

Integrating Public Works Into Emergency Planning

Present State

Even though Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 requires our participation in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS), Public Works is often overlooked during emergency management planning, training and decision making.



Present State

- The concept of unified command and the broad acceptance of incident command are well ingrained in the fire service and (to a lesser extent) law enforcement.
- If Public Works wants to effectively contribute, we need to think of our organizations as first-responding agencies and align our planning and operations accordingly.
 - That means – among other things - learning, understanding and using ICS and the NIMS format.



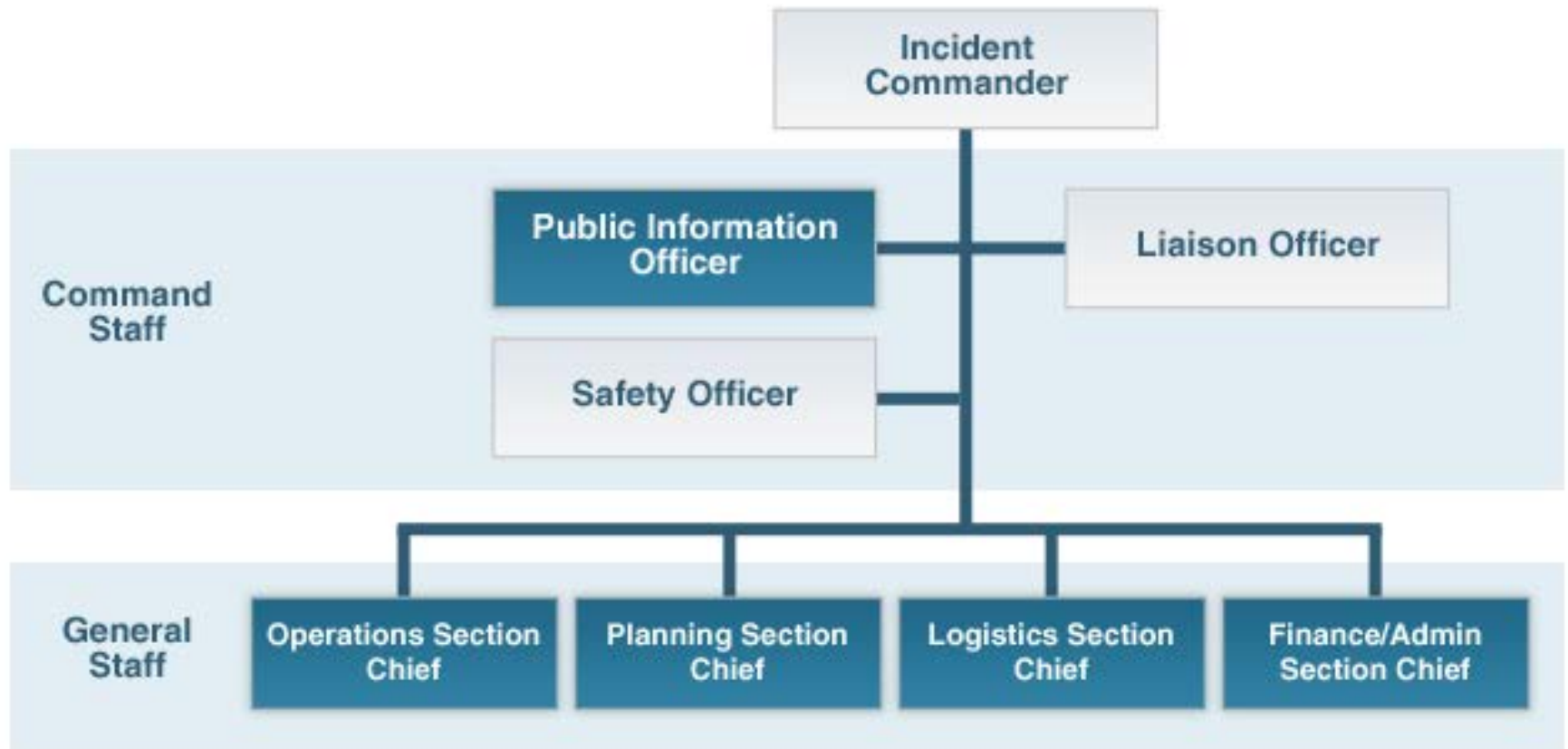
Incident Command Concepts

...the short version...



