Prerequisite

Before you can take the FEMA exams, you will need to register with the FEMA System Identification System to get a SID.

Links

- National Disaster & Emergency Management University
- SID registration
- Course page
- Interactive course

Overview

IS-100 (also labeled ICS-100, IS-0100.c) is an introduction to the ICS, or Incident Command System.

To receive credit for the course, you must get a 75% or higher on the final exam. The exam is accessible from the course page.

Unit 1: ICS Overview

The ICS (Incident Command System) is a standard for incident management used by a variety of organizations and governments for small and large emergencies and planned events. By using this standard, different organizations/jurisdictions/agencies are able to work together more efficiently and share resources (such as people, equipment, locations) with greater ease.

ICS does the following for incident management:

- Provides a systematic planning process to prepare for incidents
- Implements a common, flexible, and predesigned management structure
- Fosters cooperation between disciplines and agencies
- Clarifies chain of command and supervision responsibilities, improving accountability
- Leverages interoperable communications systems and plain language, improving communications

ICS is one component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). ICS falls under *Command and Coordination*, one of the major components of NIMS. The other two are *Resource Management* and *Communications and Information Management*.

Unit 2: NIMS Management Characteristics

There are fourteen management characteristics from NIMS that ICS is based off of:

1. Common Terminology
2. Modular Organization
3. Management by Objectives
4. Incident Action Planning
5. Manageable Span of Control
6. Incident Facilities and Locations
7. Comprehensive Resource Management
8. Integrated Communications

9. Establishment and Transfer of Command
10. Unified Command
11. Chain of Command and Unity of Command
12. Accountability
13. Dispatch/Deployment
14. Information and Intelligence Management

Common Terminology (1)

One of the biggest things that ICS does is provides a common language for everyone involved. Many groups have different terminology that they use in their day-to-day operations relative to other groups, and that can be problematic during an incident where they work with others.

ICS gives known names and definitions to major functions, units, and resources for use during an incident. All communication should use those and should avoid jargon, acronyms, and radio or agency-specific codes to ensure that all involved parties understand.

Modular Organization (2)

The structure of the incident response organization is modular and designed to be expanded and contracted as the incident grows more complex and tasks are delegated or as the incident begins to wrap up and fewer personnel are needed to manage response. The responsibility for establishing and modifying the module organization falls to the **Incident Commander**.

Management by Objectives (3)

The Incident Commander or Unified Command (see item 10 below) is responsible for establishing the incident objectives, which in turn drive the operations/activities done to handle the incident. "Management by Objectives" includes:

- Establishing specific and measurable objectives
- Identifying strategies/tactics and tasks/activities to achieve those objectives
- Developing and issuing assignments and plans/procedures/protocols to achieve those tasks
- Documenting the results of those objectives

Incident Action Planning (4)

An IAP (Incident Action Plan) is a concise way to capture and communicate incident priorities, objectives, and assignments to everyone involved. The IAP should focus on addressing the needs of "operational periods", the timeframe(s) during the incident where activities are being carried out.

The following are the desired characteristics of an IAP:

- Cover a specific timeframe
- Be proactive
- Specify the incident objectives
- State the activities to be completed
- Assign responsibilities
- Identify needed resources
- Specify communication protocols

With the exception of hazardous materials incidents, small incidents may have their IAP be either oral or written. Large incidents and any incident involving a hazardous material requires a written IAP. ICS Form 202 (Incident

Objectives) exists to help develop a written IAP. (Yes, ICS 202 is in Winlink.)

Manageable Span of Control (5)

Span of control is the number of individuals or resources that a single supervisor can effectively manage during an incident. As a general guideline, the optimal span of control for one supervisor is between 1 and 5 (1:5) resources. Similar to work outside of incidents, if a supervisor has too much responsibility they may struggle to manage everything effectively. However, the specific incident, the task(s) the supervisor is overseeing, any safety factors, and the distances between those resources may impact the manageable span of control (for example, a supervisor may be limited to a ratio of 1:2 to be effective, or be fine with 5:15).

