

EMERGENCY RESPONSE:

**USING THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM
TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS
IN LARGE RETIREMENT COMPLEXES,
LARGE RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES FOR THE ELDERLY, AND
SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES**

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IV. EMERGENCY RESPONSE

THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a method for managing emergencies which is widely used by emergency responders throughout the State of California. The system provides for an organized response to meet the demands of emergency incidents and larger disasters in a rapid and efficient manner. ICS is a practical method for dividing labor and responsibilities when responding to these events.

The following version of ICS has been adapted to meet the needs of large retirement complexes and large residential care facilities for the elderly. It can also be used by skilled nursing facilities which are co-located with retirement complexes as well as large free-standing care homes. It is important to note that:

- ◆ In large retirement complexes, ICS positions will be filled primarily by residents since most facilities do not have on-site staff other than the administrator and possibly maintenance personnel.
- ◆ In large residential care facilities, staff will assume ICS response roles, possibly supplemented by residents, if appropriate.
- ◆ In skilled nursing facilities, staff will assume all ICS response roles and may need a higher than normal staff-to-patient ratio to maintain patient care.

Skilled Nursing Facilities lend themselves to having a significant first aid function due to staff's medical capability. During disasters, this care could extend to the surrounding community, much like a medical clinic. In addition, the facility could receive and care for patients transferred to it from acute care hospitals.

The ICS is flexible and allows for the use of people present at the time of an incident. For planning and training purposes, it is preferable to assign people to perform each function so that they develop an understanding of what will be required in responding to an emergency.

A. DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF ICS TEAM MEMBERS

In retirement complexes, each resident assigned as either a Section Chief or support person within ICS sections should be an individual who is resourceful, remains calm during emergencies, is well organized, a "team" player, and free of disabilities which might interfere with his/her functioning. Also designate "back up" people for each assigned person in case injuries or absence prevent them from assuming their responsibilities.

In residential care facilities and skilled nursing facilities, assigning staff to ICS functions should take into consideration the personal characteristics listed above as well as each individual's job related skills and responsibilities. Medical care should be performed by those with the best, most current skills, regardless of rank.

Badges or colorful vests with designated titles will identify members of the ICS team as the people charged with ensuring the health and safety of residents during the disaster.

B. ORGANIZATION OF THE ICS--ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Incident Command System provides a process for managing the response and recovery efforts following a disaster. It consists of a chain of command which incorporates four sections--Plans, Operations, Logistics, and Finance--under the overall leadership of an Incident Commander. Each of the four sections operates under its own Section Chief and has its own tasks or job descriptions (described in the Job Action Sheets which follow in this supplement). The tasks identify priorities that arise during a disaster event (see pp. 19-20, and 64-65 of the original *Guidelines*) and provide for a uniformly structured response and recovery effort.

1. INCIDENT COMMANDER

One person manages the overall response effort: the **Incident Commander**. Usually the person assigned to that job is the facility administrator. In the absence of the administrator, a resident, or another staff member may be designated to act in that role until the administrator is able to assume the position. Specific responsibilities are then systematically

divided among other capable and competent people. Each ICS team leader is referred to as a **Section Chief**. The **Incident Commander** oversees the Section Chiefs and coordinates the response activities as follows:

- ✓ Activates and manages the Command Center
- ✓ Implements the Response Plan
- ✓ Establishes overall priorities and assigns personnel to designated positions
- ✓ Ensures that all of the functions of the ICS are carried out either directly or by assigning them to ICS sections
- ✓ Reviews situation with Section Chiefs and sets priorities for actions, resource allocation and short term recovery
- ✓ Communicates with authorities regarding facility/resident situation and needs

2. PLANS CHIEF

The **Plans Chief** provides current information on the facility situation and projects short and longer term needs for recovery and return to normal operation. S/he is responsible for the following:

- ✓ Collects information on the emergency from the **Operations Chief** and **Logistics Chief** and generates disaster situation reports
- ✓ Identifies and displays essential elements of information
- ✓ Maintains overview of available and needed resources
- ✓ Communicates and cooperates with other Section Chiefs
- ✓ Identifies recovery needs and develops plans for resuming normal operations

3. OPERATIONS CHIEF

The **Operations Chief** directs the carrying out of initial response functions, reporting results and situation status to the **Incident Commander** and other Section Chiefs, as follows:

- ✓ Ensures carrying out of the site security function, including damage assessment, utility checks and "turn-off" as necessary
- ✓ Ensures suppression of fires when possible, contacting the Fire Department, if necessary/possible
- ✓ Directs search and rescue teams
- ✓ Directs first aid function. In skilled nursing facilities, directs Triage Unit and expanded first aid function
- ✓ Notes and tracks injuries, treatment and fatalities
- ✓ Accounts for all residents, staff and visitors
- ✓ Oversees evacuation and relocation of residents, if necessary
- ✓ Receives and documents all team reports, providing information to the **Incident Commander** and other Section Chiefs

