

# ICS

## Incident Command System (Canadian Version)

### UNIFIED COMMAND

*An Operational Guideline applicable to all emergencies involving the Incident Command System.*

Stafford Reid  
EnviroEmerg Consulting Services  
Cowichan Bay, British Columbia  
CANADA

EnviroEmerg.ca



BLANK PAGE

## Preface

***Unified Command is much more than about authority, it also about respect.***

This operational guideline provides guidance on how to implement a unified command organization at the site (Incident Command Post) for emergencies under the Incident Command System (ICS). The site and field levels of incident management are where most response performance and accountability reside. The Incident Command System (ICS) is a disciplined approach to incident management that:

- Ensures responder safety;
- Pays attention to both the detail and the bigger picture about the incident;
- Lets the management organization get bigger faster;
- Addresses the complexity of an incident;
- Shares responsibility with others that have a reason to be involved;
- Builds relationships both internally within an organization, as well as externally with other stakeholders and the response community;
- Saves lives;
- Protects property,
- Helps the environment, and
- Builds both response capability and capacity.

The ICS is not just for dedicated emergency departments, such as Fire, Police and Ambulance. It is often undertaken by people that have never worked together or even met. The management of incident can be “unusual” business for most people. A few well-trained people in the right place, at the right time, doing the right things can make a big difference. However, it all starts under the ICS with an Incident Commander. In some situation, more than one incident commander may be involved under the ICS protocol of “unified command”.

Unified Command is the “cornerstone” of the ICS when more than one jurisdiction (governing body such as province, federal, or local government, First Nations), Responsible Party (spiller or facility owner) or functional agency (fire, police, ambulance) have a tactical and/or decision-making mandate/ roles in the management of an incident.

International versions of ICS largely pertains to areas of nation-specific terminology. For example, in Canada: US *County* = Canadian *Local Government*, US *Tribe* = Canadian *First Nations*, US *State* = Canadian *Province/Territory*, etc.

## Acknowledgements

This operational guideline was adapted from the US National Strike Team’s Technical Document on ICS/Unified Command. Any errors or omissions are the responsibility of *EnviroEmerg Consulting Services*. Those that used this guideline have sole responsibility for any performance outcome. *EnviroEmerg Consulting Services* holds no liability on the application of this ICS guideline during an incident. This document does not impose any legal obligations or duties on any party.

USERS OF THIS OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE ARE EXPECTED TO HAVE ICS BASIC (200)  
TO ICS INTERMEDIATE (300) LEVELS OF TRAINING.

Table of Contents

**SUMMARY** ..... iv

**1 INTRODUCTION**..... 1

**2 THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM AND UNIFIED COMMAND**..... 2

**2.1 Incident Command System**..... 2

**2.2 Unified Command**..... 6

        2.2.1 When to use Unified Command..... 9

        2.2.2 Who Makes-up Unified Command.....10

        2.2.3 Unified Command Decisions.....12

        2.2.4 Agencies Participation When not a Part of the Unified Command..... 13

        2.2.5 The Relationship Between an ICS and an Unified Command..... 13

        2.2.6 Advantages of an ICS/Unified Command..... 14

**3. ADVANCED PREPARING FOR ICS/UNIFIED COMMAND**.....15

**4. IMPLEMENTING ICS/UNIFIED COMMAND DURING AN INCIDENT**..... 16

**4.1 The Initial Unified Command Meeting**..... 16

**5. CONCLUSION**..... 19

**Appendix A – Frequently Asked Questions About Unified Command**.....A-1

**Appendix B – Incident Command System Terms and Acronyms**.....B-1

**Appendix C – Benefits of Emergency Preparedness**..... C-1

List of Figures

Figure 1 – Basic Incident Command System Structure .....3

Figure 2 – Incident Action Plan Development Pertains to an Operational Period..... 5

Figure 3 – A Functional Unified Command .....9

Figure 4 – A Jurisdictional Unified Command.....9

Figure 5 – Relationship Between ICS and Unified Command ..... 13

Figure 6 – Model Layout of a Command Room..... 16

BLANK PAGE

## SUMMARY

Managing a major emergency – especially a complex, multi-jurisdictional response – is one of the most difficult challenges facing agencies and industries. Effective coordination among local, provincial, and federal responders – in conjunction with the Responsible Party (spiller or a facility owner) - at the incident site is often key to ensuring successful response. Both the application of the Incident Command System and Unified Command are means to effectively join efforts from multiple agencies, as well as the private sector (company, contractors). They are two important tools available for the emergency community to foster a successful, cohesive response regardless of the size and complexity of an incident.

To the uninitiated, the Incident Command System (ICS) appears complex, and the concept of Unified Command (UC) is not universally understood or endorsed by all agencies and industries. The purpose of this document is to instill a greater understanding and appreciation of the ICS and Unified Command to manage an emergency. The document's main focus is on Unified Command, its arrangements, merits, and application for managing emergencies whether a spill, flood, fire, crime, or seismic event.

The ICS was developed in 1976 specifically to manage multi-agency response to urban interface forest fires in California – of which Unified Command remains an essential component. Unified Command was created in recognition that most incidents (spills, forest fires, floods) have impacts that cross jurisdictional boundaries such as local, federal, provincial, international, and First Nations (Aboriginal). Furthermore, authority's for incident response are not normally legally confined to a single jurisdiction or agency. There is often the need to delineate and share response responsibilities.

A premise of Unified Command is that the responders - whether government or industry - generally hold common goals such as the protection of people, property, and the environment. As such, there is a common desire to achieve mutually-agreed-on response objectives, strategies and tactics. Unified command assists in meeting common tactical goals and varied values (business, environmental, public safety etc.). As such, Unified Command is when more than one agency has a shared role to formulate response objectives and strategies and to work as an integrated Incident Management Team. This arrangement also applies when a facility owner is involved due to business loss (structural fire or failure), impacts to the environment (spiller/polluter), consequences to public safety (dam safety, agricultural health), or combinations thereof.

Unified Command is an integral part of the ICS that helps define the “rules of engagement”. Unified Command is defined as:

*A unified team effort which allows all agencies with responsibility for the incident, either jurisdictional or functional - and a company if a facility owner or responsible for pollution or public safety impact - to manage an incident by establishing a common set of incident objectives and strategies. This is accomplished without losing or abdicating agency or corporate authority, responsibility, or accountability.*

The ICS is an on-site (Incident Command Post) organization to manage emergency response in the field, whereas Unified Command is an arrangement for managing multi-jurisdictional / multi-agency / corporate interests and efforts within the ICS. Understanding the concepts of ICS/Unified Command is as important for local responders (Fire, Police, Ambulance, Public Works), who generally arrive on-scene first, as it is for Company, Provincial and/or Federal organizations that may be joining the Incident Management Team later at an Incident Command Post.

The concept of Unified Command simply means that all departments and government agencies and company who have a functional, jurisdictional, or legal responsibility at an incident contribute to the process of:

## AN OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- ➔ Determining overall response strategy and objectives;
- ➔ Insuring that joint planning for response activities will be accomplished;
- ➔ Insuring that integrated operations are conducted;
- ➔ Making maximum use of all assigned resources, and
- ➔ Keeping track of financial costs.

The process of Unified Command encompasses consensus decision-making, delineating activities, and sharing responsibilities (tactics and management), rather than the more traditional "Command and Control" approach whereby there is only one authority. The latter model often leaves important stakeholders only as advisors - allowing in put only when asked.

Unified Command is essentially about "respect". The choosing of members to be part of a Unified Command is first and foremost about respecting a jurisdiction's or agency's role to govern and to represent affected populace, economies and environments and/or mandates.

In the case of a company whose business is affected (e.g. structural fire or failure), it is about their economic and commercial values being recognized (e.g. what to protect first). If in the case of a spill where the "polluter-pay" principle applies, Unified Command is about expenditures of the Responsible Party's (RP) money that ensures reasonable actions and costs to mitigate the impact, to allow the RP to demonstrate *due diligence* and to enable the spiller to make the community whole again.

In the case of a functional Unified Command, it is about respecting a local government's agencies mandate to fight fire, police, provide medical services in a safe and effective manner.

