INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

NATIONAL TRAINING CURRICULUM

UNIFIED COMMAND

MODULE 13
I-400

REFERENCE
TEXT
OCTOBER 1994

NFES 2464

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

on behalf of the

NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

The following training material attains the standards prescribed for courses developed under the interagency curriculum established and coordinated by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. The instruction is certified for interagency use and is known as:

Unified Command

Member NWCG and Training Working Team Liaison

Chair, Training Working Team

Date 11/7/94

Date 10/24/94

Description of the Performance Based System

The Wildland Fire Qualifications System is a "performance based" qualifications system. In this system, the primary criteria for qualification is individual performance as observed by an evaluator using approved standards. This system differs from previous wildland fire qualifications systems which have been "training based." Training based systems use the completion of training courses or a passing score on an examination as a primary criteria for qualification.

A performance based system has two advantages over a training based system:

- Qualification is based upon real performance, as measured on the job, versus perceived performance, as measured by an examination or classroom activities.

- Personnel who have learned skills from sources outside wildfire suppression, such as agency specific training programs or training and work in prescribed fire, structural fire, law enforcement, search and rescue, etc., may not be required to complete specific courses in order to qualify in a wildfire position.

1. The components of the wildland fire qualifications system are as follows:

   a. Position Task Books (PTB) contain all critical tasks which are required to perform the job. PTB's have been designed in a format which will allow documentation of a trainee's ability to perform each task. Successful completion of all tasks required of the position, as determined by an evaluator, will be the basis for recommending certification.

      IMPORTANT NOTE: Training requirements include completion of all required training courses prior to obtaining a PTB. Use of the suggested training courses or job aids is recommended to prepare the employee to perform in the position.

   b. Training courses and job aids provide the specific skills and knowledge required to perform tasks as prescribed in the PTB.

   c. Agency Certification is issued in the form of an incident qualification card certifying that the individual is qualified to perform in a specified position.

2. Responsibilities

   The local office is responsible for selecting trainees, proper use of task books, and certification of trainees, see the Task Book Administrators Guide 330-1 for further information.

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Additional copies of this publication may be ordered from:

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PREFACE

This module is one of seventeen modules which comprise the Incident Command System (ICS) National Training Curriculum. The entire curriculum has been developed by an interagency steering group and a contract consultant. The curriculum was sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, and development was directed and supported by the National Interagency Fire Center, Division of Training. The Steering Group was represented by several application areas (Search & Rescue, Law Enforcement, Structural Fire, Wildfire, etc.) which guided the work of the contractor in the development of this package.

The Steering Group was:

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Mike Colgan - Orange County Fire Department
Dave Engle - USDI, Bureau of Land Management
Dan Francis - California Department of Forestry
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The Contract Consultant was:

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This module describes the purposes and advantages of multijurisdiction and/or multi-agency Unified Command, and how Unified Command can be applied to incident situations. It describes the Unified Command organization, how Unified Command is established, and the roles of its major elements. The module discusses a number of factors to be considered in implementing Unified Command.

Objectives:

1. Define Unified Command.

2. Define the advantages of Unified Command and define the kinds of situations which may call for a Unified Command organization.

3. Identify the primary features of a Unified Command organization.

4. Given a simulated situation, describe roles and reporting relationships under a Unified Command which involves agencies from within the same jurisdiction, and under multijurisdiction conditions.

5. Describe areas of cost sharing which might apply under a Unified Command structure.

6. Given a simulated situation, describe an appropriate Unified Command organization.

I. Background on Unified Command

Early in the development of ICS, it was recognized that many incidents crossed jurisdictional boundaries or the limits of individual agency functional responsibility.

The standard ICS organizational framework with a single Incident Commander from one jurisdiction or agency did not lend itself to creating an effective organization for multijurisdictional incidents, or for incidents involving several agencies from the same political jurisdiction. In fact, the use of a single Incident Commander would, in some cases, not be legally possible or politically advisable.

On the other hand, it was also recognized that every incident must have <u>one</u> person with the responsibility and the authority to direct tactical actions. Lacking a single authority, chaos easily prevails on multijurisdictional or multi-agency incidents.

Two solutions were considered:

A. Divide the incident either geographically or functionally so that each jurisdiction or agency could establish its own ICS organization in a well-defined geographical or functional area of responsibility.

