



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

May 2023



Glossary

Action Plan: See Incident Action Plan.

After Action Review: A structured review or de-brief process of an event, focused on performance standards, that enables participants to discover for themselves what happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses. After action reviews, informal or formal, follow the same general format, involve the exchange of ideas and observations, and focus on improving performance.

Agency: A division of government with a specific function offering a particular kind of assistance. In the Incident Command System, agencies are defined either as jurisdictional (having statutory responsibility for incident management) or as assisting or cooperating (providing resources or other assistance). Governmental organizations are most often in charge of an incident, though in certain circumstances private sector organizations may be included. Additionally, nongovernmental organizations may be included to provide support.

Agency Administrator/Executive: The official responsible for administering policy for an agency or jurisdiction, having full authority for making decisions, and providing direction to the management organization for an incident.

Agency Dispatch: The agency or jurisdictional facility from which resources are sent to incidents.

Agency/Authority Having Jurisdiction: An organization, office, business, governmental subdivision, or individual having statutory responsibility for enforcing the requirements of a code or standard or for approving equipment, materials, and installation or a procedure.

Agency Representative: A person assigned by a primary, assisting, or cooperating government agency or private organization that has been delegated authority to make decisions affecting that agency's or organization's participation in incident management activities following appropriate consultation with the leadership of that agency.

Air Operations Branch Director: The person primarily responsible for preparing and implementing the air operations portion of the Incident Action Plan. Also responsible for providing logistical support to helicopters operating on the incident.

All-Hazards/All Risk: Describing an incident, natural or manmade, that warrants action to protect life, property, environment, public health or safety, and minimize disruptions of government, social, or economic activities.

All Hazards Incident Management Team: An Incident Command System organization made up of the Incident Commander (IC) or Unified Command (UC), the necessary Command and General Staff members, and other ICS positions considered appropriate by the sponsoring governance or entity that can be deployed or activated when needed to safely, effectively, and efficiently manage, or assist in managing, an incident or event.

Allocated Resource: Resource dispatched to an incident.



Area Command (Unified Area Command): An organization established to oversee the management of (1) multiple incidents that are each being handled by an Incident Command System organization, or (2) large or multiple incidents to which several Incident Management Teams have been assigned. Area Command has the responsibility to set overall strategy and priorities, allocate critical resources according to priorities, ensure that incidents are properly managed, and ensure that objectives are met, and strategies followed. Area Command becomes Unified Area Command when incidents are multijurisdictional. Area Command may be established at an Emergency Coordination Centre facility or at some location other than an Incident Command Post.

Area Commander: The person responsible for managing a very large incident that has multiple IMTs assigned. These teams may be established any time the incidents are close enough that oversight direction is required.

Assessment: The evaluation and interpretation of measurements and other information to provide a basis for decision making.

Assigned Resources: Resources checked in and assigned work tasks on an incident.

Assignments: Tasks given to resources to perform within a given operational period that are based on operational objectives defined in the Incident Action Plan.

Assistant: Title for subordinates of principal Command Staff positions. The title indicates a level of technical capability, qualifications, and responsibility subordinate to the primary positions. Assistants may also be assigned to unit leaders.

Assisting Agency: An agency or organization providing personnel, services, or other resources to the agency with direct responsibility for incident management. See Supporting Agency.

Available Resource: A Resource assigned to an incident, checked in, and available for a mission assignment, normally located in a Staging Area.

Base: The location at which primary Logistics functions for an incident are coordinated and administered. There is only one Base per incident. (Incident name or other designator will be added to the term Base.) The Incident Command Post may be co-located with the Base.

Base/Camp Manager: The person responsible for appropriate sanitation and facility management services in the assigned Base or Camp.

Branch: The organizational level having functional or geographical responsibility for major aspects of incident operations. A Branch is organizationally situated between the Section Chief and the Division or Group in the Operations Section, and between the Section and Units in the Logistics Section. Branches are identified by the use of Roman numerals or by functional area.

Branch Director: The person responsible for implementing the portion of the Incident Action plan applicable to the assigned Branch.

Cache: A predetermined complement of tools, equipment, and/or supplies stored in a designated location, available for incident use.



Camp: A geographical site within the general incident area (separate from the Incident Base) that is equipped and staffed to provide sleeping, food, water, and sanitary services to incident personnel.

Certification: A formal process by which a recognized individual or body (government or non-government) assesses and recognizes that an individual has demonstrated competence in a specific position or role.

Chain of Command: A series of command, control, executive, or management positions in hierarchical order of authority.

Check-In: Process in which all responders, regardless of agency affiliation, must report in to receive an assignment in accordance with the procedures established by the Incident Commander.

Chief: The Incident Command System title for individuals responsible for management of functional Sections: Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration, and Intelligence/Investigations (if established as a separate Section).

Clear Text: The use of plain English in radio communications transmissions. No Ten Codes or agency-specific codes are used when using clear text.

Command: The act of directing, ordering, or controlling by virtue of explicit statutory, regulatory, or delegated authority.

Command Post: See Incident Command Post.

