

# **ICS Communication Exercise**

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Time Requirement: 1.5 hours for part 1; 1 hour for part 2

Number of Instructors: 1 or more, consistent with ratio shown in Minimum Criteria.  
Optimal class size is 15-20 participants, and more may be a limitation for contract programs.

## **Materials**

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- Copies of ICS Chart and roles and responsibilities to hand out (from the organization and/or the generic ICS included in this Guide)
- Large Incident Command System Chart(s) (second needed for part 2)
- Participant Guide
- Whiteboard or equivalent; markers
- As many different colors of Sticky Notes as possible
- Emergency/Event scenario (if not using the provided scenario)

## **Objectives**

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When completed, participants will be better able to:

### **Initial Actions (part 1)**

- Describe the responsibilities of the ICS roles
- Identify the roles needed for a particular emergency/event
- Describe the flow of information up and down the ICS
- Identify potential overloads/bottlenecks in the ICS
- Identify resource(s) for ICS planning

### **Transfer and Termination (part 2)**

- Describe the transition of Incident Command to another organization
- Describe the importance of documentation in the Termination phase

## Teaching Methods

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Small-group activity/discussion

## Facilitator Preparation

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Note this Facilitator Guide covers content for two Exercises, as shown above in the Objectives. Part 2 can be completed as time allows, building on the work of part 1.

To initiate the exercise(s) obtain the organization's ICS, position responsibilities, and relevant parts of the Emergency Response Plan if possible. If not, a generic ICS with roles and responsibilities can be found at the end of this Facilitator Guide; generic ERP text is shown at <https://mwc.umn.edu/catalog/>; see Training Only ERP.

- Review the ICS resources on the FEMA website:  
<https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/>
- You may need to add positions for the scenario.
- The more knowledge you have of your participant's previous training and experience, the easier it is to assign roles they are qualified to do. This exercise may not work well for all emergency response groups, especially if the class size is small.
- Having Emergency Response Team members present and the organization's initial Incident Commander as participants may complicate the exercise. Carefully present the objectives at the start of the exercise.
- Modifying the scenario time to off hours (1:30 am) may require a multiple sequence of these group and individual activities as personnel arrive on the scene. This is not recommended for your first use of this exercise.

For Part 2, a second ICS Chart is needed, to include an external group (Fire/Police/EMS or other as described in the ERP or Scenario). This can be done using a generic ICS or you may choose to do some reconnaissance and visit with area responders to accurately portray this phase as it would be conducted locally.

- Review the Participant Guide(s) for the parts you will be using.
- Prepare handouts and large ICS Chart(s). (For part 2 you need a second ICS Chart)
- Note this exercise can be modified to provide a more realistic scenario for your participants. Below are guidelines for developing your own scenario:

## Incident Command System Communication Exercise – Facilitator Guide

- Discuss possible emergencies/events that the organization has identified. This Exercise works best for a moderate to severe/large event. Add date/time/weather.
- Develop the scenario and update the Facilitator and Participant Guides as necessary to reflect the scenario.
- Discuss/revise scenario with peers and your Program Director.
- Prepare a handout of the local-relevant scenario.

### Minimum Content Requirements

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- Small group activity/discussion for each exercise
- Complete worksheet (part 1 Initial Actions, only)

### Questions you may be asked

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#### Initial Actions (part 1)

*Our ICS does not operate like what is shown on this handout.*

Be prepared to facilitate a discussion of how ICS has been implemented by participants, and draw a relevant chart, as needed. See also FEMA resources shown above.

#### Transfer and Termination (part 2)

*Emergency Response Team (ERT) members and other responders report that management has more responsibility than shown in in Termination.*

After reviewing the range of tasks in Termination shown in the Participant Guide, identify aspects that require responder input in order to fulfill the goals this part of the response.

*ERT members note that there is never time to document what happened and what needs to happen.*

Facilitate a discussion of reasons for documentation as part of termination. List reasons for important functions that are not being conducted currently and then brainstorm a list what could happen because of the omission.

## Presentation of the Session

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### Activity-Initial Actions (part 1)

In this exercise, participants will identify roles needed for initial response to the scenario, list information needed by each position and place questions on the chart position where the answer would be sought.

- Discuss the purpose of ICS
- Hand out ICS Chart, roles and responsibilities. Review the roles and responsibilities. Ask for experience of participants in previous ICS responses.
- Facilitate group discussions of information needs and completion of the Worksheet
- Place Sticky Notes
- Facilitate a discussion about the process and make any necessary adjustments to the placement of the Sticky Notes
- Draw attention to the flow of information on the ICS chart, as demonstrated by Sticky Notes above and below various roles on the chart
- Identify potential bottlenecks in the ICS as demonstrated by the roles with the greatest number of Sticky Notes
- Capture changes to ICS procedures that may need to be addressed and share later with the employer

### Transition to External ICS (part 2)

- Post the new ICS chart, showing the External Incident Commander
- Lead a discussion about the transition to an External ICS and how the participants would participate in the evolving structure
- Ask participants to place Sticky Note(s) on the new ICS, showing where each would fit. Discuss the role(s) of each participant; identify any roles not taken by organizational employees.
- Given enough lead time, you may be able to have a representative from the Fire, Police, or EMS participate in some manner (how they would like the transition to take place and who in the organization they would be looking for information/assistance from in their ICS). This will have extremely positive feedback in the review, though on occasion they may not like all they hear.

### Termination (part 2)

Review the listing of termination activities in the Participant Guide. Note that others may be specified in the employer-specific SOP in the ERP.

## Incident Command System Communication Exercise – Facilitator Guide

Review the required parts of Termination:

- Debrief
- Reconstruct the response
- Critique (review) the response
- Correct/Fix

Ask: What are the steps conducted in each of these activities?

