

Multnomah County Health Department Incident Commander's Expectations of the Incident Command Team and the Principle of Completed Staff Work

Introduction. These are the Incident Commander's key expectations of individuals serving on a high performing Incident Command Team. There are many Incident Command System guides, checklists, and positions descriptions; some are over simplified, some too detailed, some full of redundancy. Checklists may compel the inexperienced to focus on individual tasks and the here and now. The following Incident Commander's expectations emphasize teamwork, teamwork between and within ICS functions while both leading current operations and preparing for future operations. Read this whole document to understand how other function relate to yours, and then focus on how your function relates to others. The last page's Principles of Completed Staff Work is critical to giving leaders the time to lead and coordinate, and ensuring that individuals complete detailed staff work without needing to be micro-managed.

IC Expectations of the Incident Command Team

General Expectations of Everybody – Leaders and Staff

- **Responsibility and Authority.** Maintain overall responsibility and authority for your Incident Command System roles and direct responsibility for unit functions that you do not delegate/assign. Be guided by ICS position description references.
- **Safety.** Keep personnel safety as your highest priority. Each of you, and each of your leaders is a Safety Officer and Human Resources Specialist.
- **Take care of people.** Be considerate and helpful even when everyone is tired. People's health and welfare are more important than saving resources. People are placed above all else. A supporting hug or pat on the back may be the most important activity of the moment.
- **Generously Share Information.** Provide continuous feedback and updates to each other and develop a "team spirit" approach to incident management. The concept of "knowledge is power" has no place on this team. We all succeed or we all fail.
- **Communicate.** Good communication is essential. Mediocre, partially developed information on time and to the right people is better than excellent information too late and to the wrong people. Regularly coordinate your actions with those who you support or who support you.
- **Be Flexible.** We all must be flexible in our roles. This is especially critical early on in a developing incident when high priorities may not be well staffed. Freely contribute to priority need without being confined titles/position roles.

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- ❑ **Relationship with and Accountability to your Leader and Your Colleagues.** Establish a working relationship with your leader on which decisions you will make and which they want to make. Be accountable to your leader and provide feedback to him/her on a regular basis.
- ❑ **Check-In.** As an individual and as a leader, ensure personnel check in with the Resource Unit Check-In Points when reporting in and being released from the incident.

General Expectations of Leaders

- ❑ **Initially Organize.** Set up your organization at the beginning of the incident to fit the complexity of your job.
- ❑ **Continuously Organize.** Build your organization to keep pace with the growth of the incident. Anticipate. Don't play catch-up.
- ❑ **Delegate.** Delegate work and authority to staff and meet all the requirements of the Planning Cycle.
- ❑ **Anticipate.** Keep track of the incident(s) and anticipate your needs before they materialize. The earlier we get started, the more time we'll have to adjust.
- ❑ **On Time and Prepared.** Meetings are a necessary part of making informed decisions that are known and executed. We will strive to keep them short and productive. Attend or have a representative attend all planning meetings required by your position. Be on time, aware of the agenda in advance, and fully prepared to contribute knowledge, situational awareness, and solutions. Develop/maintain/post a schedule of important events and deadlines for you staff that is aligned with the Planning Cycle schedule set by the Planning Section Chief.
- ❑ **Log Staff and Key Events.** Maintain an accurate unit log of key events, actions, and employed resources/personnel. File it with the Documentation Unit at the end of each shift or operational period.

Incident Commander's Personal Expectations

- ❑ **Set Performance and Time Objectives.** I will promptly (early in the Planning Cycle) define the operational periods and set and adjust overall goals and objectives for the next operational periods.
- ❑ **Set Expectations and Limits of Officer and Chief Authority.** I will give general limits of authority and decision-making to Command and General Staff and expectations of frequency and scope of issues that must be briefed or referred to me.
- ❑ **Maintain Balance.** I will balance my responsibility to lead you and our response organization with establishing our relationships with other response organizations, executive leadership, our partners, and the community.

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Incident Commander Expects Safety Officer to:

- ❑ **Prevent Accidents.** Monitor operations and exercise authority to stop unsafe tactical operations judiciously-work through the chain of command when possible.
- ❑ **See and Anticipate Hazards.** Monitor incident operations for safety to personnel and the public. Identify risks and arrange reasonable safety measures using an ICS 215A format of evaluating operational risks and measures to reduce risks.
- ❑ **Design Safety.** Assist in the development of safe strategies, tactics, and contingency plans (i.e. actions when things go wrong).
- ❑ **Investigate Accidents.** Investigate accidents.
- ❑ **Improve Safety.** Analyze patterns of accidents and injuries, and advise team on remedial actions.
- ❑ **Ensure Accountability.** Ensure that effective leadership and accountability for safety is taking place in the “most active” divisions/groups.