Command Staff: Consists of Information Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer, and other positions as required, who report directly to the Incident Commander. They may have an assistant or assistants, as needed.

Common Operating Picture: An overview of an incident by all relevant parties that provides incident information and intelligence enabling the IC/UC and any supporting agencies and organizations to make effective, consistent, and timely decisions.

Common Terminology: Normally used words and phrases-avoids the use of different words/phrases for same concepts, consistency.

Communications: Process of transmission of information through verbal, written, or symbolic means.

Communications/Dispatch Centre: Agency or interagency dispatcher centres, 911 call centres, emergency control or command dispatch centres, or any naming convention given to the facility and staff that handles emergency calls from the public and communication with emergency management/response personnel.

Communications Unit: An organizational unit in the Logistics Section responsible for providing communication services at an incident.



Communications Unit Leader: The person responsible for developing plans for the effective use of incident communications equipment and facilities; installing and testing communications equipment; supervising the Incident Communications Center; distributing communications equipment to incident personnel; and maintaining and repairing communications equipment.

Compacts: Formal working agreements among agencies to obtain mutual aid.

Compensation/Claims Unit: Functional unit within the Finance/Administration Section responsible for financial concerns resulting from property damage, injuries or fatalities at the incident.

Compensation/Claims Unit Leader: The person responsible for the overall management and direction of all administrative matters pertaining to compensation for injury and claims-related activities related to an incident.

Complex: Two or more individual incidents located in the same general area and assigned to a single Incident Commander or to Unified Command.

Continuity of Operations: An effort within individual organizations to ensure that Primary Mission Essential Functions continue to be performed during a wide range of emergencies.

Contingency Plan: The portion of an Incident Action Plan or other plan that identifies possible but unlikely events and the contingency resources needed to mitigate those events.

Cooperating Agency: An agency supplying assistance other than direct operational or support functions or resources to the incident management effort.

Coordinate: To advance systematically an analysis and exchange of information among principals who have or may have a need-to-know certain information to carry out specific incident management responsibilities.

Coordination: The process of systematically analyzing a situation, developing relevant information and informing appropriate command authority of viable alternatives for selection of the most effective combination of available resources to meet specific objectives. The coordination process (which can be either intra- or interagency) does not involve dispatch actions. However, personnel responsible for coordination may perform command or dispatch functions within the limits established by specific agency delegations, procedures, legal authority, etc.

Coordination Centre: A facility that is used for the coordination of agency or jurisdictional resources in support of one or more incidents.

Corrective Actions: The implementation of procedures that are based on lessons learned from actual incidents or from training and exercises.

Cost-sharing agreements: Agreements between agencies or jurisdictions to share designated costs related to incidents. Cost-sharing agreements are normally written but may also be oral between authorized agency or jurisdictional representatives at the incident.

Cost Unit: Functional unit within the Finance/Administration Section responsible for tracking costs, analyzing cost data, making cost estimates, and recommending cost-saving measures.



Cost Unit Leader: The person responsible for collecting all cost data, performing cost-effectiveness analyses, and providing cost estimates and cost-saving recommendations.

Critical Infrastructure: Essential underlying systems and facilities upon which our standard of life relies.

Delegation of Authority: A statement provided to the Incident Commander by the Agency Executive delegating authority and assigning responsibility. The Delegation of Authority can include objectives, priorities, expectations, constraints, and other considerations or guidelines as needed. Many agencies require a written Delegation of Authority to be given to Incident Commanders prior to their assuming command on larger incidents. Same as the Letter of Expectation.

Demobilization: The orderly, safe, and efficient return of an incident resource to its original location and status.

Demobilization Unit: Functional unit within the Planning Section responsible for assuring orderly, safe and efficient demobilization of incident resources.

Demobilization Unit Leader: The person responsible for preparing the Demobilization Plan and schedule, ensuring an orderly, safe, and efficient movement of personnel and equipment from the incident.

Department Coordination Centre: A coordination centre specific to a single department or agency. The focus of a DCC is on internal department/agency management, coordination of the department/agency's response to an incident, and continuity of the services they provide. DCCs are usually linked to the ECC appropriate to their jurisdiction/entity. In smaller departments a DCC may be physically co-located in or represented by authorized personnel of the department/agency who are working in the local ECC.

Deputy: A fully qualified individual who, in the absence of a superior, can be delegated the authority to manage a functional operation or perform a specific task. In some cases a deputy can act as relief for a superior, and therefore must be fully qualified in the position. Deputies generally can be assigned to the Incident Commander, General Staff, and Branch Directors.

Director: The Incident Command System title for individuals responsible for supervision of a Branch.

Dispatch: The ordered movement of a resource or resources to an assigned operational mission or an administrative move from one location to another.

Dispatch Centre: A facility from which resources are ordered, mobilized and assigned to an incident.

Division: The partition of an incident into geographical areas of operation. Divisions are established when the number of resources exceeds the manageable span of control of the Operations Chief. A Division is located within the Incident Command System organization between the Branch and resources in the Operations Section.



Division Supervisor: The person responsible for supervising equipment and personnel assigned to a division. Reports to the Branch Director or Operations Section Chief.

