UNIT 3: UNIFIED COMMAND
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Unit 3: Unified Command

Visuals

Your Notes

Unit Objectives

- Define and identify the primary features of Unified Command.
- Describe how Unified Command functions on a multijurisdiction or multiagency incident.
- List the advantages of Unified Command.
- Given a simulated situation, demonstrate roles and reporting relationships under a Unified Command that involves agencies within the same jurisdiction and under multijurisdiction conditions.

Background on Unified Command

How can you organize for incidents that cross jurisdictional boundaries or exceed individual agency responsibility?

Two Solutions

Options include:

- Dividing the incident geographically or functionally so that each jurisdiction or agency can establish its own ICS organization.
- Creating a single ICS incident structure and process that has an effective and responsible multijurisdictional or multiagency approach.

Your Notes
Unit 3: Unified Command

Visuals

**Definition of Unified Command**

As a team effort, Unified Command allows all agencies with jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility for the incident to jointly provide management direction to an incident through a common set of incident objectives and strategies and a single Incident Action Plan (IAP).

Each participating agency maintains its individual authority, responsibility, and accountability.

**Unified Command**

- Enables all agencies with responsibility to manage an incident together by establishing a common set of incident objectives and strategies.
- Allows incident Commanders to make joint decisions by establishing a single command structure.
- Maintains unity of command. Each employee reports to only one supervisor.

Your Notes

Review the job aid on the next page.
### Comparison of a Single Incident Commander and Unified Command

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single Incident Commander</th>
<th>Unified Command</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Incident Commander is solely responsible (within the confines of his or her authority) for establishing incident objectives and strategies.</td>
<td>The individuals designated by their jurisdictional or organizational authorities (or by departments within a single jurisdiction) must jointly determine objectives, strategies, plans, resource allocations, and priorities and work together to execute integrated incident operations and maximize the use of assigned resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Incident Commander is directly responsible for ensuring that all functional area activities are directed toward accomplishment of the strategy.</td>
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Source: NIMS
Unit 3: Unified Command

Visuals

Unified Command: Multiple Jurisdictions

**Incidents That Impact More Than One Political Jurisdiction**

*Example:* A wildland fire starts in one jurisdiction and burns into another jurisdiction. Responding agencies from each jurisdiction have the same mission (fire suppression), and it is the political and/or geographical boundaries that mandate multiagency cooperation and involvement.

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Multiagency/Single Jurisdiction Incident

**Incidents Involving Multiple Agencies/Departments Within the Same Political Jurisdiction**

*Example:* During a hazardous materials incident, the fire department has responsibility for fire suppression and rescue, the police department has responsibility for evacuation and area security, and public health agencies and others have responsibility for site cleanup.

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Your Notes

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Visuals

**Unified Command: Multiagency/Multijurisdiction**

**Incidents That Impact on (or Involve) Several Political and Functional Agencies**

*Example:* Severe weather, earthquakes, wildland fires, some special events, and terrorist threats involve large numbers of local, State, and Federal agencies. These incidents cross political boundaries and involve multiple functional authorities.

**Multiagency/Multijurisdiction Incident**

Sample Organization Chart

- **Unified Command**
- **Local Incident Commander(s)**
- **State Incident Commander(s)**
- **Federal Incident Commander(s)**

**Unified Incident Objectives**

- Safety Officer
- Public Information Officer
- Liaison Officer
- Operations Section
- Planning Section
- Logistics Section
- Finance/Admin Section

**Unified Command Elements (1 of 2)**

- **Policies, Objectives, Strategies:** Are established jointly by each jurisdiction/agency authority in advance of tactical operations.
- **Organization:** Consists of the various jurisdictional or agency on-scene senior representatives (agency incident Commanders) operating within a Unified Command structure.
- **Resources:** Are supplied by the jurisdictions and agencies that have functional or jurisdictional, legal, and financial responsibility.

**Unified Command Elements (2 of 2)**

- **Operations:** Are directed by one person, the Operations Section Chief, who controls tactical resources. There is still unity of command.

Resources (personnel and equipment) stay under the administrative and policy control of their agencies. Operationally, they respond to tactical assignments under the coordination and direction of the Operations Section Chief.

Your Notes
Unit 3: Unified Command

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Unified Command Features: Overview
- A single integrated incident organization
- Collocated (shared) facilities
- One set of incident objectives, single planning process, and Incident Action Plan
- Integrated General Staff
- Coordinated process for resource ordering

Single Integrated Incident Organization
In a Unified Command:
- Jurisdictions and/or agencies blend into an integrated, unified team.
- The mix of participants depends on location of the incident and kind of incident.
- The members must function together as a team.

