

of information gathering, briefings, and implementation.

## Summary

Originally developed to fight forest fires, ICS has grown into an incident management system that is widely adopted and used. Because of its flexible nature, low cost of implementation, and widespread use, it is an ideal system for emergency response.

### Suggested References:

Incident Command System National

Training Curriculum: ICS Orientation  
National Wildfire Coordinating Group  
1994

Incident Command System Forms  
U.S. Coast Guard Response Website  
[www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/nmc/response/Default.htm#Guides](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/nmc/response/Default.htm#Guides)

## Oil or Chemical Spill Notification

call the National Response Center at  
**800-424-8802**

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### Oil Spill Response

in the Caribbean Region Coastal Zone,  
contact the U.S. Coast Guard  
Sector San Juan, PR  
787-289-2041

In the Caribbean Region Inland Zone,  
contact the U.S. EPA Caribbean  
Environmental Protection Division in Puerto  
Rico:  
787-977-5870

Commonwealth, Territory, and Neighboring  
Nation Pollution Response Contacts are:

Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board  
787-766-2823

Puerto Rico Emergency Response Office  
787-724-0824

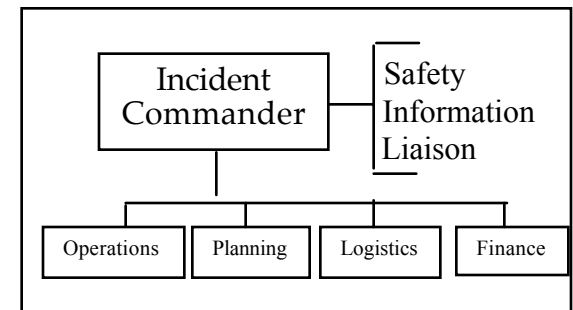
U.S. Virgin Islands Dept. of Planning & Natural  
Resources  
809-774-3320

U.S. Virgin Islands Emergency Management Agency

St. Thomas 809-774-2244  
St. Croix 809-773-2244

British Virgin Islands Office of Disaster Preparedness  
284-494-4499

# INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM IN OIL SPILL RESPONSE



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Other informational pamphlets are available through  
the Caribbean RRT Web Site at [www.nrt.org](http://www.nrt.org)

## Introduction

Significant oil spills involve numerous agencies and hundreds, possibly thousands, of people conducting and supporting cleanup efforts. To promote effective and quick coordination during oil spill responses, the Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency use a management system called the Incident Command System (ICS), a part of the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). ICS provides a comprehensive framework for managing emergency and non-emergency events. Originally created to coordinate firefighting efforts at forest fires, it has been expanded to an all-hazard, all-risk management system. Many applications exist for ICS because of its flexibility, including:

- Oil spill response
- Fires, hazardous material, and multi-casualty incidents
- Multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency disasters
- Wide area search and rescue
- Transportation incidents

Because NIIMS ICS is a public-domain system, training and implementation costs are minimized. Many agencies and companies involved in emergency response have adopted ICS, resulting in improved coordination of response efforts.

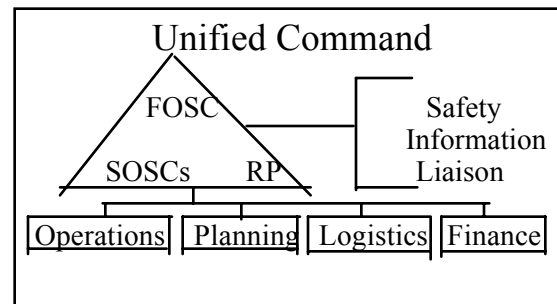
## Management Activities

The ICS organization is built around five major management activities:

- *Incident Command* sets objectives and priorities, has overall responsibility at the incident or event. Certain functions, such as safety, information, and liaison, are assigned to command staff officers who

report directly to the incident command.

- *Operations* conducts tactical operations to carry out an action plan, develops the tactical objectives and organization, and directs all resources.
- *Planning* develops the action plan to accomplish the objectives, collects and evaluates information, tracks resource status, and documents the response effort.
- *Logistics* provides support to meet incident needs, provides resources and all other services needed to support the incident.
- *Finance/Administration* monitors costs related to incident, provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analysis.



## Flexibility

The adaptability of ICS stems from the ability to expand or contract the organization as necessary. Small incidents may be managed by one person, the Incident Commander. Large incidents require the functions of ICS to be set up as separate sections, which may be further subdivided. A basic principle that allows the ICS to expand and contract smoothly during an incident is that the person at the top is responsible until the authority is delegated to another person. Span of control is maintained at three to seven employees per supervisor. Smooth shift changes are fostered by established change-of-shift procedures.

## Unified Command

In some incidents, including oil spills, there are several organizations that may have shared authority to respond. ICS has the advantage of combining different Federal, State, and Local agencies and the Responsible Party into the same organizational system maximizing coordination of spill response activities and avoiding duplication of efforts. A structure called Unified Command allows the Incident Commander position to be shared among several agencies and organizations that have jurisdiction. In oil spills in the coastal zone, the Unified Command is typically comprised of the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC), the State On-Scene Coordinator(s) (SOSC), and a Responsible Party representative (RP). This group sets the overall incident objectives and guides and approves the incident action plan. The Unified Command members retain their authority, but work to resolve issues in a cooperative fashion so maximum attention is given to response efforts.

## Planned Actions

Every incident has an oral or written Incident action plan prepared for each operational period, a period of time chosen based on the nature of the incident, typically a half day, a day, or several days. A suite of ICS forms exists to help prepare the incident action plan.

## Training

ICS training and pocket guides help the system run smoothly. A system is provided for the cycle