   This was the simplest political solution, but there were obvious cost and effectiveness reasons why this solution was unacceptable.

B. Create a single ICS incident structure with a <u>built-in process</u> for an effective and responsible multijurisdictional or multi-agency approach.

   This was the challenge to the early ICS designers, and the solution was an incident management process called Unified Command. Unified Command has been used many times, and has

become a major feature of the Incident Command System.

II. Description of Unified Command

Unified Command is a team effort process, allowing all agencies with responsibility for an incident, either geographical or functional, to establish a common set of incident objectives and strategies that all can subscribe to. This is accomplished without losing or abdicating agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.

Unified Command is not a new process, or one that is unique to the Incident Command System. The U.S. military has used a similar concept in integrating military services in joint operations for years. In describing Unified Command, an imperfect analogy can be drawn with a United Nations multi-nation military force used to respond to global situations requiring outside intervention.

There are essentially four elements to consider in applying Unified Command:

A. Policies, Objectives, Strategies

In joint military operations, setting the policy, objectives, and strategy is the responsibility of the coalition of countries operating within the United Nations mandate. In ICS, this responsibility belongs to the various jurisdictional and agency administrators who set policy and are accountable to their agencies. This activity is done in advance of tactical operations, and may be coordinated from some other location than where the direct action takes place.

B. Organization

In joint military operations, the organization consists of the unified Force Command established at the scene. In ICS, the organization consists of

the various jurisdictional or agency on-scene senior representatives (agency incident commanders) operating within a Unified Command structure.

C. Resources

In joint military operations, resources consist of all of the U.S. armed services, plus various service elements from other countries. In ICS Unified Command, resources are the personnel and equipment supplied by the jurisdictions and agencies that have functional or jurisdictional responsibility.

D. Operations

In joint military operations, after the objectives, strategies and interagency agreements are decided, a single Force Commander is designated to develop tactical action plans and to direct tactical operations. In ICS Unified Command that person is the incident Operations Section Chief.

In both joint military operations and ICS Unified Command, resources stay under the administrative and policy control of their agencies. However, operationally they respond to mission assignments under the coordination and direction of the Force Commander or Operations Section Chief based on the requirements of the action plan.

While by no means a perfect analogy, it does serve to show how a unified team approach can be successfully implemented.

Unified Command represents an important element in increasing the effectiveness of multijurisdictional or multi-agency incidents. As incidents become more complex and involve more

agencies, the need for Unified Command is increased.

III. Advantages of Using Unified Command

Below are the principal advantages of using Unified Command.

- One set of objectives is developed for the entire incident.
- A collective approach is made to developing strategies to achieve incident goals.
- Information flow and coordination is improved between all jurisdictions and agencies involved in the incident.
- All agencies with responsibility for the incident have an understanding of one another's priorities and restrictions.
- No agency's authority or legal requirements will be compromised or neglected.
- Each agency is fully aware of the plans, actions and constraints of **all** others.
- The combined efforts of all agencies are optimized as they perform their respective assignments under a single Incident Action Plan.
- Duplicative efforts are reduced or eliminated, thus reducing cost and chances for frustration and conflict.

IV. Applications

Several examples below show the use of an ICS Unified Command application.

A. Incidents that impact more than one political jurisdiction.

The classic example is a wildland fire starting in one jurisdiction and burning into the jurisdiction of one or more others. Responding agencies from each jurisdiction all have the same basic mission (fire control), and it is the political and/or geographical boundaries that mandate multi-agency cooperation and involvement.

B. Incidents involving multiple agencies (or departments) within the same political jurisdiction.

Hazardous materials incidents provide an example for this kind of a situation. The fire department has responsibility for fire control and rescue, the police department has responsibility for evacuation and area security, and public health agencies and others have responsibility for site clean-up.

Major commercial airplane crashes are another example. Here, the management challenge increases.

In one geographical location, fire, law enforcement, health services, the FAA, and others all have legal responsibilities to perform their different missions at the site of the same incident.

All may be active at the same time and in the same place. <u>It is the functional role and the legal obligation -- not the geography -- that brings about the multiple involvement.</u>

C. Incidents that impact on (or involve) several political and functional agencies.

These kind of incidents occur with storms, earthquakes, and other major natural disasters,

and they present the greatest incident management challenges.