Incident Facilities and Locations (6)

During an incident, Incident Command may establish designated facilities to support the incident. Common support facilities include:

- Incident Command Post (ICP)
- Incident base, staging areas, and camps
- Mass casualty triage areas
- Point-of-distribution
- Emergency shelters

Comprehensive Resource Management (7)

Resource management is exactly what it sounds like: managing any sort of resource (e.g., people, teams, facilities, equipment, supplies). This includes identifying required resources, ordering and acquiring them, mobilizing those resources, tracking and reporting on them, demobilizing them, and doing any reimbursement and restocking during and after the incident.

Of special note is people. As IS-100 is frequently used for incidents that may include injuries and casualties, managing people resources sometimes includes not only telling someone where to go and who to report to but ensuring their qualifications and properly credentialing the resources.

Integrated Communications (8)

Ensuring that everyone involved in managing the incident can communicate with one another is important. It is necessary to ensure that any necessary voice and data links stay connected, that those involved have the necessary situational awareness, and that information can be shared between groups as needed.

Establishment and Transfer of Command (9)

One of the first tasks to be completed during incident response is clearly establishing command. The jurisdiction or organization with primary responsibility for the incident designates an Incident Commander and defines the process to transfer the command, should it be necessary. If command does need to be transferred, that process should include a briefing to ensure the new command has all essential information so that the incident response can continue to be done safely and effectively.

Unified Command (10)

While a small incident is likely to have a single individual designated as the Incident Commander, a large incident may involve multiple jurisdictions or require the authority and/or resources of multiple groups to manage.

When that happens, instead of a single Incident Commander, there is a Unified Command that jointly manages incident. This allows groups with different legal, functional, or geographic responsibilities to work together without affecting the authority, responsibility, or accountability of the individual organizations. As an example, law enforcement and fire may form a Unified Command, working together toward a common resolution but having their respective personnel doing the tasks that their agencies have the authority and resources for.

Chain of Command and Unity of Command (11)

Chain of command is an orderly line showing how authority flows through the organizational structure for that incident. It allows the Incident Commander (or Unified Command) to direct and control the actions of all personnel involved in the incident. Chain of command also requires that all orders flow from supervisors downward, though it does not prevent individuals from asking for and sharing information with others.

Unity of command means that all individuals have a single designated supervisor to report to. An individual should never have more than one ICS supervisor, and their work assignments should only come from that ICS supervisor. It is important to note that the command structure of the ICS organization and the administrative structure of the jurisdiction/agency may differ; when an individual is assigned to an incident, they report to their ICS supervisor and **not** their day-to-day supervisor.

Accountability (12)

As part of the ICS, individuals need to abide by agency policies and guidelines as well as applicable local, tribal, state, and federal rules and regulations. The following principles need to be followed:

- Check-in/check-out: All responders must check in to receive an assignment, and check out upon departure.
- Incident Action Planning: Operations must be coordinated following the IAP.
- Unity of Command: Each individual is assigned to just one supervisor.
- Personal Responsibility: ICS relies on individuals taking personal accountability for their own actions.
- Span of Control: Supervisors must be able to effectively supervise, control, and communicate with the resources under their supervision.
- Resource Tracking: Supervisors must record and report resource status changes as soon as they occur. Accountability for a resource begins when the resource is requested and continues until the resource returns to their home base safely.

Dispatch/Deployment (13)

Resources should be deployed only when requested or when dispatched by an appropriate authority. This should be done through established resource management systems, whatever those look like for the involved agencies (e.g., pagers).

Resources not requested should not self-dispatching to avoid overburdening incident command.

Information and Intelligence Management (14)

Incident management needs to establish a process to gather, analyze/assess, share, and manage information and intelligence related to the incident.

In NIMS, *intelligence* exclusively refers to threat-related information from law enforcement, medical surveillance, and other investigative organizations.

