
Glossary of Related Terms

EXTRACTED FROM - E/L/G 0300 INTERMEDIATE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM FOR EXPANDING
INCIDENTS,
ICS 300

GLOSSARY

Access and Functional Needs: Individual circumstances requiring assistance, accommodation, or modification for mobility, communication, transportation, safety, health maintenance, etc., due to any temporary or permanent situation that limits an individual's ability to take action in an emergency.

Agency: A government element with a specific function offering a particular kind of assistance.

Agency Administrator/Executive: The official responsible for administering policy for an agency or jurisdiction.

Agency Representative: A person assigned by a primary, assisting, or cooperating local, state, tribal, territorial, or Federal Government agency, or nongovernmental or private organization, who has authority to make decisions affecting that agency's or organization's participation in incident management activities following appropriate consultation with that agency's leadership.

Area Command: An organization that oversees the management of multiple incidents or oversees the management of a very large or evolving situation with multiple ICS organizations. See Unified Area Command.

Assigned Resource: A resource that has been checked in and assigned work tasks on an incident.

Assignment: A task given to a person or team to perform based on operational objectives defined in the IAP.

Assistant: A title for subordinates of principal Command Staff and EOC director's staff positions. The title indicates a level of technical capability, qualification, and responsibility subordinate to the primary positions. Assistants may also be assigned to unit leaders.

Assisting Agency: An agency or organization providing personnel, services, or other resources to the agency with direct responsibility for incident management.

Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ): An entity that has the authority and responsibility for developing, implementing, maintaining, and overseeing the qualification process within its organization or jurisdiction. This may be a state or Federal agency, training commission, NGO, private sector company, or a tribal or local agency such as a police, fire, or public works department. In some cases, the AHJ may provide support to multiple disciplines that collaborate as a part of a team (e.g., an IMT).

Available Resource: A resource assigned to an incident, checked in, and available for assignment.

Badging: The assignment of physical incident-specific credentials to establish legitimacy and permit access to incident sites. See Credentialing.

Base: See Incident Base.

Branch: The organizational level having functional or geographical responsibility for major aspects of incident operations. A branch falls between the Section Chief and the division or group in the Operations Section, and between the section and units in the Logistics Section. Branches are identified by Roman numerals or by functional area.

Camp: A geographical site within the general incident area (separate from the Incident Base) that is equipped and staffed to provide sleeping, food, water, and sanitary services to incident personnel.

Certification: The process of authoritatively attesting that individuals meet qualifications established for key incident management functions and are, therefore, qualified for specific positions.

Chain of Command: The orderly line of authority within the ranks of incident management organizations.

Check-In: The process through which resources first report to an incident. All responders, regardless of agency affiliation, report in to receive an assignment in accordance with the Incident Commander or Unified Command's established procedures.

Chief: The ICS title for individuals responsible for the management of functional sections: Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.

Clear Text: Communication that does not use codes. See Plain Language.

Command: The act of directing, ordering, or controlling by virtue of explicit statutory, regulatory, or delegated authority.

Command Staff: A group of incident personnel that the Incident Commander or Unified Command assigns to support the command function at an ICP. Command staff often include a PIO, a Safety Officer, and a Liaison Officer, who have assistants as necessary. Additional positions may be needed, depending on the incident.

Cooperating Agency: An agency supplying assistance other than direct operational or support functions or resources to the incident management effort.

Coordinate: To exchange information systematically among principals who have or may have a need to know certain information to carry out specific incident management responsibilities.

Core Capability: An element defined in the National Preparedness Goal as necessary to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.

Credentialing: Providing documentation that identifies personnel and authenticates and verifies their qualification for a particular position. See Badging.

Critical Infrastructure: Assets, systems, and networks, whether physical or virtual, so vital to the United States that the incapacitation or destruction of such assets, systems, or networks would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination of those matters.

Delegation of Authority: A statement that the agency executive delegating authority and assigning responsibility provides to the Incident Commander. The delegation of authority can include priorities, expectations, constraints, and other considerations or guidelines, as needed.

Demobilization: The orderly, safe, and efficient return of an incident resource to its original location and status.

Department Operations Center (DOC): An operations or coordination center dedicated to a single, specific department or agency. The focus of a DOC is on internal agency incident management and response. DOCs are often linked to and/or physically represented in a combined agency EOC by an authorized agent(s) for the department or agency.