Incident Command System Concept #1

One person is in charge (the Incident Commander)



ICS Concept #1: The IC is in charge

- When we are in charge of an incident (such as a snow emergency or broken water line) we are responsible for formulating the strategy and tactics necessary to fix the problem.



ICS Concept #1: The IC is in Charge

- When we are NOT in charge of an incident we are responsible for:
 - Pre-thinking responses based upon what we know.
 - Taking stock of available resources.
 - Communicating up and down our chain of command.
 - What we know
 - What we should be ready to do



Incident Command System Concept #2

- One person is in charge (Incident Commander).
- Management by Objectives – the person in charge gets to decide what we are doing.



ICS Concept #2: Management by Objectives

- Goals are set for the coming operational period and are communicated in such a way that everyone understands what needs to be done.

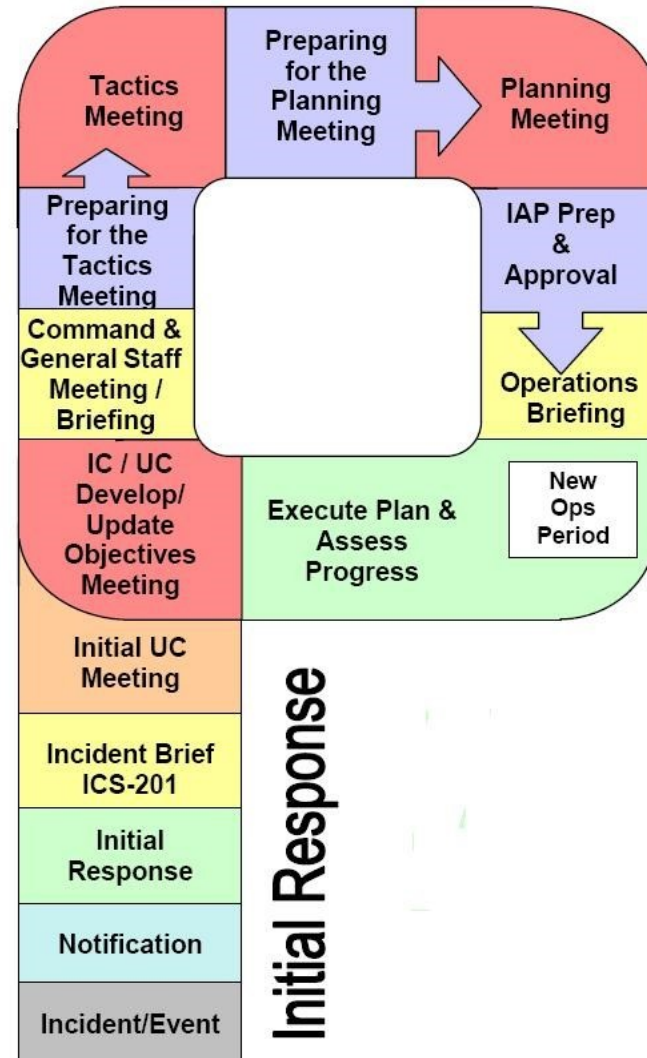
Example:

1. Ensure the safety of all deployed personnel.
2. Ensure roads are safe and passable for all first responder vehicles.
3. Assess debris conditions and implement removal plan.



ICS Concept #2: Management by Objectives

- The “Planning P” is the formalized process for writing the Incident Action Plan.