Unified Command is not about "power" where a jurisdiction or agency postures to "trump" another's role, or that a company tries to divide authorities by seeking only one person to be in charge. Members of Unified Command must recognize "inclusive" emergency management strives to fully identify and apply "values" regarding what is protected first, when, and to what degree. No one authority has this mandate to make these decisions when an incident crosses agency or jurisdictional boundaries and/or affects a private business interest.

The advantages of an ICS/Unified Command include:

- ➔ Using a a common language and response culture;
- ➔ Optimizing combined efforts of multiple agencies and companies;
- ➔ Eliminating duplicative efforts;
- ➔ Establishing a single command post;
- ➔ Allowing for collective approval of operations, logistics, planning, and finance activities;
- ➔ Encouraging a cooperative response environment;
- ➔ Allowing for shared facilities, reducing response costs, maximizing efficiency;
- ➔ Minimizing communication breakdowns; and
- ➔ Permitting responders to develop and implement one consolidated Incident Action Plan

The ICS/Unified Command structure outlines responsibilities and functions, thereby reducing potential conflicts, and improving information flow among all participating organizations. The ICS maintains its modular organizational structure, so that none of the advantages of the ICS are lost by the introduction of a Unified Command.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to emergency responders who are part of an Incident Management Team (IMT) functioning under the Incident Command System (ICS) and led by a Unified Command (UC). The objectives of this guideline are:

- ➔ To increase awareness of ICS/Unified Command;
- ➔ To improve coordination among responders during incidents;
- ➔ To encourage interagency training programs and exercises;
- ➔ To foster development of a common language and response culture among all response agencies and private companies; and
- ➔ To help members of an Incident Management Team to achieve cohesive, effective, and efficient response regardless of size and type of incident.

Issues and lessons learned about the ICS and Unified Command include:

- ➔ The ICS is flexible and is a response tool, not a response rule;
- ➔ The application ICS varies depending on the needs of the incident;
- ➔ One individual can fill multiple ICS functions;
- ➔ The Unified Command members should have response decision-making and spending authorities;
- ➔ The planning for and exercising ICS/Unified Command is critical to its success;
- ➔ The local, provincial and federal governments and First Nations (Aboriginal) representatives are key participants in establishing ICS/Unified Command whenever their facilities, lands or interests are affected; and
- ➔ A Company that owns or operates a facility (pipeline, railway, building, vessel, vehicle *etc.*) needs to be part of Unified Command if their business interests are directly affected by the incident (*e.g.* structural fire or failure), impacts the environment (spiller or polluter), has consequences to public safety (dam failure, animal disease out-break), or combinations thereof.

Clarifying and promoting the ICS helps to join local, provincial, and federal response efforts – as well as a company owner/operator - through common emergency management structure, training, and joint exercises. Such efforts make for safer and more effective incident response.

This guideline is intended to provide technical assistance on the management of responses at the site (Incident Command Post) level under the ICS protocol of Unified Command. It applies to emergencies that may involve multiple government jurisdictions (local, federal, provincial, First Nations), multiple first responding (functional) agencies such as Fire, Police, and Ambulance, or combinations thereof. It can also include facility owners whose business are affected by the event, or a person or party responsible for environmental damages (*e.g.* spill, forest fire) or consequences to public welfare.

The guideline is applicable for all threats such as for spills, seismic events, forest fires, structural fires, floods, dam failures, disease out-breaks (human and agricultural), and crime situations (criminal, vandalism, terrorist).

The basic framework at the incident site is the use of the ICS and Unified Command by an Incident Management Team (IMT) located at a single Incident Command Post (See Text Box on *Characteristics of Site Level Response*). These elements - organization, people and place - bring together the functions of all responders to use resources (people, equipment, technology) effectively. This applies whether the resources come from a company (owner and their contractors), provincial or federal agencies, or the local government (including First Nations), or combinations thereof.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF SITE-LEVEL RESPONSE

Generally, site response manages a single spill source or incident, such as a hazardous material incident (railway accident, tire fire). Site response is where the internationally-established Incident Command System (ICS) is applied. The ICS organization and protocols are designed to handle small to very large and complex incidents. Its modular structure and organization expands to meet emergency management demands.

Three fundamental features delineate site response - the Command Post: 1) the first line of communications to field personnel, including media and assisting/cooperating agencies; 2) where tactical (operational) planning actions and decisions are undertaken; and 3) where unified command (functional or jurisdictional) is established among participating local government, provincial government, federal government, First Nations and Responsible Party (spiller) or facility owner/operator.

The facility where an incident management team manages site response is called the "Incident Command Post". The Incident Command Post may be near the incident or many kilometers away, and may be just a single person (Incident Commander), a vehicle, trailer or community hall, or pre-designated emergency building.

The "field" is where response personnel implement the approved tactical (operational) decisions of the incident management team such as firefighting, hazardous material control, equipment and people decontamination, and waste handling. The number of response personnel at the site's Incident Command Post and in the field can be from a few people to hundreds.

## 2 THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM AND UNIFIED COMMAND

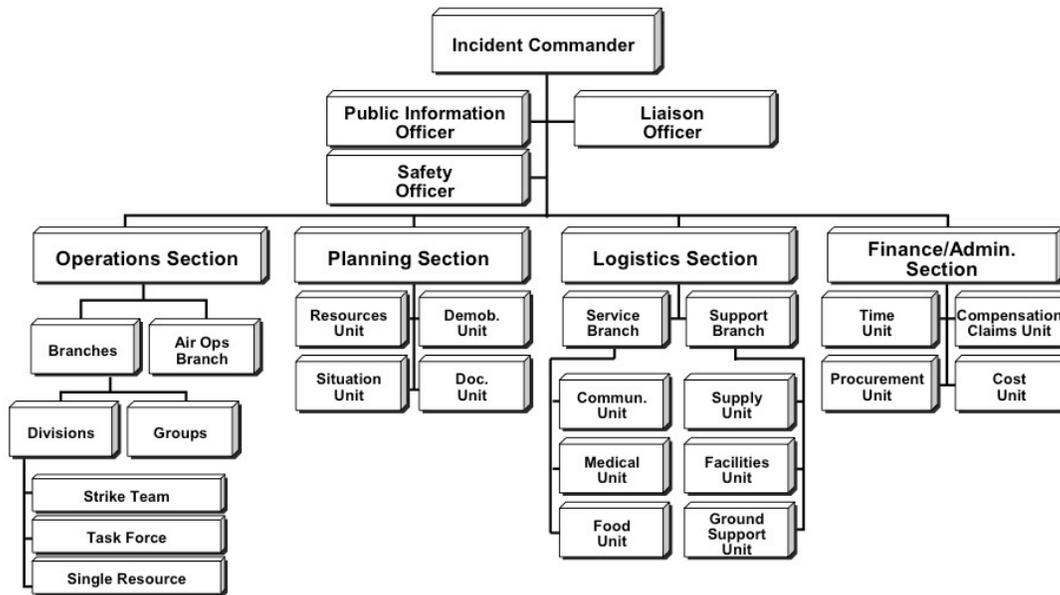
### 2.1 Incident Command System

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standardized on-site incident management organization designed to scale up or down to address the complexity and demands of any single incident or multiple incidents. In the early 1970s, ICS was developed to manage rapidly moving wildfires and to address the following problems:

- ➔ Too many people reporting to one supervisor;
- ➔ Different emergency response organizational structures;
- ➔ Lack of reliable incident information;
- ➔ Inadequate and incompatible communications;
- ➔ Lack of structure for coordinated planning among agencies;
- ➔ Unclear lines of authority;
- ➔ Terminology differences among agencies; and
- ➔ Unclear or unspecified incident objectives.

## AN OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

An ICS enables integrated communication and planning by establishing a manageable span-of-control – ensures each responder has only one supervisor and each supervisor is not overseeing too many people. An ICS divides an emergency response into five manageable functions essential for emergency response: *Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance / Administration*. Figure 1 shows the ICS structure.