Deputy: A fully qualified individual who, in the absence of a superior, can be delegated the authority to manage a functional operation or to perform a specific task. In some cases, a deputy can act as relief for a superior, and, therefore, should be fully qualified in the position. Deputies generally can be assigned to the Incident Commander, EOC director, General Staff, and branch directors.

Director: The ICS title for individuals responsible for supervision of a branch. Also, an organizational title for an individual responsible for managing and directing the team in an EOC.

Dispatch: The ordered movement of a resource or resources to an assigned operational mission, or an administrative move from one location to another.

Division: The organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area. Divisions are established when the number of resources exceeds the manageable span of control of the Section Chief. See Group.

Emergency: Any incident, whether natural, technological, or human-caused, that necessitates responsive action to protect life or property.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC): A congressionally ratified agreement that provides form and structure to interstate mutual aid. Through EMAC, a disaster-affected state can request and receive assistance from other member states quickly and efficiently, resolving two key issues up front: liability and reimbursement.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC): The physical location where the coordination of information and resources to support incident management (on-scene operations) activities normally takes place. An EOC may be a temporary facility or located in a more central or permanently established facility, perhaps at a higher level of organization within a jurisdiction.

Emergency Operations Plan: A plan for responding to a variety of potential hazards.

Emergency Support Function (ESF): The grouping of governmental and certain private sector capabilities into an organizational structure to provide capabilities and services most likely needed to manage domestic incidents.

Essential Elements of Information (EEI): Important and standard information items, which support timely and informed decisions.

Evacuation: The organized, phased, and supervised withdrawal, dispersal, or removal of people from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas, and their reception and care in safe areas.

Event: See Planned Event.

Federal: Of or pertaining to the Federal Government of the United States of America.

Finance/Administration Section: The ICS Section responsible for an incident's administrative and financial considerations.

General Staff: A group of incident personnel organized according to function and reporting to the Incident Commander or Unified Command. The ICS General Staff consists of the Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, Finance/Administration Section Chief.

Group: An organizational subdivision established to divide the incident management structure into functional areas of operation. Groups are composed of resources assembled to perform a special function not necessarily within a single geographic area. See also Division.

Hazard: Something that is potentially dangerous or harmful, often the root cause of an

Incident: An occurrence, natural or manmade, that necessitates a response to protect life or property. In NIMS, the word “incident” includes planned events as well as emergencies and/or disasters of all kinds and sizes.

Incident Action Plan (IAP): An oral or written plan containing the objectives established by the Incident Commander or Unified Command and addressing tactics and support activities for the planned operational period, generally 12 to 24 hours.

Incident Base: A location where personnel coordinate and administer logistics functions for an incident. There is typically only one base per incident. (An incident name or other designator is added to the term Base.) The ICP may be co-located with the Incident Base.

Incident Command (IC): The ICS organizational element responsible for overall management of the incident and consisting of the Incident Commander or Unified Command and any additional Command Staff activated.

Incident Command Post (ICP): The field location where the primary functions of incident command are performed. The ICP may be co-located with the Incident Base or other incident facilities.

Incident Command System (ICS): A standardized approach to the command, control, and coordination of on-scene incident management, providing a common hierarchy within which personnel from multiple organizations can be effective. ICS is the combination of procedures, personnel, facilities, equipment, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of on-scene resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of incidents and is applicable to small, as well as large and complex, incidents, including planned events.

Incident Commander: The individual responsible for on-scene incident activities, including developing incident objectives and ordering and releasing resources. The Incident Commander has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations.

Incident Complex: Two or more individual incidents located in the same general area and assigned to a single Incident Commander or Unified Command.

Incident Management: The broad spectrum of activities and organizations providing operations, coordination, and support applied at all levels of government, using both governmental and nongovernmental resources to plan for, respond to, and recover from an incident, regardless of cause, size, or complexity.

Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT): A team of ICS-qualified personnel, configured according to ICS that deploy in support of affected jurisdictions and/or on-scene personnel.

Incident Management Team (IMT): A rostered group of ICS-qualified personnel consisting of an Incident Commander, Command and General Staff, and personnel assigned to other key ICS positions.

Incident Objective: A statement of an outcome to be accomplished or achieved. Incident objectives are used to select strategies and tactics. Incident objectives should be realistic, achievable, and measurable, yet flexible enough to allow strategic and tactical alternatives.

