing all of the Command and General Staff positions can be assembled, or selective positions can be filled, as needed.

The pool of qualified personnel for General Staff and Command Staff positions should consist of experienced fire personnel, and those from other agencies that are **qualified and trained** to function in one or more General and Command Staff positions. Although all pool members must be qualified through training and experience for the positions to which they are assigned, they do not necessarily train together and may not have worked together.

These IMT's can be coordinated on a countywide or regional basis. Tactical resources are provided by the agency in whose jurisdiction the incident is located and supplemented by tactical resources provided by other neighboring or mutual-aid agencies.

Members of an IMT operate in cooperation with and under the direction of officials of the agency in whose jurisdiction the incident has occurred. If requested by the agency in whose jurisdiction the incident occurs, a complete General Staff and Command Staff Team can be dispatched, or individuals from the Team pool can be dispatched for specific General Staff and Command Staff positions. Assignments from the IMT pool may be based on duty schedules and availability of qualified pool members, however in some situations personnel may be sent regardless of work assignment or duty status. This requires 24-hour communications capability (e.g., pager, cell phones) or a predetermined rotation schedule.

## SINGLE COMMAND, UNIFIED COMMAND, AND MULTIJURISDICTIONAL INCIDENTS

### Single Command

In Single Command situations one agency has legal responsibility.

Within the jurisdiction where an incident occurs, and when there is no overlap of jurisdictional boundaries, a single Incident Commander (IC) will be designated by the jurisdictional agency that has overall management responsibility for the incident, e.g., police, fire, emergency medical.

In Single Command structure, the Incident Commander is responsible for setting the Incident Objectives and managing the incident. The implementation of strategy and tactics to achieve operational control is the responsibility of the Operations Section Chief.

### Unified Command and Multijurisdictional Incidents

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|---|---|---|
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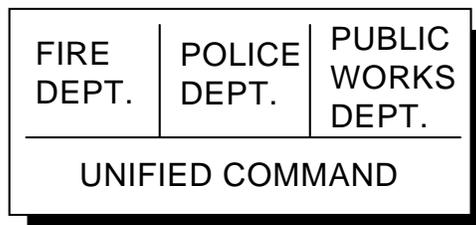
Incidents involving weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, hazardous materials, mass casualties, natural and manmade disasters, or urban wildland fires, may involve a number of jurisdictions and/or agencies that have a legal and/or functional need to be involved directly in the decision-making process.  In these incidents Unified Command should be established as soon as possible.

What cues the need for a Unified Command?

- More than one agency is responsible for decision-making within a single jurisdiction, e.g., a terrorist incident in a city, or commercial aircraft crash in a national forest.  Local fire, law enforcement, medical, Federal forestry, and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) all are involved.

- More than one jurisdiction is involved, e.g., a major flood, hurricane, earthquake, tornado, etc.

- All agencies with responsibility to manage the incident contribute personnel to the Unified Command process.  Together they determine incident objectives and strategies, and plan tactics jointly.  This ensures the maximum use of assigned resources.

- The location of the incident, e.g., an inland waterway entirely within the boundaries of a single jurisdiction also could involve the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).

Who is involved?

- All agencies with jurisdictional, functional, or legal responsibility to manage the incident contribute to the Unified Command process.  They determine incident objectives, determine strategies, and plan tactics.  This method ensures maximum use of assigned resources.

- One official from each jurisdiction or responsible agency.

Federal, state, or local statute may determine the selection of the Unified Incident Commanders. Generally, the agency with the greatest jurisdictional involvement is assigned as the Operations Section Chief.


## Area Command

Area Command is established to:

- Oversee the management of multiple incidents, each of which is being handled by an ICS organization.

- Oversee the management of a very large incident that has multiple IMT's assigned to it.

Area Command typically is used only when the incidents are of a similar nature, e.g., two or more hazardous materials spills, fires, etc. When incidents are of different kinds, they would be handled either as separate incidents or under the MACS Organization.

If the incidents under the authority of the Area Command are multijurisdictional, a Unified Area Command should be established. This allows each jurisdiction to have representation in the Area Command.

