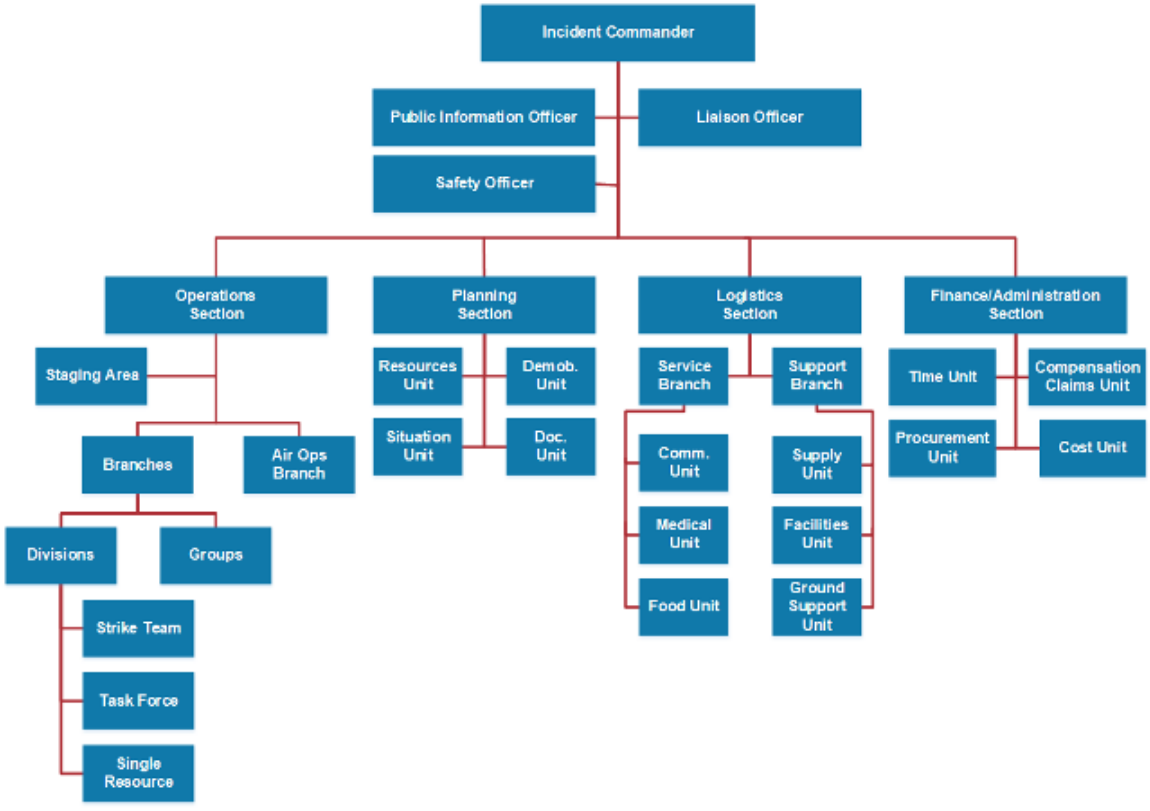
ICS for Utilities

Why is ICS important for Utilities?

Many utilities in the U.S. understand the government construct under the National Response Framework (NRF); the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and tenets of the Incident Command System (ICS). Utilities also utilize the construct of mutual assistance allowing them to "loan" and "borrow" resources (human and material) between companies/agencies to promptly effect energy restoration activities using these or like frameworks. Taking an All Hazards approach to routine, daily business is the norm these days for utility companies and being more compatible with their first response partners when there is a "blue sky" emergency in the field on any given day has demonstrated the benefit of the Incident Command System for utilities. Utilities are now able to "scale" ICS from a "blue sky" day to a complex or long duration incident because the concepts are used more frequently. The majority of utilities in the U.S. are privately held corporations but also include municipal operations, special districts, and other government bodies. It is important that ICS for Utilities address all of these environments and configurations and that the tenets integrate between the public and private sectors.

How might the ICS Command Structure Look in a Utilities Environment?



