
STANDARDIZED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

APPROVED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

FIELD COURSE

INCIDENT AND EVENT PLANNING

**MODULE 11
I-300**

**PARTICIPANT
REFERENCE
MANUAL
2003**

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Subjects covered in this module include:

- Importance of planning
- Essential Incident Action Plan elements
- The planning process
- Planning for incident demobilization
- Developing the Incident Action Plan.

Objectives:

1. List the major steps involved in the planning process.
2. Identify the ICS titles of personnel who have responsibilities in developing the Incident Action Plan and list their duties.
3. As part of an exercise, identify incident objectives for a simulated scenario.
4. As part of an exercise, describe appropriate strategies and tactics to meet incident objectives for a simulated scenario.
5. Explain the use of Operational Periods in the planning process, and how Operational Periods are derived.
6. Explain the function of the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS 215) and other forms which may be used in preparing the Incident Action Plan.
7. Explain the criteria for determining when the Incident Action Plan should be prepared in writing.
8. Identify the kinds of supporting materials included in an Incident Action Plan.
9. List the major sections in a Demobilization Plan.
10. As part of a group exercise, develop an Incident Action Plan for a simulated scenario.

I. Importance of Planning

It is essential that every incident or event be managed according to a plan. In the ICS, the management plan is called the Incident Action Plan.

Most of the discussion in this module is to learn the process for doing operational period incident action planning. Event incident action planning is similar, however, and the same principles will apply.

For simple incidents of short duration, the Incident Action Plan will be developed by the Incident Commander and communicated to subordinates in a verbal briefing. The planning process for this kind of incident does not require a formal planning meeting.

A. Incident Action Plans

Written Incident Action Plans documenting planning decisions should be considered whenever:

- Two or more jurisdictions are involved.
- The incident continues into another Operational Period.
- A number of organizational elements have been activated.
- It is required by agency policy.

Written Incident Action Plans provide:

- A clear statement of objectives and work assignments.
- A basis for measuring work and cost effectiveness.
- A basis for measuring work progress and for providing accountability.

The decision to prepare a written incident action plan will be made by the Incident Commander. However, it will not always be possible to have a written plan, nor is it always appropriate on small, short duration incidents even though they may be complex.

The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201), used for briefings will provide valuable information to the oral or written planning process. That form will be discussed later in the module.

B. Operational Periods

Incident action plans should be prepared for specific time periods, called Operational Periods. Operational Periods can be of various lengths, although they should normally be no longer than 24 hours. It is not unusual to have much shorter Operational Periods covering, for example, two or four hour time periods. Decisions on the length of the Operational Period will be affected by:

- Length of time available/needed to achieve tactical objectives.
- Availability of additional resources.
- Future involvement of other jurisdictions and/or agencies.
- Environmental considerations, e.g., remaining daylight, weather, etc.
- Safety considerations.

Planning must be done far enough in advance to ensure that additional resources needed for the next Operational period are available.

II. Essential Elements in the Incident Action Plan

Several ICS forms are provided for many of the essential parts in any written or oral incident action plan. These include:

1. Incident Objectives Form (ICS 202) - Statement of what is expected to be achieved. Objectives must be measurable.
2. Organization Assignment Form (ICS 203) - Describes what elements of the ICS organization will be in place for the next Operational Period.
3. Division Assignment Form (ICS 204) - Describes tactics and control operations, and what resources will be assigned. Resource assignments are often done by geographic divisions or functional groups as reflected on the Division Assignment List.
4. Supporting Material - Examples may include a map of the incident, Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS 205), Medical Plan (ICS 206), Traffic Plan, weather data, special precautions, and safety message.

Other supporting materials have no fixed format or form numbers.

We will discuss the contents of the Incident Action Plan in more detail later in this module.

All incident supervisory personnel must be familiar with the current, as well as the next operational period's Incident Action Plan. This can be accomplished through briefings, by distributing a written plan prior to the start of the operational period, or, as is often done, by both methods.

III. The Planning Process

It was recognized early in the development of the ICS that the critical factor of adequate planning for incident operations was often overlooked or not given enough emphasis. This resulted in poor use of resources, inappropriate strategies and tactics, safety problems, higher incident costs, and lower effectiveness.

Those involved in the original ICS development felt that there was a need to develop a simple but thorough process for planning which could be utilized for both smaller, short-term incidents and events, and for longer, more complex incident planning.

