

**INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM  
NATIONAL TRAINING CURRICULUM**

**HISTORY OF ICS**

**October 1994**

- I. Background of ICS**
- II. Curriculum Design**
- III. Companion Documents**
- IV. Supporting Material**
- V. Table of Modules**

## **I. Background of the Incident Command System (ICS)**

### **A. Need for a Common Incident Management System**

The complexity of incident management, coupled with the growing need for multi-agency and multifunctional involvement on incidents, has increased the need for a single standard incident management system that can be used by all emergency response disciplines.

Factors affecting emergency management and which influence the need for a more efficient and cost-effective incident management system are listed below. Not all of these will apply to every incident.

- Population growth and spread of urban areas.
- Language and cultural differences.
- More multijurisdictional incidents.
- Legal changes mandating standard incident management systems and multi-agency involvement at certain incidents.
- Shortage of resources at all levels, requiring greater use of mutual aid.
- Increase in the number, diversity, and use of radio frequencies.
- More complex and interrelated incident situations.
- Greater life and property loss risk from natural and human-caused technological disasters.
- Sophisticated media coverage demanding immediate answers and emphasizing response effectiveness.
- More frequent cost-sharing decisions on incidents.

These factors have accelerated the trend toward more complex incidents. Considering the fiscal and resource constraints of local, state and federal responders, the Incident Command System (ICS) is a logical approach for the delivery of coordinated emergency services to the public.

### **B. History of ICS Development**

ICS resulted from the obvious need for a new approach to the problem of managing rapidly moving wildfires in the early 1970s. At that time, emergency managers faced a number of problems.

- Too many people reporting to one supervisor.
- Different emergency response organizational structures.

- Lack of reliable incident information.
- Inadequate and incompatible communications.
- Lack of a structure for coordinated planning between agencies.
- Unclear lines of authority.
- Terminology differences between agencies.
- Unclear or unspecified incident objectives.

Designing a standardized emergency management system to remedy the problems listed above took several years and extensive field testing. The Incident Command System was developed by an interagency task force working in a cooperative local, state, and federal interagency effort called FIRESCOPE (Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies). Early in the development process, four essential requirements became clear:

1. The system must be organizationally flexible to meet the needs of incidents of any kind and size.
2. Agencies must be able to use the system on a day-to-day basis for routine situations as well as for major emergencies.
3. The system must be sufficiently standard to allow personnel from a variety of agencies and diverse geographic locations to rapidly meld into a common management structure.
4. The system must be cost effective.

Initial ICS applications were designed for responding to disastrous wildland fires. It is interesting to note that the characteristics of these wildland fire incidents are similar to those seen in many law enforcement, hazardous materials, and other kinds of situations.

- They can occur with no advance notice.
- They develop rapidly.
- Unchecked, they may grow in size or complexity.
- Personal risk for response personnel can be high.
- There are often several agencies with some on-scene responsibility.
- They can very easily become multijurisdictional.
- They often have high public and media visibility.
- Risk of life and property loss can be high.

- Cost of response is always a major consideration.

ICS is now widely used throughout the United States by fire agencies, and is increasingly used for law enforcement, other public-safety applications, and for emergency and event management.

### **C. Evolution of ICS**

ICS applications and users have steadily increased since the system's original development. In 1980, the ICS that was originally developed in California under the FIRESCOPE program made the transition into a national program called the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). At that time ICS became the backbone of a wider-based system for all federal agencies with wildland fire management responsibilities.

The following agencies and entities, among others, have endorsed the use of ICS:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

National Curriculum Advisory Committee on Incident Command Systems/Emergency Operations Management Systems recommends adoption of ICS as a multihazard/all-agency system.

FEMA's National Fire Academy (NFA) has adopted ICS as a model system for fire services.

FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue Response System, a component of the Federal Response Plan, uses ICS as its on-site management structure.

- NFPA Standard 1405 (Land-Based Firefighters who respond to marine vessel fires) was developed at the request of, and in cooperation with, the U.S. Coast Guard and calls for the use of ICS. The U.S. Coast Guard also is incorporating ICS basic structure and management principles into the National Response System used for oil and hazardous material pollution response.

- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that all governmental and private organizations that handle hazardous materials use ICS.
- The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1500 states that all departments should establish written procedures for use of ICS.
- Some states now require the use of an emergency management system based on ICS.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules require non-OSHA states to use ICS at hazardous materials incidents.
- The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) has formally adopted ICS for use by all federal and state wildfire management organizations.

## **II. Training Curriculum Design**

### **A. The Need for a Standard ICS National Training Curriculum**

Because of the national interest in ICS and its growing use, it has become essential to develop a standard training curriculum applicable for all users. Three factors have dictated this need:

1. Use of the Incident Command System by public safety and private sector organizations across the country is increasing. ICS is now being used for a variety of applications which include:
  - Fire, HAZMAT, and multi-casualty incidents of all sizes.
  - Law enforcement routine and special operations.
  - Joint law enforcement/military narcotics interdiction operations.
  - Multijurisdiction and multi-agency fires.
  - Search and rescue missions of all types.
  - Oil spill response and recovery incidents.
  - Air, ground, and water transportation accidents.
  - Planned events, e.g., parades, celebrations.
  - Forest pest control programs.