Information and intelligence may come from many sources. A few examples are:

- 911 calls

- Radio, video, and data communications by responders
- SITREPS (Situation Reports)
- Technical specialists (e.g., individuals from the NWS using their weather knowledge)
- Reports from field observers
- Geospatial data (GIS, etc.)
- Print, online, broadcast, and social media
- Risk assessments
- Terroristic/violent threats
- Surveillance of disease outbreaks
- Structural plans and vulnerabilities

Unit 3: ICS Functional Areas and Command Staff Roles

There are five major functional areas under ICS:

1. Command
    1. Sets the incident objectives, strategies, and priorities
    2. Has overall responsibility for the incident
2. Operations
    1. Conducts operations to reach incident objectives
    2. Establishes tactics and directs all operational resources
3. Planning
    1. Supports the IAP by tracking resources, collecting/analyzing information, and maintaining documentation
4. Logistics
    1. Arranges for resources and needed services to support incident objectives
5. Finance/Administration
    1. Monitors incident costs
    2. Provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analyses

There is a sixth function identified in NIMS, "Intelligence/Investigations," the area responsible for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information and intelligence to the relevant responders in the incident. Incident Command can place the I/I function in various places. It may fall under Operations or Planning, it may be its own major functional area, or it may fall to command staff that reports directly to the Incident Commander/Unified Command.

The ICS does not dictate that these Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration, and I/I be established as command staff positions. Until the Incident Commander delegates that functionality, the IC is directly responsible for the area's tasks. If a function is established, the persona in charge of the section is designated as a Section Chief and has the ability to expand their section to meet the needs of the situation.

The Incident Commander is responsible for the overall management of the incident. It is the only position that is **always** staffed within the ICS (even the smallest incident only involving a single person has a person in charge).

In additional to being responsible for the overall management, the Incident Commander is also responsible for the following:

- Ensuring overall incident safety
- Providing information services to both internal and external stakeholders (disaster survivors, executives from involved agencies, senior officials)
- Establishing and maintaining liaisons with other agencies participating in the incident response

IC may appoint one or more deputies (who should be fully qualified to assume the IC position).

In addition to the functional areas, ICS also defines the ICS Command Staff, made up of personnel providing information, safety, and liaison services and reporting to the Incident Commander. The three Command Staff roles are:

- Public Information Officer: Interface with the public and media and/or other agencies needing incident-related information
- Safety Officer: Monitors incident operations and advises the IC on matters relating to safety, including personnel health and safety
- Liaison Officer: Services as the IC's point of contact for representatives of government agencies, NGOs, and private-sector organizations.

Additionally, an IC may choose to appoint technical specialists (for matters such as legal, medical, science/technology, access, and other functional needs) to act as command advisors.

Effective incident management is done through the use of the following:

1. Incident Command System (ICS)
    1. Directs tactical response to save lives, stabilize the incident, and protect property and the environment
2. Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs)
    1. Acquires resources, gathers information, and facilitates interagency coordination
    2. A location, physical or virtual, where staff from multiple agencies come together to address imminent threats and hazards
    3. Staffed with personnel who are trained for and authorized to represent their agency or discipline
3. Multi-agency Coordination (MAC) Groups
    1. Provides policy guidance and senior level decision making
4. Joint Information System(JIS).
    1. Handles outreach and communication with the media and public to keep them informed about the incident
    2. When possible, public information officials from all participating agencies should co-locate at the JIC

Unit 4: General Staff Roles

1. Operations Section
    1. Implements strategies and develops tactics to carry out incident objectives
    2. Directing the management of all tactical activities on behalf of the IC
    3. Supports the development of the IAP to ensure it accurately reflects current operations
    4. Organizes, assigns, and supervises tactical response resources
2. Planning Section
    1. Prepares and documents IAPs
    2. Manages information
    3. Maintains situational awareness for the incident
    4. Tracks resources assigned to the incident
    5. Maintains incident documentation
    6. Develops plans for demobilization
3. Logistics Section
    1. Orders, obtains, maintains, and accounts for essential personnel, equipment, and supplies

    2. Provides communication planning and resources
    3. Sets up food services for responders
    4. Set up and maintains incident facilities
    5. Provides support transportation
    6. Provides medical services to incident personnel
4. Finance/Administration Section
    1. Contract negotiation and monitoring
    2. Timekeeping
    3. Cost analysis
    4. Compensation for injuries or damages to property
    5. Documentation for reimbursement (e.g., mutual aid agreements or assistance agreements)

Unit 5: How ICS Applies to You

This unit in the interactive course is a scenario involving flooding in Emerald City. I recommend you visit the course and go through this section to test your knowledge of various ICS roles, responsibilities, and organizational structures.