In these incidents, large numbers of local, state, and federal agencies become immediately involved. These emergencies cross political boundaries and involve multiple functional authorities. Roles, missions, and responsibilities are all intermixed.

ICS' Unified Command approach to incidents like those just mentioned is a practical and cost-effective solution. By using Unified Command, participating agencies can improve overall incident management and achieve goals in a timely and cost-effective manner.

V. Primary Features of a Unified Command Organization

- A single integrated incident organization
- Collocated (shared) facilities
- A single planning process and Incident Action Plan
- Shared planning, logistical, and finance/ administration operations
- A coordinated process for resource ordering

A. A Single Integrated Incident Organization

Under Unified Command, the various jurisdictions and/or agencies are blended together into an integrated unified team. The resulting organization may be a mix of personnel from several jurisdictions or agencies, each performing functions as appropriate and working toward a common set of objectives.

The proper mix of participants in a Unified Command organization will depend on:

- The location of the incident, which often determines the jurisdictions that must be involved.

- The kind of incident, which dictates the functional agencies of the involved jurisdiction(s), as well as other agencies that may be involved.

In a multijurisdictional situation, a Unified Command structure could consist of one responsible official from each jurisdiction. In other cases, Unified Command may consist of several functional department managers or assigned representatives from within a single political jurisdiction.

Because of common ICS organization and terminology, personnel from other jurisdictions or agencies can be easily integrated into a single organization.

B. Collocated (shared) Facilities

By bringing the responsible officials, Command Staffs and planning elements together in a single Incident Command Post a coordinated effort can be maintained for as long as the Unified Command structure is required.

One base can serve the needs of multiple agencies. Similarly, resources from several agencies can be brought together in Staging Areas.

C. A Single Planning Process and Incident Action Plan

The planning process for Unified Command is similar to that used on a single jurisdiction or agency incident.

One important distinction is the need for every jurisdictional or functional agency's Incident Commander to get together before the first operational period planning meeting in a command meeting.

This meeting provides the responsible agency officials with an opportunity to discuss and concur on important issues prior to joint incident action planning. The agenda for the command meeting should include the following:

- State jurisdictional/agency priorities and objectives.
- Present jurisdictional limitations, concerns, restrictions.
- Develop a collective set of incident objectives.
- Establish and agree on acceptable priorities.
- Adopt an overall strategy or strategies to accomplish objectives.
- Agree on the basic organization structure.
- Designate the best qualified and acceptable Operations Section Chief.
- Agree on General Staff personnel designations and planning, logistical, and finance agreements and procedures.

- Agree on the resource ordering process to be followed.
- Agree on cost-sharing procedures.
- Agree on informational matters.
- Designate one agency official to act as the Unified Command spokesperson.

Command Meeting Requirements

- The Command Meeting should include <u>only</u> agency Incident Commanders.
- The meeting should be brief, and important points should be documented.
- Prior to the meeting, the respective responsible officials should have reviewed the purposes and agenda items described above, and be prepared to discuss them.

Incident Action Planning meetings will use the results of the Command Meeting to decide on:

- Tactical operations for the next operational period.
- Establishing resource requirements and determining resource availability and sources.
- Making resource assignments.
- Establishing the unified Operations Section organization.
- Establishing combined planning, logistics, and finance/administration operations as needed.

The end result of the planning process will be an Incident Action Plan which addresses multijurisdiction or multi-agency priorities, and provides tactical operations and resource assignments for the unified effort.

D. Shared Planning, Logistical, and Finance Sections

The Unified Command incident organization can also benefit by integrating multijurisdictional and/or multi-agency personnel into various other functional areas.

For example, in Operations and Planning, Deputy Section Chiefs can be designated from an adjacent jurisdiction which may in future operational periods have the primary responsibility for these functions.

By placing other agency's personnel in the Planning Section's Situation, Resources, and Demobilization Units, there can be significant savings in personnel, and increased communication and information sharing.

In Logistics, a deputy Logistics Section Chief from another agency or jurisdiction can help to coordinate incident support as well as facilitate resource ordering activities. Placing other agencies personnel into the Communications Unit helps in developing a single incident-wide Communications Plan.

Although the Finance/Administration Section often has detailed agency specific procedures to follow, cost savings may be realized through agreements on cost sharing for essential services. For example, one agency might provide food services, another fuel, another security, etc.

E. Unified Command Resource Ordering

An important advantage of Unified Command is advance establishment of resource ordering procedures. These decisions are made during the Command Meeting.

