



REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT:

ORGANIZATION OF AN OIL SPILL RESPONSE

What does the RSC need to know?

The RSC will be part of an Incident Command System (ICS) that is designed to bring together incident managers and field responders from government and industry to cooperatively manage the response. RSC members do not need to be qualified to fill other roles within this system, but a basic knowledge of how the system is organized will help RSC members understand how responsibilities and decision-making are distributed.

This backgrounder covers:

- Basic overview of Incident Command System (ICS) – page 1
- Role of the Unified Command – page 4
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Basics of the Incident Command System (ICS)

Whether large or small, a spill response will be organized using the Incident Command System (ICS). The Incident Command System is a **standardized, scalable structure** used to organize all aspects of an incident response – from strategic (setting priorities and making decisions) to operational (deploying response equipment and personnel to clean up a spill). The Incident Command System provides a common hierarchy within which responders from multiple agencies can work together effectively. The Incident Command System has its own chain of command, terminology, forms, meetings, and planning process. Together, these pieces allow people from different agencies, organizations, or companies to understand who does what and what needs to happen next – while creating consistent documentation of each step along the way.

The National Contingency Plan (NCP) prescribes the use of the Incident Command System across the U.S. as a way to effectively integrate agencies and other organizations that otherwise would operate under their own structures, titles, terminology/acronyms, and norms.

This document is part of a series of resources to support community members who may be asked to represent their community during an oil spill. More resources for the Regional Stakeholder Committee can be found at: www.pwsrccac.org/rsc

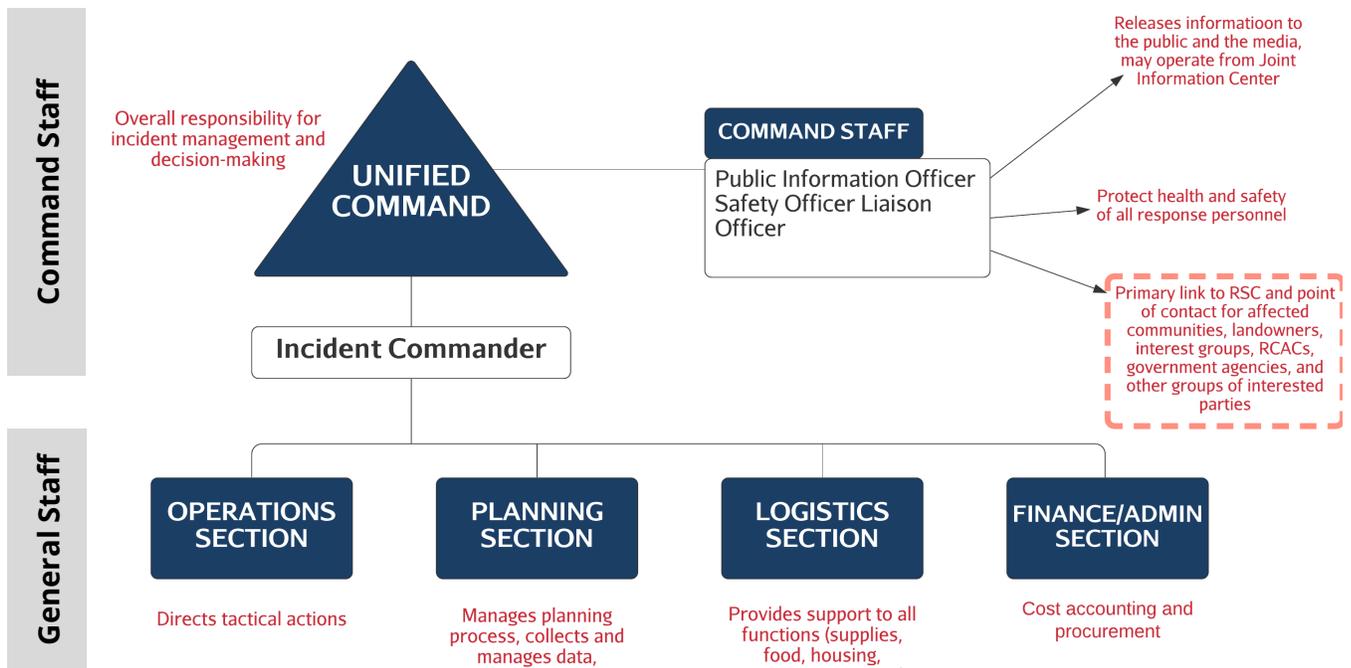


Figure 1: Key functions of Command and General staff in the Incident Command System

