



Amateur Radio Emergency Service Santa Barbara South County

ICS, SEMS, AND NIMS

ICS – Incident Command System

The Incident Command System (ICS) is an organizational structure for the field or on-scene management of response situations. As a system, it was originally developed through a cooperative (local, state, and federal) effort known as FIREScope to efficiently manage any incident or emergency in which fire protection agencies would respond.

It is important to know the basics of the ICS, since it will be used on all emergency responses and is the foundation for SEMS and NIMS, developed later.

As an organizational structure, ICS is designed to be usable in all kinds of emergencies, whether small day-to-day situations or very large and complex ones. It is also readily adaptable to new technology, and yet is simple enough to ensure low operational maintenance costs. The major benefit of ICS, as a field management system, is that it can expand in a logical manner from an initial isolated incident into a major widespread disaster with the least disruption of systems and resources.

The major components of ICS are: common terminology, modular organization, management by objectives, reliance on an incident action plan, manageable span of control, predesignated incident locations and facilities, resource management, integrated communications, and a command structure.

Common Terminology and Clear Text A critical part of an effective multiagency management system is for all communications to be in plain English. Do not use radio codes, agency-specific codes, or jargon.

Management by Objectives Management by objectives is used to communicate functional areas in the ICS organization and is accomplished through the incident action planning process. The Incident Action Plan (IAP) is an oral or written plan containing general objectives reflecting the overall strategy for managing an incident.

Management by Objectives Management by objective is an approach used to communicate functional actions throughout the entire ICS organization. It can be accomplished through the incident action planning process.

Reliance on an Incident Action Plan An Incident Action Plan (IAP) is an oral or written plan containing general objectives reflecting the overall strategy for managing an incident. An IAP includes the identification of operational resources and assignments and may include attachments that provide additional direction.

Manageable Span of Control Span of control pertains to the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can manage effectively during emergency response incidents or special events. Effective span of control on incidents may vary from three to seven and a ratio of one supervisor to five individuals is recommended. If the number falls outside of these ranges, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary, although there may be exceptions.

Predesignated Incident Location and Facilities A variety of operational locations and support facilities are identified by the Incident Commander. They include:

- Incident Command Post, or ICP, is the location from which the Incident Commander oversees all incident operations. It is located outside the hazard zone but close enough to maintain command and may be in a building, vehicle, tent, etc. It is designated by the name of the incident, which is normally an identifier of the incident's location (Zaca Fire).
- Staging Area is the location where immediately available personnel and equipment are kept for tactical assignment. As in the case of the ICP, it is located near the close to the incident for a timely response.
- A base is where logistics and administrative functions are coordinated and administrated. It may be at the ICP.
- A camp is where resources are kept to support the incident and provide food, water, sleeping areas, sanitary services, etc.
- A helibase is where helicopter operations are conducted and include fueling and maintenance.
- Helispots are more temporary locations at the incident where helicopters can safely land and take off.

Resource Management There are two categories of ICS resources: Tactical (personnel and equipment used by the Operations function) and Support (all other resources to support the incident, such as food, shelter, radios, etc.).

Integrated Communications Communications equipment, systems, and protocols must operate across jurisdictions (called interoperability).

Chain of Command and Unity of Command In the ICS, Chain of command means there is an orderly line of authority within the ranks of the organization, with lower levels subordinate to and connected to higher levels. Unity of command means that every individual is accountable to only one designated supervisor to whom they report.

The command function may be carried out as a Single command, where the IC will have complete responsibility for the whole incident, or as a Unified command, where responding agencies and jurisdictions with responsibilities in the incident share incident management.

ICS Organization There are five major management functions upon which the ICS organizations develops. They are:

- Incident Command: (IC) sets the incident objectives, strategies, and priorities and has overall responsibility at the incident.
- Operations conducts tactical operations to carry out the plan, develops tactical objectives and organization, and directs all tactical resources.
- Planning prepares and documents the Incident Action Plan to accomplish the objectives, collects and evaluates information, maintains resource status and documentation.
- Logistics provides support, resources, and other services needed to meet operational objectives.
- Finance/Administration monitors incident costs, provides accounting procurement, etc.

If the size and type of incident requires, the Incident Commander will designate personnel to provide Information, Safety, and Liaison services for the event. These positions make up the Command Staff and the officers report directly to the Incident Commander.

- Public Information Officer serves as the conduit for information to internal and external sources, including the media.
- Safety Officer monitors safety conditions and develops measures to assure safety of incident personnel.

Liaison Officer serves as primary contact for supporting agencies assisting at an incident.

Joint Information Center The Joint Information Center, or JIC, can be used in ICS, SEMS, and NIMS operations. It is the physical location where public information staff involved in incident management activities can co-locate to perform critical emergency information, crisis communications, and public affairs functions. They provide an organizational structure for coordinating and disseminating official information.

The JIC includes representatives of all agencies and organizations managing the response.

SEMS – Standardized Emergency Management System

The Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) is required by the State of California for managing response to multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional emergencies in the State. SEMS consists of five organizational levels which are activated as necessary: field response, local government, operational area, regional, and state.

