

Lesson 3: Command and Management Under NIMS—Part 2

Lesson Overview

While ICS has proven itself to be effective for all types of incidents, other levels of coordination may be required to facilitate management of:

- Multiple concurrent incidents.
- Incidents that are nonsite specific, such as biological terrorist incidents.
- Incidents that are geographically dispersed.
- Incidents that evolve over time.

Unified and Area Command

In some situations, NIMS recommends variations in incident management. The two most common variations involve the use of Unified Command and Area Command.



What Is Unified Command

Unified Command is an application of ICS used when:

- There is more than one responding agency with responsibility for the incident.
- Incidents cross political jurisdictions.

For example, a Unified Command may be used for:

- A hazardous materials spill that contaminates a nearby reservoir. In this incident, the fire department, the water authority, and the local environmental authority may each participate in a Unified Command.
- A flood that devastates multiple communities. In this incident, incident management personnel from key response agencies from each community may participate in a Unified Command.

How Does Unified Command Work?

Under a Unified Command, agencies work together through the designated members of the Unified Command to:

- Analyze intelligence information.
- Establish a common set of objectives and strategies for a single Incident Action Plan.

Unified Command does not change any of the other features of ICS. It merely allows all agencies with responsibility for the incident to participate in the decisionmaking process.

What Is an Area Command?

An Area Command is an organization established to:

- Oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being managed by an ICS organization.
- Oversee the management of large incidents that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Area Commands are particularly relevant to public health emergencies because these incidents are typically:

- Not site specific.
- Not immediately identifiable.
- Geographically dispersed and evolve over time.

These types of incidents call for a coordinated response, with large-scale coordination typically found at a higher jurisdictional level.



What Does an Area Command Do?

The Area Command has the responsibility for:

- Setting overall strategy and priorities.
- Allocating critical resources according to the priorities.
- Ensuring that incidents are properly managed.
- Ensuring that objectives are met.
- Ensuring that strategies are followed.

An Area Command may become a Unified Area Command when incidents are multijurisdictional or involve multiple agencies.

How Is a Area Command Organized?

An Area Command is organized similarly to an ICS structure but, because operations are conducted on-scene, there is no Operations Section in an Area Command. Other Sections and functions are represented in an Area Command structure.



Multiagency Coordination Systems

On large or wide-scale emergencies that require higher-level resource management or information management, a Multiagency Coordination System may be required.

What Are Multiagency Coordination Systems?

Multiagency Coordination Systems are a combination of resources that are integrated into a common framework for coordinating and supporting domestic incident management activities. These resources may include:

- Facilities.
- Equipment.
- Personnel.
- Procedures.
- Communications.

What Do Multiagency Coordination Systems Do?

The primary functions of Multiagency Coordination Systems are to:

- Support incident management policies and priorities.
- Facilitate logistics support and resource tracking.
- Make resource allocation decisions based on incident management priorities.
- Coordinate incident-related information.
- Coordinate interagency and intergovernmental issues regarding incident management policies, priorities, and strategies.

Direct tactical and operational responsibility for the conduct of incident management activities rests with the on-scene Incident Commander.

Multiagency Coordination System Elements

Multiagency Coordination Systems include Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) and, in certain multijurisdictional or complex incidents, Multiagency Coordination Entities.

- **EOCs** are the locations from which the coordination of information and resources to support incident activities takes place. EOCs are typically established by the emergency management agency at the local and State levels.
- **Multiagency Coordination Entities** typically consist of principals from organizations with direct incident management responsibilities or with significant incident management support or resource responsibilities. These entities may be used to facilitate incident management and policy coordination.

Emergency Operations Centers

EOC organization and staffing is flexible, but should include:

- Coordination.
- Communications.
- Resource dispatching and tracking.
- Information collection, analysis, and dissemination.

EOCs may also support multiagency coordination and joint information activities.

EOCs may be staffed by personnel representing multiple jurisdictions and functional disciplines. The size, staffing, and equipment at an EOC will depend on the size of the jurisdiction, the resources available, and the anticipated incident needs.



Multiagency Coordination Entity Incident Responsibilities

Regardless of their form or structure, Multiagency Coordination Entities are responsible for:

- Ensuring that each involved agency is providing situation and resource status information.
- Establishing priorities between incidents and/or Area Commands in concert with the Incident Command or Unified Command.
- Acquiring and allocating resources required by incident management personnel.
- Coordinating and identifying future resource requirements.
- Coordinating and resolving policy issues.
- Providing strategic coordination.

Multiagency Coordination Entity Postincident Responsibilities

Following incidents, Multiagency Coordination Entities are typically responsible for ensuring that revisions are acted upon. Revisions may be made to:

- Plans.
- Procedures.
- Communications.
- Staffing.
- Other capabilities necessary for improved incident management.

These revisions are based on lessons learned from the incident. They should be coordinated with the emergency planning team in the jurisdiction and with mutual aid partners.