Drop Point: A predefined location where personnel, equipment, and supplies will be delivered, stored, or picked up. Usually sequentially numbered.

Documentation Unit: Functional unit within the Planning Section responsible for collecting, recording and safeguarding all documents relevant to the incident.

Documentation Unit Leader: The person responsible for maintaining accurate and complete incident files, providing duplication services to incident personnel, and packing and storing incident files.

Emergency: A present or imminent event that requires prompt coordination of actions concerning persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare of people, or to limit damage to property or the environment.

Emergency management: The management of emergencies concerning all-hazards, including all activities and risk management measures related to prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Emergency Management/Response Personnel: Includes Federal, Provincial, Territorial, and local governments, First Nations, private-sector organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, nongovernmental organizations, and all other organizations and individuals who assume an emergency management role. Also known as emergency responders.

Emergency Management Coordinator/Director: The individual within each political subdivision that has coordination responsibility for jurisdictional emergency management.

Emergency Coordination Center: The physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support incident management (on-scene operations) activities normally takes place. An ECC may be a temporary facility or may be located in a more central or permanently established facility, perhaps at a higher level of organization within a jurisdiction. ECCs may be organized by major functional disciplines (e.g., fire, law enforcement, and medical services), by jurisdiction or some combination thereof. Sometimes referred to as Emergency Operations Centres (EOC).

Emergency Operations Plan: The ongoing plan maintained by various jurisdictional levels for responding to a wide variety of potential hazards.

Emergency Public Information: Information that is disseminated primarily in anticipation of an emergency or during an emergency. In addition to providing situational information to the public, it also frequently provides directive actions required to be taken by the general public.

Essential Elements of Information: Those factual items derived from information, incident information, and intelligence regarding the situation, physical environment, and management environment of the incident/event designed to provide incident management personnel with a common operating picture and situational awareness of the incident/event and its surrounding environment. EEI is considered vital for timely and accurate decision-making.



Evacuation: Organized, phased, and supervised withdrawal, dispersal, or removal of civilians from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas, and their reception and care in safe areas.

Event: See Planned Event.

Facilities Unit: Functional unit within the Support Branch of the Logistics Section that provides fixed facilities for the incident. These facilities may include the Incident Base, feeding areas, sleeping areas, sanitary facilities, etc.

Facilities Unit Leader: The person responsible for laying out and operating incident facilities (Base, Camp(s), and ICP) and managing Base and Camp operations. Each Base and Camp may be assigned a manager.

Federal: Of or pertaining to the federal government of Canada.

Field Observer: The person responsible for collecting incident status information from personal observations at the incident and providing this information to the activated function, or other resources.

Field Operations Guide: A pocket-size manual of instructions on the application of the Incident Command System.

Finance/Administration Section: The Section responsible for all administrative and financial considerations surrounding an incident.

Finance/Administration Section Chief: The person responsible for all financial, administrative, and cost analysis aspects of the incident and for supervising members of the Finance/Administration Section.

Food Unit: Functional unit within the Service Branch of the Logistics Section responsible for providing meals for incident personnel.

Food Unit Leader: The person responsible for determining feeding requirements at all incident facilities and for menu planning, determining cooking facilities required, food preparation, serving, providing potable water, and general maintenance of the food services area.

Function: Refers to the five major activities in the Incident Command System: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration. The term function is also used when describing the activity involved (e.g., the planning function). A sixth function, Intelligence/Investigations, may be established, if required, to meet incident management needs.

General Staff: A group of incident management personnel organized according to function and reporting to the Incident Commander. The General Staff normally consists of the Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, and Finance/Administration Section Chief. An Intelligence/Investigations Chief may be established, if required, to meet incident management needs.

Ground Support Unit: Functional unit within the Support Branch of the Logistics Section responsible for the fueling, maintaining and repairing of vehicles, and for the transportation of personnel and supplies.



Ground Support Unit Leader: The person responsible for the fueling, maintaining, and repairing of vehicles, and the transportation of personnel and supplies.

Group: Established to divide the incident management structure into functional areas of operation. Groups are composed of resources assembled to perform a special function not necessarily within a single geographic division. (See Division.) Groups are located between Branches (when activated) and Resources in the Operations Section.

Group Supervisor: The individual responsible for supervising equipment and personnel assigned to a group. Reports to a Branch Director or Operations Section Chief.

Hazard: A potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon or human activity that may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation.

Helibase: The main location for parking, fueling, maintenance and loading of helicopters operating in support of an incident. It is usually located at or near the Incident Base.

Heli-spot: Any designated location where a helicopter can safely take off and land. Some Heli-spots may be used for loading supplies, equipment or personnel.

Hierarchy of Command: See Chain of Command.

Incident: An occurrence or event, natural or manmade, that requires a response to protect life or property. Incidents can, for example, include major disasters, emergencies, terrorist attacks, terrorist threats, civil unrest, wildland and urban fires, floods, hazardous materials spills, nuclear accidents, aircraft accidents, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, tropical storms, tsunamis, war-related disasters, public health and medical emergencies, and other occurrences requiring an emergency response.