**Figure 1 – Incident Command System Structure**

The following lists the duties generally associated with each ICS function:

- ➔ **Incident Commander or Unified Command** is responsible for all aspects of the response, including developing incident objectives and managing all incident operations. Incident Commanders are recognized by their green vests.
- ➔ **Command Staff** is responsible for public affairs, health and safety, and liaison activities within the incident command structure. The Incident Commander/Unified Command may assign individuals to carry out these responsibilities and report directly to them. Command Staff are recognized by their red vests. The following are Command Staff duties:
  - The **Information Officer's** role is to develop and release information about the incident to the news media.
  - The **Liaison Officer's** role is to serve as the point of contact for assisting and coordinating activities between the Incident Commander/Unified Command and various agencies and groups.
  - The **Safety Officer's** role is to develop and recommend measures to the Incident Commander/Unified Command for assuring personnel health and safety and to assess and/or anticipate hazardous and unsafe situations..

## AN OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

**General Staff** includes the Section Chiefs of *Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administrative*. These responsibilities remain with the Incident Commander (or Unified Command) until they are assigned to a Section Chief. When sections are established, they can be supported by other functional branches, units, divisions, and/or groups according to standard ICS organizational practices and protocols. The general functions of each section include:

- ➔ **Operations** staff are responsible for all operations directly applicable to the primary mission of the response. (Operations personnel are recognized by their orange vests);
- ➔ **Planning** staff are responsible for collecting, evaluating, and disseminating the tactical information related to the incident, and for preparing and documenting Incident Action Plans (IAPs). (Planning personnel are recognized by their blue vests);
- ➔ **Logistics** staff are responsible for providing facilities, services, and materials for the incident response. (Logistics personnel are recognized by their yellow vests);
- ➔ **Finance and Administrative** staff are responsible for all financial, administrative, and cost analysis aspects of the incident. (Finance and Administration personnel are recognized by their grey vests).

The following is a list of Command Staff and General Staff responsibilities that either the Incident Commander or Unified Command should perform or assign to appropriate members of the Command or General Staff:

- ➔ Provide response direction;
- ➔ Coordinate effective communication;
- ➔ Coordinate resources;
- ➔ Establish incident priorities;
- ➔ Develop mutually agreed-upon incident objectives and approve response strategies;
- ➔ Assign objectives to the response structure;
- ➔ Review and approve Incident Action Plans (IAPs);
- ➔ Ensure integration of response organizations into the ICS/Unified Command;
- ➔ Establish protocols;
- ➔ Ensure worker and public health and safety; and
- ➔ Inform the media.

The modular organization of the ICS allows responders to scale their efforts and apply the parts of the ICS structure that best meet the demands of the incident. There are no hard and fast rules for when or how to expand the ICS organization. Many incidents will never require the activation of Planning, Logistics, or Finance/Administration Sections, while others will require some or all of them to be established.

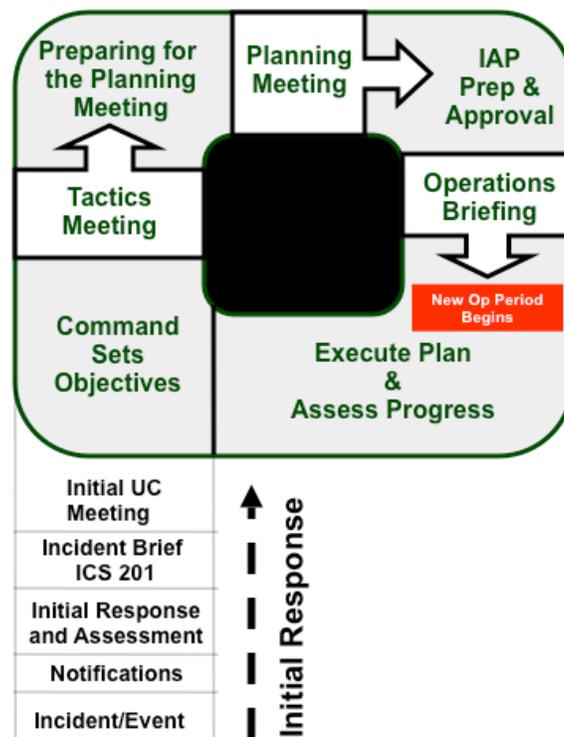
A major advantage of the ICS organization is the ability to fill only those parts of the required organization. For some incidents and in some applications, only a few of the organization's functional elements may be required. However, if there is a need to expand the organization additional positions exist within the ICS framework to meet virtually any need. For example, in responses involving responders from a single jurisdiction, the ICS establishes an organization for comprehensive response management. However, when an incident involves more than one agency or jurisdiction, responders can expand the ICS framework to address a multi-jurisdictional incident.

## AN OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The advantage of Unified Command is that each participating jurisdiction can contribute to the Incident Management Team by assuming various positions – Technical specialists, field observers, unit, branch or division positions *etc.*

The roles of the ICS participants will also vary depending on the incident and may even vary during the same incident. Staffing considerations are always based on the needs of and complexity of the incident. There is no absolute standard to follow. However, large-scale incidents will usually require that each ICS component is set up separately. A basic operating guideline is that the Incident Commander is responsible for all activities until command authority is transferred to another person. Under ICS, there is always an Incident Commander!

Another key aspect of an ICS is the development of an *Incident Action Plan* (IAP) to guide operations for a specified period. A planning cycle is typically established by the Incident Commander and Planning Section Chief, and an *Incident Action Plan* is then developed by the Planning Section for the next Operational Period (usually 12- or 24-hours in length) and submitted to Unified Command for approval.



**Figure 2 – Incident Action Plan development pertains to an Operational Period**

A planning cycle and an IAP for a particular operational period help focus available resources on the highest priorities/incident objectives. The planning cycle, if properly practiced, brings together everyone's input and identifies critical shortfalls that need to be addressed to carry out the Incident Commander's objectives for that period.

**2.2 Unified Command**

Although a single Incident Commander normally handles the command function, an ICS organization may be expanded into a Unified Command (UC). The Unified Command is a structure that brings together the "Incident Commanders" of all major organizations involved in the incident to coordinate an effective response while at the same time carrying out their own jurisdictional or corporate responsibilities. The Unified Command links the organizations responding to the incident and provides a forum for these entities to make consensus decisions that often reflect the values affected by the incident (See Scenario below).

Under Unified Command, the various jurisdictions and/or agencies may blend together throughout the operation to create an integrated response team. The Unified Command is responsible for overall management of the incident. The Unified Command directs incident activities, including development and implementation of overall objectives and strategies, and approves ordering and releasing of resources. Members of the Unified Command work together to develop a common set of incident objectives and strategies, share information, maximize the use of available resources, and enhance the efficiency of the individual response organizations.

**Challenges of an Incident Commander**

The Incident Commander is faced with many responsibilities when arriving on scene. Unless specifically assigned to another member of the Command or General Staff, these responsibilities remain with the Incident Commander. Some of the more complex responsibilities include:

- Establish immediate priorities especially the safety of responders, bystanders, and people involved in the incident
- Stabilize the incident by ensuring life safety and manage resources efficiently and effectively.
- Determine incident objectives and tactical strategies.
- Establish and monitor incident organization.
- Approve the implementation of the written or oral Incident Action Plan.
- Ensure adequate health and safety measures.

**Burning Furniture Manufacturing Building**

**Scenario**

Incident is a burning furniture manufacturing factory in a semi-rural area. On arrival of Fire Department, the fire was beginning to fully engulfing storage building containing plastic-based substances that pollute when ignited. Owner evacuated all occupants safely. Manufacturing equipment and office buildings are located near the burning warehouse. Company owner, Fire Chief and provincial environmental emergency response officer are on scene. Structural firefighting resources are limited due to low water pressure and only three pumper trucks.