The Planning Meeting will determine resource requirements for all levels of the organization. However, the nature and location of the incident will, to some extent, dictate the most effective off-incident resource ordering process.

The resource requirements established at the planning meeting are given to the Logistics Section, which then creates a resource order which is transmitted to one agency's dispatch center to be filled.

Some situations may require resource orders to be made to different agencies from the incident. Multiple resource orders are generally less desirable than the use of a single resource order, and should be avoided when possible.

If the incident is operating under Unified Command, specific kinds and types of resources to be supplied by certain jurisdictions or agencies may be pre-designated as a part of the resource order. This will depend upon the prior commitments of the responsible agency officials in the Unified Command meeting.

If this information is not known in advance, then it will be up to the individual agency dispatch center receiving the resource order to fill the order based on closest available resources.

VI. Guidelines for the Use of Unified Command

A. Understand ICS Unified Command

It is essential to understand how ICS Unified Command functions. Knowledge of ICS principles and structure will enable managers to accept and easily adapt to a Unified Command mode of operation when it is required. Lack of knowledge about ICS can limit the willingness of some jurisdictions or agencies to participate in a Unified Command incident organization. It is impossible to implement Unified Command unless agencies have agreed to participate in the process.

B. Collocate Essential Functions

Establish a single Incident Command Post and, as needed, other facilities where all agencies can operate together. Avoid the confusion created by separate command, planning, and logistical set-ups.

C. Implement Unified Command at an Early Stage of a Multijurisdictional or Multi-agency Incident

It is essential to begin joint planning as early as possible. Initiate Unified Command as soon as two or more agencies having jurisdictional or functional responsibilities come together on an incident. It is especially important on those incidents where there may be conflicting priorities based on agency responsibilities.

D. Concur on an Operations Section Chief and Other General Staff Members

The Operations Section Chief will normally be from the jurisdiction or agency which has the greatest involvement in the incident, although that is not essential.

The Operations Section Chief should be the most qualified and experienced person available. The selection of the Operations Section Chief must be agreed upon by the Unified Command, as the Operations Section Chief will have full authority to implement the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan. It is also necessary to agree on other General Staff personnel who will be implementing their portions of the Incident Action Plan.

E. If Necessary, Designate One of the Incident Commanders to be a Spokesperson (Operational Period Duty Officer)

The Incident Commanders may see the need to identify one of them to act as an Operational Period Duty Officer and/or spokesperson for the Unified Command.

This can provide a designated channel of communications from General and Command Staff members into the Unified Command. That person does not make Unified Command decisions, but does provide a point of contact as necessary for the General and Command Staffs.

F. Train Often as a Team

Finally, it is important to conduct training exercises in using Unified Command with adjacent jurisdictions and functional agencies whenever possible.

VII. Functioning in Unified Command

Individually and collectively, the designated agency Incident Commanders functioning in a Unified Command have the following responsibilities at an incident:

A. They must be clear on their jurisdictional or agency limitations. Any legal, political, jurisdictional, or safety restrictions must be identified and made known to all.

B. They must be authorized to perform certain activities and actions on behalf of the jurisdiction or agency they represent. These actions could include:

- Ordering of additional resources in support of the Incident Action Plan.
- The possible loaning or sharing of resources to other jurisdictions.
- Agreeing to financial cost-sharing arrangements with participating agencies.

C. The Unified Command has the responsibility to manage the incident to the best of its abilities. This includes:

- Working closely with the other IC's in the Unified Command.
- Providing sufficient qualified staff and resources.
- Anticipating and resolving problems.
- Delegating authority as needed.
- Inspecting and evaluating performance.
- Communicating with their own agency on priorities, plans, problems, and progress.

D. The members of the Unified Command must function together as a team. They must ensure that effective coordination takes place. In many ways, this is the most important function they perform in Unified Command.

There are two distinct levels of coordination:

- Coordination with other members of the Unified Command team. It is essential that all participants be kept mutually informed, involved, and consulted.

- Coordination with higher authorities, agency administrators, etc. It is important to keep their respective authorities well informed and confident that the incident is being competently managed.