Incident Action Plan: An oral or written plan containing general objectives reflecting the overall strategy for managing an incident. It may include the identification of operational resources and assignments. It may also include attachments that provide direction and important information for management of the incident during one or more operational periods.

Incident Base: Location at the incident where the primary Logistics functions are coordinated and administered. (Incident name or other designator will be added to the term “Base.”) The Incident Command Post may be collocated with the base. There is only one base per incident

Incident Command: Responsible for overall management of the incident and consists of the Incident Commander, either single or unified command, and any assigned supporting staff.

Incident Command Post: The field location where the primary functions are performed. The ICP may be co-located with the incident base or other incident facilities.

Incident Command System: A standardized on-scene emergency management system specifically designed to provide for the adoption of an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of emergencies and is



applicable to small as well as large and complex incidents. ICS is used by various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private, to organize field-level incident management operations.

Incident Commander: The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and the release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site.

Incident Communications: Incident Command manages communications at an incident, using a common Communications Plan and an incident-based Communications Center established solely for use by the command, tactical, and support resources assigned to the incident. All entities involved in managing the incident will utilize common terminology, for communications.

Incident Communications Centre: The location of the Communications Unit and the Message Centre.

Incident Complex: See Complex.

Incident Information: Information specific to the incident, usually provided by the Information Officer, that consists of an assemblage of non-sensitive incident-related intelligence products mixed with incident specific information provided for consumption by response personnel and the general public.

Incident Management: The broad spectrum of activities and organizations providing effective and efficient operations, coordination, and support applied at all levels of government, utilizing both governmental and non-governmental resources to plan for, respond to, and recover from an incident, regardless of cause, size, or complexity.

Incident Management Team: IMTs are rostered groups of ICS-qualified personnel, consisting of an Incident Commander and other incident leadership and personnel qualified for other key ICS positions. IMTs exist at local, regional, Provincial/Territorial and national levels and have formal notification, deployment, and operational procedures in place. These teams are typed based on team members' qualifications and may be assigned to manage incidents or to accomplish supporting incident-related tasks or functions.

Incident Objectives: Statements of guidance and direction needed to select appropriate strategies and the tactical direction of resources. Incident objectives are based on realistic expectations of what can be accomplished when all allocated resources have been effectively deployed. Incident objectives must be achievable and measurable, yet flexible enough to allow strategic and tactical alternatives.

Incident Types: Incidents are categorized by five types based on complexity. Type 5 incidents are the least complex and Type 1 the most complex.

Incident Support Organization: Includes any off-incident support provided to an incident. Examples would be Agency Dispatch Centres, airports, Mobilization Centres, etc.



Information: Processes, procedures, and systems for communicating timely, accurate, accessible information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest to the public, responders, and additional stakeholders (both directly affected and indirectly affected).

Information Management: The collection, organization, and control over the structure, processing, and delivery of information from one or more sources and distribution to one or more audiences who have a stake in that information.

Information Officer: A member of the Command Staff responsible for interfacing with internal clients, the public and media and/or with other agencies with incident related information requirements.

Initial Actions: The actions taken by those responders first to arrive at an incident site.

Initial Response: Resources initially committed to an incident.

Intelligence/Investigations: Different from operational and situational intelligence gathered and reported by the Planning Section. Intelligence/Investigations gathered within the Intelligence/Investigations function is information that either leads to the detection, prevention, apprehension, and prosecution of criminal activities (or the individual(s) involved) including terrorist incidents or information that leads to determination of the cause of a given incident (regardless of the source) such as public health events or fires with unknown origins.

Intelligence Officer: The Intelligence Officer is responsible for managing internal information, intelligence and operational security requirements supporting incident management activities. These may include information security and operational security activities, as well as the complex task of ensuring that sensitive information of all types (e.g., classified information, law enforcement sensitive information, proprietary information or export-controlled information) is handled in a way that not only safeguards the information, but also ensures that it gets to those who need access to it to perform their missions effectively and safely.

Interoperability: The ability of emergency management/response personnel to interact and work well together. In the context of technology, interoperability is also defined as the emergency communications system that should be the same or linked to the same system that the jurisdiction uses for nonemergency procedures and should effectively interface with national standards as they are developed. The system should allow the sharing of data with other jurisdictions and levels of government during planning and deployment.

Job Aid: Checklist or other visual aid intended to ensure that specific steps of completing a task or assignment are accomplished.

Joint Information Centre: A facility established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities. It is the central point of contact for all news media. Public information officials from all participating agencies should co-locate at the JIC.

Joint Information System: Integrates incident information and public affairs into a cohesive organization designed to provide consistent, coordinated, timely information during crisis or incident operations. The mission of the Joint Information System is to provide a structure and system for developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages; developing, recommending and executing public information plans and strategies on behalf of the Incident



Commander; advising the Incident Commander concerning public affairs issues that could affect a response effort; and controlling rumors and inaccurate information that could undermine public confidence in the emergency response effort.