We will now describe an incident or event planning process which consists of six sequential steps. The first three steps can be accomplished during a formalized planning meeting, or in the mind of the Incident Commander. The last three steps ensure that the plan does the job for which it is intended.

The steps are:

- Understand the situation
- Establish Incident Objectives and strategy
- Develop tactical direction and assignments
- Prepare the plan
- Implement the plan
- Evaluate the plan.

A. Understanding the Situation

A full understanding of the incident situation requires that the planner be aware of certain essential elements of information. These will vary considerably depending upon the kind of incident, and each incident will have its own special characteristics.

In general, the essential elements of information can be categorized by knowledge and understanding of the following:

- What has happened?
- What progress has been made?
- How good is the current plan?
- What is the incident growth potential?
- What is the present and future resource and organizational capability?

These steps pertain to any kind or size of incident. Information related to each of the steps is essential to effective planning.

It is especially important that planners know in advance what the likelihood is of obtaining additional resource support from outside sources for use in the next Operational Period.

If there are readily available resources of the proper kind and type, then the planning process can encompass a wider variety of potential strategies than would be possible under conditions of very limited resources.

B. Establishing Incident Objectives and Strategy

Determining the Incident Objectives and strategy is an essential prerequisite to developing the plan. Incident Objectives should have the following characteristics:

1. **Attainable** - They must be achievable with the resources that the agency (and assisting agencies) can allocate to the incident, even though it may take several Operational Periods to accomplish them.
2. **Measurable** - The statement of objectives should make it possible to conduct a final accounting as to whether objectives were achieved.
3. **Flexible** - Objectives should be broad enough to allow for consideration of both strategic and tactical alternatives.

The strategy(ies) to achieve the objectives should pass the following criteria test:

- Make good sense (feasible, practical, and suitable).
- Be within acceptable safety norms.
- Be cost effective.
- Be consistent with sound environmental practices.
- Meet political considerations.

It is also essential to consider alternative strategies which may have to be employed. If possible, an alternative strategy should be considered for each Incident Objective.

On small incidents, the task of developing Incident Objectives and strategies is the sole responsibility of the Incident Commander. The activity associated with these first two steps may take only a few minutes.

On larger incidents, members of the General Staff and others will contribute to this process. These roles will be discussed later in this module.

It should also be pointed out that agency policy will affect the objectives and strategies. In some agencies, for large incidents, the agency executive or administrator will provide the Incident Commander with written authority and document any constraints or limitations.

The following is an example of a Tactical Objective and several strategies for accomplishing the objective.

Objective:

- Reduce reservoir level by 35 feet by 0800 tomorrow.
- Possible strategies:
 - Strategy #1 - Reduce/divert inflow
 - Strategy #2 - Open spillways
 - Strategy #3 - Use pumps

C. Determining Tactical Direction and Make Resource Assignments

Tactical direction includes determining the tactics and operations necessary for the selected strategy, and determining and assigning the appropriate resources. The tactical direction is developed around an Operational Period and must have measurable results.

On large incidents which may last for some time, only so much may be achieved toward accomplishing an Incident Objective in a single Operational Period. Therefore, the tactical direction should be stated in terms of accomplishments that can realistically be achieved within the time frame currently being planned.

Resource assignments will be made for each of the specific work tasks. Resource assignments will consist of the kind, type, and numbers of resources available and needed to achieve the tactical operations desired for the operational period.

If the required tactical resources will not be available, then an adjustment should be made to the tactics and operations being planned for the Operational Period. Lack of available resources could require both a reassessment of tactics and perhaps the overall strategy.

It is very important that tactical resource availability and other needed support be determined prior to spending a great deal of time working on strategies and tactical operations which realistically cannot be achieved.

Personnel and logistical support factors must be considered in determining tactical operations. Lack of logistical support can mean the difference between success and failure in achieving objectives.

D. Preparing the Plan

On smaller incidents which do not require a written incident action plan, the sequence of steps for a briefing by the Incident Commander to the General Staff includes:

- Stating the Objective(s)
- Describing the strategy (one or more)
- Describing specific tactics
- Making resource assignments.

The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) provides the Incident Commander with a useful framework for preparing a briefing when no written incident action plan is prepared. The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) may also be used as an initial incident action plan if it contains objectives, resource assignments and organization.