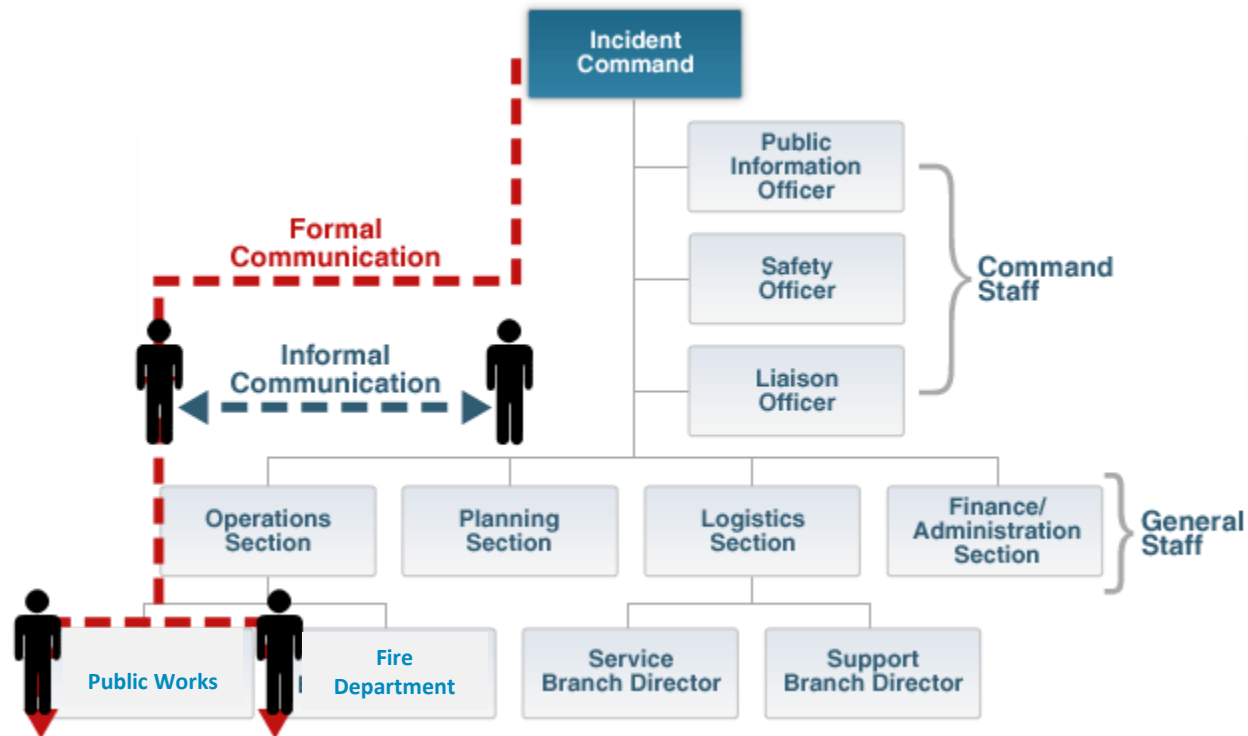
Incident Command System Concept #3

- One person is in charge (Incident Commander).
- Manage by objectives - person in charge gets to decide what we are doing.
- **Emphasis on communication and the chain of command.**



ICS Concept #3: Communication & Chain of Command

- Communication – especially within the chain of command - is critical.



Incident Command System Concept # 4

- One person is in charge (Incident Commander).
- Manage by objectives - person in charge gets to decide what we are doing.
- Emphasis on communication and chain of command.
- **We are prepared to act.**



ICS Concept #4: Prepared to Act

- “Pre-think” potential responses to what is known.
 - What might we need?
 - What do we have?
 - Take stock of available resources.
 - What needs to be in place if we are called?
 - Communicate up and down the Public Works chain of command.
- Lean forward
 - Be ready to go when we’re asked – *but not before.*



...and now back to our regularly
scheduled presentation...



Present State

- The task for Public Works leadership is to engage with our emergency management leaders as a first responding agency in every part of a unified, coherent response to both managed and unexpected events.
 - Tornadoes or other severe weather incidents.
 - Republican National Convention, 2014 All-Star Game, 2018 Super Bowl.
 - 35W bridge collapse
 - Fire/Rescue; Police; Public Works.
 - Protests / civil unrest.




Are we first responders?

Yes! Public Works personnel and their operations are *very* much like law enforcement and the fire service.



Are we first responders?

- Public Works departments have routine duties that put our people out in the community.
 - Just like cops patrol a sector, Public Works personnel are doing street maintenance, utility work or other tasks.
 - Public Works responds to emergencies.
 - Water main breaks; localized flooding.
 - We manage city-wide challenges in a way that mirrors initial response/first alarm protocol for police and fire.
 - Snow emergencies, downed trees following severe weather, damaged utilities.
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Are we first responders?

- Public Works staff (particularly operational personnel) are a lot like cops and firefighters.
 - They have a strong sense of service and mission.
 - They are paid to solve problems.
 - They are “doers” by nature.



The fact is, many emergencies have a large Public Works component

- Downed trees aren't a tree problem, they are a street problem.
- Snow emergencies can easily become a traffic-flow problem.
- Acts of civil unrest or terrorism can quickly become an infrastructure problem.
 - Blocked roads, vandalism to public structures, unsafe conditions.



