



THE FLYNT GROUP INC.

ACTIONABLE KNOWLEDGE®

■ **Bundling Arrows:**
Making a Business Case for Adopting an Incident Command System (ICS)



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Flynt Group White Paper

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“The fears and sorrows of this moment are so heavy; they can break us if we try to bear them alone. But if we are bundled together, if we stick together, we are unbreakable and shall do far more than merely survive; we shall overcome.”

~ Rabbi Marc Gellman, Prayer for America Service, Yankee Stadium, September 24, 2001

Proper response to a crisis depends on effective leaders. Without a proven management framework, leaders risk not being able to make the right decisions at the right time.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Incident Command System (ICS) organizes incident management by integrating facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications within a unified structure. The ICS is a recognized best practice used by both the public and private sectors for emergency management, nationally.

We hope that this Flynt Group White Paper informs your team’s discussions and contributes to making the business case for tailoring ICS to fit your organization’s unique requirements for crisis management. Flynt Group has extensive experience in delivering tailored, comprehensive programs to mitigate the full spectrum of risk, globally. We can assist you with crisis management planning, training and exercise support, equipping you to protect your organization’s personnel, assets, and operations.

Flynt Group’s mission is to equip our clients with *Actionable Knowledge*® to wisely manage their risk positions and achieve their goals across a broad spectrum of hazards and threats. Should we be able to provide further information, please contact us at 816.243.0044, or via email at Info@FlyntGroup.com.

Sincerely,

Bill Flynt, Ph.D., LTC (R)
President
The Flynt Group, Inc.
“Actionable Knowledge”®



Overview of the Incident Command System (ICS)

The ICS is a component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), a comprehensive framework enabling a coordinated emergency response across organizational boundaries.¹ The key components of NIMS are: preparedness, communications and information management, resource management, command and management, and ongoing management and maintenance.²

The ICS facilitates coordination among responding agencies with standard processes for incident management. Central to the ICS system is the ability to integrate first responders, all levels of government, and the private sector into a unified organizational framework that promotes quick and efficient response. ICS is flexible, and applies to a wide variety of crisis incidents, ranging from an Active Shooter to regional disasters. Long adopted by federal, state, and local governments, ICS is a proven best practice also adopted by the private sector and nongovernmental organizations to manage emergencies and seamlessly integrate with mutually supporting organizations.

The Incident Command System:

- **Enables effective coordination**
- **Establishes defined processes**
- **Integrates responding agencies**
- **Is a scalable, proven best practice**

Without a validated incident management system, emergency response is unsynchronized, lacks accountability, and is characterized by undefined chains of command and ambiguous control systems. Without common terminology and compatible systems, communication between responding elements is problematic. Further, without an ICS, responders lack a common, flexible management structure enabling delineation of responsibilities and controlling task execution.

Corporations adopting an ICS-based framework mitigate these deficiencies and are consequently better able to protect their personnel, assets and operations in a crisis. In doing so, firms can expect to benefit from both a tangible and intangible return on investment due to a more efficient management of the crisis, in turn preserving life, limiting loss, and enhancing the public's and employees' regard for the company's capabilities and reputation.

Leveraging the ICS framework within a corporate emergency response program is a more efficient and cost-effective proposition than establishing a proprietary solution. This approach reduces programmatic costs while mitigating risk - a significant benefit that provides return on investment.

ICS Description

ICS achieves its standardization across diverse agencies through use of a common terminology.³ This terminology assists in defining the cross-cutting functions and the organizations' specific

¹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Incident Management System (NIMS), 2008, http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/NIMS_core.pdf, 31 August 2012.

² *Ibid*, 7.

³ *Ibid*. The NIMS/ICS terminology addresses organizational functions, resource descriptions, and incident facilities.



roles and relationships in a collective response. All responders and agencies are “speaking the same language,” increasing the efficiency and speed of response operations.

The ICS framework coordinates crisis management across 14 organizing elements:⁴

Standardization	Integrated communications
Modularity	Establishment and transfer of command
Management by objectives	Chain of command and unity of command
Incident action planning	Unified command
Ensuring manageable span of control	Accountability
Establishment of support facilities and locations	Dispatch/deployment procedures
Comprehensive resource management	Information and intelligence management

The Incident Command System is flexible and focused on defined outcomes. From setting strategic objectives to documenting tactical lessons learned, the ICS provides a standard approach that can be tailored to each incident. Modular in nature, the command structure of a response task force can be adjusted to meet the scale and complexity of the incident. This ensures a “right-sized” span of control promoting responsiveness and enabling a minimum of hierarchy in decisionmaking. Use of Incident Action Plans (IAP) to specify incident objectives, activities to be completed, and approved timelines establishes the common framework communicating the Incident Commander’s objectives to operational and support elements.