The Incident Command System is scalable to different sized incidents. In a small incident, all roles could be filled by just a few people. A large incident could involve hundreds. Regardless, ICS personnel are generally organized in two categories:

- **Command Staff** are direct advisors to Unified Command and include the Public Information, Safety, and Liaison Officer(s). This is the level at which RSC processes will be taking place with the RSC members having direct access to the Unified Command for a limited time each day.
- **General Staff** are the positions that report directly to the Unified Command, which are organized in four Sections as shown in Figure 1:
 - Planning
 - Operations
 - Logistics
 - Finance/Administration

Sections may be divided into one or more Branches, Divisions, Groups, Units, Task Forces, and Strike Teams.

Figure 2 shows what the Incident Command System for a large oil spill response may look like.

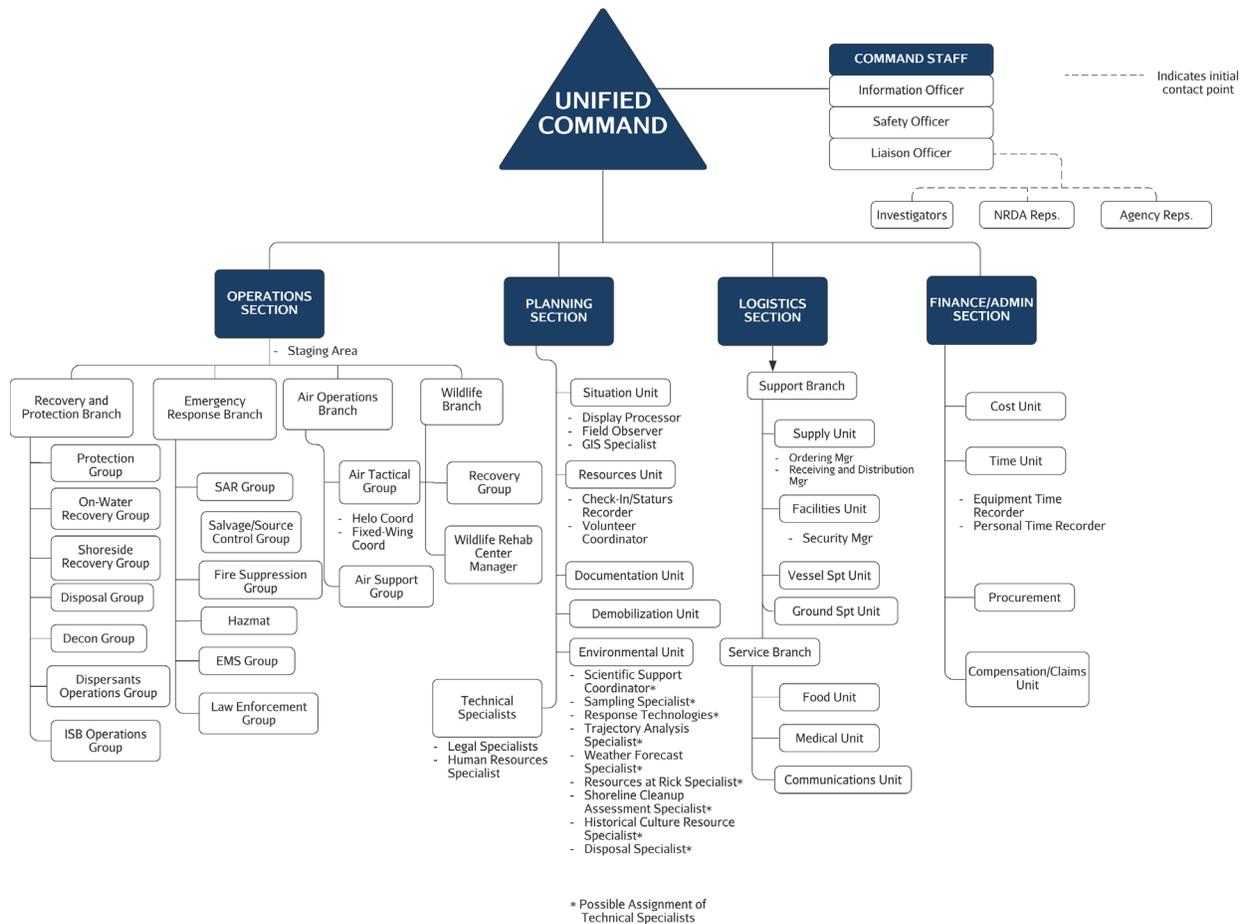


Figure 2: Example of fully developed ICS organization for a large oil spill response (U.S. Coast Guard Field Operations Guide for Oil Spill Response)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Federal Emergency Management Agency ICS trainings

