Northwest Area Committee/ Regional Response Team

Incident Command System

Introduction

The complexity of incident management, coupled with the growing need for multi-agency and multifunctional involvement on incidents, has increased the need for a single standard incident management system that can be used by all emergency response disciplines.

To promote quick and effective coordination during responses, the Regional Response Team uses a management system called Incident Command System (ICS). ICS provides a comprehensive framework for managing emergency and non-emergency events. Originally created to coordinate firefighting efforts at forest fires, it has been expanded to an all-hazard, all-risk management system.

Unified Command

ICS has the advantage of combining different agencies into the same organization, maximizing coordination, and avoiding duplication of efforts. A structure called Unified Command allows the Incident Commander position to be shared among several agencies and organizations.

In oil spills along the coast, the Unified Command is typically comprised of the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC), the State On-Scene Coordinator(s) (SOSC), and a Responsible Party representative (RP). In addition to these, the Unified Command may also include a Local On-Scene Coordinator (LOSC) and a Tribal On-Scene Coordinator. This group sets the overall incident objectives and guides and approves the incident action plan. The Unified Command members retain their authority, but work to resolve issues in a cooperative fashion so maximum attention is given to response efforts.

Management Activities

The ICS organization is built around 5 major management activities:

• ***Incident Commander/Unified Command*** has overall responsibility at the incident or event. Certain functions, such as safety, information, and liaison, are assigned to command staff officers who report directly to the IC. (Diagram on back side.)

• ***Operations*** manage all operations to remove the oil and restore the environment.

• ***Planning*** develops the action plan and collects, evaluates, disseminates incident information.

• ***Logistics*** provides facilities, services, and material in support of the incident.

• ***Finance/Administration*** provides all financial and cost analysis aspects of the incident.

Flexibility

The adaptability of ICS stems from the ability to expand or contract the organization as necessary. One person, the Incident Commander, may manage small incidents. Large incidents

require the functions of ICS to be set up as separate sections, which may be further subdivided.

Planned Actions

Every incident has an incident action plan (IAP) prepared prior to each operational period, typically a half-day, a day, or several days. Getting ahead of a spill by documenting planned activities in an IAP is critical to the overall success of the response; a set of ICS forms exist to help prepare the IAP. ICS training is available from many sources. Pocket guides, such as the USCG Field Operations Guide, also help responders manage an incident and help the response run smoothly.

Tribal

Should an incident occur on the tribal land/water holdings they have the opportunity to actively participate in the unified command and be engaged in the decision making process.

Responsible Parties (RPs)

RPs must fulfill their statutorily duties under the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) in the event of an oil or hazardous substance incident. However, spills where the RP is unknown are designated as mystery spills.

Summary

ICS is an incident management system that is widely adopted and used. Because of its flexible nature, low cost of implementation, and widespread use, it is an ideal system for emergency response.

For more information, please visit:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incident_Command_System

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