

# ICS 100 – Lesson 4: ICS Features and Principles

## Lesson Overview

The **ICS Features and Principles** lesson introduces you to:

- Use of Common Terminology.
- Incident Facilities.
- Common ICS Responsibilities.

This lesson should take approximately **20 minutes** to complete. **Remember, you must complete the entire lesson to receive credit.**

## Common Terminology

The ability to communicate within ICS is absolutely critical. Using standard or common terminology is essential to ensuring efficient, clear communication. ICS requires the use of common terminology, meaning standard titles for facilities and positions within the organization.

Common terminology also includes the use of “clear text”—that is, communication without the use of agency-specific codes or jargon. **In other words, use plain English.**

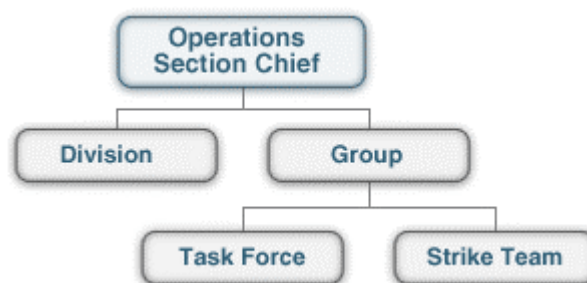
**Uncommon Terminology:** “APHIS Branch, this is PPQ ID 1, we are 10-24.”

**Common Terminology:** “APHIS Branch, this is PPQ ID 1, we have completed our assignment.”

## Organizational Elements and Resources

As you learned earlier, organizational elements require a consistent pattern for designating each level within the ICS organization.

Resources are also assigned common designations. Many kinds of resources may also be classified by type, which will indicate their capabilities (e.g., types of helicopters, sprayers, etc.).



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## Organizational Facilities

Common terminology is also used to define incident facilities, help clarify the activities that take place at a specific facility, and identify what members of the organization can be found there.

Incident facilities will be addressed in greater detail later in this lesson.

## Use of Position Titles

As mentioned previously, ICS Command and General Staff positions have distinct titles.

- Only the Incident Commander is called Commander.
- Only the heads of the Sections in the General Staff are called Chiefs.

Learning and using this standard terminology helps reduce confusion between the day-to-day position occupied by an individual and his or her position at the incident.

The following are standardized titles used in ICS:

<b>Organizational Level</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Support Position</b>
Incident Command	Incident Commander	Deputy
Command Staff	Officer	Assistant
General Staff (Section)	Chief	Deputy
Branch	Director	Deputy
Division/Group	Supervisor	N/A
Unit	Leader	Manager
Strike Team/Task Force	Leader	Single Resource Boss

## Integrated Communications

Every incident requires a Communications Plan. Communications includes:

- The “hardware” systems that transfer information.
- Planning for the use of all available communications frequencies and resources.
- The procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally.

Communications needs for large incidents may exceed available radio frequencies. Some incidents are conducted entirely without radio support. In such situations, other communications resources (cell phones, alpha pagers, email, and secure phone lines) may be the only communication methods used to coordinate communication and to transfer large amounts of data efficiently.

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## Incident Facilities

Incident activities may be accomplished from a variety of facilities. Facilities will be established depending on the kind and complexity of the incident or event. It is important to know and understand the names and functions of the principal ICS facilities.

Only those facilities needed for any given incident will be activated. Some incidents may require facilities not included in the standard list.

## Incident Facilities Virtual Tour

The standard ICS incident facilities include:

- **Incident Command Post (ICP):** Where the Incident Commander oversees the incident. Every incident or event will have an ICP.
- **Staging Areas:** Where resources are kept while waiting to be assigned.
- **Base:** Where primary service and support activities take place.
- **Camps:** Where resources may be kept.
- **Helibase/Helispot:** The area from which helicopter operations are conducted.

Only those facilities needed for any given incident will be activated.

The **Incident Command Post**, or ICP, is the location from which the Incident Commander oversees all incident operations. There is only one ICP for each incident or event. Every incident or event must have some form of an Incident Command Post. The ICP may be located in a vehicle, trailer, tent, or within a building. The ICP will be positioned outside of the present and potential hazard zone, but close enough to the incident to maintain command.

**Staging Areas** are temporary locations at an incident where personnel and equipment are kept while waiting for tactical assignments. Staging Areas should be located close enough to the incident for a timely response, but far enough away to be out of the immediate impact zone. There may be more than one Staging Area at an incident. Each Staging Area will have a Staging Area Manager who reports to the Operations Section Chief or to the Incident Commander if an Operations Section has not been established.

A **Base** is the location from which primary service and support activities, such as feeding and resupply, are performed. Not all incidents will have a Base. There will be no more than one Base per incident.

A **Camp** is the location where resources may be kept to support incident operations if a Base is not accessible to all resources. Not all incidents will have Camps.

A **Helibase** is the location from which helicopter-centered air operations are conducted. Helibases are generally used on a more long-term basis and include such services as fueling and maintenance.

**Helispots** are more temporary facilities used for loading and unloading personnel and cargo. Large incidents may require more than one Helibase and several Helispots.

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## Common Responsibilities

You should now be familiar with the use of common terminology and the various types of incident facilities. In this section, you'll learn about your responsibilities.

The next screens review the **common responsibilities associated with ICS assignments**. You will receive additional training and guidance on your specific duties.

## Your First ICS Deployment

Wondering what your first deployment will be like?