*The following shows potentially different outcomes as a result of using either a single versus unified command protocol under the Incident Command System*

# AN OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

<b>Burning Furniture Manufacturing Building</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Single Command</b></p> <p><i>Incident Commander:</i> Fire Chief of Local Fire Department.</p> <p>Response objective, strategies and tactics established by only Fire Chief based on above information.</p> <p><i>Response Objectives:</i>                      1) Reduce exposure of other buildings to fire.                      2) Save warehouse and its contents</p> <p><i>Strategy:</i> Apply fire fighting resources to burning warehouse</p> <p><i>Tactics:</i>                      •Use streaming nozzles to extinguish burning warehouse stock                      •Use fog nozzles for reducing fire exposure to nearby buildings.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unified Command</b></p> <p><i>Unified Commanders:</i> Owner [Company], Fire Chief [Local Govt.], Response Officer (Provincial Govt.)</p> <p>Response objective, strategies and tactics were jointly established by unified command and additional information provided by each participant.</p> <p>Additional information provided was:</p> <p>By owner: manufacturing equipment/building was as highest value as these are expensive and difficult to replace resulting in potential long-term closure of factory. Company has inventory loss insurance, but did not cover loss of business.</p> <p>By Response Officer: factory location and drainage lead to sensitive wetland habitat with high fisheries values. Smoke particulates potentially an issue to public health.</p>
	<p><i>Response Objectives of Unified Command:</i>                      1. Contain fire within warehouse                      2. Protected manufacturing equipment building near burning warehouse                      3. Protect the Environment                      4. Mitigate public health concerns</p> <p><i>Strategies:</i>                      •Apply majority of fire fighting resources to protected manufacturing equipment building.                      •Apply foam to warehouse structure to reduce surface water discharges.                      •Allow interior stock to burn with minimal water to reduce smoke and to minimize toxic product generation.                      •Establish an “Environmental Protection Branch” under operations and create three operational Divisions (A: warehouse, B: manufacturing building, and C: wetland area)</p> <p><i>Tactics:</i>                      •Use fog nozzles to reduce fire exposure to nearby manufacturing building.                      •Dig a ditch to capture run-off water to prevent entering wetland using owner’s backhoe equipment/operator.                      •Establish monitoring for air quality managed by technical specialists from the provincial environment</p>

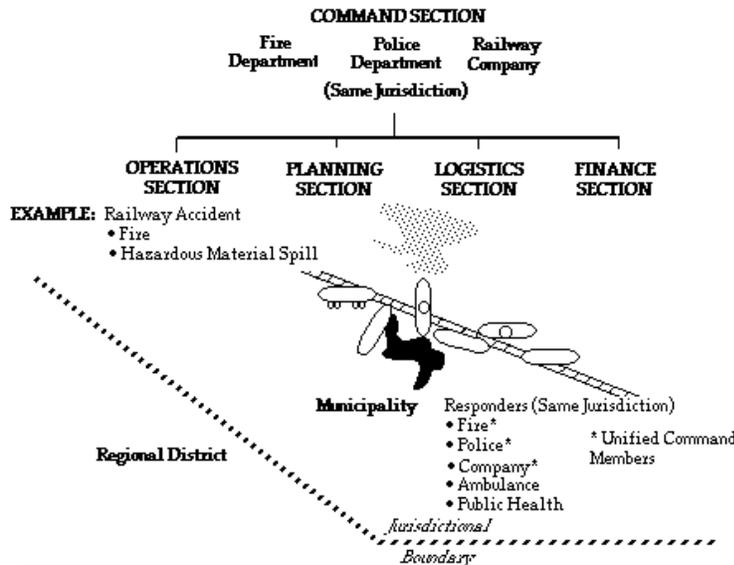
<b>Burning Furniture Manufacturing Building</b>	
<i>Outcome of Single Command</i>	<i>Outcome of Unified Command</i>
<p>Both warehouse with stock and manufacturing building burned to ground before fire was extinguished. Heavy contamination of wetland by water discharge with semi-combusted materials. Public complaints and concern about smoke to Environment Minister. Loss of business and work for employees for six months.</p>	<p>Total loss of warehouse and its stock. Manufacturing building and its equipment saved. Minimal contamination of nearby wetland. Few complaints by public. Environment Minister had air monitoring and water quality data to address environmental and health issues. Insurance covered company's lost inventory. Business continued within one week as alternative storage area was found.</p>
<b>The Lessons</b>	
<p>Incident command reflects not just about which organization has the most response resources, but about interests and values being protected. In this scenario, it is the company owner that determines the economic/business values of their business, and the provincial response officer about the environment and public health values. The primary value of the Fire Chief, its to protect the responders and achieve the "value-based" response objectives effectively.</p> <p>All members of unified command brought information, knowledge and skills to the table and to the incident management. The ICS organization was built to address the increased complexity of the incident (e.g. Environmental Protection Branch/delineation of Divisions) and additional staff from all organizations represented in unified command integrated (Technical Specialist in air quality, backhoe operator of owner).</p>	

**2.2.1 When to Use Unified Command**

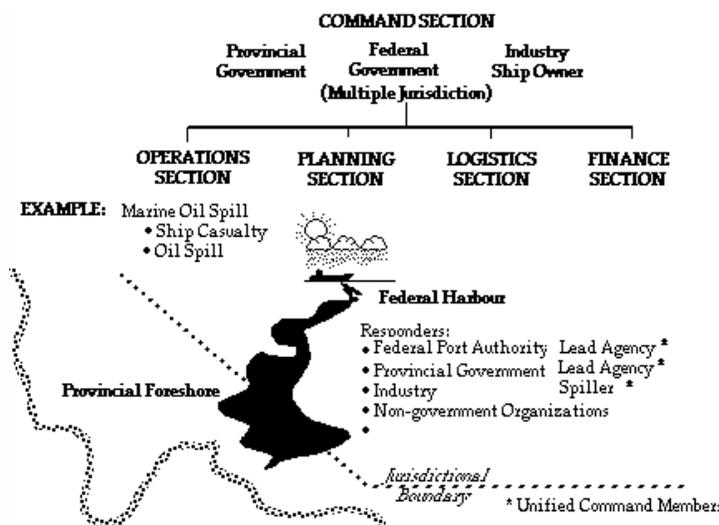
The Unified Command may be used whenever multiple jurisdictions are involved in a response effort. These jurisdictions could be represented by:

- ➔ Functional responsibilities (e.g. fire fighting, ambulance, police, public works) Figure 3
- ➔ Jurisdictional governments (e.g. local, provincial, federal, First Nations) Figure 4

Both Functional and Jurisdictional situations include a company owner or operator if their business interests are directly affected by the event such as structural fire or failure



**Figure 3 – A Functional Unified Command**



**Figure 3 – A Jurisdictional Unified Command**

## 2.2.2 Who Makes-up Unified Command

Actual composition of Unified Command for a specific incident will be determined on a case-by-case basis taking into account: (1) the specifics of the incident; (2) determinations outlined in existing response plans; or (3) decisions reached during the initial meeting of the Unified Command. Participation in Unified Command can be optional (See Text Box).

The makeup of the Unified Command may change as an incident progresses to account for changes in the situation. (See Text Box)

The Unified Command is a team effort, but to be effective, the number of personnel should be kept small and selective. Representation for any given jurisdiction should be provided by only one Incident Commander - not by several departments or ministries. These agencies can be accommodated with the ICS organization by filling specific positions, such as technical specialists in the Planning Section, or an Operational Branch under the Operations Section.

Frequently, the first responders to arrive at the scene of an incident are emergency response personnel from local fire, police, ambulance and public works. Local first responders familiar with ICS and are likely to establish an ICS organization with a *functional* unified command. If the incident affects stays within a single jurisdiction, the Unified Command would generally begin and remain as a functional arrangement of fire, police, ambulance, and other local government emergency services. However, if more than one jurisdiction is involved, the functional arrangement may shift to a *jurisdictional* one which a representative for each jurisdiction. This shift would occur at the initial response phase, as *per* the Operational Period diagram (See: Figure. 2).

A jurisdictional Unified Command addresses overall "governance" issues and representation, and not just the interests of a single responding department. Once elected officials – mayor, premier, prime minister, First Nations Chief – are actively engaged and interested in the event, a jurisdictional Unified Command needs to be considered. The functional entities of Fire, Police, Ambulance can then become engaged in the branches established under the Operations Section.

### Opting Out of Unified Command

Any jurisdiction or department person that is entitled to assume an Incident Commander position can opt out of Unified Command and assume another position within the ICS organization, such as a Branch Director or Group/Division Supervisor within the Operations Section, or a Technical Specialist within the Planning Section, or any other ICS position (Unit leader, Section Chief *etc*).