Incident Personnel: All individuals who have roles in incident management or support, whether on scene, in an EOC, or participating in a MAC Group.

Information Management: The collection, organization, and control over the structure, processing, and delivery of information from one or more sources and distribution to one or more audiences who have a stake in that information.

Intelligence/Investigations (I/I): Efforts to determine the source or cause of the incident (e.g., disease outbreak, fire, complex coordinated attack, or cyber incident) in order to control its impact and/or help prevent the occurrence of similar incidents. In ICS, the function may be accomplished in the Planning Section, Operations Section, Command Staff, as a separate General Staff section, or in some combination of these locations.

Interoperability: The ability of systems, personnel, and equipment to provide and receive functionality, data, information, and/or services to and from other systems, personnel, and equipment, between both public and private agencies, departments, and other organizations, in a manner enabling them to operate effectively together.

Joint Field Office (JFO): The primary Federal incident management field structure. The JFO is a temporary Federal facility that provides a central location for the coordination of local, state, tribal, and Federal governments and private sector and NGOs with primary responsibility for response and recovery.

Joint Information Center (JIC): A facility in which personnel coordinate incident-related public information activities. The JIC serves as the central point of contact for all

news media. Public information officials from all participating agencies co-locate at, or virtually coordinate through, the JIC.

Joint Information System (JIS): A structure that integrates overarching incident information and public affairs into a cohesive organization designed to provide consistent, coordinated, accurate, accessible, timely, and complete information during crisis or incident operations.

Jurisdiction: Jurisdiction has two definitions depending on the context:

- A range or sphere of authority. Public agencies have jurisdiction at an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authority. Jurisdictional authority at an incident can be political or geographical (e.g., local, state, tribal, territorial, and Federal boundary lines) and/or functional (e.g., law enforcement, public health).
- A political subdivision (e.g., municipality, county, parish, state, Federal) with the responsibility for ensuring public safety, health, and welfare within its legal authorities and geographic boundaries.

Kind: As applied to incident resources, a class or group of items or people of the same nature or character or classified together because they have traits in common.

Leader: The ICS title for an individual who is responsible for supervision of a unit, strike team, resource team, or task force.

Liaison Officer (LOFR or LNO): A member of the ICS Command Staff responsible for coordinating with representatives from cooperating and assisting agencies or organizations.

Local Government: Public entities responsible for the security and welfare of a designated area as established by law. A county, municipality, city, town, township, local public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments (regardless of whether the council of governments is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under state law), regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government; a tribe or authorized tribal entity, or in Alaska, a Native Village or Alaska Regional Native Corporation; a rural community, unincorporated town or village, or other public entity.).

Logistics: The process and procedure for providing resources and other services to support incident management.

Logistics Section: The ICS Section responsible for providing facilities, services, and material support for the incident.

Management by Objectives: A management approach, fundamental to NIMS, that involves (1) establishing objectives, e.g., specific, measurable and realistic outcomes to be achieved;(2) identifying strategies, tactics, and tasks to achieve the objectives; (3) performing the tactics and tasks and measuring and documenting results in achieving the objectives; and (4) taking corrective action to modify strategies, tactics, and/or performance to achieve the objectives.

Manager: The individual within an ICS organizational unit assigned specific managerial responsibilities (e.g., Staging Area Manager or Camp Manager).

Mission Area: One of five areas (Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery) designated in the National Preparedness Goal to group core capabilities.

Mitigation: The capabilities necessary to reduce the loss of life and property from natural and/or manmade disasters by lessening the impacts of disasters.

Mobilization: The processes and procedures for activating, assembling, and transporting resources that have been requested to respond to or support an incident.

Multiagency Coordination Group (MAC Group): A group, typically consisting of agency administrators or executives from organizations, or their designees, that provides policy guidance to incident personnel, supports resource prioritization and allocation, and enables decision making among elected and appointed officials and senior executives in other organizations, as well as those directly responsible for incident management. Can also be called the Policy Group.

Multiagency Coordination Systems: An overarching term for the NIMS Command and Coordination systems: ICS, EOCs, MAC Group/policy groups, and JISs.

Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement: A written or oral agreement between and among agencies/organizations and/or jurisdictions that provides a mechanism to quickly obtain assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate the rapid, short-term deployment of support prior to, during, and/or after an incident.

National: Of a nationwide character, including the local, state, tribal, territorial, and Federal aspects of governance and policy.