**Incident Commander**
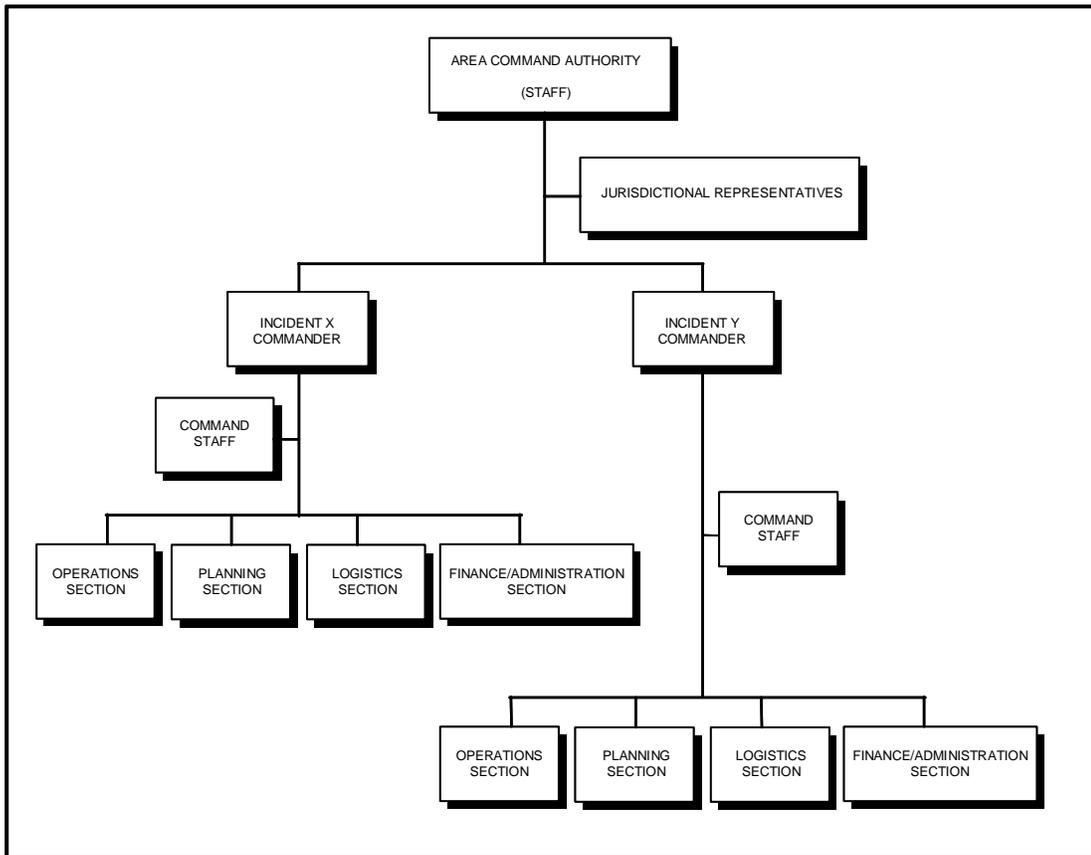
The Incident Commander's responsibility is the overall management of the incident.

| ICS Forms the Incident Commander is responsible to complete. | |
|---|---|
| **ICS 201** | Ensure the completion of the INCIDENT BRIEFING for the next operational period. |
| **ICS 202** | INCIDENT OBJECTIVES (General Control Objectives part only). |
| **ICS 209** | Ensure that the INCIDENT STATUS SUMMARY is completed. |
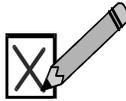
## Activity 1.3

Turn to Appendix C to view examples of completed ICS Forms.  View the following forms that the Incident Commander is responsible to have completed:

1. ICS Form 201--Incident Briefing Form.
2. ICS Form 202--Incident Objectives.
3. ICS Form 209--Incident Status Summary Form.

## KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED FOR THE INCIDENT COMMANDER

The skill required to manage large/complex emergency incidents is developed through experience and training. As incidents increase in size or complexity, so does the required level of management skill.

## DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INCIDENT COMMANDER

### 1. Assess the Situation and/or Obtain a Briefing from the Prior Incident Commander

Initial and continuing assessments and briefings at change of command are important at any incident and critical at large/complex emergencies.

Accurate ongoing assessments of current conditions and an awareness of potential expansion are the basis for actions that are taken.

### 2. Determine Incident Objectives and Strategy

As the Incident Commander determines the incident objectives and strategy, appropriate resources are deployed to carry out the necessary tactical activities.

### 3. Establish the Immediate Priorities

Use a logical sequence to determine in which order things should be done based on existing or anticipated conditions and available resources. Examples are:

- RECEO (VS).

    **R**escue                     **V**entilation
    **E**xposure
    **C**onfinement                **S**alvage
    **E**xtinguishment
    **O**verhaul

- Incident Priorities:

    - life safety;
    - incident stabilization; and
    - property conservation.

### 4.    Establish an Incident Command Post



Incident Command Post

An Incident Command Post is normally required for large/complex incidents.  In determining the best location for the Incident Command Post, the Incident Commander will consider:

- view of the incident;
- safety considerations;
- noninterference with tactical activities; and
- identifiable Command Post.

### 5.    Establish an Appropriate Organization

Consider Qualified Personnel to Staff the Command Post

Who should be at the Command Post?

The command structure must be compatible with the incident size and complexity.  Large/Complex incidents typically require expanded command organizations.  Failure to delegate functional responsibilities in a timely manner at a large/complex emergency situation can overwhelm the Incident Commander completely.

Consider availability of qualified personnel for assignment to required positions.

<u>Determine Command Mode</u>

**Single Incident Commander**--on most incidents a single Incident Commander carries out the command function.

**Unified Command**--in ICS, Unified Command is a team effort which allows all agencies with responsibility for the incident, either geographical or functional, to manage an incident by establishing a common set of objectives and strategies. This is accomplished without losing or abdicating agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.
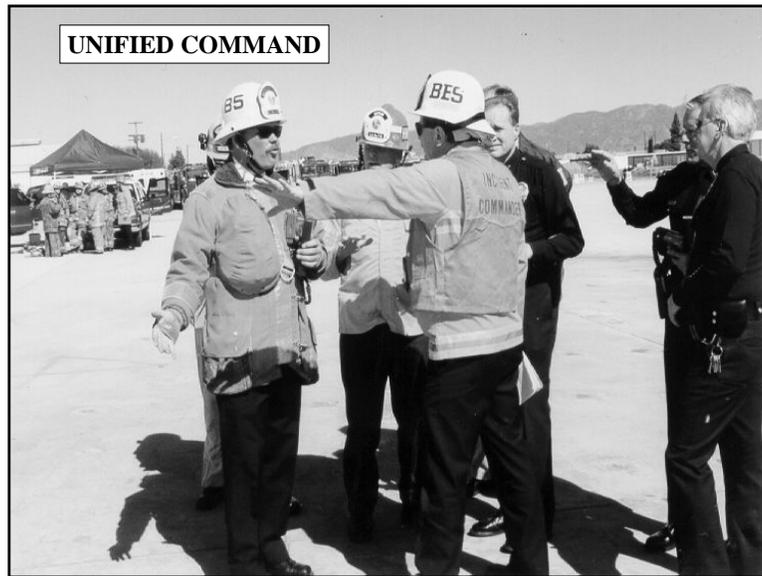


**Area Command--**Area Command is an expansion of the Incident Command function primarily designed to manage a very large incident that has multiple Incident Management Teams assigned. However, an Area Command can be established at any time that incidents are close enough to require oversight direction among IMT's to ensure conflicts do not arise.