In doing so, that person may not be party to or directly influence the strategic direction of the response, speak on behalf of their agency in isolation of a unified message.

Generally, all members within an Incident Management Team should be accountable - but not necessarily reporting to - to their representative Incident Commander in Unified Command. This arrangement avoids "free wheeling" by an individual without accountability to other members of a cohesive response team.

Those that choose not to be part of Unified Command, should not subvert the ICS protocol. This can have potentially significant political ramifications and result in public out-cry.

### Transfer of Command

Often a responding company, jurisdiction, or department may not be versed in ICS or unified command, They might not even have resources to offer. Nevertheless, they are entitled to participate in unified command until a more qualified person arrives to transfer the command too.

An example, is an oil storage facility manager that is managing spill may assume the Incident Commander for the company along with the local government's Fire Chief. The manager may be replaced by a company trained Incident Commander from their regional or Headquarters office.

## AN OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Should the incident (structural fire, spills, flood damage, farm disease out-break) involves a private company or facility, then Unified Command - whether functional or jurisdictional - needs to include the owner or operator.

Regardless if a functional or jurisdictional Unified Command, one member of Unified Command should be designated as the “spokesperson” whereby he/she speaks on the integrated and united efforts of the responders. However, each Incident Commander has the authority and right to speak on behalf of their individual agency’s or jurisdiction’s efforts and interests. The role of the Unified Command spokesperson can change as the incident unfolds. For example, during the active fire fighting phase of a structural fire of an industrial facility, the spokesperson can be the local Fire Chief as they have the primary response resources engaged. However, during the environmental cleanup phase, the spokesperson can be the company representative in Unified Command as they are paying the cost of pollution mitigation and cleanup.

### Spokesperson for Unified Command

Generally the spokesperson is the Incident Commander functioning under Unified Command with the highest degree of operational responsibility and/or is paying for the response. The spokesperson must identify that he/she is speaking on behalf of Unified Command and only to the decisions, incident status, response objectives/strategies and issues that the Unified Command have mutually agreed on.

Members in the Unified Command must have decision-making authority for the response. To be considered for inclusion as a Unified Command representative, the representative’s organization must:

- ➔ Have jurisdictional authority or functional responsibility under a law for the incident;
- ➔ Have an area of responsibility that is affected by the incident or response operations;
- ➔ Be specifically charged with commanding, coordinating, or managing a major aspect of the response, and
- ➔ Have the resources to support participation in the response organization.

Unified Command representatives must also be able to:

- ➔ Agree on common incident objectives and priorities;
- ➔ Have the capability to sustain a command presence and commitment to the incident;
- ➔ Have the authority to commit agency or company resources to the incident;
- ➔ Have the authority to spend agency or company funds;
- ➔ Agree on an incident response organization;
- ➔ Agree on the appropriate Command and General Staff position assignments to ensure clear direction for on-scene tactical resources;
- ➔ Commit to speak with “one voice” through the Information Officer or Joint Information Center (JIC), if established;
- ➔ Agree on logistical support procedures, and
- ➔ Agree on cost-sharing procedures, as appropriate.

Each Unified Command member bring their authorities to the command table, oversee their respective personnel participating in an integrated Incident Management Team and provide oversight of any other resources (equipment, funds, technology, etc) to carry out their responsibilities. Each members in a Unified Command role has a responsibility to the Unified Command, and also to their respective agency, jurisdiction or company. **These individuals do not relinquish agency or corporate authority, responsibility, or accountability in undertaking their command duties.**

The Unified Command may consist of a pre-designated Incident Commanders from federal and provincial and/or local government, as well as a company. For incidents on or affect First Nation's (Aboriginal) lands a representative from the Indian Band or Council should be invited to participate in the Unified Command.

Some, but not all these Incident Commanders will have pre-established Incident Management Teams established under them. In some situations - such as a Fire Department - most of the responders are tactical in nature so are committed to field operations. For some government agencies and some corporations, there may only be an overhead team generally comprised of an Incident Commander, Command Staff, and Section Chiefs. There is often a shortage of Unit Leaders, Branch Directors, and Division/Group Supervisors. As such, it becomes that much more important to establish Unified Command so that all available response personnel can be strategically placed within the ICS organization to manage the incident at the Incident Command Post (site) as well as the tactical operations (field).

### **2.2.3 Unified Command Decisions**

The Unified Command is not "decision by committee." The principals are there to command the response to an incident. Time is of the essence. The Unified Command should develop synergy based on the significant capabilities that are brought by the various representatives. There should be personal acknowledgement of each representative's unique capabilities, a shared understanding of the situation, and agreement on the common response objectives. With the different perspectives on the Unified Command comes the risk of disagreements, most of which can be resolved through an understanding of the underlying issues. Exercising with local government and industry is an effective means to understanding underlying issues, building trust and relationships, working with and around varied incident management styles and personalities, and fostering confidence in Unified Command and team integration.

Contentious issues may arise, but the Unified Command framework provides a forum and a process to resolve problems and find solutions. If situations arise where members of the Unified Command cannot reach consensus, the member representing the agency with primary jurisdiction over the issue would normally be deferred to for the final decision - generally the designated spokesperson. If this approach does not work, the Incident Commander can then elevate the concerns to their respective Agency Executive – the body of senior executive personnel of government or company responsible to resolve matters of strategic policy and issues.<sup>1</sup>

Failure to provide clear objectives for the next Operational Period means that the Command function has failed. While the Unified Command structure is an excellent vehicle for coordination, cooperation, and communication, the duly authorized representatives must make the system work successfully. A strong Command – a single Incident Commander or a Unified Command – is essential to effective emergency response.

Each Unified Command member may assign Deputy Incident Commander(s) to assist in carrying out Incident Commander responsibilities. Unified Command members may also be assigned individual legal, insurance, risk management advisers and recorders from their own organizations.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Agency Executive is also referred to as the "Crisis Management Team". The former is a government term, whereas the latter is used mainly by companies.

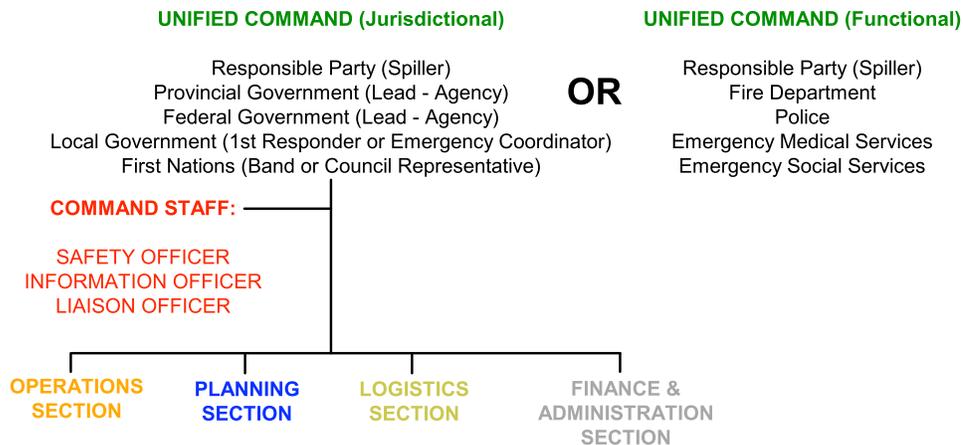
## 2.2.4 Agencies Participation when not a Part of the Unified Command

To ensure that your organization's concerns or issues are addressed if your agency is not represented within the Unified Command, your organization should assign representatives to:

- ➔ Serve as an agency or company representative;
- ➔ Manage or work within a functional Branch within the Operations Section;
- ➔ Provide in put to your agency or company representative, who has direct contact with the Liaison Officer;
- ➔ Provide stakeholder in put to the Liaison Officer such as for environmental, economic, or political issues;
- ➔ Serve as a Technical Specialist in the appropriate section such as in the Planning Section<sup>2</sup>; and/or
- ➔ Provide advisory in put to a Unified Command member such as legal council.