What can Public Works offer to Emergency Managers?

- Fuller use of unified command.
 - Many emergency events -and most emergencies needing the activation of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) - will have a Public Works component.
- Easier access to, and command of, resources.
 - Public Works has access to stuff they need.
 - Wet-fueling capacity, generators, lights, heavy equipment, raw materials, vehicles and people – lots and lots of people.
- Public Works makes it easier to attain desired outcomes.
 - Many hands make light work.



Where do we start?

- Public Works lags behind in emergency response capacity because we are not intentionally made part of the process by the folks who understand it best.

That means we have some work to do.



What should we do?

- Public Works officials must work with emergency managers to learn the language and command structure of a unified emergency response.
- We need to learn ICS well enough to understand our role.
 - Otherwise we'll struggle with a trust gap and wind up shorting our cities the most helpful contributions of a ready workforce.
 - It's not enough to say "let us know how we can help."



What else should we do?

- It may seem obvious, but building relationships at the group level is essential.
 - Our first responding partners need to trust that we know what we are doing in the context of an emergency management scenario.



What's first?

- Ask your emergency manager to share their vision for an integrated response to your city's events / emergencies.



What's next?

- Ask to be a part of the emergency planning process.
 - Attend meetings and training on Incident Command, emergency management and continuity of operations.
 - Get to know the emergency management decision makers in your city or county.
 - Ask for a spot for Public Works in your EOC.
 - Participate in table-top exercises and debriefs.
 - Identify the people who will “own the process” in your agency.
 - Try to be 3 deep.




What's after that?

- Offer your help in the context of the ICS system.
 - This is important since Public Works personnel tend to want to self-deploy (which is rarely what is most helpful to the Incident Commander).
 - Public Works personnel have a strong sense of service and pride. They will want to do *something* – especially in an emergency.



What would be helpful?

- Engage staff in “pre-thinking” potential responses based on what is known.
 - “Could we hold two operators if we needed to?”
 - “How many generators do we have available?”
 - “How quickly can we put a crew together to do x?”
 - Lean forward.
 - Help folks understand that “being ready” is different than “sitting around.”
 - Communicate up and down the Public Works chain of command.
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Next Steps...

- Ask the emergency management team to request outcomes - *not to* direct activities at the tactical level.
 - This is where trust building comes in.
 - No one would tell the cops how to secure a scene during a major fire.
 - Work with the emergency management team to allow Public Works to accomplish the task that's been asked of them.



Example:

Strategic Need – Clear Streets

- A common mistake is calling for a resource without any context.
 - “I need some heavy equipment on the 3800 block of Dupont.”
 - That’s sort of like saying, “I need some fire trucks on the 3800 block of Dupont.”
- Instead, help emergency management understand how to ask for the outcome they seek.
 - “I need downed trees moved street-side on the 3800 block of Dupont.”
 - “I need lighting for at least the next 12 hours on the west side of City Hall.”



What else?

- Don't allow "Bob" to respond directly to resource requests.
- Encourage emergency management to cycle requests through a designated point of contact (like they do for everything else).
 - This is a learning process for emergency management as much as Public Works.
 - There is a chain of command in Public Works just like in fire or law enforcement (or at least there should be.)
 - Don't enable bad ICS behavior by not using the chain of command.




What else?

- Getting your people to lean forward on an event decreases their response time .
- Having the IC send requests through the proper channels increases the likelihood of them getting what they actually need.



Trust-building early pays dividends later

- By making Public Works a part of the planning and training process we are *far* more likely to deliver the needed help when and where it is required.
 - You may even find your people “leaning forward” on major events without having to be asked.
 - Fuel stand-by
 - Barricade staging, etc.
 - You will also be able to explain why a request cannot be filled (rather than leaving the IC with the feeling that the request was ignored altogether.)
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Final Thoughts

- Public Works can make all the difference in a City's ability to handle planned and unplanned events.
- Our personnel are primed to help and possess skills and expertise vital to mustering a response to even the worst scenarios.



Final Thoughts

- Mastering the Incident Command System (ICS) and understanding our role in a unified response framework is crucial to delivering on the “Public Works promise” of making our cities and counties healthy, livable and safe.



Your Thoughts?

