Incident Command System (ICS)
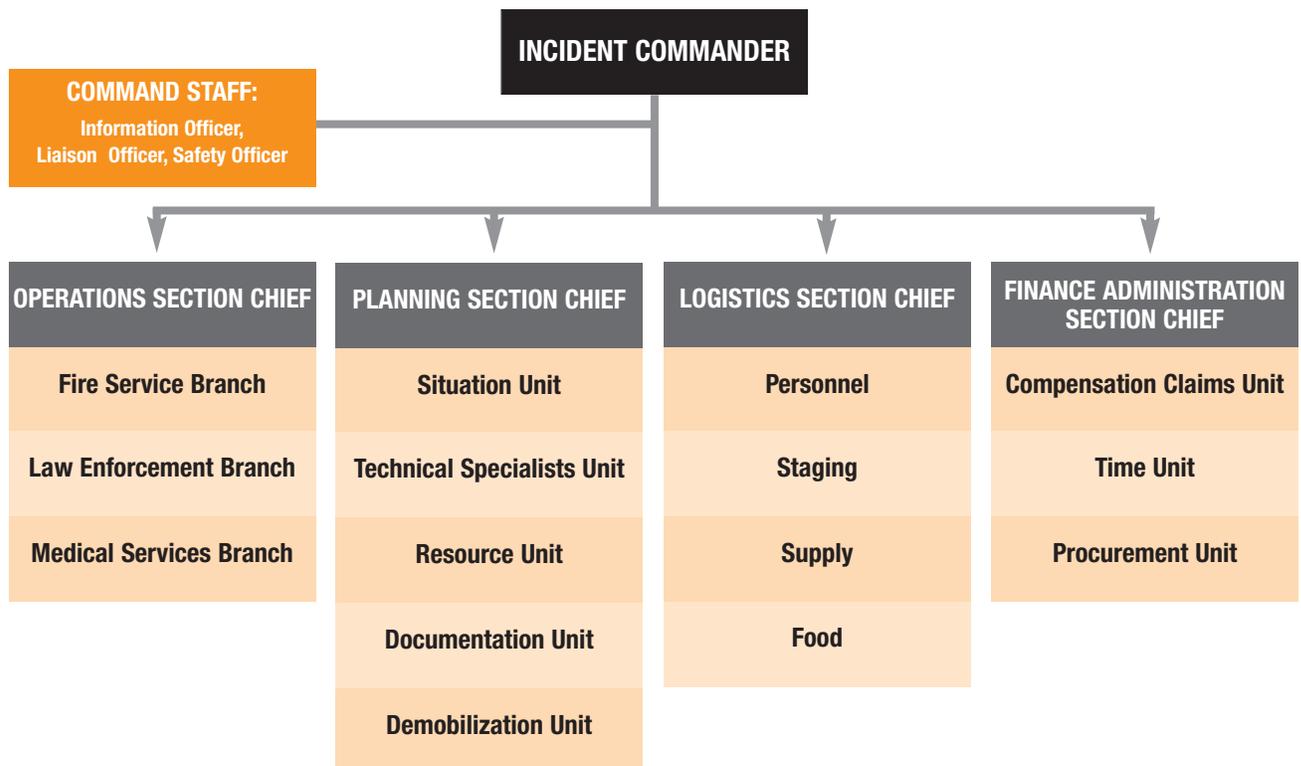
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Editor's Note: This Chapter is the continuation of an adaptation of a state plan for disaster preparation and response. In total, the original chapter comprises Chapters, 1, 14, 16-18.

Incident Command System

Editor's Note: The Incident Command System (ICS) is the organizing model for disaster response. We have included it here in the Reference Section of this manual so that religious leaders understand both that there is a coordinated response plan for their community, as well as how things work during a disaster. Technically, this information would come as part of the mitigation and preparation phase.