**Dr. Bill Smith**  
**USDA, Veterinary Services**

"My tips would be follow, don't reinvent. Work within the ICS structure because it's proven to be successful and let it work for you. Don't get in there and say well, we don't do it this way, try it their way, you'll be surprised."

**Dr. Carey Floyd**  
**Oklahoma Department of Agriculture**

"I would say be sure and, and take your notebook because you are going to want to take notes. Go with some questions in mind but be willing to spend some time to just sit back and watch what's going on."

**Van Bateman**  
**USDA, Forest Service**

"Make sure you know exactly what your responsibility is, exactly what's expected of you. Make sure that whoever you are working for on that given day sits down and gives you a very complete briefing on what to expect that day and what you are going to be doing and where you are going to be doing it at."

## General Guidelines – Lengthy Assignments

Many incidents last only a short time, and may not require travel. Other deployments may require a lengthy assignment away from home. Below are general guidelines for incidents requiring extended stays or travel:

- Assemble a travel kit containing any special technical information (e.g., maps, manuals, contact lists, and reference materials).
- Prepare personal items needed for your estimated length of stay, including medications, cash, credit cards, etc.
- Ensure that family members know your destination and how to contact you.
- Determine appropriate travel authorizations.
- Familiarize yourself with travel and pickup arrangements.
- Determine your return mode of transportation (if possible).
- Determine payroll procedures (at incident or through home agency).

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## General Guidelines—Roles and Authorities

In addition to preparing for your travel arrangements, it is important to understand your role and authorities.

- Review your emergency assignment. Know to whom you will report and what your responsibilities will be.
- Establish a clear understanding of your decisionmaking authority.
- Determine communications procedures for contacting your headquarters or home office (if necessary).
- Identify purchasing authority and procedures.
- Determine how food and lodging will be provided (incident, personal, and agency).

## Actions Prior to Departure

Upon receiving an incident assignment, your deployment briefing should include, but may not be limited to, the following information:

- Incident type and name or designation
- Incident check-in location
- Specific assignment
- Reporting date and time
- Travel instructions
- Communications instructions
- Resource order number or request number (if applicable)
- Special support requirements (facilities, equipment transportation and off-loading, etc.)
- Travel authorization for air, rental car, lodging, meals, and incidental expenses

## Check-In at the Incident: Activities

Check-in officially logs you in at the incident. The check-in process and information helps to:

- Ensure personnel accountability.
- Track resources.
- Prepare personnel for assignments and reassignments.
- Locate personnel in case of an emergency.
- Establish personnel time records and payroll documentation.
- Plan for releasing personnel.
- Organize the demobilization process.

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### **Check-In at the Incident: Locations**

**Check in only once.** Check-in locations may be found at several incident facilities, including:

- Incident Command Post (Resources Unit).
- Base or Camp(s).
- Staging Areas.
- Helibase.

Note that these locations may not all be activated at every incident. Check-in information is usually recorded on the ICS Form 211, Check-In List.

### **Common Responsibilities at the Incident**

After check-in, locate your incident supervisor, and obtain your initial briefing. The briefing information helps you plan your tasks and communicate with others. Briefings received and given should include:

- Current situation assessment.
- Identification of your specific job responsibilities.
- Identification of coworkers.
- Location of work area.
- Identification of eating and sleeping arrangements, as appropriate.
- Procedural instructions for obtaining additional supplies, services, and personnel.
- Operational periods/work shifts.
- Required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and safety procedures.

### **Incident Recordkeeping**

All incidents require some form of recordkeeping. Requirements vary depending upon the agencies involved and the nature of the incident. Detailed information on using ICS forms will be covered in other training sessions, or may be found in the Forms Manual.

Below are general guidelines for incident recordkeeping:

- Print or type all entries.
- Enter dates by month/day/year format.
- Enter date and time on all forms and records.
- Fill in all blanks. Use N/A as appropriate.
- Use military 24-hour time.

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## Communications Discipline

Important considerations related to communications include:

- Observing strict radio/telephone procedures.
- Using plain English in all communications. Codes should not be used in radio transmissions. Limit the use of discipline-specific jargon, especially on interdisciplinary incidents.
- Limiting radio and telephone traffic to essential information only. Plan what you are going to say.
- Following procedures for secure communications as required.

## Incident Demobilization

Agency requirements for demobilization may vary considerably. General demobilization guidelines for all personnel are to:

- Complete all work assignments and required forms/reports.
- Brief replacements, subordinates, and supervisor.
- Follow incident and agency check-out procedures.
- Provide adequate followup contact information.
- Return any incident-issued equipment or other nonexpendable supplies.
- Complete postincident reports, critiques, and medical followup.
- Complete all payment and/or payroll issues or obligations.
- Report to assigned departure points on time or slightly ahead of schedule.
- Stay with your group until you arrive at your final destination (as appropriate).

## Lesson Summary

You have completed the **ICS Features & Principles** lesson. This lesson addressed that:

- The ability to communicate within ICS is absolutely critical. Using standard or common terminology (clear text) is essential to ensuring efficient, clear communication.
- Incident facilities will be established depending on the kind and complexity of the incident or event. Only those facilities needed for any given incident will be activated.
- Common ICS responsibilities include preparing travel arrangements, understanding your role and authorities, the check-in process, incident recordkeeping, and preparing for demobilization.

You have now completed all of the ICS content lessons! When you are ready, you should proceed to the Course Summary and Posttest. To receive credit for the course, you must complete the posttest.