## 2.2.5 The Relationship Between an ICS and a Unified Command

An ICS may be expanded to include a Unified Command for complex responses. When it becomes necessary to establish a Unified Command, it replaces the single Incident Commander arrangement and becomes an essential component of an ICS. In this way, the Unified Command provides the organizational management tool to facilitate and coordinate the effective involvement of the various agencies; it creates the link between the organizations responding to the incident and provides a forum for these agencies to make decisions with which all responders can agree. Figure 5 shows the relationship between a Unified Command and an ICS.



**Figure 5 – Relationship between ICS and Unified Command**

The decision to include a Unified Command is based in large part upon the level of the response and the need for additional resources to respond effectively. It is important to view ICS/ Unified Command as a response *tool*, not a response *rule*. The ICS/ Unified Command organization adheres to a “form

<sup>2</sup> The Environmental Unit is within the Planning Section and staffed by various stakeholders and expertise that contribute to public safety and environmental protection priorities that are important in puts into the Incident Action Plan.

follows function” philosophy. In other words, the organization at any given time should reflect only what is required to meet planned tactical objectives. The establishment and administration of an ICS/ Unified Command should not detract from response efforts.

In the early stages of a response, it may be necessary to commit the limited number of response personnel to field operations and scale back less critical ICS/ Unified Command administration procedures until more assets and resources become available. Ideally, an ICS/ Unified Command should allow for information sharing both horizontally and vertically throughout the response organization. However, this information-sharing does not always work unless all parties are integrated below the Unified Command. **For ICS/ Unified Command to work effectively, all parties participating in the response need to be integrated throughout the response, not just in the Unified Command.** This does not mean that each agency should have representatives in each section, only that the responders need to be working together within and throughout the sections. For example, if a company has a well defined ICS Organization in place, the provincial government may only have to provide an Incident Commander to participate in Unified Command, an Information Officer to participate in a Joint Information Centre, and various technical specialists (e.g. air quality, waste management, etc) to work within the Planning Section. If requested by the company, the provincial government may provide additional resource people just to assist in other units such as the Resource Unit or Documentation Unit where work demand is often high.

In some complex emergencies, incident-specific issues emerge that have a tendency to dominate the response effort and have a large effect on its eventual outcome. These aspects of a response could include salvage operations, criminal investigations, responder safety, *etc.* In situations such as these, the ICS must be flexible enough to allow these concerns to be addressed at the appropriate functional level and create an open dialogue between the Unified Command and the section/branch that is handling the issue.

### **2.2.6 Advantages of an ICS/Unified Command**

An ICS led by a Unified Command has been used to manage local, provincial, and federal responses to complex multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional incidents - as well as events involving private companies. The advantages of an ICS/Unified Command include:

- ➔ Using a common language and response culture;
- ➔ Optimizing combined efforts of multiple agencies and companies;
- ➔ Eliminating duplicative efforts;
- ➔ Establishing a single command post;
- ➔ Allowing for collective approval of operations, logistics, planning, and finance activities;
- ➔ Encouraging a cooperative response environment;
- ➔ Reducing response costs, maximizing efficiency, and
- ➔ Minimizing communication breakdowns; and
- ➔ Permitting responders to develop and implement one consolidated Incident Action Plan

The ICS/ Unified Command structure outlines responsibilities and functions, thereby reducing potential conflicts, and improving information flow among all participating organizations. The ICS maintains its modular organizational structure, so that none of the advantages of the ICS are lost by the introduction of a Unified Command.

### 3. ADVANCED PREPARING FOR ICS/UNIFIED COMMAND

The key to successful implementation of an ICS/Unified Command is planning and exercising at the regional and local levels. Practice using an ICS/Unified Command prior to an incident helps responders understand their roles and responsibilities and prepares them to work together in the ICS.

There are three key elements to implementing an ICS with a Unified Command. Responders need:

1. To learn ICS/Unified Command. The better it is understood and the more familiar it is, the easier it will be to form a common structure when needed.
2. To understand how the ICS/Unified Command will be implemented in varying situations in advance of an incident. Emergency Planners and responders need to understand the authorities and resources each response organization brings to a specific incident type and specific geographical area.
3. To train and exercise ICS/Unified Command

To maintain proficiency, using ICS on smaller events should be considered. Don't wait for the big event or the big exercise. Each response results in new lessons learned, which necessitates continuing refinement of the procedures and processes, development of better methods, and meshing of agency and company needs and actions. The more incidents and exercises using the ICS and principles of Unified Command, the better.

Because most responses that require an ICS with a Unified Command will be either multi-agency or multi-jurisdictional, all participating organizations must understand the complexities of coordination. The question is not "Who is in charge?" **but** "How can all responders work together for the best results?" The goal of an ICS is to enhance response efficiency by eliminating duplication of effort and lessening response time – and consequently response costs. The best way to reduce confusion and conflict is to anticipate problems and develop possible solutions. This requires scenario-based planning and exercises with constant communications and coordination among all participants, working together as a single, integrated response team.

The following is a list of elements that should be in place and documented in relevant plans well before an incident occurs for an ICS/ Unified Command to be effective:

- ➔ The structure must be formalized and accepted by all parties concerned;
- ➔ Specific ICS functions and responsibilities must be well defined;
- ➔ Individuals must be designated for each function and the reporting mechanisms defined and accepted. (However, it is important to note that the scope and complexity of the incident will determine the extent of the organizational positions actually staffed);
- ➔ Established methodology for developing an Incident Action Plan (IAP);
- ➔ The participating organizations must make a committed effort to respond as a team;
- ➔ Response (Contingency) plans need to include a section on Unified Command pertaining to interfacing/integration industry and government agencies. The delivery of the response plans must address training to ensure familiarity with an ICS/Unified Command.

#### **Emergency Preparedness: benefiting now while preparing for the future**

Emergency preparedness by agencies and companies are often viewed as addressing a future event where the benefits of their investment of time and effort may not manifest. The immediate benefit is the emergency preparedness the process of being prepared. Emergency training and exercises that embrace the sponsor's internal organization, as well as the response community, is an effective opportunity to demonstrate leadership and commitment towards fostering a safe and secure environment. (See Appendix C: Benefits of Emergency Preparedness)

## 4. IMPLEMENTING ICS/UNIFIED COMMAND DURING AN INCIDENT

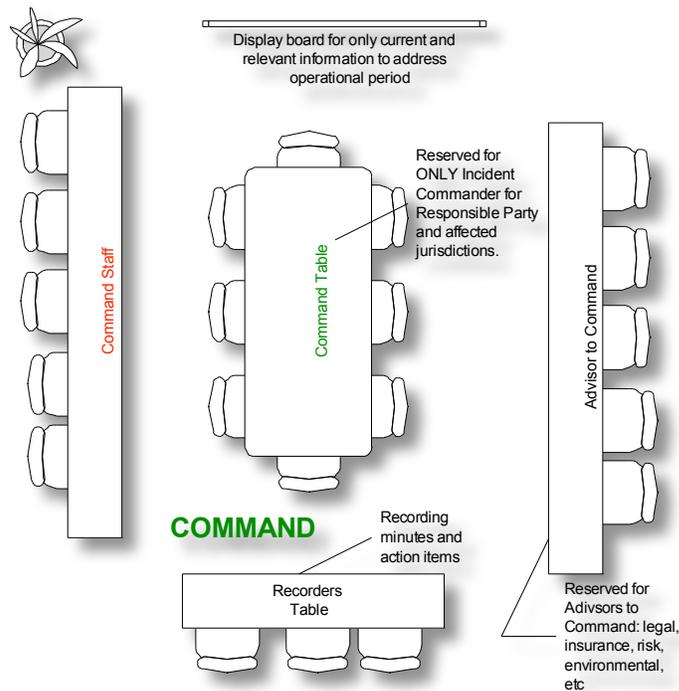
### 4.1 The Initial Unified Command Meeting

Open and early discussion among members of the Unified Command is critical to ensuring effective implementation of the ICS/ Unified Command when an incident occurs and plans need to be implemented. The establishment of a Unified Command must begin with an initial meeting of the Incident Commanders and their staffs from each of the involved jurisdictions - and company if one is involved in the incident.