The Incident Command System (ICS)[1] is a formalized management structure that lends consistency, fosters efficiency, and provides direction during a disaster or emergency response. ICS is used by all levels of government—federal, state, local, and tribal nations—and by many private sector and nongovernmental organizations. The Incident Command System defines the structure of the incident response as well as the coordination of the responding agencies. The ICS is built around a number of critical components with someone identified as the lead for each component. The illustration that follows provides an overview of the structure.

INCIDENT COMMANDER			

COMMAND STAFF: Information Officer, Liaison Officer, Safety Officer

OPERATIONS SECTION CHIEF	PLANNING SECTION CHIEF	LOGISTICS SECTION CHIEF	FINANCE ADMINISTRATION SECTION CHIEF
Fire Service Branch	Situation Unit	Personnel	Compensation Claims Unit
Law Enforcement Branch	Technical Specialists Unit	Staging	Time Unit
Medical Services Branch	Resource Unit	Supply	Procurement Unit
	Documentation Unit	Food	
	Demobilization Unit		

ICS Command System

ICS Component	Responsibilities
Incident Commander	• Set objectives and priorities. • Assume overall responsibility at the incident or event.

Operations Section	• Implement the Incident Action Plan (IAP).
	• Manage tactical operations at the incident site with the objectives of:
	  1.Reducing the immediate hazard.
	  2.Saving lives and property.
	  3.Establishing situation control.
	  4.Restoring normal conditions.

Planning Section	• Collect and evaluate information. • Develop Incident Action Plans. • Maintain resource status.
Logistics Section	• Provide support to meet incident needs. • Provide resources and all other services needed to support the incident.
Finance/Administration Section	• Monitor costs related to incident. • Provide accounting Procurement Time recording cost analyses.

Incident Commander

The Incident Commander is the individual in charge of the overall response to the disaster scene. Typically, this responsibility is assumed by the local Fire Chief, though in some jurisdictions the local police chief may be placed in the role of Incident Commander. The Incident Commander ensures that human and material resources are provided to adequately support the needs of the response. Within the Hospital Incident Command System, there is also an identified Incident Commander. This person, typically the Hospital CEO, Senior Administrator, or their designee, will coordinate the health care systems response to the disaster and ensure the needs of disaster victims and others are met, as well as coordinate the provision of the hospital's human and material resources.

County Emergency Manager

At the same time the community's Incident Commander is assessing the response needs at the disaster scene, he or she is determining whether or not the situation justifies alerting the County Emergency Manager. The County Emergency Manager is a local governmental representative responsible for overseeing any disaster response where the assets of the county will be required. During non-disaster times, the County Emergency Manager is responsible for the overall coordination of the county's disaster planning and preparedness activities. During times of local emergencies or disasters, the County Emergency Manager usually reports to a County Manager or County Executive and will work in concert with him or her to identify the need to open the County's Emergency Operation Center, commonly referred to as the County EOC.

Usually, the County Emergency Manager oversees the development and implementation of the County's Disaster Plan. A county's disaster plan should clearly articulate how county resources will be managed and delivered during times of disaster and how other county public and private agencies with disaster relief missions will provide supplemental support. While there may be multiple agencies responding to the needs of those affected by disaster, it is the county's responsibility to coordinate disaster relief efforts and ensure and protect the community's well-being.

County Emergency Operation Center (EOC)

The County EOC represents the physical location where the coordination of information and resources to support incident management activities takes place. The County EOC is organized by major functional departments or agencies (fire, law enforcement, medical services, public

health, mental health, etc.) or by jurisdiction (city, county, region, etc.), or a combination thereof. The County EOC can also be staffed with representatives from other agencies and organizations such as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Department of Aging, Agriculture, Transportation, etc. The County EOC is usually directed by the County Emergency Manager in conjunction with the County Manager or County Executive.

Hospital Emergency Operation Center

The hospital's EOC represents the physical location where the hospital's coordination of information and resources to support incident management activities takes place. As seen in the HICS flow chart, the hospital EOC is organized by major functional areas (Operations, Logistics, Planning, Finance, etc.). Hospital administrators and other personnel serving in these roles ensure that adequate material and human resources are available to meet the needs of the disaster. Communication with the County's EOC and more specifically, the County's Director of Public Health is critical in coordinating the disaster response efforts of the local health care system.