## 6.    Ensure Planning Meetings are Scheduled as Required

Formal Planning Meetings normally are not necessary for routine incidents. For large/complex incidents they can be critical to achieving desired results.

The primary purpose of Planning Meetings is to select specific strategies and tactics for incident control operations and for service and support planning.

## 7. Approve and Authorize the Implementation of an Incident Action Plan

**Incident Action Plan.** Every incident **must** have an oral or written Incident Action Plan. The purpose of the Incident Action Plan is to provide all incident supervisory personnel with clear direction and an understanding of incident objectives. Action plans, whether written or oral, are developed for specific time intervals called operational periods. The duration of these operational periods may vary, depending on several factors including the type and complexity of the incident, the projected duration of the incident, the numbers of resources and agencies involved, environmental issues, and safety considerations. Operational periods may be as short as two hours but should not be longer than 24-hours.

On smaller incidents, the Incident Commander usually will be solely responsible for developing the incident action plan. However, on larger incidents with more staffing, members of the Command and General Staff and others will contribute to the development of the action plan. The Planning Section has primary responsibility for documenting the Incident Action Plan, as well as for assembling, printing, and distributing it to appropriate personnel.

While written plans will vary in content and size, some items should be considered for all plans. The major elements of an Incident Action Plan are shown on the following diagram.
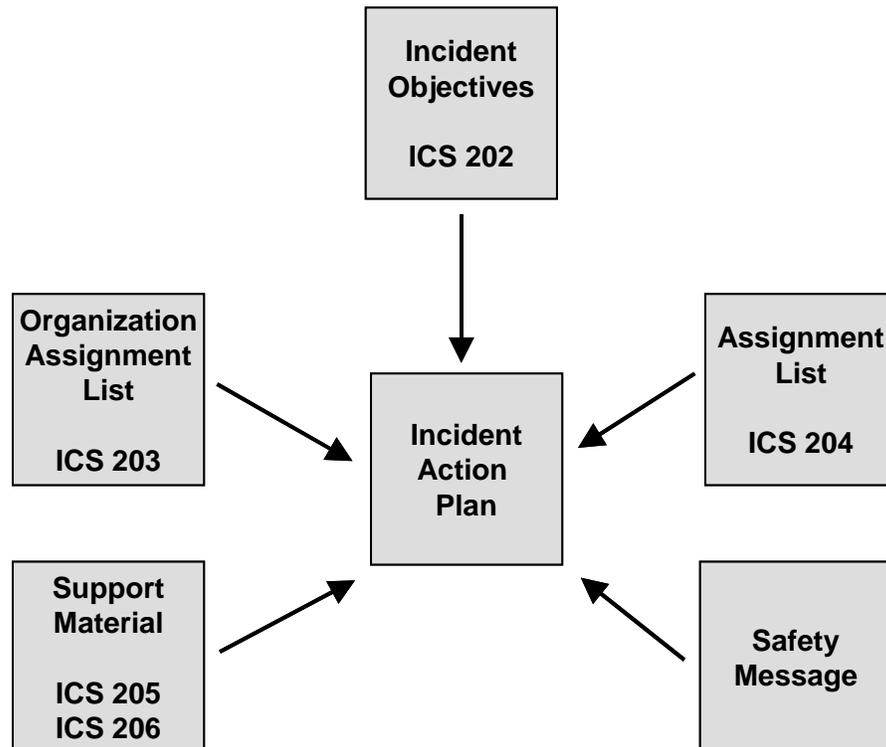
- **Incident Objectives.** Clearly states objectives as they apply to the overall incident (ICS Form 202: Incident Objectives).

- **Organization.** Describes the ICS organization for a specific operational period (ICS Form 203: Organization Assignment List).

- **Assignments.** Normally prepared for each Branch, Division, or Group and include the strategy, tactics, and resources to be used (ICS Form 204: Assignment List).

- **Support Material.** May include maps, traffic plan, communications plan, medical plan, and similar materials (ICS Form 205: Incident Radio Communications Plan and ICS Form 206: Medical Plan).

- **Safety Message.** Information/Warning regarding issues that affect firefighter/scene safety.
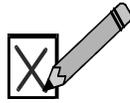
 Activity 1.4

When complete, a formal Incident Action Plan will include what ICS forms?

**HINT:** Turn to Appendix B to view a formal Incident Action Plan.

NOTE: A complete set of ICS Forms with directions for completion can be found at http://www.FIRESCOPE.org.

## 8. Ensure that Adequate Safety Measures are in Place

Safety concerns start with the Incident Commander and must be a primary focus of everyone at the incident. Consider safety issues related to incident objectives, strategies, and tactical operations.

Safety concerns at large/complex incidents usually are much more involved than in routine emergencies.

The Incident Commander will assign a Safety Officer and assistants as required.