<https://training.fema.gov/nims/>

U.S. Coast Guard Incident Management Handbook

<https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/assets/ics%20review%20document.pdf>

Role of the Unified Command

A Unified Command structure is used to oversee a spill when more than one agency has jurisdiction. Unified Command brings multiple responsible agencies together to manage an incident by establishing a common set of incident objectives and strategies. The Unified Command then directs the response through a joint decision-making process.

Unified Command is made up of On-Scene Coordinators (OSC) from impacted jurisdictions. Depending on the affected area, these may include:

- **Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC)** – Representative from the U.S. Coast Guard for marine and coastal spills, typically the Captain of the Port for a given Port Zone; the Environmental Protection Agency for inland spills; or the Department of Defense for anything related to the military.
- **State On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC)** – Representative of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC).
- **Responsible Party On-Scene Coordinator (RPOSC)** – Employee of or contractor hired by the company responsible for the oil spill, known as the "Responsible Party," often abbreviated simply as "RP."
- **Local On-Scene Coordinator (LOSC)** – Representative of the local government(s). There is typically a LOSC only when there is an immediate threat to the health and safety of a local population and/or the incident occurs within their jurisdiction. After an immediate public health threat has passed, the LOSC may transition to the RSC.
- **Tribal On-Scene Coordinator (TOSC)** – Representative of Tribal government(s) impacted by a spill. Similar to the LOSC, there may not be a TOSC for every spill.

The authority to assign an On-Scene Coordinator to the Unified Command is derived from response plans, laws, and regulations.

Within the Unified Command, there will be a single **Incident Commander** who directs the control, containment, removal, and disposal of the spill. In most cases, the Incident Commander (IC) is the Responsible Party On-Scene Coordinator, unless the Responsible Party is unknown, unwilling, or unable to fulfill their responsibilities. In this case, the Federal On-Scene Coordinator or State On-Scene Coordinator may assume the role of Incident Commander. The Local On-Scene Coordinator may also assume this role as long as there is an immediate threat to public safety in their jurisdiction.

Role of Local On-Scene Coordinator vs. RSC

Understanding the difference between Unified Command and RSC roles is important for local or Tribal governments with an interest in spill response and should be discussed in local emergency response plans.

The table below outlines basic differences between a Unified Command role and RSC membership based on the regional and area contingency plans.

Considerations for Assigning Community Representatives	Local or Tribal On-Scene Coordinator (LOSC/TOSC)	RSC Member
Impact to Community	Immediate threat to public health and safety from oil spill	Potential ecological or cultural resource impacts, but no immediate threat to public health/safety
Level of Authority over Incident Response	Participate in Unified Command response decision-making, including setting priorities and directing resources	Provides input to Unified Command through Liaison Officer but no direct role in setting priorities and directing resources
Incident Action Plan (IAP) Development and Review	As part of Unified Command, responsible for reviewing and signing off on each IAP during Planning Meeting	Reviews IAP once it is signed off and provides feedback or input to Unified Command through Liaison Officer for next IAP
Connection to and Coordination with Community/Constituents	Accountable to senior administrative officials in government or tribe, and may coordinate incident response with local/tribal Emergency Operations Center if activated	Provide informational updates to community leaders or in-community liaisons and convey community concerns and priorities back to Unified Command through Liaison Officer

Incident Action Planning (IAP) Process

Operational Periods and the "Planning P"

The Incident Command System uses operational planning cycles, which defines a schedule of meetings and the development of the Incident Action Plan, starting with the initial response. This process is often shown in a "Planning P" that begins with initial response steps that happen only once, then enters a "loop" that repeats until the response has concluded.