MODULE 13

UNIFIED COMMAND

Exercise Scenario

VIII. Exercise

Scenario for Unified Command Exercise

A semi-trailer containing forty 55-gallon drums of potassium chlorate is involved in an accident on State Highway 42 in the City of Drearyville. The truck severely damaged a railroad overpass over the state highway. The driver was killed. There is no fire at the present time, however several of the drums have ruptured and contents are flowing on to the highway and into an adjacent stream.

The State Police have closed the highway in both directions and traffic is rapidly backing up. The Wilson Co. Fire Dept. HAZMAT team is on the scene along with Drearyville fire, police, and public works departments. There are commercial businesses along both sides of the highway, and a trailer park with seventy-five units is located 1/4 mile east.

Additional Information:

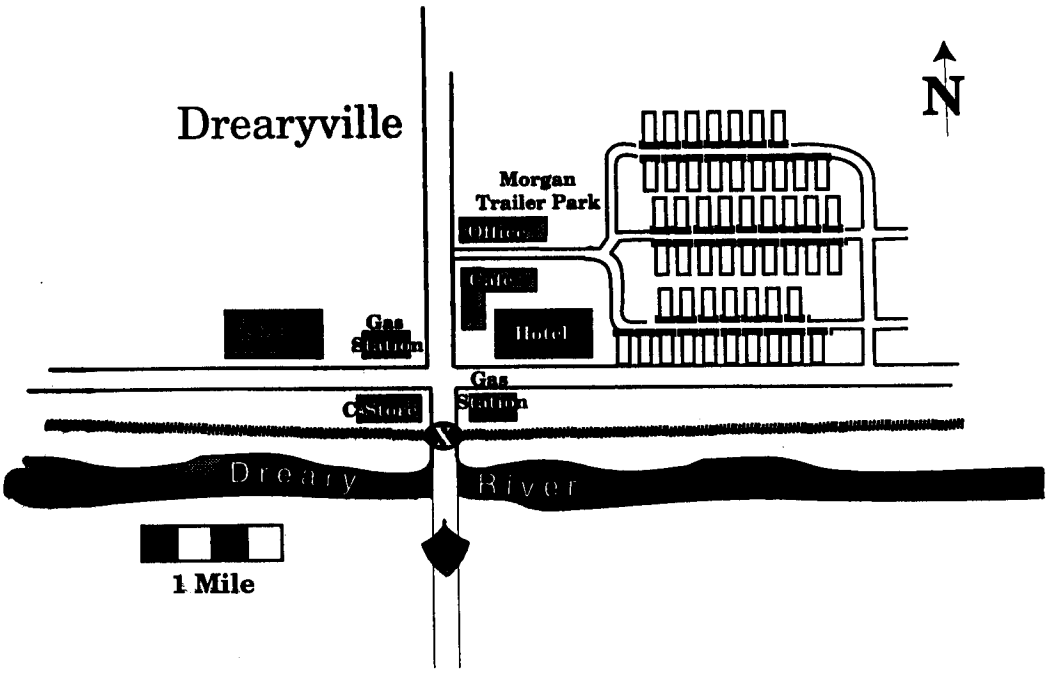
Weather: Temp 65, wind from the SW at 5 mph

Day/Time: 4 p.m. on a Saturday

City, County, and State agencies are not yet in a Unified Command mode, although all are familiar with ICS.

The media is on scene with a helicopter and ground vehicles.

Provide other assumptions and/or ground rules as necessary to all groups.


Drearyville
N
Morgan
Trailer Park
Office
Cafe
Hotel
Gas
Station
Gas
Station
C-Store
Dreary
River
1 Mile

RESOURCE TABLE FOR USE IN EXERCISES

KIND OF RESOURCE				
ALS UNITS				
BLS UNITS				
BULLDOZERS				
BUSES - 30 PASS 50 PASS				
COAST GUARD VES.				
COMMUNICATION UNITS				
CRANES				
DUMP TRUCKS				
EMS UNITS				
FIRE ENGINE CO'S				
FIRE TRUCK CO'S				
FIREBOATS				
FOUR WHEEL DRIVE PASS. VEH.				
HAZMAT UNITS				
HELICOPTERS				
K-9 UNITS				
MARINE RESCUE UNITS				
MOTORCYCLE UNITS				
PASSENGER VEHICLES				
PATROL UNITS				
PICKUP TRUCKS				
PRIVATE AMBULANCES				
SAR UNITS				
STATION WAGONS				
WATER TENDERS				

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☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1995-690-705