### 9.    Coordinate Activity for all Command and General Staff

The Incident Commander must see "the big picture," which requires

- periodic updates;
- planning meetings/Incident Action Plans; and
- good communication (face to face and/or radio).

### 10.    Coordinate with Key Personnel and Officials

The Incident Commander will coordinate with key personnel and officials, such as agency heads, government officials, etc.  This role should not detract from or interfere with the primary responsibility of overall management of the incident.  This function can be facilitated through the Public Information Officer or the Liaison Officer.



Unified Command Post
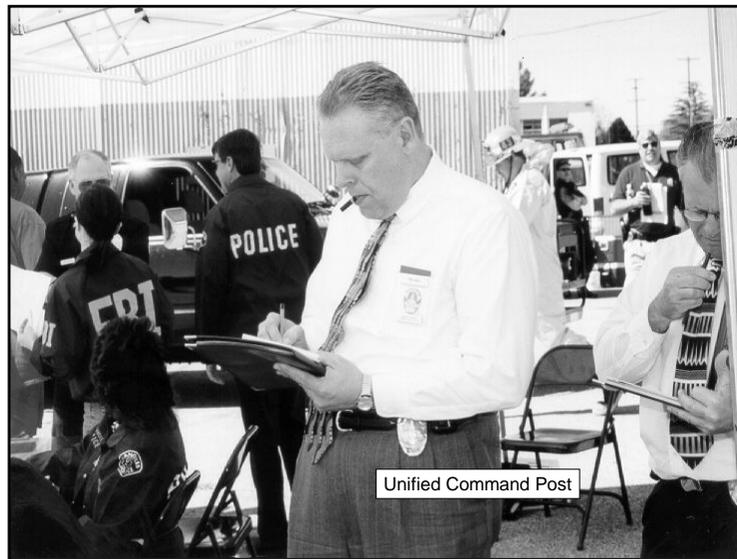
### 11.    Approve Requests for Additional Resources or for the Release of Resources

Control of resources is critical to overall operations.  This requires coordination with the Planning Section.

### 12. Keep Agency Administrator Informed of Incident Status

Ranking official(s) in whose jurisdiction the incident has occurred or the head of the agency with overall responsibility for incident control should be kept informed of the status of the incident.

This can be facilitated through the Public Information Officer or Liaison Officer.

### 13. Approve Use of Trainees, Auxiliary Personnel, and Individuals who may Volunteer their Assistance

Use of personnel not formally dispatched to the incident or lacking requisite experience can place them in danger and may present serious liability issues. Use of such personnel must be tightly supervised to prevent injuries to them or to others.

### 14. Authorize Release of Information to the News Media

All incident personnel must understand that all information related to the incident must come from the Incident Commander or a person(s) designated by the Incident Commander. This is much harder to control at a large/complex incident than at a routine emergency.

Refer to Information Officer (ICS 420-1).

### 15. Ensure Incident Status Summary (ICS Form 209) is Completed and Forwarded to Appropriate Higher Authority (If Applicable)

Agency policy determines the need for the ICS Form 209. This form is seldom required at routine incidents; however, it may be required at large/complex emergencies.

### 16. Order the Demobilization of the Incident When Appropriate

A Demobilization Plan will be developed for every incident. A small incident may not require a written demobilization plan.

The Incident Commander needs to consider the manner in which the demobilization is done (e.g., first in/first out, outside agency resources first, etc.).

Refer to Planning Section/Demobilization Leader (ICS 420-1).


## DECISION-MAKING DURING EMERGENCIES

There are two primary methods used by decision-makers to reach conclusions, determine results, and institute actions during emergencies. They are the classical method and the naturalistic decision-making (NDM) method.


### Classical Decision-Making

The **classical method** is a time-consuming process where the decision-maker:

- gathers information;
- analyzes the information;
- determines the problems that are present and selects and prioritizes those problems in order of importance;
- determines and prioritizes the possible solutions;
- selects tactics from one or more possible options; and
- issues directives to have the tactics implemented.

The routine use of this system, called the **command sequence**, should develop into a habit. When this happens, the Incident Commander will begin to use this technique under unfamiliar emergency conditions, thus structuring the decision-making process and reducing stress. Using the Command Sequence assists the Command Officer in staying proactive.

Decision-makers need the classical method when they are in the training mode. In the training mode, they will be taught to look for cues, draw conclusions, consider results, and take action for an incident type not previously learned, or learned incorrectly. Whether the cues, conclusions, results, and actions are learned must be tested in an application format. Such a format is a simulation. Such training must be from an expert in the incident type: for example, an urban or municipal fire officer learning wildland firefighting from a wildland fire expert.

The classical process is used for evaluating and planning when time is not a factor.

Decision-makers need the classical method when they are evaluating and comparing the critical cues used, conclusions and results determined, and actions taken by other decision-makers. This form of training typically involves case studies. Here the student uses a case study to examine the obvious and subtle cue differences. The examination provides optional conclusion, result, and action sets based on those differences. By using a case study and the classical method, students are able to evaluate whether or not the cues match the conclusions and actions of the decision-maker at the actual scene. If they do not, then specific actions to avoid also may be learned.

In addition, the classical method is used at an **actual incident scene where there has been little or no previous experience or training** with this specific incident type. There also may be little or no experience or training with an incident with the variables that are now present. The decision-maker must formulate a basic plan before directing tactical actions. A process that does not include an evaluation of the incident information, risk-benefit analysis, and appropriate strategies and tactics, is not a plan. It is a design for disaster.