Incident Commander Expects Information Officer to:

- ❑ **Good Media Relations.** Establish and maintain an effective working relationship with the media. Design opportunities that fully leverage the reach and power of the media to inform targeted audiences.
- ❑ **Public Information System.** Stress inter-agency/organization efforts including unity of main messages, agreement of scope of information released by different organizations, and messages supporting objectives. This is a team effort leading to a well disciplined and effective overall Joint Information System.
- ❑ **Monitor Coverage.** Keep the team (especially PIO staff, Command, and Command and General Staff) informed of the general trend in press coverage, especially if unfavorable reports begin to surface.
- ❑ **Message Release Authority.** Obtain approval for press releases as agreed with the Incident Commander. Seek defined level of delegated release authority.
- ❑ **Develop the Message.** Assist in the development of warnings and instructions to the public that support objectives. Persuasively inform the public on how they can know and use desired emergency services and/or be confident that they and loved ones are safe and need not burden emergency services.
- ❑ **Inform Partners.** Keep POCs of concerned partner jurisdictions and organizations informed on the status of the incident.
- ❑ **Inform Response Organization.** Create information boards to inform members of the response organization.
- ❑ **PIO Schedule.** Post updated schedule of major PIO events such as press conferences, news releases, VIP tours, live news updates.

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The Incident Commander expects the Liaison Officer to:

- **Contact/Inform Representatives.** Establish and maintain contact with all cooperating and assisting agencies/organizations. Create and maintain comprehensive agency/organization representative 7x24 contact information using Agency Representative ICS form. Consider conducting scheduled meetings with representatives at an appropriate point in Planning Cycle to ensure that their agency will support the developing Incident Action Plan.
- **Logistic Support.** Identify and facilitate mutual aid and assisting resources being integrated into the response organization.
- **Know Limitations of Support.** Assist identification of limitations or restrictions on the use of mutual aid and assisting resources.
- **Be the Expert on Resource Use Issues.** Keep the team informed of problems related to the use of cooperating and assisting agency resources.
- **Update Partner Agencies on Their Resources.** Keep cooperating and assisting organizations briefed on the conduct of the incident and the status of their resources.

Incident Commander Expects Operations to:

- **Prepare Tactical Assignments.** Begin drafting a new operations worksheet (ICS 215) immediately upon learning of the objectives for the next operational period and before the Tactics Meeting. Provide Resources Unit with tactical assignments and amended 215 no later than an hour before the planning meeting for them to transcribe onto a master copy for display at the Planning Meeting. If not done, this can bog down the meeting.
- **Report Resource Changes.** Provide status updates to Incident Commander and Section Chiefs when personnel and equipment are assigned new tasks or are moved to different locations other than indicated on the Incident Action Plan and the operation worksheet.
- **Support Timely Logistics.** Identify communications and equipment needs as soon as possible. Help Logistics perform smoothly and assure support requirements can be met by consolidating orders and providing as much lead time as possible when ordering.
- **Monitor and Report Progress.** Keep the Planning Section apprised of the effectiveness of tactical assignments so that they accurately depict progress and plan for revised objectives or tactics.
- **Plan Strategies and Contingencies.** Provide directions for the development of contingency plans to use when operations don't go as expected.

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Incident Commander Expects Planning to:

- Establish Resource Management System.** Promptly establish resources check-in and demobilization procedures. Have a packet for each participant as they register which includes:
 - Vest – With the name of the section already in the pocket
 - A name tag to put into the pocket with the person's name
 - Instructions as what to do and where to go
 - Information hand-outs/displays to speed orientation (information from Incident Action Plans, Situation Status displays, etc.)
 - Arrange briefings on:
 - Where, when, and to whom to report for training, equipment issue, or work assignment
 - Recommended ways or guidelines for communicating: email, telephone, radio, general message form, etc.
 - Instruction on time recording for supervisors
- Develop, maintain, and provide up-to-date status information for all personnel and major equipment resources.
- Orchestrate the Planning Cycle.** Coordinate, schedule, and efficiently facilitate core planning cycle meetings with solid agenda's and clear desired outcomes.
- Incident Action Plan (IAP).** When a written IAP is produced, provide all Sections with accurate and timely IAPs to focus effort on objectives. Poorly constructed and inaccurate plans hurt the team's credibility and reduce overall efficiency.
- Ensure IAP is Credible.** Avoid last minute changes to the IAP. If changes are necessary, immediately notify Command and General Staff.
- Display Situation.** Document the situation and collect, analyze, and display intelligence from the first dispatch through demobilization. Maintain all visual displays accurately, punctually, and professionally. Create and provide current up-to-date maps of facility locations and forecasted development of incident.
- Collect and Organize Documentation.** Maintain historical documents including situation displays, resource tracking materials, and unit logs.

