

RRT III Fact Sheet

www.dot.gov/dotinfo/uscg/lantarea/rrt/rrtmain.htm

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM In Oil Spill Response

Introduction

Significant oil spills involve numerous agencies and hundreds, possibly thousands, of people conducting and supporting cleanup efforts. To promote effective and quick coordination during oil spill responses, the Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency use a management system called the Incident Command System (ICS), a part of the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). ICS provide a comprehensive framework for managing emergency and nonemergency events. Originally created to coordinate firefighting efforts at forest fires, it has been expanded to an all-hazard, all-risk management system. Many applications exist for ICS because of its flexibility, including:

Oil spill response; fires, hazardous material, and multicasualty incidents; multijurisdictional and multiagency disasters; wide area search and rescue; and transportation incidents.

Because NIIMS ICS is a public domain system, training and implementation costs are minimized. Many agencies and

companies involved in emergency response have adopted ICS, resulting in improved coordination of response efforts.

Management Activities

The ICS organization is built around five major management activities:

Incident Command sets objectives and priorities, 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 incident command.

Operation conducts tactical operations to carry out an action plan, develops the tactical objectives and organization, and directs all resources.

Planning develops the action plan to accomplish the objectives, collects and evaluates information, tracks resource status, and documents the response effort.

Logistics provides support to meet incident needs, provides resources and all other services needed to support the incident.

Finance/Administration monitors' cost related to incident, provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analysis.

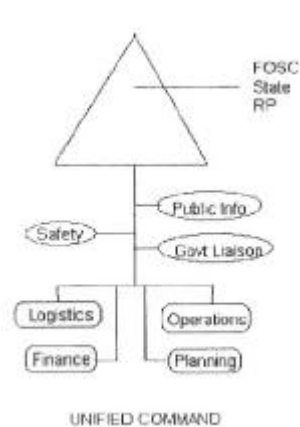
Flexibility

The adaptability of ICS stems from the ability to expand or contract the organization as necessary. Small incidents may be managed by one person, the Incident Commander. Large incidents require the functions of ICS to be set up as separate sections, which may be further subdivided. A basic principle that allows the ICS to expand and contract smoothly during an incident is that the person at the top is responsible until the authority is delegated to another person. Span of control is maintained at three to seven employees per supervisor. Smooth shift changes are fostered by established change-of-shift procedures.

Unified Command

In some incidents, including oil spills, there are several organizations that may have shared authority to respond. ICS has the advantage of combining different Federal, State, and Local agencies and the Responsible Party into the same organizational system

maximizing coordination of spill response activities and avoiding duplication of efforts. A structure called Unified Command allows the Incident Commander position to be shared between several agencies and organizations that have jurisdiction. 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. In oil spills in the coastal zone, 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 inland responses, the Unified Command



will also include the Local Incident Commander.

Planned Actions

Every incident has an oral or written incident action plan prepared for each operational period, a period of time chosen based on the nature of the incident, typically a half day, a day, or several days. A suite of ICS forms exists to help prepare the incident action plan.

Training

ICS training and pocket guides help the system run smoothly. A system is provided for the cycle of information gathering, briefings, and implementation.

Summary

Originally developed to fight forest fires, ICS has grown into 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 managing emergency responses to complex or multijurisdictional incidents.

Please contact our RRT Coordinator through the web site or at (757) 398-6620 for more information.