

<b>Objective #3 Incident Command</b> Demonstrate, or discuss in a tabletop exercise, the ability to implement an Incident Command System and effectively direct, coordinate, and manage emergency response activities.
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## **A Basic Intent**

OSHA's Hazwoper standard (1910.120(q)(3)(I)) notes that the "senior official" on-scene will control the emergency with a site-specific Incident Command System (ICS). Ohio law (ORC 3737.80) notes the chief of the fire department or their designee is responsible for primary coordination of the on-scene activities. Therefore, this Objective will look at how responders implement a command system. It will also note how well other agencies work within and understand that command system. Please note that the phrase "incident command system" may also be referred to as an "incident management system" or "unified command system".

## **B Discussing the Points of Review**

### *1. Was an Incident Command System (ICS) clearly identified?*

Incident command begins as the first piece of equipment arrives on-scene and it expands to meet the needs of the incident response. ICS positions should be assigned as the situation requires (i.e. Operations, Decon, Staging, Logistics, Medical, and PIO). It should be noted that OSHA requires a Safety officer be designated for every Hazmat incident. Liaisons from outside agencies (i.e. law enforcement, EMA) should also be included in the command system as required.

### *2. Was the Incident Commander (IC) clearly identified and effectively in charge?*

The senior fire official who is first on-scene will become the IC. The IC will need to clearly establish the response priorities and then delegate the functional responsibilities to responders. Once the functions are delegated, the IC's job is to coordinate activities and not get involved with the individual "hands-on" assignments. The IC should remain within the Command Post and be easily accessible to the command positions. This point also evaluates the effective coordination required when a unified command system includes multiple "lead" agencies at the Command Post.

### *3. Was a Command Post (CP) established and clearly identified?*

The size and actual location of the Command Post will depend on the incident. Small incidents may be controlled from the front seat of a vehicle while larger incidents may utilize a formal command vehicle. Its location should also allow easy access for key personnel working in the cold zone but remain isolated from outside distractions (media, the public). Some departments use techniques such as posting green lights/flags to identify the CP. The CP must be able to communicate with agencies that are both on-site and off-site. Liaisons coordinating off-site activities should also be located within the CP environment.

### *4. Was the Command Post staffed and equipped to support emergency operations?*

Staffing the Command Post depends on the incident size and complexity. For most incidents, the IC will need a liaison from the external or support agencies that are coordinating actions off-site. These liaisons typically include law enforcement for traffic control, public information

officers for media/public relations, and possibly an EMA official for logistical support. The CP staff may include the spiller so they can provide input on how to control or cleanup the release. In larger incidents, the IC should have administrative support to document actions taken, manage communications, and account for resources on-site.

5. *Was decision-making and information sharing coordinated with on-site personnel?*

The IC needs to ensure personnel are in the information loop. The IC should be in regular contact with command positions who in turn keep individual personnel informed. The command positions will provide feedback back to the IC as to what actions are completed and what additional actions or resources are needed. Significant changes (i.e. the spill worsens, all victims are rescued) should be immediately shared with the IC. This will allow the IC to set new response priorities or modify protective actions off-site.

6. *Was decision-making and information sharing coordinated with off-site agencies?*

Off-site agencies (i.e. medical facilities, shelters, EOC, etc.) need to receive information about what actions are taking place on-scene and how they are supposed to support operations. These groups may need to re-prioritize their actions (open a new shelter, establish new traffic detours) and thus need information at the onset of the emergency as well as throughout the event. At the same time, these agencies need to keep the IC informed of the actions completed off-site. The ultimate goal is to ensure response actions are not overlooked, duplicated, or thought to be still in progress. The IC may accomplish this coordination for small incidents or they can delegate that task to specific liaisons or command positions.

7. *Did the command staff consider the need to activate an Emergency Operations Center?*

Typically, county plans rely on the local EMA Director to coordinate with the IC and decide where/when to activate an EOC. EMA offices may activate an EOC prior to receiving a formal request to do so. In this case, the EOC should ensure the IC knows this has occurred. An EOC should then coordinate off-site activities and to support the IC's logistical needs. The IC needs to demonstrate how it was decided whether or not to activate an EOC. If an EOC is not required, the IC should be able to clearly explain the reasoning as to why the EOC was not needed.