During this initial Unified Command meeting (See Figure 2) – which should be brief –the Incident Commanders must come to consensus on:

- ➔ Response priorities;
- ➔ A set of incident objectives;
- ➔ Tactical strategies for a agreed on operational period to achieve the objectives;
- ➔ Spokesperson for unified command;
- ➔ Method and scope of response team integration;
- ➔ Determination of joint media releases, and
- ➔ Schedule of general briefings for the Incident Management Team

The initial Unified Command meeting should be done in a private room that is separated from the Incident Management Team. Only selected peoples should attend, which includes Command Staff, advisors (legal, insurance) and recorders. Only those that represent the Unified Command should be seated at a common table. Figure 6 shows a model layout of a Command room.



**Figure 6 – Model Layout of a Command Room**

Although an initial meeting is critical for ensuring the effective integration of all responders into the ICS/ Unified Command, the steps involved in the Unified Command meeting (as identified below) may have to be revisited periodically as information on the incident or the demands of the incident change.<sup>3</sup>

These Unified Command meetings will provide a private opportunity for the Incident Commanders to speak openly about their priorities, considerations, and concerns. However, once participants in the Unified Command leave this meeting, they must speak with one voice to the Incident Management Team, media and at public meetings.

All major decisions pertaining to Unified command representation, response objectives/strategies, Incident Management Organization, cost recovery, safety, *etc.* must be fully recorded.

### ***Step 1 – Setting Priorities and Objectives***

For the Unified Command to work, each participant must be committed to working together to solve a common problem. Each responding agency will have individual objectives to carry out. In addition, the primary objectives of each responding agency (and company) are established. Example objectives for a spill may include:

- ➔ Ensure the safety of the public and response personnel;
- ➔ Control the source/spread of the spill;
- ➔ Reduce exposures to the threat;
- ➔ Manage a coordinated response effort;
- ➔ Maximize the protection of environmentally sensitive areas;
- ➔ Contain and recover the spilled material;
- ➔ Recover and rehabilitate injured wildlife;
- ➔ Remove contaminants and remediate damaged areas;
- ➔ Minimize economic impacts;
- ➔ Keep stakeholders informed of response activities;
- ➔ Meet stakeholder expectations;
- ➔ Include stakeholders in incident management that provide legitimate information to guide response efforts;
- ➔ Keep the public and executive informed of response activities.
- ➔ Maintaining business survival, and/or
- ➔ Minimizing response costs.

Understanding all the issues facing the Unified Command participants is important in any negotiation. Because consensus must be reached for the Unified Command to be effective, it is critical that the Unified Command engage in response and information coordination. If consensus cannot be reached, the Agency Executive (Crisis Management Team) of the respective agencies or company can be used as a forum for achieving consensus at the executive/political level. The senior executives of the respective jurisdictions can liaise by phone to address the issue – the Unified Command needs to provide a clear picture of where the discrepancies / conflict occurs. Every attempt must be made to keep the response moving forward on matters that the Unified Command does agree on.

---

<sup>3</sup> The *Operational Guideline on ICS Process* provides detailed mission, duties, deliverables and meeting of all positions within the ICS, including those of Incident Commanders

### ***Step 2 – Present Considerations***

At the onset of the initial meeting, Unified Command members have an obligation to raise and discuss openly what each response organization can provide in terms of authorities, equipment, skills, and experience, including their response capabilities. All Incident Commanders must be free to speak openly with the other members of the Unified Command about their constraints or limitations, whether practical or political in nature, because these constraints may have an impact on how the Unified Command's objectives can best be achieved.

### ***Step 3 – Develop a Collective Set of Incident Objectives***

The planning process for the Unified Command is the same whether a jurisdictional (local, federal, provincial governments) or functional (fire, police, ambulance) agency incident. Because each agency and company (if involved) will bring its own set of objectives and considerations (values) to the response, the Unified Command must decide upon a collective set of incident-specific objectives to identify what as a whole team needs to accomplish. Priorities for immediate public, property, and environmental protection need to be developed. The response objectives should be specific, measurable, assignable, reasonable, and time-related because all tactical response strategies will be formulated in the Incident Action Plan to achieve these broad objectives. These response objectives need full and careful considerations, because it is often difficult to change course once they are implemented.

### ***Step 4 – Develop and Implement Response Strategies and Tactics***

Response strategies and tactics are designed to achieve the agreed on objectives for response based on the "realities" of the situation. In a spill situation, the response strategies may be to evacuate people, closure of roads, remove mobile vehicles, or combinations thereof. Because there are frequently multiple possible strategies that would accomplish the same objective, the Unified Command staff will often ask the Planning Section to recommend strategies. As part of the planning process is to ensure that operations has the resources and expertise to implement the strategies effectively and safely – and that it can be done within a specified Operational Period. The actual, detailed tactics is generally left to operations personnel. This integrated planning process allows for better input and discussion from the responders, and also reduces meeting time for the Incident Commanders.

### ***Step 5 – Select a Unified Command Spokesperson***

Frequently, the Unified Command will establish a Joint Information Centre and designate a single spokesperson to speak on behalf of Unified Command. The spokesperson will also chair and speak on behalf of Unified Command at any general meetings of the integrated Incident Management Team. The spokesperson is a member of the Unified Command, and serves as a point of contact and a single voice of the members of the Incident Management Team at external and internal briefings. The spokesperson may change during the course of an incident as the situation develops. For example, a different agency may designate a spokesperson if it has more expertise in a particular area at a certain time, or its jurisdictional interests are more affected and hence more accountable to affected stakeholders, or the agency or company is paying for all the response costs. All members of Unified Command should be present at public meetings and at general Incident Management Team meetings, so as to speak on behalf of their specific involvement and challenges.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

The ICS/ Unified Command is designed to be flexible to lend itself to integration at the decision-making and operational levels, and to expansion and contraction when needed. Complex and/or multi-jurisdictional incidents will call for an ICS led by a Unified Command. A commitment to cooperation by all involved parties is necessary for the creation of an improved organizational and operational process.

ICS/ Unified Command is important to practice as part of response exercises and include in response (contingency) plans of industry and of local, regional, provincial and federal governments. Such exercising and planning will facilitate coordination and cooperation and will ensure that all responders are able to work together effectively to protect public welfare, property and the environment.

## Appendix A – Frequently Asked Questions About Unified Command

**Q1-** Do agency titles change when a person becomes a member of Unified Command?

**Not Necessarily.** Those who comprise a unified command may bring with them their own titles and representation. For example, there may be a Fire Chief representing a municipality, an Incident Commander representing a provincial emergency response team, and an Incident Manager representing a company. It is not necessary to relinquish/change agency/corporate title because you still represent your government, department or company. A typical scenario would be a media conference where participants of unified command are seated. Each may introduce themselves according to their original/official titles, but only one person is the "spokesperson" for the unified team. Collectively all participants are called or referred to as "unified command". As all response team member will be wearing a colour coded ICS vest, it is recommended that each affiliation also wears some identifying shirt or golf shirt underneath with their agency or corporate logo and/or name. The standardize ICS vests communicate function and neutrality, whereas the agency/company specific shirt underneath communicates representation. This applies also to Incident Commanders - particularly those representing a jurisdiction (Fire, Police and Ambulance generally wear uniforms that meet this need)

**Q2 -** Is it prudent to have industry as part of the Unified Command, who is the responsible agent for the incident such as a spill, dam failure, or that has suffered a business loss such as facility fire or structural failure which the incident revolves around, or both?

**Highly Recommended.** Unified command should comprise of the primary parties with functional, jurisdictional, and/or legal responsibilities. A company who has a corporate and legal responsibility to respond would be a primary stakeholder - *i.e.* "polluter pay principle". The overriding premise of effective response is the protection of people, property, and the environment as the foremost goal. To ignore a primary stakeholder with the equipment, personnel, and funds to respond could compromise this goal. Furthermore, where a company is responsible for the delivery of tactical operations, it is government that is responsible for establishing public, property and environmental priorities within their respective governance mandates.

**Q3 -** How do other supporting (resource) agency, a non-government organizations (NGO's), or interest groups, participate in developing the response objectives/strategies, Incident Action Plans, and tactical delivery?

