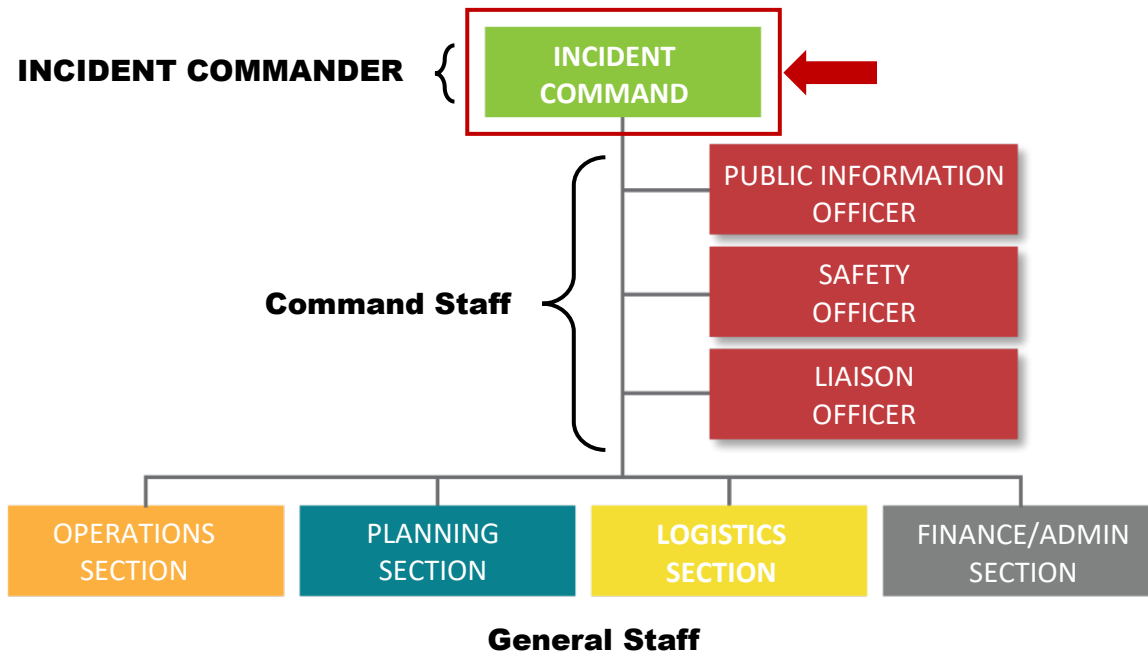


TOPIC 2: INCIDENT COMMANDER



The Incident Commander (IC) leads and coordinates all aspects of an incident response. Until the IC delegates subordinate roles, they remain responsible for any actions those roles would manage. For most incidents, a single individual can fulfill the Incident Command function. However, for complex incidents involving multiple authorities, a Unified Command model may be established, or a Deputy Incident Commander appointed.

Within the Incident Command System (ICS), the first responding person assumes the IC role, assesses the situation, confirms the scope of the incident, and activates the Emergency Response Plan. If a more qualified person becomes available, a transfer of command can take place.

The Incident Commander assigns roles for the Command Staff and General Staff. Based on the scale of the incident, activated roles can include Section Chiefs for Operations, Planning, Logistics, Liaison Officer, Safety Officer, and Public Information Officer and (especially for large scale incidents), a Finance chief.

If the incident is not large, some roles may not be assigned, or multiple roles may be assumed by one person. Having staff available to fill both core and subordinate roles allows the IC and Section Chiefs to mount an effective response. This reflects the best practice to “Get Big Quick.” Note: assignments within the sections are the responsibility of the Section Chiefs or Officers.

Effective communications is an essential part of any incident management effort. For this reason, the IC should quickly establish and test primary and secondary modes of communication, verifying the operations team has good field communications, and can communicate with the corporate EOC.

Upon assuming the Incident Commander role, the critical early steps include: reviewing the checklist and key ICS forms (such as the time and event log), and once roles are assigned, holding an initial briefing meeting to update everyone involved on the current situation. From there, the IC, Planning Section Chief, Safety Officer and Operations Section Chief can collaborate on the development of the Incident Action Plan.

The IC is responsible for continually evaluating the overall strategy and coordinating the efforts of each section. For larger incidents, the IC may wish to assign a Deputy to assist, or use the position as a transition into the Incident Command role.

Use Your Checklists - All roles have associated checklists. When fulfilling multiple roles, personnel must remember to use all applicable checklists. Keep in mind, not all tasks on a checklist may need to be completed. In many cases, the incident will determine the required tasks. Checklists are often divided into phases of the incident, such as: **Initial Response, Ongoing, and Demobilization**. Personnel must respond at the pace dictated by the incident and refer to the checklist for the specific stage of incident they are currently managing. To make a comparison, airline pilots refer to their take-off checklist first before they look at one for the landing process.

Span of Control/Chain of Command – It is important to maintain a manageable span of control, so personnel in leadership and critical decision-making positions are not overwhelmed. Span of control should be maintained between three and seven, and a ratio of one supervisor to five direct reports is optimal. It is also essential personnel respect the chain of command and ensure they only answer to their direct supervisor, not directly to the IC. Sharing the incident organization chart with all responders will help ensure these lines are understood.

Incident Action Plan (IAP) - The Planning Section leads development of the IAP, while input from the Operations Section, the **Incident Commander** and Safety Officer are integral to create an effective blueprint for the response and management of the incident. A sample IAP may contain the following objectives (see the Planning Section Chief Toolbox Guide for further information on IAP development):

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Responder Safety | 3. Control and Containment |
| 2. Public Protection | 4. Environment |

Briefing Meetings – Status briefing meetings should occur at regular intervals (as scheduled by the Planning Section in conjunction with the IC). The IC will receive all updated information and make determinations surrounding incident strategies as the incident unfolds. These meetings should be held every 15 to 20 minutes in the early stages of the incident response, and can be spread out to every 45 minutes or hour as things come under control.

Demobilization – Once a stand-down has been confirmed with the regulatory agency (BC Oil and Gas Commission), demobilization can begin. During the demobilization phase, the IC:

- Reviews and approves the demobilization plan.
- Supervises the demobilization of personnel.
- Supervises demobilization of the organization.
- Ensures any open actions not yet completed will be handled after demobilization.
- Ensures all required forms or reports are completed prior to demobilization.
- Is prepared to provide input to the after-action report.
- Demobilizes incident facilities and operations at the designated time, as appropriate.

Forms: ICS forms are an integral part of proper documentation processes and all roles should be familiar with the forms applicable to them. Documentation is vital during an incident as evidence of the processes and decisions made while responding to an incident, and can be legally admissible in a court of law. Maintaining a time and event log is crucial. When possible, the IC should assign a scribe to maintain documentation associated with the role.

Examples of Forms used by the Incident Commander:

Incident Briefing; Incident Objectives; Time & Event Log, Organization Chart and Incident Status Summary.