Jurisdiction: A range or sphere of authority. Public agencies have jurisdiction at an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authority. Jurisdictional authority at an incident can be political or geographical or functional (e.g., law enforcement, public health).

Jurisdictional Agency: The agency having jurisdiction and responsibility for a specific geographical area, or a mandated function.

Key Resource: Any publicly or privately controlled resource essential to the minimal operations of the economy and government.

Kind: An Incident Command System resource classification that refers to similar resources. All fire engines for example are grouped as the same “Kind” of resource, their capability however is defined by “Type”.

Landing Zone: See Helispot.

Leader: The Incident Command System title for an individual responsible for a task force, strike team, Resource Team, or functional unit.

Liaison: A form of communication for establishing and maintaining mutual understanding and cooperation.

Liaison Officer: A member of the Command Staff responsible for coordinating with representatives from cooperating and assisting agencies or organizations.

Logistics: Providing resources and other services to support incident management.

Logistics Section: The Section responsible for providing facilities, services, and material support for the incident.

Logistics Section Chief: This individual responsible for supervising the Logistics Section. Reports to the Incident Commander and is a member of the General Staff. This position may have one or more deputies assigned.

Major Disaster: A major disaster is any natural catastrophe (including any hurricane, tornado, storm, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm or drought), or, regardless of cause, any fire, flood or explosion that causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance and multi-agency response.

Management by Objectives: A management approach that involves a five-step process for achieving the incident goal. The Management by Objectives approach includes the following: establishing overarching incidents objectives; developing strategies based on overarching incidents objectives; developing and issuing assignments, plans, procedures, and protocols; establishing specific, measurable tactics or tasks for various incident management, functional activities, and directing efforts to attain them, in support of defined strategies; and documenting results to measure performance and facilitate corrective action.



Managers: Individuals within Incident Command System organizational Units that are assigned specific managerial responsibilities (e.g., Staging Area Manager or Camp Manager).

Medical Unit: Functional unit within the Service Branch of the Logistics Section responsible for the development of the medical emergency plan and for providing emergency medical treatment of incident personnel.

Medical Unit Leader: The person responsible for developing the Medical Plan, obtaining medical aid and transportation for injured or ill incident personnel, and preparing reports and records.

Message Centre: The Message Centre is part of the Incident Communications Centre and is collocated or placed adjacent to it. It receives records and routes information about resources reporting to the incident, resource status, and administrative and tactical traffic.

Metrics: Measurable standards that are useful in describing a resource's capability.

Mitigation: Sustained actions taken to eliminate or reduce risks and impacts posed by hazards well before an emergency or disaster occurs; mitigation activities may be included as part of prevention.

Mobilization: The process and procedures used by all organizations-Federal, Provincial/Territorial, regional, and local-for activating, assembling, and transporting all resources that have been requested to respond to or support an incident.

Mobilization Centre: An off-incident location at which emergency service personnel and equipment are temporarily located pending assignment, release or reassignment.

Mobilization Guide: Reference document used by organizations outlining agreements, processes, and procedures used by all participating agencies/organizations for activating, assembling, and transporting resources.

Multiagency Coordination: Typically, administrators/executives, or their appointed representatives, who are authorized to commit agency resources and funds, are brought together and form MAC Groups. MAC Groups may also be known as multiagency committees, emergency management committees, or as otherwise defined by the system. It can provide coordinated decision making and resource allocation among cooperating agencies, and may establish the priorities among incidents, harmonize agency policies, and provide strategic guidance and direction to support incident management activities.

Multiagency Coordination System(s): Multiagency coordination systems provide the architecture to support coordination for incident prioritization, critical resource allocation, communications systems integration, and information coordination. The elements of multiagency coordination systems include facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications. Two of the most commonly used elements are emergency coordination centres (ECC) and MAC groups. These systems assist agencies and organizations responding to an incident.

Multijurisdictional Incident: An incident requiring action from multiple agencies that each have jurisdiction to manage certain aspects of an incident. In the Incident Command System, these incidents will be managed under Unified Command.



Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement: Written or oral agreement between and among agencies/organizations and/or jurisdictions that provides a mechanism to quickly obtain emergency assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and/or after an incident.

Non-Governmental Organization: An entity with an association that is based on interests of its members, individuals, or institutions. It is not created by a government, but it may work cooperatively with government. Such organizations serve a public purpose, not a private benefit. Examples of NGOs include faith-based charity organizations and the Canadian Red Cross.

Objective: The overarching purposes or aims of an incident response is expressed as an objective. Objectives are priority based, specific, measurable to a standard and a timeframe and are both reasonable and attainable.

Officer: The ICS title for the personnel responsible for the Command Staff positions of Safety, Liaison, and Public Information.

Operational Period: The time scheduled for executing a given set of operation actions, as specified in the Incident Action Plan. Operational periods can be of various lengths, although usually they last 12-24 hours.

Operations Branch Director: The person responsible for implementing the portion of the IAP applicable to the assigned Branch.

Operations Section: The Section responsible for all tactical incident operations and implementation of the Incident Action Plan. In the Incident Command System, it normally includes subordinate Branches, Divisions, and/or Groups.