On larger incidents which meet the earlier criteria for having a written plan, the above material plus other supporting material will be compiled into a formal, written document called the Incident Action Plan.

The Planning/Intelligence Section has primary responsibility for documenting the Incident Action Plan, and for assembly, printing, and distribution of the plan.

Written plans will vary in their contents and size.

1. Responsibilities for Incident Action Planning

On small incidents, the Incident Commander is responsible for developing the Incident Action Plan. The IC may have assistance to help collect or obtain information, but the IC has sole responsibility for determining the Incident Objectives, strategy, tactical operations, and resource assignments.

On larger incidents, and as part of the overall planning process, other ICS organizational positions are responsible for contributing information to the Incident Action Plan.

2. The Planning Process

The Planning/Intelligence Section Chief has the responsibility to conduct the planning meetings. The planning process outlined below provides a logical set of steps to achieve the plan.

This process only works however, if everyone involved comes to the planning meeting well prepared, and understands the process.

The time required for development of a plan will vary depending on the kind of incident and agencies involved. The principal steps involved are as shown in the table that follows.

TEN STEP PLANNING MEETING CHECKLIST

NO.	ACTIVITY	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY
1	State Incident Objectives - Policy Issues.	Incident Commander
2	Give situation and resources briefing. Conduct Planning Meeting.	Planning/Intelligence Section Chief
3	State primary and alternative strategies to meet objectives.	Operations Section Chief. Planning/Intelligence and Logistics Section Chiefs contribute.
4	Designate Branch, Division, Group boundaries and/or functions as appropriate.	Operations Section Chief
5	Describe tactical operations and tactics.	Operations Section Chief
6	Make tactical resource assignments.	Operations Section Chief. Planning/Intelligence and Logistics Section Chiefs contribute.
7	Specify reporting locations and additional facilities needed.	Operations Section Chief. Logistics Section Chief assist.
8	Develop the resources, support and overhead order.	Planning/Intelligence and Logistics Section Chiefs. Logistics will place the order.
9	Consider additional support requirements needed because of communications, traffic, safety, medical, etc.	Logistics Section Chief. Planning/Intelligence Section Chief will contribute.
10	Finalize, approve and implement the plan.	Planning/Intelligence Section Chief finalizes the plan. Incident Commander approves it, and General Staff implements the plan.

The actual time committed to the activity may only be a few minutes when there are just a few resources involved. On very large incidents, the planning cycle will be longer.

It is important that prior to the planning meeting, inter-agency negotiations on the use of resources, strategies, and cost issues have been discussed and resolved by the Incident Commander or the Unified Command.

A major criticism of planning meetings is that they tend to "drag on" and consume valuable time. The Planning/Intelligence Section Chief can help to ensure that planning meetings are only as long as necessary by close adherence to the following:

- All participants must come prepared.
- Strong leadership must be evident.
- Agency Representatives must be able to commit for their agencies.
- All participants adhere to the planning process.
- Eliminate distractions (no radios, cellular phones, or pagers at planning meetings).

A checklist of information to be supplied, and those responsible follows. The steps are in the general sequence that should occur. Not all steps may apply, depending upon the specific application, and some variation may be necessary.

3. Two ICS Forms Developed to Support the Planning Process

Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS 215)

An Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS 215) is intended to be used in the incident planning meeting to develop tactical assignments and resources needed to achieve incident objectives and strategies. The Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS 215) is discussed in Module 9.

This form is often enlarged and attached or drawn onto a white board or chalkboard. The forms brings together information on resources required and resources available for specific work assignments. It also provides a written designation of reporting locations.

At the end of the planning meeting, the Operational Planning Worksheet (ICS 215) is used to prepare the off-incident tactical resource order.

Air Operations Summary (ICS 220)

For those incidents which have a significant amount of aviation resources assigned, the Air Operations Summary (ICS 220) provides information related to numbers and types of aircraft and tactical assignments.

4. Other Forms Available for Use in Incident and Event Planning

As discussed earlier, the ICS has a number of forms which can be used to document the results of the planning process, and to assist in preparing the Incident Action Plan.

The Incident Action Plan will normally consist of:

FORM NO.	FORM NAME	RESPONSIBLE TO PREPARE
202	Incident Objectives	Incident Commander
203 or 207	Organization List/Chart	Resources Unit
204	Assignment Lists	Resources Unit/Planning Recorder
205	Communications Plan	Communications Unit
206	Medical Plan	Medical Unit
220	Air Operations Summary	Air Operations Branch Director

Action Plans may also contain additional references as required, such as Traffic, Safety, Demobilization Plans and maps.