Base the plan on incident information (critical cues), real problems, and appropriate broad solutions (strategies). Choose the best solutions (tactics) from several options.

### Naturalistic Decision-Making (NDM)

The **NDM method** is a more rapid and intuitive process in which the decision-maker:

- looks for certain critical cues (visual, verbal, touch, smell);
- relates those cues to previous similar situations (from experience or training);
- recalls the previous conclusion, results, and actions that most fit the new situation; and
- issues directives to have the tactics implemented.

It is obvious that basing decisions on the understanding gained from previous experience can produce results much faster than following a step-by-step classical process.

The more experience the fire officer has on similar types of incidents, the greater that person's ability will be to read the subtle differences at the incident, draw refined conclusions, and direct the most appropriate actions to provide a solution.

Use the NDM method when the decision-maker has adequate experience or training on the incident type or the variables within the incident type. The NDM method is almost an instant recall of previously learned conclusions, results, and actions. It includes the interrelationships of specific information with conclusions, results, and actions based on whether or not they worked before. Therefore, it provides a direct, lightning-fast transition from what you see, hear, feel, and smell to what you conclude and what you do.

## Time-Pressure Nature of Decision-Making

Because of the time-pressure nature of emergency-scene decision-making, the choice between naturalistic and classical will not be conscious. The decision-maker's brain will attempt the naturalistic method first. This is the way the brain operates, even though it is not cognitive to the person. For example, "What is/was the color of your mother's hair?" It came to you instantly. Why? The information resided in your long-term memory. Your brain checks long-term memory as soon as you read the question. You immediately had the answer. You have had **experience** with this information and you simply recalled the answer.

The decision-maker must recognize when they possesses insufficient information to use this method. Some cues for this recognition are:

1.      It is obvious to the decision-maker that there has been little or no experience or training on the specific incident type.

2.      The decision-maker recognizes that the incident cues are very unfamiliar and do not immediately result in appropriate action decisions.

3.      The decision-maker feels lost or overwhelmed, cannot think, or is in a panic. In these cases, the classical method is the appropriate response.

This is an emotional response to the inability of the brain to find an answer or solution in long-term memory. By recognizing this emotional cue, the decision-maker can recognize that it is time to convert to some other decision-making methodology. That methodology is the classical method. If this conversion is not done, the decision-maker often is left with what has been called "brain-lock."

If NDM was used on the incident scene, the decision-maker uses the classical method to evaluate actions to ensure that what is being done is achieving the desired result. This is continuing sizeup.

## THE COMMAND SEQUENCE

The command sequence emanates from the mission of the fire department. Incident priorities are the **mission statements**. The incident priorities are 1) life safety, 2) incident stabilization, and 3) property conservation. The mission describes why a fire department exists. Every action taken by the fire department must address one or more of these mission statements.

The three action steps and specified results of the command sequence are:

| Action | Result |
|---|---|
| Sizeup | Problem Identification |
| Objectives, Strategy, and Tactics | Action Plan |
| Implementing the Action Plan | Tasks |

### Action:  Sizeup
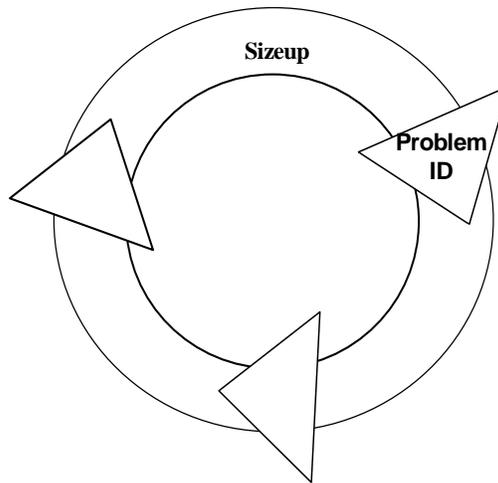


Gathering and Analyzing Access

Sizeup is the process of gathering and analyzing incident information that has an impact on our decision-making. We call this type of information **critical cues**. Sizeup leads to our identification of the problems at an incident.

Knowing where to look for these critical cues enhances our ability to identify the problems at the incident. The difficulty in the process is gaining the knowledge and experience to know where to look and what to look for.

There are three phases of sizeup: 1) preincident information, 2) dispatch through onscene sizeup, and 3) ongoing sizeup.

Phase One:  Preincident Information

Sizeup is more than what you see through the windshield when you arrive at the scene.  It includes preincident information, the factors (critical cues) that are known or gathered before the incident.  These factors will have an impact on decisions or actions.  Information is available on every structure or facility, and you can obtain it simply by asking and taking the time to gather it.  This information includes

- preplan documents:
  - occupancy information,
  - building construction,
  - hazards to personnel,
  - fire flow needs,
  - fire behavior probability,
  - water supply location and quantity,
  - problems anticipated,
  - built-in fire protection,
  - floor plan/plot plan, and
  - utility connections/shutoffs;
- environmental considerations;
- time of day, day of week, season of year;
- knowledge of the surrounding area;
- departmental resources; and
- interagency/private sector assistance.

Preincident information helps the Incident Commander understand what has happened.  It will assist the Command Officer in predicting what is happening presently, as well as what is going to happen.  It provides a basis for being proactive.  It assists with the identification of the problems, as well as the development of strategy and tactics.  It is invaluable in identifying safety considerations, including hazards that are present.  It has often been said, "It is hard to gather preincident information when the flames are licking at the boxes of dynamite."