Ask: Who participates in each of these termination activities?

Facilitate a discussion regarding the responses, acknowledging that there are few ‘right answers’ since each ERP is designed for local needs.

### Discuss

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1. Review the Objectives and ask – Were they achieved?

Here, it should be noted that there are resources, as shown at the FEMA website. It may be most relevant to programs where the company plan needs updating or revision. The use of them can be part of the discussion in item 2, below.

2. Ask “Going forward, how has the exercise made you more aware of ICS functions?”

As with any training, answers/participation to this question may be limited, but later expressed in their evaluation, which you can then share with the client.

3. Answer any remaining questions

### Follow-up

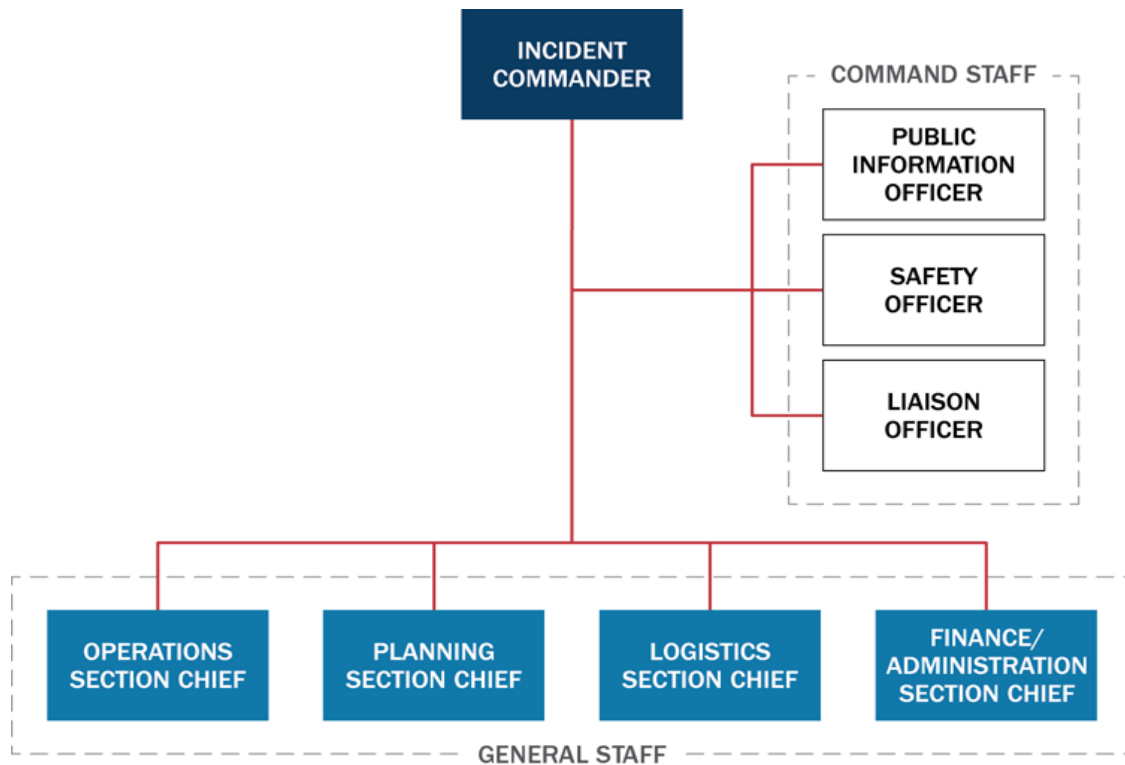
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Make this exercise better:

- Organize the listing of ‘takeaways’ and forward to your program director. These are very important impacts to report to NIEHS.

The Midwest Consortium developed this guidance under cooperative agreement number U45 ES 06184 from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

## Incident Command System Organizational Chart



Source: [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema\\_nims\\_doctrine-2017.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_nims_doctrine-2017.pdf)

Representative roles and lines of authority in the ICS are shown below.

**Incident Commander (IC)** Also called senior official, project leader, or on-scene coordinator.

Functions:

- Directs all aspects of the response
- Coordinates all teams' efforts
- Establishes a command post or Emergency Operations Centers and chain of command
- Maintains ongoing communication with all teams
- Coordinates with off-site personnel
- Keeps a log of all response activities and maintains records

## Safety Officer

Functions:

- Reports directly to the Incident Commander
- Implements the safety plan
- Monitors condition of the entry team members in the warm zone
- Advises Incident Commander and team leaders on appropriate PPE and decon methods
- Acts as liaison with emergency medical personnel, as directed by the Incident Commander
- Minimizes risks

## Liaison Officer

Functions:

- Coordinates the involvement of agencies such as fire and law enforcement
- Maintains communication between outside agencies and in-house response
- Designates places for agencies to report and communicate with each other

## Public Information Officer (PIO)

Functions:

- Establishes an area for the press and media
- Releases accurate information concerning the incident as it is cleared by the Incident Commander

## Operations Officer

Functions:

- Controls operations to bring the emergency under control
- Terminates emergency operations
- Executes specific tasks such as entry, decon, sampling, and security
- Establishes all zones and access points
- Directs the response at the hands-on level

## Planning Officer

Functions:

- Collects information on appropriate PPE and decontamination methods
- Prepares a research brief on the hazardous material involved, including incompatibilities, flammability and explosion hazard, First Aid methods, and other relevant information
- Develops action plans and alternative plans

### **Logistics Officer**

Functions:

- Provides equipment, supplies, and services needed to support the incident
- Establishes provisions for long-duration incidents, such as food, toilet facilities, vehicle refueling, and other support services

### **Finance Officer**

Functions:

- Purchase needed materials; records personnel's work time and other monetary matters
- Evaluates the financial aspects of the incident