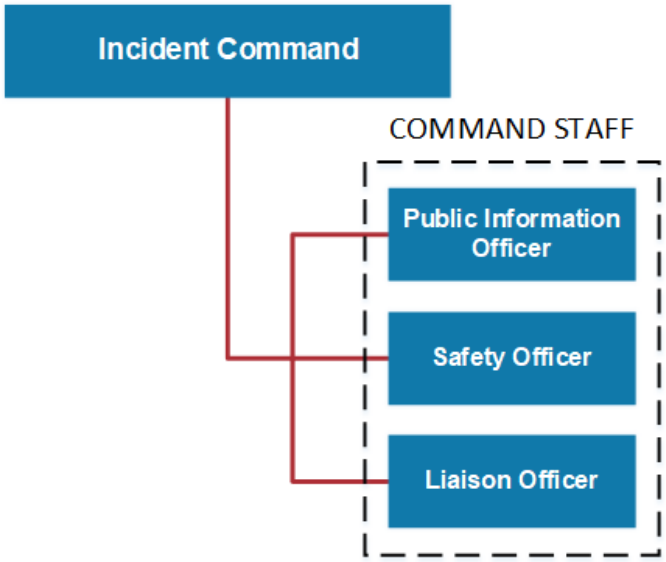
Each utility is taking the foundational concepts of ICS and tailoring the system for their operations. Some utilities are using ICS for weather only related incidents and others are using it across their

company/agency for incidents beyond weather such as: Generation Plant outages, Wildfires involving facilities or lines; Data Center outages; Call Center outages; etc. When properly designed ICS will provide an integration strategy that includes all business units of the company/agency whether in a single corporate/agency environment or across multiple companies/agencies and multiple states or disciplines. Utilities are unique in terms of configuration – Electric and Gas; Electric and Water; Gas Only; and also include other energy provides like Fuel.

The most important implementation component is to remain true to the basic ICS structure (see diagram above) and build out from there. That way the company/agency will remain aligned with other utilities who may provide support during mutual assistance activations.

The system allows the utility to expand and contract the structure to manage span of control; to ensure appropriate resources are available and properly allocated; and that the entire company/agency remains on the same "operational" page during the response and recovery.

COMMAND STAFF



Incident Commander

The Incident Commander for a utility is likely a person who is broadly familiar with corporate/agency operations – whether in the Emergency Operations Center or at the scene in the Field at an Incident Command Post. Many utilities (private sector) have elevated their Executives to a Policy Team level (rather than leading Operations as an Incident Commander) so that they are available for policy level decisions and to interact with Government leaders during a large scale emergency. Therefore, the Executives have delegated authority for Incident Command to a high level staff member who is capable of managing the emergency response and recovery operations.

The Incident Commander is responsible for establishing incident objectives and activating other components of the Incident Management Team (IMT).

Many utilities are requiring their Incident Commanders to take additional levels of ICS training (I100, 200, 700, 300/400 and the IC "L" course) to strengthen their capacity and capabilities for serving in this role. Additional information on these courses is located here https://training.fema.gov/.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

Most, if not all utilities have a Public Relations department or business unit that is working daily on both internal and external communications with employees, customers, stakeholders and shareholders alike. Their transition into the Public Information Office (PIO) role is typically seamless during an emergency and in many instances they may be the first party contacted from the utility by the news media when something happens.

The most important task beyond their normal duties is to learn more about the Joint Information Center (JIC) and Joint Information System (JIS) environments to ensure the utility's messaging is well aligned with those of its counterparts in other agencies/parts of the community. Additional information on PIO specific courses are located here https://training.fema.gov/.

Safety Officer (SO)

Like the PIO, most utilities have daily operational Safety Officers that are working across the utility environment to ensure worker and operational safety (internally and externally). Utilities work in a routinely dangerous environment and it is important that the Safety Officer is familiar with "blue sky" as well as emergency hazards that may escalate during non-routine operations. Most utilities have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that include their safety tailboards and rules of engagement. The most important thing a utility can do is gather their Safety Team and walk through and discuss/document how conditions change during specific emergencies – fire; flood; earthquake; tornado; pipeline rupture; dig-in; etc. This will allow the utility to expand their traditional safety SOPs for any situation they may face. Then through routine drills and exercises, the responders and Safety Officers can work together to ensure the refined, emergency SOPs will protect both employees and the public during a response/recovery effort.