Phase Two:  Dispatch Through Onscene Sizeup

Preincident information provides a foundation for the more specific data needed to understand a particular incident.  Phase Two is rapid gathering and evaluation of factors (critical cues) related to a specific emergency incident.

Identifying the problems is the first objective.  The Incident Commander must assess incident conditions.  They must know where to look and what to look for and must understand the significance of the **critical cues**.  If we do not identify the real problems, we probably apply the wrong

solutions. Potential hazards to firefighters need to be "read" and identified.

When relieving an initial Command Officer, Incident Commander must review the big picture, evaluate resource needs, the current strategy and tactics, changes in incident conditions, and the probability of escalation.

## Sizeup Factors to Consider

Various authors use different elements to delineate the factors that affect decision-making. One technique uses 13 points and has the acronym, **WALLACE WAS HOT**:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **W**ater | **W**eather | **H**eight |
| **A**rea | **A**uxiliary | **O**ccupancy |
| **L**ife | appliances* | **T**ime |
| **L**ocation/ | **S**pecial hazards | |
| Extent | | |
| **A**pparatus/ | | |
| Personnel | | |
| **C**onstruction | | |
| **E**xposures | | |

*Standpipes, sprinklers, heat detectors, etc.

These 13 points are specific enough to encompass emergency incident scene factors, yet broad enough to fit almost any type of incident. The acronym, once learned, will help you recall these topics. However, most people find that it is impossible to process this many items while en route to or standing in front of an incident scene. The most appropriate use of **WALLACE WAS HOT** is for training; especially training that involves learning the **critical cues** for handling a specific incident type.

The best use of **WALLACE WAS HOT** is in prefire planning with the exception of location and extent, time, and weather.

You must commit these factors to memory. The brain will use this information as you attempt to gather critical cues. Having these factors in long-term memory allows the brain to access the data.

## Information Sources

Dispatchers provide valuable incident information. Train your dispatch personnel to give responding companies all the important information. Your knowledge base--what you know about the area, structure, water

supply, etc., includes information from people on scene, including fire and police personnel and civilians.

Phase Three: Ongoing Sizeup

Incidents are dynamic, and the Incident Commander must evaluate the situation and the actions taken continuously. Due to constantly changing conditions, new problems may arise as previously identified problems are solved. The Incident Commander must assess the results of those actions continually and ask herself/himself, "Is what we are doing here solving the problems at this incident scene? Are our tactics working?" A re-evaluation of the **critical cues** may indicate that a modification of the action plan is needed.

The Incident Commander must view an incident scene as a pessimist. A pessimist continually looks for things that could go wrong. Remember-- Murphy's Law applies here also!

### Result:  Problem Identification

Problem identification is the goal of sizeup. Mental analysis and comparison of incident cues is the basis for problem identification.

Once the problems of an incident are identified, the correct solutions may be determined and applied. Now the planning process can begin.

## ESTABLISHING OBJECTIVES, DETERMINING STRATEGY, AND SELECTING TACTICS
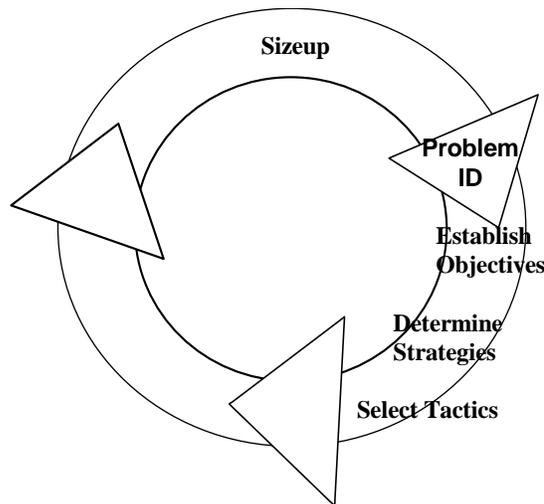
### Action: Establishing Incident Objectives

**Incident objectives** are **statements of guidance** and direction necessary for the selection of appropriate strategy(ies) and the tactical direction of resources.  Incident objectives answer the question of what can be accomplished when all allocated resources have been deployed effectively.  Incident objectives must be achievable and measurable, yet flexible enough to allow for strategic and tactical alternatives.  Determining incident objectives is an essential prerequisite to developing a plan.

Objectives must be:

- **Attainable** with the resources available to the agency (even though it may take several operational periods to accomplish).

- **Measurable** so that a final accounting can determine whether objectives were achieved.

- **Flexible and broad** enough to allow for consideration of strategic and tactical alternatives.

For example, in a fire on the second floor of a single family, unattached dwelling at 0300 hours, the objective could be to:

- remove all occupants from the structure and provide medical care, as needed;
- prevent the fire from extending and extinguish it; and
- remove the smoke from the building.


### Action: Determining Strategy

**Strategy** is a general plan or direction to accomplish incident objectives.  Strategy delineates the broad goals, defines "**what**" must be done to provide a solution to the problems, and is the basis for action planning.

Strategy gives direction to get you from where you are to where you want to be.  Strategy may have multiple components to gain control of an incident.  Strategy evolves directly from the identified problems and is the beginning of the solution to those problems.  Strategy will have several components to gain control of an incident.

It is essential to consider alternative strategies that may be employed should the primary strategy fail to achieve the intended results.  Strategies are continually reevaluated.

- **For small incidents**, incident objectives and strategies are the sole responsibility of the Incident Commander and may take only a few minutes to complete.

- **For larger incidents**, members of the General Staff (and others) will contribute to this process.