Operations Section Chief: The individual responsible for supervising the Operations Section, who reports to the Incident Commander and is a member of the General Staff. This position may have one or more deputies assigned.

Organization: Any association or group of persons with like objectives. Examples include, but are not limited to, governmental departments and agencies, private-sector organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

Out-of-service resources: Resources assigned to an incident but unable to respond for mechanical, rest or personal reasons.

Overhead: Personnel assigned to supervisory positions, including incident commander, command staff, general staff, branch directors, supervisors, unit leaders, managers and staff.

Personal Protective Equipment: Any piece of equipment or clothing designed to be used to protect the health and safety of an individual.

Personal Responsibility: All responders are expected to use good judgment and be accountable for their actions.



Personnel Accountability: The ability to account for the location and welfare of incident personnel. It is accomplished when supervisors ensure that Incident Command System principles and processes are functional and that personnel are working within established incident management guidelines.

Personnel Accountability Reports: Periodic reports verifying the status of responders assigned to an incident. A PAR is an accountability tool, typically requested by command and performed at the Division/Group level and below, to confirm that all personnel assigned to an emergency incident are physically accounted for during/after emergencies, evacuations, or at periodic benchmarks.

Plain Language: Communication that can be understood by the intended audience and meets the purpose of the communicator. Plain language is designed to eliminate or limit the use of codes and acronyms, as appropriate, during incident response involving more than a single agency.

Planned Event: A planned, non-emergency activity (e.g., sporting event, concert, parade, etc.).

Planning Meeting: A meeting held as needed before and throughout the duration of an incident to select specific strategies and tactics for incident control operations and for service and support planning. For larger incidents, the Planning Meeting is a major element in the development of the Incident Action Plan.

Planning Section: The Section responsible for the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of operational information related to the incident, and for the preparation and documentation of the Incident Action Plan. This Section also maintains information on the current and forecasted situation and on the status of resources assigned to the incident.

Planning Section Chief: The person responsible for supervising the Planning Section. Reports to the Incident Commander and is a member of the General Staff. This position may have one or more deputies assigned.

Pre-Positioned Resources: Resources moved to an area near the expected incident site in response to anticipated resource needs.

Preparedness: Actions that involve a combination of planning, resources, training, exercising, and organizing to build, sustain, and improve operational capabilities. Preparedness is the process of identifying the personnel, training, and equipment needed for a wide range of potential incidents and developing jurisdiction-specific plans for delivering capabilities when needed for an incident.

Preparedness Organizations: The groups that provide interagency coordination for domestic incident management activities in a nonemergency context. Preparedness organizations can include all agencies with a role in incident management for prevention, preparedness, response or recovery activities. They represent a wide variety of committees, planning groups and other organizations that meet and coordinate to ensure the proper level of planning, training, equipping and other preparedness requirements within a jurisdiction or area.



Prevention: Actions to avoid an incident or to intervene to stop an incident from occurring. Prevention involves actions to protect lives and property. It involves applying intelligence and other information to a range of activities that may include such countermeasures as deterrence operations; heightened inspections; improved surveillance and security operations; investigations to determine the full nature and source of the threat; public health and agricultural surveillance and testing processes; immunizations, isolation or quarantine; and, as appropriate, specific law enforcement operations aimed at deterring, preempting, interdicting or disrupting illegal activity and apprehending potential perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

Private Sector: Organizations and entities that are not part of any governmental structure. The private sector includes for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, formal and informal structures, commerce, and industry.

Procurement Unit: Functional unit within the Finance/Administration Section responsible for financial matters involving vendor contracts.

Procurement Unit Leader: The person responsible for administering all financial matters pertaining to vendor contracts, leases, and fiscal agreements.

Protocols: Sets of established guidelines for actions (which may be designated by individuals, teams, functions, or capabilities) under various specified conditions.

Public Information: Processes, procedures, and systems for communicating timely, accurate, and accessible information on an incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest to the public, responders, and additional stakeholders (both directly affected and indirectly affected).

Qualification: A specified pre-arranged series of requirements (knowledge, abilities, skills, and experience) that shall be acquired to be eligible to perform a specific position or role.

Recovery: The development, coordination, and execution of service- and site-restoration plans; the reconstitution of government operations and services; individual, private-sector, nongovernmental, and public-assistance programs to provide housing and to promote restoration; long-term care and treatment of affected persons; additional measures for social, political, environmental, and economic restoration; evaluation of the incident to identify lessons learned; post incident reporting; and development of initiatives to mitigate the effects of future incidents.

Recovery Plan: A plan developed to restore the affected area or community.

Recognition Primed Decision-making: A model that describes how experts make decisions under stressful situations that are time critical and rapidly changing.

Reimbursement: Mechanism used to recoup funds expended for incident-specific activities.

Reinforced response: Those resources requested in addition to the initial response.

Reporting Locations: One of the six recognized ICS facilities/locations where incoming incident assigned resources can check-in to the incident. 1) The Incident Command Post (check-in with the Resources Unit), 2) Base, 3) Camp, 4) Staging Area, 5) Helibase, or 6) if instructed to report to a Division or Group, with the appropriate Division or Group Supervisor.