Initial response steps happen only once during the earliest phase of the response, when parties are being notified and are beginning to form the Incident Command System response structure. The "loop" in the P is a process that repeats for the duration of the response. Operational periods are typically shorter (12 -24 hours) in the beginning of the event when the situation is most dynamic. As the response matures, operational periods may lengthen to 24 hours or even days or weeks.

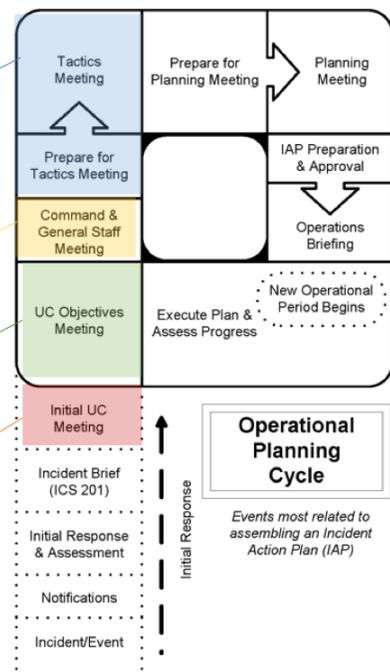
There are many versions of this Planning P diagram; the one shown here is from the U.S. Coast Guard's Incident Management Handbook.

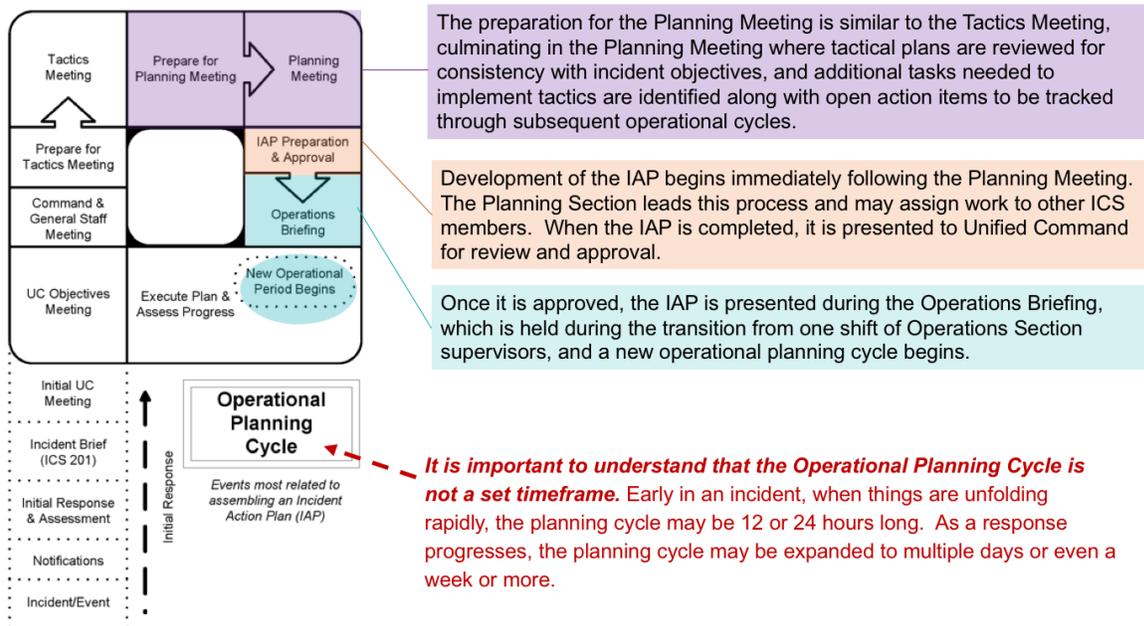
The Tactics Meeting Preparation step refers to the work done by staff from the Operations and Planning Section. They fill out ICS forms associated with operational and work planning; these forms will feed into the Incident Action Plan. The Tactics Meeting is typically a short meeting to review the ICS forms and finalize their content.

The Command and General Staff Meeting is usually run by the Planning Section Chief and involves briefing out the incident status and objectives, identifying important information needs, and assigning resources.

The first block in the "P" is the UC Objectives Meeting, which is attended by members of Command and General Staff and it is used to develop priorities, assign tasks, and create a set of objectives to drive the work and planning that is done through the rest of the cycle.

The transition from initial response to the operational planning cycle occurs once Unified Command (UC) has been assembled and briefed on the incident status as it is known.





