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Unit 4: Assessment & Agency Guidance in Establishing Incident Objectives

Unit Objectives

- Describe methods and tools used to assess incident/event complexity.
- Describe types of agency(s) policies and guidelines that influence management of incident or event activities.
- Describe the process for developing incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.
- Describe the steps in transferring and assuming incident command.
- As part of an activity, develop incident objectives for a simulated incident.

Activity: Incidents vs. Events

Instructions:
1. Review the definitions below.
   - **Incident**: An unexpected occurrence that requires immediate response actions through an ICS organization.
   - **Event**: A scheduled nonemergency activity (sporting events, concerts, parades).
2. Working as a team, identify the differences and similarities between planning for incidents versus events. Record your answers on chart paper.
3. Choose a spokesperson and be ready to present your answers to the large group in 10 minutes.

Planning for Incidents

The incident planners must take into account the following factors:
- Time criticality
- Unstable, changing situation
- Potential rapid expansion of incident and response
- Incomplete communications and information
- Lack of experience managing expanding incidents
Planning for Events

The planners of an event should know:

- Type of event
- Location, size, expected duration, history, and potential in order to project incident objectives
- Number of agencies involved
- Single or multijurisdiction
- Command Staff needs
- Kind, type, and number of resources required
- Projected aviation operations
- Staging Areas required
- Other facilities required
- Kind and type of logistical support needs
- Financial considerations
- Known limitations or restrictions
- Available communications

Planning “P” and Unified Command

This unit covers:
- Initial response and assessment.
- Incident briefing.
- Setting initial objectives and strategies (during Initial UC Meeting).

Initial Actions

What actions must the first responding units take to organize an incident?

Overall Priorities

Initial decisions and objectives are established based on the following priorities:

#1: Life Safety
#2: Incident Stabilization
#3: Property Conservation

Your Notes
Visuals

Initial Response Actions

Assessment and Safety
- Size up the situation.
- Determine if life is at risk.
- Ensure personnel safety.
- Identify environmental issues to address.

Planning and Resource Management
- Assume command and establish Incident Command Post.
- Establish immediate incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.
- Determine resource needs.
- Establish initial organization that maintains span of control.

Your Notes

Review the job aid on the following page.
Job Aid: Initial Response Actions

For any incident, the person currently in charge (Incident Commander) must do at least the following:

- **Size up the situation.** A thorough sizeup will provide the Incident Commander with the information needed to make initial management decisions.

- **Determine if life is at immediate risk.**

- **Ensure that personnel safety factors are taken into account.**

- **Determine if there are any environmental issues that need to be addressed.** For example, will a hazardous materials spill affect a nearby lake or stream? Is there a toxic plume that requires evacuation?

- **Assume command and establish the Incident Command Post.**

- **Establish immediate incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.** The sizeup should provide information about what needs to be done first to prevent loss of life or injury and to stabilize the situation. For small incidents, the initial Incident Action Plan (IAP) may be verbal and may cover the entire incident. For larger, more complex incidents, the initial IAP may cover the initial operating period. A written IAP will then be developed.

- **Determine if there are enough resources of the right kind and type on scene or ordered.** The incident objectives will drive resource requirements. What resources are required to accomplish the immediate incident objectives? If the right kind and type of resources are not on scene, the Incident Commander must order them immediately.

- **Establish the initial organization that maintains span of control.** At this point, the Incident Commander should ask: What organization will be required to execute the IAP and achieve the objectives? He or she should establish that organization, always keeping in mind safety and span-of-control concerns. Consider if span of control is or will soon approach practical limits. The span of control range of three to seven is to ensure safe and efficient utilization of resources.

Ordering an Incident Management Team (IMT) may be necessary depending on the size or complexity of the incident, or existing policies and laws. Many local organizations are not equipped to manage a type 3 incident, so when a sizeup reveals that additional IMT support may be required, it should be requested as soon as possible.


**Initial Response: Conduct a Sizeup**

The first responder to arrive must assume command and size up the situation by determining:

- Nature and magnitude of the incident
- Hazards and safety concerns
  - Hazards facing response personnel and the public
  - Evacuation and warnings
  - Injuries and casualties
  - Need to secure and isolate the area
- Initial priorities and immediate resource requirements
- Location of Incident Command Post and Staging Area(s)
- Entrance and exit routes for responders


**Initial Management Decisions**

A thorough sizeup provides information needed to make initial management decisions.

- Establish Objectives
- Develop Strategy
- Select Tactics


**Situational Awareness**

Situational awareness is the perception of:

- What the incident is doing, and
- What you are doing in relation to the incident and your objectives.

Situational awareness involves the ability to predict:

- Changes in the incident, and
- Your future actions.


**Situational Awareness Skills (1 of 2)**

- Identify problems/potential problems.
- Recognize the need for action (atypical situations).
- Do NOT ignore information discrepancies; rather, analyze discrepancies before proceeding.
- Seek and provide information before acting.
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Situational Awareness Skills (2 of 2)
- Continue collecting information about the incident and assignments made.
- Assess your own task performance.
- Identify deviations from the expected.
- Communicate your situational awareness to all team members!

Loss of Situational Awareness
Tunnel vision is an indicator of losing situational awareness.

How might you know if you are experiencing tunnel vision?

What causes tunnel vision? How can it be avoided?

Complexity Analysis Factors (1 of 2)
- Impacts to life, property, and the economy
- Community and responder safety
- Expected duration
- Number of resources involved
- Potential hazardous materials
- Weather and other environmental influences
- Likelihood of cascading events or incidents

Complexity Analysis Factors (2 of 2)
- Potential crime scene (including terrorism)
- Political sensitivity, external influences, and media relations
- Area involved, jurisdictional boundaries
- Availability of resources

Your Notes
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**Visuals**

**Authorities, Policies, and External Stakeholders**

In addition to the information collected during the sizeup, the Incident Commander must take into account:

- Authorities
- Policies & Guidelines
- External Stakeholders

**Agency Policies and Guidelines**

What are some examples of agency policies and guidelines that can affect your management of an incident?