Building Teamwork
How can you build the teamwork necessary for Unified Command?

Collocated (Shared) Facilities
A single Incident Command Post allows the Unified Command to maintain a coordinated effort.

Your Notes
Your Notes

Review the job aid on the next page.
The leg of the “P” describes the initial response period: Once the incident/event begins, the steps are Notifications, Initial Response & Assessment, Incident Briefing using ICS-201, and Initial Incident Command (IC)/Unified Command (UC) Meeting.

At the top of the leg of the “P” is the beginning of the first operational planning period cycle. In this circular sequence, the steps are IC/UC Develop/Update Objectives Meeting, Command and General Staff Meeting, Preparing for the Tactics Meeting, Tactics Meeting, Preparing for the Planning Meeting, Planning Meeting, IAP Prep & Approval, and Operations Briefing.

At this point a new operational period begins. The next step is Execute Plan & Assess Progress, after which the cycle begins again.
Visuals

Initial Unified Command Meeting

The Initial Unified Command Meeting:
- Includes all members of the Unified Command.
- Takes place before the first operational period planning meeting.
- Provides the responsible agency officials with an opportunity to discuss and concur on important issues prior to joint incident planning.

View the sample agenda on the next page.

Your Notes
Sample: Initial Unified Command Meeting Agenda

- Statement of specific jurisdictional/agency goals, based on the following overarching priorities:
  - #1: Life Safety
  - #2: Incident Stabilization
  - #3: Property Preservation

- Presentation of jurisdictional limitations, concerns, and restrictions

- Development of a collective set of incident objectives

- Establishment of and agreement on acceptable priorities

- Adoption of an overall strategy or strategies to accomplish objectives

- Agreement on the basic organization structure

- Designation of the best qualified and acceptable Operations Section Chief

- Agreement on General Staff personnel designations

- Agreement on planning, logistical, and finance agreements and procedures

- Agreement on the resource ordering process to be followed

- Agreement on cost-sharing procedures

- Agreement on informational matters

- Designation of one agency official to act as the Unified Command spokesperson
Shared General Staff Sections
Integrating multijurisdictional and/or multiagency personnel into various other functional areas may be beneficial. For example:

- In Operations and Planning, Deputy Section Chiefs can be designated from an adjacent jurisdiction.
- In Logistics, a Deputy Logistics Section Chief from another agency or jurisdiction can help to coordinate incident support.

Integrated General Staff

- Incident Commanders within the Unified Command must concur on the selection of the General Staff Section Chiefs.
- The Operations Section Chief must have full authority to implement the tactics within the IAP.

Selection of the Ops Section Chief

What should be considered when selecting the Ops Section Chief in a Unified Command?

Coordinated Resource Ordering

The Incident Commanders within the Unified Command work together to establish resource ordering procedures that allow for:

- Deployment of scarce resources to meet high-priority objectives.
- Potential cost savings through agreements on cost sharing for essential services.

Your Notes
Incident Commander Responsibilities
Each designated agency Incident Commander functioning in a Unified Command must:
- Act within his/her jurisdictional or agency limitations.
- Inform the other Commanders of any legal, political, jurisdictional, or safety restrictions.
- Be authorized to perform certain activities and actions on behalf of the jurisdiction or agency he/she represents.
- Manage the incident to the best of his/her abilities.

Spokesperson Designation
One of the Incident Commanders may be designated as the spokesperson to:
- Serve as a designated channel of communications from Command and General Staff members.
- Provide a point of contact as necessary for the Command and General Staffs.

Unified Command and Preparedness
- Include Unified Command delegations in local emergency operations plans and interagency/mutual-aid agreements.
- Conduct training exercises using Unified Command with adjacent jurisdictions and functional agencies.

Advantages of Unified Command
Now that you've learned more about Unified Command... What are the advantages of using Unified Command?
Summary: Advantages of Using Unified Command

- A single set of objectives is developed for the entire incident.
- A collective approach is used to develop strategies to achieve incident objectives.
- Information flow and coordination are improved between all jurisdictions and agencies involved in the incident.
- All agencies with responsibility for the incident have an understanding of joint priorities and restrictions.
- No agency’s legal authorities will be compromised or neglected.
- The combined efforts of all agencies are optimized as they perform their respective assignments under a single incident Action Plan.

Applied Activity

Follow instructions . . .
- Presented by instructors.
- Outlined on handouts.

Your Notes