Generally, Command Officers use Lloyd Layman's seven factors to provide a basis for the development of strategy:

> **R**escue        **V**entilation
> **E**xposure
> **C**onfinement    **S**alvage
> **E**xtinguishment
> **O**verhaul

Remember these factors by using the acronym **RECEO VS**. Typically, ventilation supports one or more of the other strategies.

A well-defined strategy gives incident personnel a clear description of the Incident Commander's plan and helps them accomplish it. The Incident Commander must determine strategy before developing an action plan. Having a strategy indicates that critical cues have been gathered and assessed and problems have been identified. The Incident Commander also has completed an evaluation of resource requirements and availability and has set priorities. Planning has begun.


### Action:  Selecting Tactics

**Tactics** are the operations that must be completed successfully to accomplish the strategy. Tactics refer to the deployment and direction of incident resources to accomplish the strategy--as guided by the objective. Tactics generally answer the question of "**how"** we are going to accomplish a strategy. Tactics are measurable and specific and can be completed within an operational period.

Examples of tactics are:

- confine fire to room of origin (confinement strategy);
- conduct a primary search (rescue strategy);
- protect the stairway (rescue strategy);
- provide horizontal ventilation (rescue and confinement strategies); and
- check for extension (confinement strategy).

The tactical direction is developed around a specific operational period and must have measurable results. For large incidents that may last for some time, there is no limit to what may be achieved (in terms of accomplishing an incident objective) in a **single** operational period.

Therefore, tactical directions should be stated in terms of accomplishments that can be achieved realistically within the timeframe of an operational period. Resource assignments will consist of the type and number of resources needed to achieve the tactical operations for each operational period. If resources are not available for a specific tactical operation, then the Incident Commander may need to prioritize tactical assignments or reassess the tactics (and perhaps the overall strategy).

Tactical direction includes:

- determining the tactics and operations necessary for the selected strategy; and
- determining and assigning appropriate resources.

### Example of Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics

Example Objective:

Mitigate, stabilize, and isolate hazards that could cause injury to emergency responders.

Example Strategies **WHAT**

**Strategy #1:** Hazardous materials units monitor damaged properties (within their assigned area) for flammable or hazardous material leaks and take corrective actions.

**Strategy #2:** First responders use fire line tape to isolate damaged properties that could cause further serious injury.

**Strategy #3:** Stabilize all unsafe structures that will require entry by the public or incident personnel.

Example Tactics

**HOW**

**Tactic #1:** Structural engineers will identify structures that are unsafe for entry and provide technical assistance on shoring.

**Tactic #2**: Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) units are to shore unsafe structures prior to entry by public or incident personnel.

## Result:  The Action Plan

Sizeup

Problem ID

Establish Objectives

Determine Strategies

Action Plan
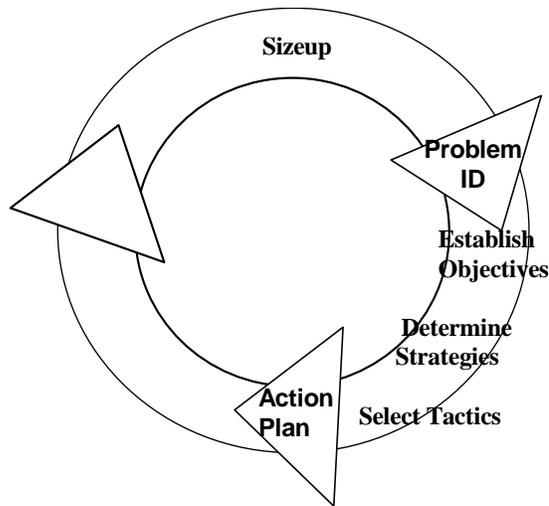
Select Tactics

The determination of strategies and the selection of tactics are the second action step and the first part of the action plan.  Strategy describes the **what** of incident solutions.  Tactics define **how** the strategies will be achieved.

The action plan, often called an Incident Action Plan, is the result of having done the strategies and tactics part of the Command Sequence. The action plan also delineates the who, where, and when of the solution.

### Action:  Implementation
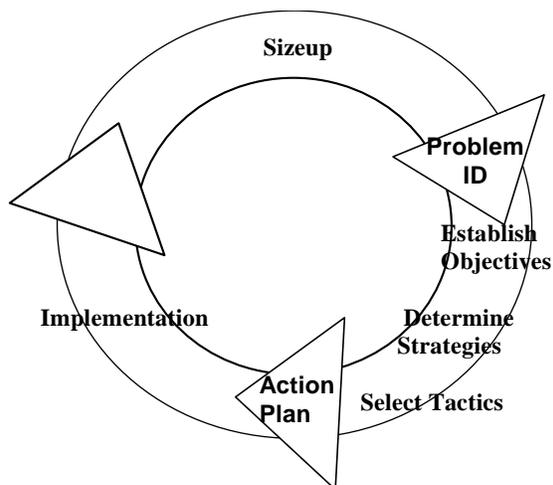
Resources need to know their part of the plan.  Directives are issued to the resources delineating their "tactical operation," the **where**, and the **when**.

Action plans are not necessarily completed before orders are given; however, the Incident Commander must be sure that the actions ordered are not "knee-jerk" reactions, but rather, part of a well-thought-out plan.

Directives define objectives that must be completed to achieve the action plan goals.

The action plan also must define the organizational structure for the operating forces.  Adequate resources must be assigned for tactics to be successful.  A **Communication Plan** defines the operational channels for the incident.  For normal incidents, most departments use a pre-established channel or channel set, and the communication plan is a habit.  However, when incidents evolve into major situations, the communication plan may need modification.  A **Medical Plan** also must be part of the action plan, explaining how emergency medical care will be provided for injured response personnel and victims.