4. LOGISTICS CHIEF

The **Logistics Chief** coordinates the use of *existing* and the procurement of *needed* resources to ensure the health and safety of residents, staff and volunteers. Responsibilities include the following:

- ✓ Provides and updates a summary of resources and supplies availability, depletion and allocation to the **Plans Section**
- ✓ Projects, with information from other Section Chiefs, supplies and assistance needed and works to obtain them
- ✓ Provides for the materiel and personnel support to the ICS as needed, including establishing staffing schedules with other Sections and the **Incident Commander**
- ✓ Receives and catalogues incoming resources from individual, public and private sources and maintains a **Resource Status Board**
- ✓ Works closely with **Plans** to anticipate, plan for and obtain supplies and services needed for recovery and return to normal operations
- ✓ Documents all transactions and costs, retaining all cost information for the **Finance Section**

5. FINANCE CHIEF

The **Finance Chief** is responsible for overseeing, processing and documenting all costs associated with the disaster:

- ✓ Tracks all costs associated with the response effort
- ✓ Handles and documents all cash exchanges
- ✓ Processes all purchase orders, payment of checks and other accounting documents
- ✓ Maintains all financial records of the incident

6. OTHER FUNCTIONS

There are a number of other functions which the Incident Commander should address in planning stages:

- Media/public relations
- Community liaison
- Psychological support and assistance for both residents and other staff until outside assistance is available
- Management of volunteers
- Child care for staff

In a small facility with minimal staff, people may have to be responsible for more than one section. The Incident Commander, for example, might have to act as Operations Chief and Media/Community Liaison.

C. COMMAND CENTER/EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

Set aside a space for the ICS team to carry out its job. Ideally, the room should be somewhat removed from the confusion in the main living area and furnished with tables and chairs for team members. An alternate area should be identified in the event that the primary location becomes either unavailable or inaccessible. At minimum, the room or space should be equipped with the following:

- Flip Charts with marking pens, masking tape, thumb tacks/push pins or dry ink board with special pens
- Detailed street maps and freeway maps of the area
- Job Action packets containing assignments and check lists (see section on Supplemental Training Materials)
- Badges and/or colorful vests
- Rotary file with telephone numbers and addresses of local vendors, pharmacies, contractors, etc.
- Flashlights/lightsticks, extra batteries
- Portable radio
- Walkie-talkies (at least 2 sets) to use inside the building
- Portable/cellular telephones
- Message pads, pens, pencils
- Facility Food/Supplies Inventory
- Drinking water, snacks and food for ICS Team
- Extra First Aid kit(s)
- First Aid book
- FAX machine

These supplies can be stored in a carton or wheeled trash container in the **Command Center** so that they are readily available. If the materials are properly stored, the room can be used for other purposes during non-emergencies and easily converted when necessary.

1. STAFFING SCHEDULE

Shifts for team members should be scheduled for six to eight hours and include break periods.

The team must be aware that they will be meeting current needs while planning for future needs. Each shift should plan at least six hours ahead so that when the new shift takes over they will be able to continue the work that is being done and will have the benefit of the information posted on the walls to provide a picture of the most current situation (e.g., number of

residents injured, location of damages, availability of drinking water, etc). It is important to remember that the situation will be changing and the planning will need to be flexible to adjust to and reflect these changes.

2. BEFORE HELP ARRIVES: EMERGENCY RESPONSE CHECK LIST

There is, of course, the possibility that at the time of the event, the person in authority at the site is confused as to what to do first. The "Emergency Response Check List" suggests prioritized procedures to follow until the ICS procedure can go into effect.

The check list appears in each of the attached "Scenario" sections. An enlarged version of the form also appears in the ICS Forms Section. It might prove helpful for staff or residents finding themselves temporarily "in charge" following a disaster if these instructions are enlarged further, laminated, placed on either end of corridors and next to elevators on each floor.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The materials that follow are provided 1) to assist you in developing an earthquake preparedness plan which covers a number of contingencies; and 2) to assist you in carrying out a "table top" exercise using the scenarios to test your planning and response procedures.

A. PRESENTATION

Prior to the training exercise, review "Introduction to the Incident Command System," the Job Action Sheets and suggested forms. Designate team members and section chiefs and ensure that there are sufficient copies of Job Action Sheets and Disaster Forms available for teams.

- ◆ Select the Scenario appropriate for your type of facility (Sections D, E, or F)
- ◆ Read and discuss the description of the facility and its Scenario for the earthquake.
- ◆ Read and enact the "Procedure" which follows.