Resources: Personnel and major items of equipment, supplies and facilities available or potentially available for assignment to incident operations and for which status is maintained. Resources are described by kind and type and may be used in operational support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at an Emergency Coordination Centre.

Resource Identification and Ordering: Standardized processes and methodologies to order, identify, mobilize, dispatch, and track the resources required to support incident management activities.

Resource Management: Efficient emergency management and incident response requires a system for identifying available resources at all jurisdictional levels to enable timely and unimpeded access to resources needed to prepare for, respond to, or recover from an incident.

Resource Team: A set number of resources of the same kind and type that have an established minimum number of personnel, common communications, and a leader. May also be referred to as a Strike Team.

Resource Tracking: A standardized, integrated process conducted prior to, during, and after an incident by all emergency management/response personnel and their associated organizations.

Resources: Personnel and major items of equipment, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment to incident operations and for which status is maintained. Resources are described by kind and type and may be used in operational support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at an Emergency Coordination Center.

Resources Unit: Functional unit within the Planning Section responsible for recording the status of resources committed to the incident. The unit also evaluates resources currently committed to the incident, the impact that additional responding resources will have on the incident, and anticipated resource needs.

Resources Unit Leader: The person responsible for establishing all incident check-in activities; preparing and processing resource status information; preparing and maintaining displays, charts, and lists that reflect the current status and location of suppression resources, transportation, and support vehicles; and maintaining a master check-in list of resources assigned to the incident.

Response: Activities that address the short-term, direct effects of an incident. Response includes immediate actions to save lives, protect property and meet basic human needs. Response also includes the execution of emergency operations plans and of mitigation activities designed to limit the loss of life, personal injury, property damage and other unfavorable outcomes. As indicated by the situation, response activities include applying intelligence and other information to lessen the effects or consequences of an incident; increased security operations; continuing investigations into nature and source of the threat; ongoing public health and agricultural surveillance and testing processes; immunizations, isolation or quarantine; and specific law enforcement operations aimed at preempting, interdicting or disrupting illegal activity, and apprehending actual perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

Response and Planning Guide: A durable pocket guide published by ICS Canada that contains essential Incident Command System and All-Hazards Incident Management Team deployment information.



Risk: Broadly, the effect of uncertainty on objectives. Risk is often expressed in terms of a combination of the consequences of an event and the associated likelihood of occurrence.

Risk-based: The concept that sound emergency management decision-making will be based on an understanding and evaluation of hazards, risks and vulnerabilities.

Risk Management: The use of policies, practices and resources to analyze, assess and control risks to health, safety, environment and the economy.

Safety Officer: A member of the Command Staff responsible for monitoring incident operations and advising the Incident Commander on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel.

Section: The organizational level having responsibility for a major functional area of incident management (e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration, and Intelligence/Investigations (if established)). The Section is organizationally situated between the Branch and the Incident Command.

Service Branch: A branch within the Logistics Section responsible for service activities at the incident. Includes the Communication, Medical and Food Units.

Single Resource: An individual, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified work supervisor (Single Resource Boss) that can be used on an incident.

Situation Assessment: The evaluation and interpretation of information gathered from a variety of sources (including weather information and forecasts, computerized models, geographic information system data mapping, remote sensing sources, ground surveys, etc.) that, when communicated to emergency managers and decision makers, can provide a basis for incident management decision-making.

Situation Report: Document that often contains confirmed or verified information regarding the specific details relating to an incident. Commonly referred to as a "SitRep".

Situation Unit: Functional unit within the Planning Section responsible for the collection, organization and analysis of incident status information and analysis of the situation as it progresses. Reports to the Planning Section Chief.

Situation Unit Leader: The person responsible for collecting and organizing incident status and information and evaluating, analyzing, and displaying that information.

Span of Control: The number of resources for which a supervisor is responsible, usually expressed as the ratio of supervisors to individuals. (An appropriate span of control is between 1:3 and 1:7, with optimal being 1:5.)

Staging Area: Established for the temporary location of available resources. A Staging Area can be any location in which personnel, supplies, and equipment can be temporarily housed or parked while awaiting operational assignment. Staging Area supervisor is referred to as a Staging Manager.



Standard Operating Guidelines: A set of instructions having the force of a directive, covering those features of operations which lend themselves to a definite or standardized procedure without loss of effectiveness.

Standard Operating Procedure: Complete reference document or an operations manual that provides the purpose, authorities, duration, and details for the preferred method of performing a single function or a number of interrelated functions in a uniform manner.

Status Report: Relays information specifically related to the status of resources (e.g., the availability or assignment of resources).

Strategy: The general overall plan or direction selected to accomplish specific incident objectives.

Strategic Plan: A plan that addresses long-term issues (such as impact of weather forecasts, time-phased resource requirements) and problems (such as permanent housing for displaced disaster victims, environmental pollution, and infrastructure restoration).

Strategy: The general plan or direction selected to accomplish incident objectives.