Effectiveness of the action plan must be established.  Additional information must be gathered and analyzed.  Modification or updating may be done to improve the effectiveness of the action plan.  Ongoing progress reports from subordinates allow the Incident Commander to modify the action plan effectively.  This is part of the continuing sizeup.

### Result:  Tasks

Performing the tasks required for tactical operations is the third outcome.  Crews perform specially learned manual tasks that, when completed,

achieve or help to achieve a tactic. Performance of tactical operations cycles back into the first action step: sizeup.

It is absolutely critical that the Incident Commander have a **rational plan** of initial action before starting tactical operations.

Going through the Command Sequence process helps to ensure that critical areas are not overlooked. The process makes you think before you act. It helps keep the Incident Commander in a proactive mode and gets him/her ahead of the time curve. The Command Sequence helps to ensure that critical cues are not overlooked. It can be used at any type of incident because it provides a logical thought process to follow.

The Command Sequence is a continuous process that starts with the first-in resource and doesn't end until the last resource leaves the scene. After the initial Sizeup to Tasks steps have been done by the Incident Commander, the process starts over again. However, it now starts with a re-evaluation of what the Incident Commander already has implemented to see if any of the incident dynamics have changed. Then, the Incident Commander is back to a second time through the Command Sequence starting with Sizeup.
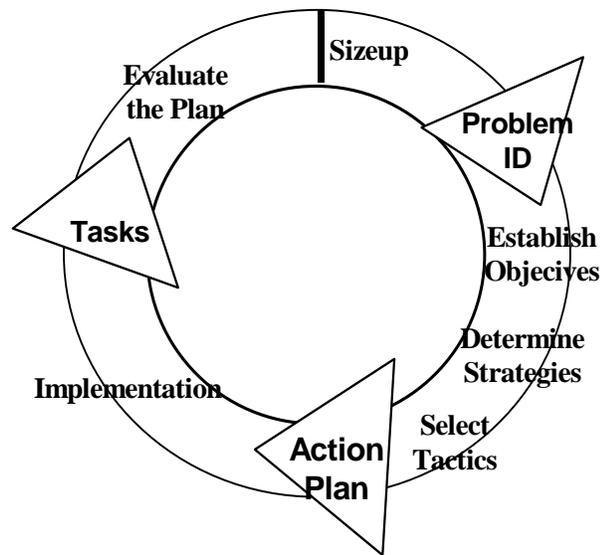
## Unit 1:  Overview Quiz

### Directions

Read each question carefully, and choose the best answers(s) from the four choices.
**NOTE:  There may be more than one correct answer.  You may use the ICS 420-1 as a reference.**

1.      The **most** correct statement describing a complex incident is:

      a.      Anytime a fire involves more than one building.
      b.      Occurs only in the wildland/urban interface environment.
      c.      Requires expanded resource commitment.
      d.      A fire occurring in a group of apartments.

2.      Which of the following about Incident Management Teams is **incorrect**?

      a.      Incident Management Teams are capable of filling all Command and General Staff positions.
      b.      Incident Management Teams work only in the wildland/urban interface environment.
      c.      Incident Management Teams may be comprised of personnel from several agencies.
      d.      It is important to have some depth in each position.

3.       It is important to understand the difference between incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.  Which of the following statements is **incorrect**?

      a.      Incident objectives are broad statements of guidance used to select appropriate strategies.
      b.      Strategy is the overall plan that will be used to control the incident.
      c.      Tactics define "what" must be done.
      d.      Tactics are measurable and specific.

4.      What "result" does the "action" sizeup produce?

      a.      Tasks.
      b.      Implementation.
      c.      Problem Identification.
      d.      Action Plan.

5.      Which of the following statements about Single Command is **incorrect**?

      a.      Single Command is always used if the incident occurs within the jurisdictional boundaries of a single agency.

      b.      In a single command structure, a Incident Commander is solely responsible for the management strategy of the incident.

      c.      A single agency has legal responsibility.

      d.      All of the above.

6.      All of these statements about Area Command are true except one.  Which one is **incorrect**?

      a.      Typically Area Command is used only when the incidents are similar in nature.

      b.      A Unified Area Command may be established if the incidents are multijurisdictional.

      c.      Area Command oversees the management of multiple incidents, each of which is handled by an ICS organization.

      d.      To avoid confusion, Area Command never manages more than one Incident Mangement Team at any given time.

## Correct Answers to Unit 1: Overview Quiz

### Question 1:

*Answer C is the most correct response.* A complex incident may involve any type of incident and normally requires an expanded resource commitment.

### Question 2:

*Answer B is the most correct response.* Incident Management Teams effectively work in all risk situations with various agencies in a variety of both emergency and non-emergency environments.

### Question 3:

*Answer C is the most correct response.* Strategy is the "what." Tactics is the "how:" the actions and resources necessary to accomplish the Strategy.

### Question 4:

*Answer C is the most correct response.* The action resulting from sizeup is "Problem Identification."

### Question 5:

*Answer A is the most correct response.* Even though the incident may occur within the jurisdictional boundaries of a single agency, there may be other agencies that have legal responsibility (e.g., Law Enforcement, Public Health, Coast Guard, etc)

### Question 6:

*Answer D is the most correct response.* Multiple large/complex incidents in a localized geographical area, requiring ICS organizations and large resource commitments are a basic premise for establishing Area Command.