SEMS incorporates the use of the Incident Command System (ICS), the Master Mutual Aid Agreement, existing mutual aid systems, the operational area concept and multi-agency or inter-agency coordination. Local governments must use SEMS to be eligible for funding of their personnel related costs under state disaster assistance programs.

By standardizing key elements of the emergency management system, SEMS can facilitate the flow of information within and between levels of the system and facilitate coordination among all responding agencies.

Organizational Levels and Functions

Field Response Level is where emergency response personnel and resources, under the command of an appropriate authority, carry out tactical decisions and activities in direct response to an incident or threat. SEMS requires the use of ICS at the field response level of an incident.

Local Government Level include cities, counties, and special districts (school, water, sanitation, etc.). Local governments manage and coordinate the overall emergency response and recovery activities within their jurisdictions. They are required to use SEMS when their emergency operations center is activated or a local emergency is declared or proclaimed in order to be eligible for state funding.

Operational Area means an intermediate level of the state's emergency services organization which encompasses the county and all political subdivisions (cities) located in the county, including special districts. The operational area manages and/or coordinates information, resources, and priorities among local governments within the operational area, and serves as the coordination and communications link between the local government level and the regional level.

Regional. Because of its size and geography, the state has been divided into six mutual aid regions. Their purpose is to provide for the more effective application and coordination of mutual aid and other emergency related activities. The region level manages and coordinates information and resources among operational areas within the mutual aid region and also between the operational areas and the state level. It also coordinates overall state agency support for emergency response activities within the region

State. The state level manages resources in response to the emergency needs of the other levels and coordinates mutual aid among the regions and between regional and state levels. It

also serves as the coordination and communication link between the state and the federal disaster response system.

Features Common to All Levels

The features of ICS that are applicable to all SEMS levels are listed below and are explained in the section on ICS above:

- Essential Management Functions. The field response level uses the five primary ICS functions: command, operations, planning/intelligence, logistics, and finance/administration. The term management is used instead of command.
- Management by Objectives means each SEMS level establishes measurable and attainable objective for each operational period.
- Action Planning. There are two types of action plans in SEMS: *Incident Action Plans* at the field response level and *EOC Action Plans* at the operational area, regional, and state levels to provide personnel with knowledge of the objectives and steps required to achieve them.
- Modular Organization. At each SEMS level, only those functional elements required to meet current objectives need be activated and all elements of the organization can be arranged in various ways within the five SEMS essential functions.
- Organizational Unity and Hierarchy of Command means every individual within an organization has a designated supervisor and all functional elements within each activated SEMS level are linked together to form a single overall organization with appropriate span-of-control units.
- Span-of-Control. The recommended span of control for supervisory personnel at the field response and all EOC levels is in the one-to-three to one-to-seven range, with five the optimum.
- Personnel Accountability is accomplished through Organizational Unity and Hierarchy of Command or Management feature.
- Common Terminology ensures that there is consistency and standardization in the use of terminology within and between all five SEMS levels.
- Resource Management at SEMS levels will vary in terms of directing and controlling, coordination, and resource inventorying.
- Integrated Communications relates to hardware systems, planning for system selection and linking, and the procedures and processes for transferring information. The specifics of how this is accomplished at EOC levels will be different than at the field response level.

NIMS - National Incident Management System

NIMS provides a consistent nationwide template to enable all government, private sector, and non-government organizations to work together during domestic emergencies and incidents. You will notice a familiar theme from ICS and SEMS in the NIMS organization.

NIMS is intended to be applicable across all potential incidents and hazard scenarios, regardless of size or complexity and to improve coordination and cooperation between public and private entities.

NIMS Concepts and Principles NIMS provides 1) a *flexible* framework to allow all government and private entities working together to manage domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity and 2) a set of *standardized* organizational structures and requirements for procedures and systems to improve interoperability.

NIMS Components The components that work together to provide a national framework for preparing for, preventing, responding to, and recovering from domestic incidents are as follows:

- Command and Management. The standard incident management structures are based on three key organizational systems:
 - The Incident Command System (ICS), which defines the operating characteristics, management components, and structure of incident management organizations
 - Multiagency Coordination System, which defines the operating characteristics, management components, and organizational structure of supporting entities
 - Public Information System, which include the processes, procedures, and systems for communicating timely and accurate information to the public during the emergencies.
- Preparedness. These activities are conducted well in advance of any potential incident and involves a combination of:
 - Planning, training, and exercises
 - Personnel qualification and certification standards
 - Equipment acquisition and certification standards
 - Publication management processes and activities
 - Mutual aid agreements and compacts
- Resource Management. Defines standardized mechanisms and establishes requirements for describing, inventorying, mobilizing, dispatching, tracking, and recovering resources during the incident.
- Communications and Information Management. Defines the requirements for a standardized framework for communications, information management, and information-sharing at all levels of incident management.
- Supporting Technologies. Technology and technological systems provide supporting capabilities essential to implementing and refining NIMS and include voice and data, data display, and information management systems.
- Ongoing Management and Maintenance. The Department of Homeland Security's NIMS Integration Center provides strategic direction and oversight in support of review and refinement of NIMS and its components.