County Department of Mental Health

The County Department of Mental Health and its director is responsible for developing and implementing the county's mental health disaster plan. The Department has a responsibility to address and respond to the mental health needs of a community during times of disaster. Often the Director, or his designee, is located at the County EOC to provide consultation to the County Emergency Manager around mental health issues. The Director coordinates the mental health response through the collaboration of private and public community-based mental health agencies and resources within the county.

County Department of Public Health

Disasters place tremendous strain on the public health systems of a community. The County Department of Public Health and its director are responsible for developing and implementing the county's public health disaster plan. The Department has a responsibility to address and respond to the public health needs of a community during times of disaster. Often the Director, or his designee, is located at the County EOC to provide consultation to the County Emergency Manager and the community's health care systems around public health issues. The Director coordinates the public health response through the collaboration of private and public community-based public health agencies and resources within the county.

The Local Hospital Response

Local hospitals are part of a community's public health system and play an integral role in responding to disasters especially those resulting in mass casualties or public health consequences. All health care facilities are required to develop and maintain a written emergency management plan describing the process of disaster readiness and emergency management, and know how to implement that plan when appropriate. These plans must also include provisions for responding to the acute health care needs of a community in the event the disaster directly affects the hospital itself. The importance of hospital disaster planning received significant visibility following the devastating impact hurricane Katrina had on the health care facilities in Louisiana and its neighboring surrounding states. Because of the critical role hospitals and other acute care facilities play in responding to a community disaster, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)[2] has set in place a more focused process to review hospital disaster plans during scheduled site visits. This additional performance measure makes health care facilities more accountable and ensures that hospitals will be able to not only be able to provide the human and material resources necessary during times of disaster, but sustain that effort as well.

The Hospital Incident Command System (HEICS)

Editor's Note: While this information and system is written for hospitals, the same organizing principles can be applied toward houses of worship. Please also refer to Chapter 4 (Radical Hospitality) for specific plans and mitigation for houses of worship.

In an effort to respond in a timely and efficient manner to acute health care needs of disaster victims, many hospitals have adopted a command structure for disaster response, similar to the community's Incident Command System. This specific health care response structure is known as the Hospital Emergency Incident Command System (HEICS)[3], though it is also referred to as HICS-Hospital Incident Command System. HEICS is an emergency management system that describes a logical management structure, defined responsibilities and reporting channels for hospital disaster managers and responders, and common terminology to help unify hospitals with other emergency responders. The illustration that follows provides an overview of the HICS structure.

Mental health and spiritual care workers play an integral role in providing supportive care to disaster victims and hospital personnel within the hospital's incident command system. Hospital social workers, psychiatric nurses, clergy and other mental health and spiritual care staff may be deployed to emergency departments, family reception centers, ambulatory care facilities, or other acute health care delivery sites to address the mental health needs of victims of disaster and hospital personnel. The roles of these workers and other mental health and spiritual care activities are more fully described earlier in this manual.

When disaster strikes, and depending upon the size and magnitude of the disaster, hospitals will respond by engaging their disaster plans. Human and material resources are deployed to meet the needs of the disaster along with a process to continually assess and evaluate these needs. In the event the hospital's material or human resources face the risk of being depleted or severely compromised, early communication with the County EOC, the County Public Health Director, and other area health care resources must occur to avoid the disruption of critical health care services.

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[1] For more information on the Incident Command System, refer to the National Incident Management System document at **www.fema.gov/pdf/nims/nims_doc_full.pdf**.

[2] More information on the JCAHO's disaster planning and response guidelines can be found on their website at **www.jcaho.org/about+us/public+policy+initiatives/emergency.htm**.

[3] Refer to the Hospital Emergency Incident Command website at www.heics.com or to the Greater New York Hospital Association website at **www.gnyha.org/eprc/general/ics/2003_NSLIJ_HEICS_Module1.pdf**.