**Policies and Guidelines: Examples**

- Pre-incident plans
- Standard operating procedures
- Emergency operations plans
- Continuity of operations plans
- Community preparedness plans
- Mutual aid and assistance agreements
- Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA)
- Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP)
- Corrective action plans
- Mitigation plans
- Recovery plans
- Tribal, State, regional, and national mobilization guides
- Field operations guides
- Delegations of authority

**Responsibility for Developing Objectives**

- On small incidents, the Incident Commander is solely responsible for developing incident objectives.
- On larger incidents, Command and General Staff contribute to the development of incident objectives.

**Your Notes**
**Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics**

- **Incident Objectives**: State what will be accomplished.
- **Strategies**: Establish the general plan or direction for accomplishing the incident objectives.
- **Tactics**: Specify how the strategies will be executed.

**Writing “SMART” Objectives**

- **Specific**: Is the wording precise and unambiguous?
- **Measurable**: How will achievements be measured?
- **Action Oriented**: Is an action verb used to describe expected accomplishments?
- **Realistic**: Is the outcome achievable with given available resources?
- **Time Sensitive**: What is the timeframe (if applicable)?

**Sample Objectives**

- Residents in Division A will be evacuated to the Whinford High School reception center by 1700 hours.
- Complete Preliminary Damage Assessments of all damaged residential structures in Anytown by 0800 hours on 3/21.
- Restore water to the business district by 0900 hours on 3/21.
- Contain fire within existing structures (during the current operational period).

**Activity: SMART Objectives? (1 of 2)**

**Situation**: It’s midnight and heavy rains have caused localized flooding. In one neighborhood, residents are becoming trapped in their homes.

**Incident Objective**: As needed, provide assistance to those who might have localized flooding problems.

**Is this objective SMART?**

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**Your Notes**
Activity: SMART Objectives? (2 of 2)

**Situation:** Blocked storm drains are causing standing water on major roadways.

**Incident Objective:** Notify public works of storm drain blockages causing standing water, or clear the drains to prevent traffic accidents.

How would you improve this objective?

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Planning “P” and Incident Briefing

Following the Initial Assessment, an Incident Briefing is conducted.

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Incident Briefing (ICS Form 201)

- Provides staff with information about the incident situation and the resources allocated to the incident.
- Serves as a permanent record of the initial response to the incident.
- Can be used for transfer of command.

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Transfer of Command

You have been serving as the initial Incident Commander.

A more qualified staff member has just arrived at the scene and will assume command of the incident.
Visuals

Steps in Assuming Command

- Assess the situation with the current Incident Commander.
- Receive a briefing from the current Incident Commander.
- Determine an appropriate time for the transfer of command and document the transfer (ICS Form 201).
- Notify others of the change in incident command.
- Assign the current Incident Commander to another position in the incident organization.

Refer to the next page in your Student Manual for more information about transfer of command briefings.

View the job aid on the next page.

Your Notes
Job Aid: Steps in Assuming Command

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transfer of Command Briefings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A transfer of command briefing must be held by the current Incident Commander, and take place face to face if possible. The briefing must cover the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Incident history (what has happened)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Priorities and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Current plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Resource assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Incident organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Resources ordered/needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Facilities established</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Status of communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Any constraints or limitations as directed by policies and guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Incident potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Status of Delegation of Authority, inherent or specific</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The incoming Incident Commander must ensure that he or she understands the responsible agencies’ policies and Agency Administrator’s direction as discussed earlier in this unit. This may be inherent based on the person’s employment or rank, or may be provided by the Agency Administrator.

Changing Incident Objectives

Explain that the incoming Incident Commander, because of depth of experience or a change in incident-related conditions, may desire to modify incident objectives upon transition of command. Changes could be required for the following reasons:

- Change in Agency Administrator goals
- Change in available resources – kinds or types
- Failure or unexpected success of tactical efforts
- Improved intelligence
- Cost factors
- Political considerations
- Environmental considerations

(Continued on the next page.)
Job Aid: Steps in Assuming Command (Continued)

Critical changes should be made immediately, rather than allowing the existing plan to proceed. Delayed changes may result in additional control problems, greater loss, and increased expense and risk. However, changes can cause disruptions. When possible, less time-sensitive changes should be implemented at the start of the next operational period.

Making a change does not imply that previous decisions and actions were wrong. Many things can influence the need for change. The Incident Commander must be assertive but also aware of potential risk and safety considerations involved in changes. Four guidelines to changes are:

1. Implement appropriate safety procedures for all changes. Before implementing changes, the Incident Commander must consider the impact on the safety of responders. If a change in the IAP places responders at greater risk, safety procedures must be changed as well.
2. Make changes only if you must. Do not make unnecessary changes to incident objectives or the IAP.
3. Make changes sooner rather than later. Evaluate the impact of any changes on overall operations. Do not wait beyond the beginning of the next operational period to make changes. If changes are critical, make them immediately.
4. Ensure that the changes are communicated clearly throughout the organization. Poor communication of changed objectives will reduce the efficiency of the response. It could also increase costs and put responders at greater risk.
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Visuals

**Applied Activity**

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

**Summary**

Are you now able to:
- Describe methods and tools used to assess incident/event complexity?
- Describe types of agency(s) policies and guidelines that influence management of incident or event activities?
- Describe the process for developing incident objectives, strategies, and tactics?
- Describe the steps in transferring and assuming incident command?
- As part of an activity, develop incident objectives for a simulated incident?

Your Notes
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