**Supporting agencies and others specific regional or local information/skills can contribute by either fulfilling a response operational function(s) or working in the Planning Section.** For supporting agencies, such as health or social services, they can fulfill a function, or groups (branches) of functions such as health impact monitoring within the Operations Section. An important function of the Liaison Officer, and the Planning Section Chief is to identify other stakeholders affected by an incident, and bring them together so that they may air their concerns or provide legitimate information to assist in Incident Action Planning. However, an important proviso for non-government organizations, individual interest groups is that every person who is part of the integrated Incident Management Team must have a respective Incident Commander that they are accountable to (but not necessarily a reporting arrangement). This avoids any "free-wheeling" of individuals or interest groups that have a different agenda than that established by Unified Command. Other opportunities to make their positions heard are public meets.

**Q4-** How far down the response organization does response team integration extend?

**As far as mutually agreed on.** In general, Unified Command begins with the primary (lead,) jurisdictions or agencies being identified, meeting and selecting a spokesperson. The initial tasks are to devise mutually accepted response objectives and tactical strategies and to establish the response organization and staffing needs to meet demands of the incident.

## Appendix B: Incident Command System Terms

**COMMAND/INCIDENT COMMANDER** – The person who provides the Command function within the ICS. This person is responsible for directing and/or controlling resources by virtue of explicit legal, agency, or delegated authority. The individual responsible for the overall management of the response is called the Incident Commander. The Command function sets objectives and priorities and defines the ICS organization for the particular response. Even if other positions are not assigned, the Incident Commander will always be designated. Depending on the magnitude, complexity, and impact of the discharge or release, the Command function may be further divided in staff elements.

**COMMAND STAFF** – The Incident Commander may appoint a person or persons to be in charge of specific staff functions including the Information, Safety, and Liaison functions. The members of the Command Staff report directly to the Incident Commander and will support, advise, and keep the other key functional managers informed. The Incident Commander may appoint functional managers responsible for specific tasks (operations, planning, logistics, and finance and administration). These tasks remain the responsibility of the Incident Commander unless they are delegated to someone else. The tasks are as follows:

- ➔ **OPERATIONS** – Operations Staff direct tactical actions to meet incident objectives, administer staging areas, and identify and utilize resources.
- ➔ **PLANNING** – Planning Staff collect, evaluate, and display incident information; prepare an action plan and health and safety plan; evaluate disposal options; plan for demobilization; and maintain documentation.
- ➔ **LOGISTICS** – Logistics Staff provide adequate service and support to meet incident or event needs, including supplies, first aid, food, communications, ground support, and transportation and vehicle maintenance.
- ➔ **FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION** – Finance and Administration Staff track incident costs, personnel and equipment records, claims, and procurement contracts; and provide legal expertise.

**GENERAL STAFF** – The group of incident management personnel comprised of: the Incident Commander or Unified Command, the Operations Section Chief, the Planning Section Chief, the Logistics Section Chief, and the Finance/Administration Section Chief.

**INCIDENT ACTION PLAN (IAP)** – Contains objectives reflecting the overall incident strategy and specific tactical actions and supporting information for the next operational period. The Plan may have a number of forms as attachments (e.g., safety plan).

**JOINT INFORMATION CENTER (JIC)** – A facility established within or near the Incident Command Post where the information officer and staff can coordinate and provide information on the incident to the public, media, and other agencies. The JIC is normally staffed with representatives that comprise the Unified Command.

**OPERATIONAL PERIOD** – The period of time scheduled for execution of a given set of operation actions as specified in the IAP. Operational Periods can be various lengths, usually not over 24 hours. The Operational Period coincides with the completion of one planning cycle.

**UNIFIED COMMAND (UC)** – A unified team that manages an incident by establishing a common set of incident objectives and strategies. This is accomplished without loss or abdication of agency or company's organizational authority, responsibility, or accountability.

### **Appendix C: The Benefits of Emergency Preparedness Go Beyond Just Being Prepared for a Future Event**

*The following explores the often unseen or not fully understood benefits of the emergency preparedness process.*

**The emergency training process builds relationships within the client's organization and broader response community, as well as challenges institutional impediments to emergency preparedness.**

It is a curiosity that an agency or company will spend large sums on leadership and team-building training and events for their employees such as social events, merit awards, and hiring "leadership gurus," when a fraction of the budget devoted to emergency training can achieve similar results.

There is a lack of understanding that the process of emergency preparedness can have immediate benefits to an agency, company or community. For example, the process of establishing of an Incident Management Team for external risks (spill preparedness) or internal ones (business continuation, fire drill) brings an organization's staff together for a common goal, breaks down internal barriers (silos) between departments (sales, engineering, administration) and between staff positions (managers, technicians, administrators). The initiative demonstrates commitment to the environment, to the organization's employees, as well as to other stakeholders (shareholders, public, regulators). These benefits alone can justify the cost of a robust emergency preparedness program.

**It is not just about being prepared for an emergency, but seen to be prepared.**

Training in emergency management is not only about preparing for a future event, but also about fostering immediate relationships internal and external to an organization - whether a company, agency or community. Emergency training lends itself to positive marketing, especially if the training is done collectively and cooperatively with other participants and not just the sponsor's employees. Even a simple fire drill with employees assigned as a fire warden or safety officers should be celebrated and acknowledge by executive managers for every drill. The process of emergency training is an opportunity to demonstrate corporate leadership and social and environmental commitment.

**There is a fundamental difference between having emergency capability versus capacity.**

Capability may reside in only a few well trained personnel, such as a ship's crew or a facility's fire-fighting staff. Capacity is the ability to expand the numbers of capable people from other sources internal and external to the organization. These may be people that have never met or worked with the organization before.

Effective emergency training builds capability and capacity in emergency preparedness by using common organization, terminology, and protocols widely adopted internationally by the response community. The use of internationally recognized emergency training such as the Incident Command System (ICS) by agencies, companies, consultants, First Responders (fire, police, ambulance) establishes a pool of capable responders to tap into. Furthermore, advanced emergency training recognizes that there are two factors that cannot be readily achieved during an emergency - making friends and educating responders.

**Effective emergency training also focuses on understanding and overcoming the institutional challenges to achieve meaningful emergency preparedness.**

There are several institutional impediments to emergency preparedness that marginalizes planning and response capacity building. First, there is a basic misunderstanding of the immediate benefits of emergency preparedness as noted above. This applies to both agencies and companies that have mandates to be prepared. Executives know it is important to be prepared for an emergency (spill, industrial accident, earthquake, etc.) for either due diligence or governance reasons. Nevertheless, there is an underlying hope that an incident doesn't happen on their watch. As such, the level of emergency staffing and budgeting can sometimes be largely "faith" based. Other competing and current demands on staff and the organization often take precedence over emergency preparedness.

A company or agency may think another organization (fire department, spill response agency, industry spill cooperative) may be adequately prepared to address the potential threat they may experience. Consequently, the level of agency or company emergency preparedness resourcing and commitment

can be marginalized. Often these external responders have their own institutional impediments, such as limited and constrained response mandates or inability to operate outside their jurisdictional boundary.

**The application of incident management programs is at the same level of government, corporate, and public understanding as employee safety and welfare programs were a decade ago.**

Incident management under the Incident Command System is where a Commander and his/her response management team stand-back to manage the response without being distracted by the chaos in the field. This requires a high degree of discipline and structure; this is what the ICS brings to emergency preparedness. The ICS is not about response tactics *per se*, such as how to actually fight a fire or cleanup a spill, but about organizational excellence and sharing the responsibility on directing operational tactics and planning ahead.

Incident management training has the potential to make a significant social and environmental improvement in public safety and ecological protection - which a company, agency, or community can be part of. A case-in-point is that emergency management training can be a "tipping point" in showing positive corporate or government leadership and exposure. This is because emergency preparedness "ideas", "products", "messages" and "behaviours" can spread quickly once the organization is prepared - and seen to be prepared - for threats they are considered to be responsible for.\*\* It is a remarkable occurrence during an incident when a Commander is shown being in charged. Better still is when there are other Commanders and team members sharing the responsibility to manage the incident as a collective effort, such for a large oil spill or flood event.

\*\* The concept of rapid change where a "little things can make a big difference" is in the book "The Tipping Point" by Malcom Gladwell. Little, Brown and Company, New York.