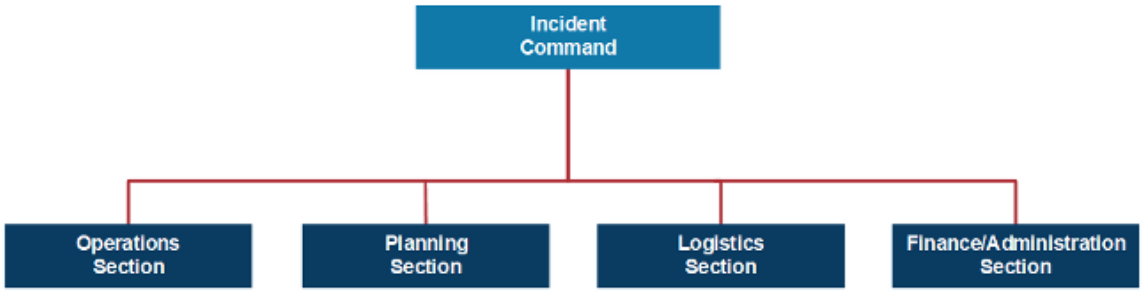
Liaison Officer (LO)

The Liaison Officer also exists in a variety of formats in many utility environments – whether based in an emergency management/business continuity, facility, customer focused or in a government affairs role. These utility staffers are consistently interacting and supporting the utility's mission and objectives on a daily basis with their counterparts in other organizations.

The most important component of the LO in a utility is broadening the reach and brokering additional relationships with their counterparts and ensuring there is unity from the utility to the outside world. There are multiple internal/external relationships for differing purposes and the utility should work to ensure alignment within the company/agency and who is communicating with who and for what purpose.

GENERAL STAFF

The General Staff consists of up to four sections: Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance/ Administration. In an expanding incident the Incident Commander first establishes the Operations Section. The remaining sections are established as needed to support the operation.



Operations Section Chief (OSC)

The Operation Section is responsible for directing ALL tactical operational aspects of the incident. The key within a utility is to ensure specific Operations Section Chiefs exist with subject matter expertise for the incident/situation at hand. Because the utility environment has a great deal of diversity, it is important that each OSC has the knowledge, training and capabilities to manage the resources, logistical needs and safety of the incident. This can differ greatly -- as an example - a weather related incident involving multiple power outages vs. a fire at a generation plant.

Many utilities are requiring their OSCs to take additional levels of ICS training (I100, 200, 700, 300/400 and the OSC "L" course) to strengthen their capacity and capabilities for serving in this role. Additional information on these courses is located here https://training.fema.gov/.

Planning Section Chief (PSC)

The Planning Section is a pivotal role in many utilities as they are typically involved with dispatch in activating the emergency response system, the Incident Management Team (IMT) and/or opening the Emergency Operations/Coordination Center (EOC/ECC). The Planning Section Chief works with the Incident Commander in support of the Field operations to facilitate the Planning "P" cycle which includes - collects, evaluates and displays incident information, prepares and documents incident action plans, tracks resources assigned to the incident, maintains incident documentation and develops plans for demobilization.

The PSC collects and provides situational awareness which is tantamount to meeting incident objectives and maintaining safety.

Logistics Section Chief (LSC)

The Logistics Section is responsible for ensuring that there are adequate resources including personnel, supplies and equipment and are typically employed in the Supply Chain business unity of the utility.

They are usually familiar with contractors, contracts, purchasing and shipping/delivery methodologies and in some cases involved in the request for mutual assistance assets.

One of the important elements for the LSC is to begin tracking resources with the PSC at incident onset. This will assist the Finance Section with costs and claims later or after the incident.

Finance/Administration Section Chief (FSC)

The Finance/ Administration function manages paying for the incident or event response. This includes all aspects of financial and cost analysis: contract negotiation, tracking personnel and equipment time, documenting and processing claims for accidents and injuries occurring at the incident and keeping a running tally of costs associated with the incident. The Finance/ Administration Section works closely with Logistics to contract for and procure the resources needed to manage the incident.

There are differences between the public and private sector utility in that the public sector utility may be eligible for FEMA reimbursement following a declared emergency while a private sector utility will likely be dependent on insurance.

Application of Incident Command in Utilities

As the saying goes, if you have met one utility – you have met one utility. Applying ICS would depend on the type of utility: Electric, Gas, Water, Fuel, etc.

ICS would apply to many of these areas:

- Corporate/Agency IMT
- ICS in the Field including Unified Command
- Transmission & Distribution (Electric, Gas, Water, Fuel)
- Generation (Plant, Pipeline, Petroleum Refinery)
- IT/Data Center
- Call Center

Conclusion

For additional Information:

- FEMA ICS Resource Center, https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/
- Additional ICS Training, https://training.fema.gov/