The ICS tenets of unity of command and rapidly establishing a clear chain of command clarify reporting relationships and reduce friction if leadership from responding agencies issue conflicting directives. ICS mandates establishment of a chain of command early in the response. Similarly, the tenet of unity of command is enhanced within the ICS through designation of supervisors across the chain of command. Dependent on the scale or type of the incident, ICS provides for a unified area or functional command approach, bringing together all agencies and responding elements under a single leader without affecting internal agency authority or responsibility.⁵ This single point of contact to the capabilities and resources of a government response assists corporate liaison efforts, and mitigates friction caused when coordinating with multiple entities that are not acting in concert.

Characteristics of the ICS framework, such as the flexible nature of its command approach, can be adopted by a corporation and tuned to its specific culture, environment, and requirements. This speeds the planning and implementation of a crisis management program that is proven, saving time, money, and effort. There will be a requirement to tailor certain aspects of ICS to one’s corporation, but it does not have to be reinvented.

The establishment of support facilities and locations is an excellent example of the ICS’ approach to comprehensive resource management. In a major crisis, such as a hurricane, not only could supply chains be interrupted, the logistical lines of communication (e.g., rail, air, interstate, and water transportation) may be unavailable. The ICS framework addresses this contingency by

⁴ *Ibid*, 46.

⁵ *Ibid*, 48.



planning and establishing operational support facilities to assist in recovering the supply chains and the logistical lines of communication. This focus on the supply chain and logistics could mean the difference between staying in business despite disruptions, or closing the company's doors due to an inability to obtain materials or deliver products in the crisis' aftermath.

Examples of support facilities and locations include incident command posts, equipment and vehicle assembly areas, supply depots, and mass casualty collection points. Resource management is critical to effective incident response, and the ICS approach equips a company with a common operating picture for available and planned personnel, equipment, supplies, and facilities protecting the delivery of required logistics. This ensures that corporate resources allocated to the firm's response team are efficiently applied and accounted for.

Information drives the operations of the incident command team. The ICS enables development of a unified communications plan and processes. Effective knowledge management ensures necessary intelligence concerning the incident is properly collected and disseminated to all elements having a requirement. Interoperability of communications equipment and systems are essential. It is important to identify requirements early in the planning, procurement, training and exercise processes, before a crisis, to ensure all elements can communicate with each other.



US Army Photo

The Role of Executives within the ICS

Executives have a key role in a major crisis. They are uniquely equipped to inform government on priorities in restoring critical services. The command structure may be led by government officials, but private sector executives should be prepared to assist them in setting priorities and coordinating available resources to recover the community.⁶ In a major disaster, executives can assist the Incident Commander in understanding the private sector's situation, assets and operations. As a case in point, only a utility understands how to restore their electric power system. In a collective response with government agencies, private sector executives should be prepared to advise the Incident Commander on how best to engage the substantial capabilities government brings to best support the community's recovery. This is especially true with critical infrastructures, like electricity, water, oil, natural gas, and telecommunications.

Most importantly, executives provide visible private sector leadership. Executives are not only the face of their company, they are the leaders of their community and critical to reassuring the public. Because of this, they are essential to any strategic communications effort during a crisis.

⁶ *Ibid*, 66.

Executive Sponsorship Key

To be most effective, an ICS framework should be integrated into the enterprise's crisis management planning. At the enterprise level, executive sponsorship is critical to ensuring an ICS is adopted and implemented. Without strong executive sponsorship, the requisite corporate policies, plans, procedures and protocols may not be established and the supporting training, exercises and resourcing may not be provided.

Implementation of the ICS in a corporation requires executive oversight, as well. Evidence of successful ICS integration throughout an enterprise includes verification of function- and location-based emergency operations policies, plans, procedures and protocols based on ICS principles; training for corporate first responders, supervisors and managers; and, participation in regular validation exercises.

Conclusion

The ICS provides corporations with a proven incident response management structure to use as a model. Adopting an ICS approach to crisis management tailored to the corporation's requirements will save time, money, effort, and perhaps even lives.

Executive sponsorship is critical to ensuring the establishment and enforcement of ICS-based corporate policies necessary to develop the policies, plans, procedures and protocols. Executive visibility of corporate ICS training and exercises validates corporate emergency response plans to protect personnel, assets and operations.

Should you wish to discuss your organization's requirements in developing a crisis management program, please contact us at Info@FlyntGroup.com.