National Incident Management System (NIMS): A systematic, proactive approach to guide all levels of government, NGOs, and the private sector to work together to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the effects of incidents. NIMS provides stakeholders across the whole community with the shared vocabulary, systems, and processes to successfully deliver the capabilities described in the National Preparedness System. NIMS provides a consistent foundation for dealing with all

incidents, ranging from daily occurrences to incidents requiring a coordinated Federal response.

National Planning Frameworks: Guidance documents for each of the five preparedness mission areas that describe how the whole community works together to achieve the National Preparedness Goal. The Frameworks foster a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities, from the firehouse to the White House, and clarifies how the Nation coordinates, shares information, and works together—ultimately resulting in a more secure and resilient Nation.

National Preparedness: The actions taken to plan, organize, equip, train, and exercise to build and sustain the capabilities necessary to prevent, protect against, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from those threats that pose the greatest risk to the security of the Nation.

National Preparedness Goal (NPG): Doctrine describing what it means for the whole community to be prepared for the types of incidents that pose the greatest threat to the security of the Nation, including acts of terrorism and emergencies and disasters, regardless of cause. The goal itself is: “A secure and resilient Nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.”

National Preparedness System (NPS): An organized process to achieve the National Preparedness Goal of a secure and resilient Nation.

National Response Coordination Center (NRCC): A multiagency coordination center located at FEMA Headquarters. Its staff coordinates the overall Federal support for major disasters and emergencies, including catastrophic incidents and emergency management program implementation.

Nongovernmental Organization (NGO): A group that is based on the interests of its members, individuals, or institutions. An NGO is not created by a government, but it may work cooperatively with government. Examples of NGOs include faith-based groups, relief agencies, organizations that support people with access and functional needs, and animal welfare organizations.

Normal Operations/Steady State: The activation level that describes routine monitoring of jurisdictional situation (no event or incident anticipated).

Officer: The ICS title for a member of the Command Staff authorized to make decisions and take action related to his/her area of responsibility.

Operational Period: The time scheduled for executing a given set of operation actions, as specified in the IAP. Operational periods can be of various lengths, but are typically 12 to 24 hours.

Operational Security (OPSEC): The implementation of procedures and activities to protect sensitive or classified operations involving sources and methods of intelligence collection, investigative techniques, tactical actions, counter-surveillance measures, counterintelligence methods, undercover officers, cooperating witnesses, and informants.

Operations Section: The ICS Section responsible for implementing tactical incident operations described in the IAP. In ICS, the Operations Section may include subordinate branches, divisions, and/or groups.

Organization: Any association or group of persons with like objectives. Examples include, but are not limited to, governmental departments and agencies, NGOs, and private sector entities.

Plain Language: Communication that the intended audience can understand and that meets the communicator's purpose. For the purpose of NIMS, plain language refers to a communication style that avoids or limits the use of codes, abbreviations, and jargon, as appropriate, during incidents involving more than a single agency.

Planned Event: An incident that is a scheduled non-emergency activity (e.g., sporting event, concert, parade).

Planning Meeting: A meeting held, as needed, before and throughout an incident to select specific strategies and tactics for incident control operations and for service and support planning.

Planning Section: The ICS Section that collects, evaluates, and disseminates operational information related to the incident and for the preparation and documentation of the IAP. This section also maintains information on the current and forecasted situation and on the status of resources assigned to the incident.

Position Qualifications: The minimum criteria necessary for individuals to fill a specific position.

Prevention: The capabilities necessary to avoid, prevent, or stop a threatened or actual act of terrorism. In national preparedness guidance, the term "prevention" refers to preventing imminent threats.

Private Sector: Organizations and individuals that are not part of any governmental structure. The private sector includes for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, formal and informal structures, commerce, and industry.

Protection: The capabilities necessary to secure the homeland against acts of terrorism and manmade or natural disasters.

Protocol: A set of established guidelines for actions (designated by individuals, teams, functions, or capabilities) under various specified conditions.

Public Information: Processes, procedures, and systems for communicating timely, accurate, and accessible information on an incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest to the public, responders, and additional stakeholders (both directly affected and indirectly affected).

Public Information Officer (PIO): A member of the ICS Command Staff responsible for interfacing with the public and media and/or with other agencies with incident-related information needs.

Recovery: The capabilities necessary to assist communities affected by an incident to recover effectively.