8. *Was a system implemented to track personnel and resources on-site?*

The IC shall limit the number of personnel at the site, especially in those areas of potential or actual chemical exposure. In order to accomplish this, the IC should have a system in-place that identifies who has been assigned to work in which areas. Also, the IC should use this system to identify when to obtain additional or replacement personnel (EMS squads, traffic controllers) and equipment (absorbents, SCBA). The system should also show when a given asset was released from service on-site.

9. *Were records kept to document the response actions taken?*

A running record of *key* actions taken and decisions made should be maintained. This task may be accomplished in the Command Post or by each functional commander (Safety, Operations, etc.). These notes can be used to see that tasks are completed and not overlooked, or to re-define response needs. They can be used to see that required calls were made or that needed assets were mobilized. As the incident comes to a close, the command personnel can use

the notes to address issues such as cost recovery, equipment accountability or replacement, and accident investigation.

*10. Were the actions taken based on existing plans and/or operating procedures?*

The LEPC plan is required to address these concerns. Further, NFPA's 471, 472, and 473, 1500 and 1600 standards discuss the merits of an incident command system and how it should be applied locally. Meanwhile, local departments should have already completed incident command training as per OSHA. Also, individual departments should have addressed these Points in their own SOPs or in a common system used by all departments in the county.

### **C Exercise Design and Control Issues**

This Objective typically does not require any special design considerations. The only limiting factor here is manpower. There must be adequate personnel available to do the hands-on tasks or fill out the command structure so one person is not trying to accomplish every task. To properly setup a scenario and identify manpower needs, the Exercise Design Team should include a responder who is trained in incident command.

For Tabletop exercises, Controller input is usually needed only to make sure one person does not dominate the conversation. The lead agency should have ample Players attend so they can fulfill the likely command positions and discuss the tasks their personnel would implement. The Controller may have to prompt discussions between positions until a natural flow progresses.

For Functional and Full-Scale exercises, an exercise Controller should be assigned to the Command Post to oversee the flow of events. Additional controllers may also be needed to assist general staff (section chief(s) as the scene grows in scope and complexity. They will need to clarify what the incident scenario is, what hazards are being simulated, and what tasks personnel must accomplish. For example, they will clarify that the green smoke is not a fire, and the closer you get to the incident the more suffocating the odor becomes. The Controllers will also need to let the IC, or the other officers, know when a response action does not work. The Controllers must avoid becoming too involved in the exercise otherwise they begin managing personnel and the exercise.

As a side note, LEPCs should refrain from using the same fire department in each exercise to test this Objective. Other departments need a chance to evaluate how their personnel manage a response. The Exercise Design Team needs to ensure each local fire department has a chance to be evaluated under this Objective. They can design exercises that allow EMS and Law Enforcement officials to arrive on-scene first. They will have to implement a command system, eventually transfer control to fire personnel, and possibly setup a unified command system.

### **D Evaluation Needs and Issues**

The Evaluator for this Objective needs to be trained in Incident Command. It is recommended that this evaluator be trained in ICS 300 & 400 and Haz Mat Operations.

For field exercises, the Evaluator will initially need to be located in a position to observe as the first pieces of equipment arrive and establish command. The Evaluator can observe how junior or non-fire personnel first manage the scene, and then observe how they transfer command to senior fire officials. The Evaluator will shadow the IC throughout most of the exercise, but also needs to observe those who were assigned various command positions.

As this activity may be accomplished away from the IC and CP, the Evaluator will need to stay alert as to who is doing what and ensure they can observe each Point. The Exercise Design Team should consider providing the Evaluator with communications equipment so they can listen in the coordination going on between the various command positions. The Exercise Design Team may also decide to use multiple Evaluators to watch the interaction among the various ICS organizational elements (sections, branches, groups, divisions) that have been assigned to deal with law, fire, medical, or health tasks.

This Objective is well suited to be evaluated along with Objectives #2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.