- Private sector emergency management programs.
  - State and local disaster response.
2. In the past, there was no standard ICS national training curriculum designed specifically for multi-discipline public and private sector applications.
  3. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group is adopting a performance-based qualifications system. Skill training courses will be based on tasks defined in position task books. Information about the use of the Incident Command System must be prepared now to support the NWCG skill courses.

## **B. The Development Program**

The ICS National Training Curriculum has been prepared with the support and assistance of a multidisciplined and interagency (local, state, and federal) steering group. Each of the training modules has been submitted for review to more than 200 public safety, emergency management, and industry professionals from across the United States. Comments from these reviews have been incorporated into each module.

## **C. Curriculum Development Goals**

Goals of the ICS training curriculum are to:

- Develop standard ICS instructional modules to serve federal, state, and local government agencies and private sector users in multihazard and planned event applications throughout the United States.
- Provide a standardized, progressive course of instruction for achieving an understanding and detailed knowledge of the Incident Command System.
- Provide a curriculum that can be used in a variety of ways to accomplish specific objectives related to ICS instruction. The modules can be applied in various combinations to meet instructional and training needs.

The standard ICS curriculum is designed to meet the ICS training needs of all users. However, it is important to note that the curriculum does not include specialized skill training in specific incident types.

Primary users of the standard ICS curriculum have been identified as:

- Public safety agencies at local, state, and federal levels.
- Government agencies at all levels in managing planned events and the response and recovery phases of long-term incidents.
- Private sector applications for managing incidents or planned events, and for responding as an integrated element of community ICS programs.

#### **D. Curriculum Development Guidelines**

- The curriculum contains the necessary instructional material to meet the ICS management training needs for all kinds and levels of users.
- Each instructional module within the curriculum is self-contained, and as non-repetitive as possible.
- Instructional modules may be mixed in a variety of combinations to meet specific orientation and training needs.
- Instructional material is generic. Examples used in instruction do not stress any particular application or hazard area.
- Course structure and content is designed for use in conjunction with agency skill and specialized application courses.

#### **E. Curriculum Description**

The ICS training curriculum contains seventeen instructional modules. Each module consists of instructor materials, reference text, exercises, tests, and visuals. Detailed information on each module can be found in the Curriculum Syllabus. Instructional Objectives for each module are also summarized in the Course Administrator/Instructor Curriculum Guide.

### III. Companion Documents

- A. **Instructor Curriculum Guide** - This is a general guide for course administrators and instructors. It contains a curriculum description, instructor guidelines appropriate for all modules, and a list of references.
- B. **Curriculum Syllabus and Syllabus Summary** - The Curriculum Syllabus describes the following for each module: target audience, suggested prerequisite modules, instructional objectives, content descriptions, delivery methods, testing methods, and duration. The Syllabus Summary provides only module content descriptions.
- C. **Forms Catalog** - A number of forms originally developed for ICS can be used without change by any user agency. Others may require adaptation to make them fit a particular application. Important commonly used forms will be presented and discussed in the appropriate instructional modules.
- D. **ICS Glossary** - The glossary provides definitions of general ICS terminology used in the curriculum. Terminology which is appropriate for use in various public-safety disciplines or applications has not been included.
- E. **Scenario/Incident Action Plan Catalog**- Scenarios describing incident situations are included with instructor material for the various modules. A separate Scenario Catalog has been compiled containing over 40 scenarios developed by agencies for use in various ICS training applications. These include: natural disasters, human-caused disasters, law enforcement, search and rescue, planned events, HAZMAT, and fire situations. Also in the catalog are examples of Incident Action Plans from several different incident applications.

### IV. Material Reviewed in the Development of the Incident Command System National Training Curriculum

Sources of review material are listed below. In addition to agency publications, a number of individuals have provided additional background material in the form of papers, articles, and personal communications. A complete reference list is contained in the Administrator/Instructor Curriculum Guide.