Incident Action Plan (IAP)

The Incident Action Plan (IAP) is the key document produced within Incident Command System that summarizes the response and describes the next steps. An IAP is produced for each operational period to summarize the response status and outline priorities for future response operations. Together, these various forms tell the story of what is happening and why. RSC access to the Incident Action Plan is assured under the Alaska Regional Contingency Plan and Prince William Sound Area Contingency Plan.

Please note: The IAP may contain secure or personal information such as phone numbers, radio frequencies, and facility and vessel diagrams, and this type of information may be redacted or omitted for RSC participants.

The Incident Action Plan itself is an important snapshot of the incident status and also creates a simultaneous record of key response decisions; however, RSC members will be most effective if they focus on providing input into the Incident Action Plan development process before the plan is finalized. RSC members may be interested in different aspects of the Incident Action Plan depending upon the priorities and concerns of their constituents and the progression of the oil spill and cleanup operations.

The Incident Action Plan is developed based on a set of standard Incident Command System forms described below. While RSC members do not need to know all the names and numbers of Incident Command System forms, it is useful to have some familiarity with the forms that make up the Incident Action Plan. In addition to the forms, other plans and procedures may be included as needed (e.g., Waste Management Plan, Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Team Plan, Wildlife Protection Plan). Incident Command System personnel may refer to forms by

their name or number interchangeably. Based on PWSRCAC’s experience during drills, the following five forms will be the most informative for RSC members: ICS 202 – Response Objectives, ICS 204 – Assignment Lists, ICS 207 – Incident Organization Chart, ICS 209 – Incident Status Summary, and ICS 232 – Resources at Risk Summary in addition to general maps of area and incident site.

If there are questions on terminology or other information on these forms, ask the Liaison Officer to review this information.

Core components of the Incident Action Plan

ICS Form #	Title	Description
ICS-202	Incident Objectives	Describes the basic incident strategy, incident objectives, command emphasis/priorities, and safety considerations for use during the next operational period.
ICS-203	Organization Assignment List	Identifies the ICS positions and units that are active and the individuals staffing each position.
ICS-207	ICS Organization Chart	Provides a visual organization chart that identifies ICS assignments and may be printed as a poster and wall mounted.
ICS-204	Assignment List	Identifies resource and work assignments to accomplish incident objectives.
ICS-205	Radio Communications Plan	Identifies radio channel assignments.
ICS-206	Medical Plan	Provides information on medical aid stations and emergency services.
n/a	Incident Map and Chart(s)	Maps and charts showing clean-up operations and other information.
n/a	Weather and Tide Forecasts	Information on conditions and tides relevant to the clean-up operation.

Additional (optional) components of the IAP

ICS Form #	Title	Description
ICS-202a and ICS-202b	Command Direction and Critical Information Requirements	Supplement the Incident Objectives (ICS-202) form with additional strategic direction and information needs to support incident objectives.
ICS-208	Site Safety and Health Plan	Plan to ensure safety and health of response personnel.
ICS-209	Incident Status Summary	Summary of information about spill volume, wildlife and shoreline impacts, waste recovered, resources, and personnel. This form receives frequent updates.
ICS-220	Air Operations Summary	Summary of air operations assignments and activities if they are ongoing.
ICS-232	Resources-at-Risk Summary	Identifies species and habitat that may be present near the spill and/or potentially impacted by the spill or the response.
n/a	Demobilization Plan	Prepared for certain resources or response functions as needed when a resource/function is released.
n/a	Transportation Plan	Plan for transporting field teams to different sites.
n/a	Decontamination Plan	Plan for cleaning contaminated equipment and resources in between assignments or prior to their release.
n/a	Waste Management or Disposal Plan	Plan for managing liquid and solid waste streams that are generated during a response.
n/a	Information Management Plan	Describes how information flows internally and externally.
n/a	Volunteer Management Plan	How volunteers – who are likely to just show up - will be managed and assigned to support the response.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

U.S. Coast Guard Incident Command System forms and instructions

<https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-C4IT-CG-6-/The-Office-of-Information-Management-CG-61/Forms-Management/ICS-Forms/>

Example Incident Action Plan from the *M/V Selendang Ayu* oil spill in the Aleutian Islands in 2004

https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1581104656811-992d3eae93901293d22fab340e653c76/Incident_Action_Planning_Guide_Revision1.pdf