- ◆ Provide Section Chiefs with "Job Action Sheets" and forms appropriate for their section. *Remember, some individuals might need to take on one or more than one job action, so it is a good idea for each team member to be familiar with the other jobs.*
- ◆ For each scenario, read **Situation Report #1** and respond to the section "Procedure/Considerations."
- ◆ Incident Commander reads subsequent scenarios (**Situation Reports #2-5**) at reasonable intervals, i.e., 30 minutes, while **relevant** new information from each scenario is noted on Status Boards. Information about the situation in the outside community which will affect facility's operation, such as road closure, etc., should be noted as well as updated information about the situation in the facility. Sections should transfer information appearing in the Scenario to the appropriate form. Each Situation Report repeats general information provided previously, with **new** information appearing underlined and in bold print.

Following the exercise, conduct an evaluation of the response (see pp. 37-38 of the *Guidelines*), encouraging team members to critique the effort without being critical of individual performances. Periodically, repeat the exercise, making it more realistic by having members actually performing their roles with residents participating, and conduct relocation and evacuation procedures. You might want to personalize the threat to your facility by changing the scenario to describe your own population and structure.

B. SUPPLEMENTAL TRAINING MATERIALS

- **Job Action Sheets:** Incident Commander, Plans Section Chief, Operations Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, and Finance Section Chief

The initial job assignments for each ICS team member are spelled out in a **Job Action Sheet**. For Retirement Complexes, it is suggested that the Administrator meet with the Resident Council to discuss job assignments and the nomination of other residents for the ICS team.

- **Incident Command System Worksheet**
- **Scenario for Large Retirement Complexes--Section D**

continued 

- **Scenario for Large Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly--
Section E**
- **Scenario for Skilled Nursing Facilities--Section F**
- **Staff Work Schedule for Large Residential Care Facility for the
Elderly**
- **Staff Work Schedule for Skilled Nursing Facilities**
- **Emergency Procedures**
- **Emergency Response Check List**
- **Training Scenario for Large Complexes**
 - Situation Report #1**
 - Situation Report #2**
 - Situation Report #3**
 - Situation Report #4**
 - Situation Report #5**
- **Training Scenario for Residential Care Facilities for the
Elderly**
 - Situation Report #1**
 - Situation Report #2**
 - Situation Report #3**
 - Situation Report #4**
 - Situation Report #5**
- **Training Scenario for Skilled Nursing Facilities**
 - Situation Report #1**
 - Situation Report #2**
 - Situation Report #3**
 - Situation Report #4**
 - Situation Report #5**
- **Emergency Message Form**
- **Physical Injury/Fatality Information Sheet**
- **Structural Damage List**
- **Non-Structural Damage List**
- **Inventory (Supplies/Services) List**
- **Emergency Response Check List (enlarged)**

C. JOB ACTION SHEETS

Incident Command System Job Action Sheet

(Read this entire Job Action Sheet before doing anything)

Title: **Incident Commander**

Position Assigned To: _____

Authority: Full authority to make emergency expenditures, personnel assignments and the decision to evacuate and relocate to **preserve life and property.**

Responsibility: Overall management of incident; supervise all other functions; authorize evacuation and relocation, if needed.

Immediate Actions: Activate Incident Command System by setting up Command Post. Select planned or alternate location.

Appoint all other Section Chiefs and distribute four Section Packets for: Planning, Operations, Logistics and Finance. Each packet should contain: identifying badge or vest, Job Action Sheet and forms needed to support actions.

Hold meeting with Section Chiefs to assess current situation and decide on priority actions.

Ongoing Actions: Meet as often as necessary with Section Chiefs to monitor situation, set new priorities and authorize expenditures and personnel work schedules.

Incident Command System Job Action Sheet

(Read this entire Job Action Sheet before doing anything)

Title: **Plans Section Chief**

Position Assigned To: _____

Authority: Under supervision of the incident commander, directs action taken by the planning section and supervises section staff.

Responsibility: Monitor changes in the situation; identify and/or anticipate future needs in the short-range (1-2 days) and long-range (1-2 weeks) or as appropriate to the incident; track and document activities.

Immediate Actions: Receive appointment/badge from Incident Commander.
Receive briefing from Incident Commander on current situation.
Brief staff of Plans Section on current situation

Ongoing Actions: **Do the following tasks (or assign people to do them and report back to you):**
Gather information from Operations Section on current situation. Continue to do this on a regular basis.
Gather information from Logistics Section on current status of resources/supplies. Continue to do this on a regular basis.
Display changes in the situation and resources on the Status Board or flip chart for use by all Sections.
Generate periodic written **Situation Reports** and **Resource Status Reports** and give to Incident Commander and all Section Chiefs.
Gather information from community responders (fire service, law enforcement) on status of external disaster. Include this information in **Situation Reports** and on **Status Boards**