Basic ICS I-220 Course  
 Basic Intergovernmental Services - ICS Unified Command Seminar  
 Boston MA Fire Dept. - Incident Command System  
 California Dept. of Forestry - Report on Application of Incident  
 Command System - Cantara Incident  
 California Office of Emergency Services - Law Enforcement Guide  
 for Emergency Operations Planning  
 California Office of Emergency Services Hazardous Material  
 Incident Contingency Plan  
 California State Fire Marshal - I-120 Introduction to ICS  
 City of Buffalo, NY- Incident Command System Operations Manual  
 City of New York Fire Department  
 Coordination and Management Review - 1988 Greater Yellowstone  
 Fire Situation  
 Emergency Management Principles and Practice for Local  
 Government  
 Emergency Response Institute - Incident Command System (Draft)  
 Fairfax County VA Fire and Rescue Dept. ICS  
 Federal Emergency Management Agency  
     Civil Preparedness Guide CPG 1-20 and 1-20 Chg. 1  
     Emergency Management Institute Student Manual 305.7  
     Emergency Management Institute ICS EOC Interface Report  
     Emergency Management Institute Overview of ICS  
     Exemplary Practices Monograph on the California  
     FIRESCOPE Program  
     Introduction to Emergency Management, Student Manual #230  
     FEMA 229 Federal Response Plan  
     National Fire Academy ICS Instructors Guide  
     Urban Search and Rescue Response System  
 FIRESCOPE Program and member agency publications on the  
     Incident Command System and Multi-agency Coordination System  
 ICS 120 -1 Operational System Description  
 ICS 420-1 Field Operations Guide  
 ICS Agency Administrators Seminar.  
 ICS Multi-casualty Operational System Description ICS-MC-120-1  
 ICS-HM-120-1 Hazardous Materials Operational System Description  
 Lake Havasu CA City Police Dept. - Labor Day 1992 Operation Plan  
 Los Angeles County Law Enforcement Incident Command System  
 MACS 400-2 - Document and Forms Description  
 MACS 400-3 - General Headquarters Forms Packet  
 MACS 410-1 MACS Procedures Guide  
 MACS 410-4 FIRESCOPE Decision Process and Operational Plan  
 MACS Coordinators Introductory Package

MACS Users Guide  
 MACS Users Guide- NIIMS Notebook  
 Mission Research & System Development Corporation's Regional  
 Coordination System Report 7328  
 NASAR - Incident Commander Field Handbook - Search and Rescue  
 Nassau County NY Fire Service Academy - ICS  
 National Fire Protection Association - NFPA 1561 - Incident  
 Management System  
 National Fire Service Consortium - Incident Management System  
 Draft  
 National Interagency Incident Management System ICS Position  
 Manuals  
 National Interagency Incident Management System Task Books  
 (Draft)  
 National Interagency Incident Management System Training Courses  
 National Interagency Mobilization Guide- 1992  
 National Park Service Report on the Response to the Exxon Valdez  
 spill  
 New Jersey State Police, Instructor Guide, Student Manual and Field  
 Operations Guide  
 New Mexico Department of Public Safety - Search and Rescue -ICS  
 NIIMS - NWCG PMS 410-1 Fireline Handbook  
 NWCG - Incident Command System Operations System Description  
 (Draft)  
 NWCG - Unified Command PMS 910-1  
 NWCG - National Interagency Mobilization Guide  
 Oklahoma State University Fire Protection Publications - Incident  
 Command System  
 Orange County CA Law Enforcement Field Operations Guide  
 Oregon Regional ICS Steering Committee - Introduction to the  
 Incident Command System  
 Palm Beach, FL Fire and Rescue  
 San Bernardino County CA  
     Law Enforcement Incident Command System  
     Technology Transfer - Law Enforcement Application of ICS  
 San Luis Obispo CA Law Enforcement ICS  
 TEMJAM Corp.  
     NIIMS System Design Recommendations Technical Report 805  
     Organizational and Functional Analysis Technical Report 804  
     Incident Command System for All Hazards Risk Management

## V. Table of Modules

The table below provides summary information on modules, course structure, and supporting documentation.

### INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM NATIONAL TRAINING CURRICULUM

Modules	Courses and Titles	Est. Hours	NWCG Users	Public Safety	Other Govt.	Private Sector
I-100	INTRODUCTION TO ICS					
1	ICS Orientation	2	x	x	x	x
	Total I-100	2				
I-200	BASIC ICS					
2	Principles and Features of ICS	2	x	x	x	x
3	Organizational Overview	4	x	x	x	x
4	Incident Facilities	2	x	x	x	x
5	Incident Resources	2	x	x	x	x
6	Common Responsibilities	2	x	x	x	x
	Total I-200	12				
I-300	INTERMEDIATE ICS					
7	Organization and Staffing	6	x	x	x	x
8	Organizing for Incidents or Events	5	x	x	x	x
9	Incident Resources Management	4	x	x	x	x
10	Air Operations	4	x	x		
11	Incident and Event Planning	8	x	x	x	x
	Total I-300	27				
I-400	ADVANCED ICS					
12	Command and General Staff	6	x	x	x	x
13	Unified Command	6	x	x	x	
14	Major Incident Management	4	x	x	x	
15	Area Command	6	x	x		
	Total I-400	22				
I-401	MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION					
16	Multi-agency Coordination	4	x	x	x	x
	Total I-401	4				
I-402	ICS FOR EXECUTIVES					
17	ICS for Executives	2	x	x	x	
	Total I-402	2				
	Total All Modules	69				
Companion Documents		Recommended for Course Presentations			Recommended for Training Administrators	
History of ICS					x	
Instructor Curriculum Guide			x		x	
Curriculum Syllabus					x	
Syllabus Summary					x	
ICS Glossary			x			
ICS Position Descriptions and Responsibilities			x			
Scenario and Incident Action Plan Catalog			x			
ICS Forms Catalog			x			

Users can follow course designations or establish other groupings to meet agency-specific needs.