Recovery Plan: A plan developed to restore the affected area or community.

Recovery Support Function (RSF): Organizing structures for key functional areas of assistance outlined in the National Disaster Recovery Framework that group capabilities of various government and private sector partner organizations to promote effective recovery from disasters before and after disasters strike.

Reimbursement: Mechanism used to recoup funds expended for incident-specific activities.

Resource Management: Systems for identifying available resources at all jurisdictional levels to enable timely, efficient, and unimpeded access to resources needed to prepare for, respond to, or recover from an incident.

Resource Team: See Strike Team.

Resource Tracking: The process that all incident personnel and staff from associated organizations use to maintain information regarding the location and status of resources ordered for, deployed to, or assigned to an incident.

Resources: Personnel, equipment, teams, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment to incident operations and for which status is

maintained. Resources are described by kind and type and may be used in operational support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at an EOC.

Response: The capabilities necessary to save lives, protect property and the environment, and meet basic human needs after an incident has occurred.

Safety Officer (SOFR): In ICS, a member of the Command Staff responsible for monitoring incident operations and advising the Incident Commander or Unified Command on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of incident personnel. The Safety Officer modifies or stops the work of personnel to prevent unsafe acts.

Section: The ICS organizational element having responsibility for a major functional area of incident management (e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration).

Single Resource: An individual, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew/team of individuals with an identified work supervisor that can be used on an incident.

Situation Report (SitRep): Confirmed or verified information regarding the specific details relating to an incident.

Span of Control: The number of subordinates for which a supervisor is responsible, usually expressed as the ratio of supervisors to individuals.

Staging Area: A temporary location for available resources in which personnel, supplies, and equipment await operational assignment.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): A reference document or an operations manual that provides the purpose, authorities, duration, and details for the preferred method of performing a single function or several interrelated functions in a uniform manner.

State: Used in NIMS to include any state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and any possession of the United States.

Status Report: Reports, such as spot reports, that include vital and/or time-sensitive information. Status reports are typically function-specific, less formal than situation reports, and are not always issued on a specific schedule.

Strategy: The general plan or direction selected to accomplish incident objectives.

Strike Team (ST): A set number of resources of the same kind and type that have an established minimum number of personnel, common communications, and a leader. In the law enforcement community, strike teams are sometimes referred to as resource teams.

Supervisor: The Incident Command System title for an individual responsible for a Division or Group.

System: Any combination of processes, facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications integrated for a specific purpose.

Tactics: The deployment and directing of resources on an incident to accomplish the objectives.

Task Force (TF): Any combination of resources of different kinds and/or types assembled to support a specific mission or operational need.

Technical Specialist: Individual with special skills that can be used anywhere within the Incident Command System organization. No minimum qualifications are prescribed, as technical specialists normally perform the same duties during an incident that they perform in their everyday jobs, and they are typically certified in their fields or professions.

Terrorism: Any activity that involves an act that is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure and is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any state or other subdivision of the United States; and appears to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, or to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.

Threat: A natural or manmade occurrence, an individual, an entity, or an action having or indicating the potential to harm life, information, operations, the environment, and/or property.

Tools: Instruments and capabilities that allow the professional performance of tasks, such as information systems, agreements, doctrine, capabilities, and legislative authorities.

Type: A NIMS resource classification that refers to capability of a specific kind of resource to which a metric is applied to designate it as a specific numbered class.

Unified Area Command: version of command established when incidents under an Area Command are multijurisdictional. See Area Command.

Unified Command (UC): An ICS application used when more than one agency has incident jurisdiction or when incidents cross political jurisdictions.

Unit: The organizational element with functional responsibility for a specific activity within the Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Sections in ICS.

Unit Leader: The individual in charge of a unit in ICS.

United States National Grid: A point and area location reference system that FEMA and other incident management organizations use as an accurate and expeditious alternative to latitude/longitude.

Unity of Command: A NIMS guiding principle stating that each individual involved in incident management reports to and takes direction from only one person.

Unity of Effort: A NIMS guiding principle that provides coordination through cooperation and common interests and does not interfere with Federal department and agency supervisory, command, or statutory authorities.

Whole Community: A focus on enabling the participation in incident management activities of a wide range of players from the private and nonprofit sectors, including NGOs and the general public, in conjunction with the participation of all levels of government, to foster better coordination and working relationships.