The contents of many of these forms will be developed by the General Staff in the planning meeting, or by others after the meeting. The Documentation Unit in the Planning/Intelligence Section is responsible for producing the Plan after the contents have been developed.

E. Implementing the Incident Action Plan

On small incidents, the Incident Commander has the full responsibility for the implementation of the Incident Action Plan. If there is no written Incident Action Plan, the IC will provide verbal instructions to subordinates. The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) can provide a useful framework for a briefing when a written Incident Action Plan is not required.

Larger incidents will require a written incident action plan. Each of the General Staff will assume responsibility for implementing their respective portions of the Incident Action Plan.

F. Evaluation of the Incident Action Plan

The planning process must include a way to provide for ongoing evaluation of the Incident Action Plan's effectiveness. It is not enough to simply complete the Incident Action Plan and implement it. Three steps to accomplish evaluation are as follows:

1. Prior to the Incident Commander approving the Incident Action Plan for release, the General Staff should review the Incident Action Plan's contents to ensure that it accurately reflects the current situation. This is done in recognition of the fact that some time may have elapsed between plan development and release.
2. During the Operational Period, the Incident Commander, the Planning/Intelligence and Operations Section Chiefs should regularly assess work progress against the control operations called for in the Incident Action Plan. If deficiencies are found, improved direction or additional staffing may be required. Tactical operations may need to be modified, and/or changes may need to be reflected in the planning for the next Operational Period.
3. The Operations Section Chief may make expedient changes to tactical operations called for in the Incident Action Plan if necessary to better accomplish an objective.

IV. Planning for Incident Demobilization

A. Importance of Demobilization Planning

Planning for incident demobilization is often overlooked. As incidents begin to wind down, everyone will be anxious to leave the scene of the incident and return to their home agency as soon as possible.

Demobilization planning helps to assure a controlled, safe, efficient, and cost-effective demobilization process.

For that reason, early ICS development included an Demobilization Unit in the Planning/Intelligence Section.

On smaller incidents, with only a few tactical resources assigned and with only a partial ICS organization in place, demobilization planning is relatively simple and may not require a written plan.

Larger incidents, particularly those with multi-agency involvement, must have adequate demobilization planning.

The Planning/Intelligence Section Chief must in plenty of time establish an adequate demobilization organization to provide for an orderly and efficient demobilization.

Resources must be released and returned to their home units as soon as possible to minimize cost, maintain morale, and to be ready for other assignments.

B. Demobilization Planning

To be effective, demobilization planning must begin early in the incident. That is why a separate unit with no other incident responsibility has been established within ICS.

Many elements of information must be gathered to help in the demobilization planning effort. Each section of the ICS organization must be involved.

Release priorities must first be determined for all elements of the organization. This is essentially a decision on what resources must be retained, and what resources can be made available for release. This determination can only be made after a full understanding of the longer-term incident needs.

C. Information Elements Needed for Demobilization Planning

Important elements of information needed for demobilization planning are summarized as follows:

1. Planning/Intelligence Section - Has basic information on resources. (Check-in lists and Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) are important to this effort.)
2. Liaison Officer - Knows terms of agreements involving use and release of other agency's resources.
3. Safety Officer - Considers physical condition of personnel, personal needs, and adequacy of transportation.
4. Logistics Section - Handles transportation availability, communications, maintenance, and continuing support.
5. Operations Section - Knows continuing needs for various kinds of tactical resources.

6. Finance/Administration Section - Processes any claims, time records, and costs of individual resources which are a factor in determining release.
7. Agency dispatch centers - Gives high priority to timely return of resources.

D. Sections in the Demobilization Plan

The Demobilization Plan should contain the following sections:

1. General Information - (discussion of the demobilization procedure)
2. Responsibilities
3. Release Priorities

Priorities will vary and must be determined at the time. Examples of release priorities related to tactical resources could be:

- Priority 1 - Type 1 Resources (Those with greatest capability)
- Priority 2 - Resources traveling the farthest distance

4. Release Procedures
5. Directory (maps, telephone listings, etc.)

Demobilization Planning can be quite complex, especially on a large multi-agency incident. Considerable guidance for demobilization planning has been prepared and is available for participants interested in obtaining more detail.