Strike Team: A specified combination of the same kind and type of resources with common communications and a leader. May also be called a “Resource Team”. The term “Resource Team” is terminology used by law enforcement agencies.

Supervisor: The Incident Command System title for an individual responsible for a Division or Group.

Supply Unit: Functional unit within the Support Branch of the Logistics Section responsible for ordering equipment and supplies required for incident operations.

Supply Unit Leader: The person responsible for ordering personnel, equipment, and supplies; receiving and storing all supplies for the incident; maintaining an inventory of supplies; and servicing nonexpendable supplies and equipment.

Support Branch: A branch within the Logistics Section responsible for providing personnel, equipment and supplies to support incident operations. Includes the Supply, Facilities and Ground Support Units.

Support Branch Director: The person responsible for developing and implementing logistics plans in support of the IAP. The Support Branch Director supervises the operations of the Supply, Facilities, and Ground Support Units.

Support Resources: Nontactical resources under the supervision of the Logistics, Planning or Finance/Administration Sections, or the Command Staff.

Supporting Agency: An agency that provides support and/or resource assistance to another agency. See Assisting Agency.

Supporting Materials: Refers to the several attachments that may be included with an Incident Action Plan (e.g., communications plan, map, safety plan, traffic plan and medical plan).



System: An integrated combination of people, property, environment, and processes that work in a coordinated manner to achieve a specific desired output under specific conditions.

Tactical Direction: Direction given by the Operations Section Chief that includes the tactics appropriate for the selected strategy, the selection and assignment of resources, tactics implementation, and performance monitoring for each operational period.

Tactics: The set of specific, measurable actions or tasks for various incident management functional activities that support the defined strategies.

Task Force: Any combination of resources assembled to support a specific mission or operational need. All resource elements within a Task Force must have common communications and a designated leader.

Task Force Leader: The individual responsible for supervising a task force. Reports to a Division/Group Supervisor or Operations Section Chief.

Technical Specialist: Individual with special skills that can be used anywhere within the Incident Command System organization. No minimum qualifications are prescribed, as technical specialists normally perform the same duties during an incident that they perform in their everyday jobs, and they are typically certified in their fields or professions.

Threat: An indication of possible violence, harm or danger.

Time Unit: Functional unit within the Finance/Administration Section responsible for recording time for incident personnel and hired equipment.

Time Unit Leader: The person responsible for recording personnel time and managing the commissary operation.

Tools: Those instruments and capabilities that allow for the professional performance of tasks, such as information systems, agreements, doctrine, capabilities and legislative authorities.

Tracking and Reporting Resources: A standardized, integrated process conducted throughout the duration of an incident. This process provides incident managers with a clear picture of where resources are located; helps staff prepare to receive resources; protects the safety of personnel and security of supplies and equipment; and enables the coordination of movement of personnel, equipment, and supplies.

Triage: A process for sorting injured people into groups based on their need for, or likely benefit from, immediate medical treatment.

Type: An Incident Command System resource classification that refers to capability. Type 1 is generally considered to be more capable than Types 2, 3, or 4, respectively, because of size, power, capacity, or (in the case of incident management teams) experience and qualifications.

Typing Resources: Resources are organized by kind, and type, including size, capacity, capability, skill, and other characteristics. This makes the resource ordering and dispatch process within and across organizations and agencies, and between governmental and non-governmental entities, more efficient, and ensures that the resources received are appropriate to their needs.



Unified Area Command: Command system established when incidents under an Area Command are multijurisdictional. See Area Command.

Unified Command: An Incident Command System application used when more than one agency has incident jurisdiction or when incidents cross political jurisdictions. Agencies work together through the designated members of the UC, often the senior person from agencies and/or disciplines participating in the UC, to establish a common set of objectives and strategies and a single Incident Action Plan.

Unit: The organizational element with functional responsibility for specific incident operations, planning, logistics, or finance/ administration activity. Unit Leaders are used in all of the General Staff organizational elements. In the Operations Section Strike Team/Resource Team Leaders, Task Force Leaders and Unit Leaders* are organizational peers. They are often used, for example, as the Decontamination Unit Leader when dealing with entries into areas having the risk of contamination by hazardous materials, or the Treatment Unit Leader during Multi-Casualty Incident (MCI) events. In addition, “Unit Leaders” are also found in the Logistics Section such as the Communications Unit Leader. They exist in the Planning Section as indicated by the “Situation Unit Leader” position. The Compensation and Claims Unit exists in the Finance/Administrative Section and is supervised by a “Leader. Some agencies recognize Units in Operations (Investigations, Environmental, etc.).

Unit Leader: The individual in charge of managing Units within an Incident Command System (ICS) functional section. The Unit can be staffed by a number of support personnel providing a wide range of services. Some of the support positions are pre-established within ICS (e.g. Base or Camp Manager), but many others will be assigned as Technical Specialists. (*Responsable d'unité*)

Unity of Command: Principle of management stating that each individual involved in incident operations will be assigned to only one supervisor.

Volunteer: An individual accepted to perform services by the lead agency (which has authority to accept volunteer services) when the individual performs services without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for services performed.