Incident Commander Expects Logistics to:

- Command Post Set up:
 - Provide facilities, facility maps, and signs noting sections, units, special functions
 - In and Out boxes, messenger service, supplies of General Message Forms
 - Adequate communications, data processing, copying, fax, and other support equipment/services
 - ICS forms; paper copies and loaded on LAN or individual computers

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- ❑ **Establish Ordering System.** Establish a smooth, responsive ordering procedure that prevents duplication. Provide current information on resources ordered, including their ETAs (estimated times of arrival), and maintain a close working relationship with the Resource Unit Leader, and the Finance/Administration Section. Make sure changes in resource status are conveyed to Planning Section. If not already done, establish a Unified Ordering Point (UOP) to consolidate dispersed, organization specific ordering points.
- ❑ **Communications.** Establish and operate a communications system and message center at the Command Post that will provide adequate and continuous service for all levels of the Incident Management Team. The communications system may include fixed and mobile telephones, radios, fax, and email. Draft and maintain directories and communications information in the Incident Action Plan. Monitor main email, phone, faxes. Promptly convey messages to action/information parties.
- ❑ **Anticipate and Respond.** Anticipate logistical problems such as running low on critical supplies, communications, transportation, food, etc. Solve them before they become a problem.
- ❑ **Transportation.** Transport personnel, materials, and supplies within the requested time frames.
- ❑ **Document Equipment Condition.** Inspect and document the condition of high-value rental and contracted equipment prior to use on the incident.
- ❑ **Relations with Suppliers.** Initiate contact with suppliers to coordinate material and equipment orders.
- ❑ **Human Needs.** Provide/ensure reliable and professional food services, lodging, and other support facilities to workers.

Incident Commander Expects Finance/Administration to:

- ❑ **Spending Procedures.** Make sure cost code/approval authorities, and expense ceilings are obtained and that team members are aware of the procedures.
- ❑ **Accounting Documents.** Make sure financial records are in order.
- ❑ **Local Purchases.** Establish a cash account for local purchases.
- ❑ **Daily Accounting.** Estimate and verify the cost of daily incident expenditures ensuring that Unit Leader submit needed time/cost information as part of required Unit Logs (ICS-214) or addendums to those logs.
- ❑ **Claims Investigation.** Provide investigation and documentation services for compensation and claims against the incident. Stay on top of this.
- ❑ **Documentation.** Provide completed financial information services to Documentation Unit following demobilization.
- ❑ **Wisdom.** Be frugal, not cheap.

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The Principle of Completed Staff Work

1. **The principle of “competed staff work” is a doctrine of a high performing Incident Command Team.**
2. **Completed staff work is the study of a problem and presentation of a solution** in a manner that enables the supervisor to merely indicate approval or disapproval. It is the duty of the responsible staff to work out the details in consultation with others as required. However the product or options presented to the supervisor should be in finished form. This is counter to what often happens.
3. **The impulse to ask the supervisor what to do** or to present the problem to the supervisor in piecemeal fashion occurs more often when the task is difficult or unfamiliar. Resist this impulse. If you know your job it is your responsibility to advise the supervisor on what s/he ought to do, not ask what you ought to do. The supervisor needs many people who can provide answers. S/he will quickly become ineffective if inundated by a constant stream of questions. Study the issues to evolve and present the main alternatives and the recommended action.
4. **Do not fill the supervisor’s time** with long explanations and memoranda. Writing a memorandum to your supervisor does not constitute completed staff work. But writing drafting the memoranda that your supervisor may owe someone else does.
5. **Completed staff work does not preclude a “rough draft.”** However, the rough draft must not be half-baked ideas or an excuse for shifting the burden of formulating action to the supervisor.
6. **Completed staff work results in more work for the subordinate,** but more freedom for the supervisor who must allocate time among many issues and staff. The completed staff work principle protects the supervisor against half-baked ideas, immature verbal presentations, and voluminous memorandum. The person with a real idea to sell is empowered to creatively solve a problem..
7. **The final test for completion of staff work** is whether you could stand in your supervisor’s shoes and be willing to stake your professional reputation on the action that you have proposed being correct.

- **Give your supervisor answers, not questions.**
- **Be prepared to offer options with analysis that guided the best course.**
- **Keep your work brief and focused.**