
UNIT 6: UNIFIED COMMAND

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Unit Objectives

At the end of this unit, the participants should be able to:

- Define Unified Command.
 - List the advantages of Unified Command.
 - Identify the primary features of Unified Command.
 - Differentiate between command and coordination.
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Scope

- Unit Introduction
 - Unified Command
 - Unified Command: Benefits
 - Unified Command: Features
 - Unified Command: Organization
 - Unified Command: Strategies
 - Coordination
 - Unit Summary
-

Methodology

The instructors will review the objectives for this unit and then provide an overview of Unified Command. An activity involving a hazardous material spill will be used to illustrate the benefits of Unified Command.

Next the instructors will present the benefits, features, and organizational structures related to Unified Command. The instructors will discuss incident coordination and the Joint Information Center, or JIC. Participants will then work in teams to apply Unified Command principles in an activity. Two quick-reference guides are included in this unit—ICS Organization and Position Titles—that participants can use on the job.

The instructors will then transition to the next unit, which focuses on putting together the information learned in this course to prepare to implement ICS.

Materials

- PowerPoint visuals 6.1 – 6.13
 - Instructor Guide
 - PowerPoint slides and a computer display system
 - Student Manual
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Unit 6: Unified Command

Time Plan

A suggested time plan for this unit is shown below. More or less time may be required, based on the experience level of the group.

Topic	Time
Unit Introduction	5 minutes
Activity: Optimal Strategy	10 minutes
Unified Command: Definition and Benefits	5 minutes
Unified Command: Features	2 minutes
Unified Command: Organization	5 minutes
Unified Command: Strategies	5 minutes
Coordination	5 minutes
Activity: Unified Command	25 minutes
Unit Summary	3 minutes
Total Time	1 hour 5 minutes

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 6.1



Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

The previous units covered the Incident Command Systems (ICS) fundamentals. This unit introduces you to a more advanced concept, called **Unified Command**.

Unified Command:

- Applies ICS in incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies.
- Enables institutions and agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 6.2

Unit Objectives

- Define Unified Command.
- List the advantages of Unified Command.
- Identify the primary features of Unified Command.
- Differentiate between command and coordination.

Unit List

- ✓ Course Overview
- ✓ ICS Overview
- ✓ ICS Features & Principles
- ✓ Incident Commander & Command Staff Functions
- ✓ General Staff Functions
- **Unified Command**
- Course Summary – Putting It All Together

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Visual 6.2
Unified Command

Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define Unified Command.
- List the advantages of Unified Command.
- Identify the primary features of Unified Command.
- Differentiate between command and coordination.


UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 6.3

Activity: Optimal Strategy

Instructions: Working individually . . .

1. Review the scenario presented in the Student Manual and select the optimal strategy that provides the best solution.
2. Be prepared to share your answer in 5 minutes.



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Visual 6.3
Unified Command

Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

Activity Purpose: To reinforce participants' understanding of the importance of Unified Command.

Instructions: Working individually:

1. Read the scenario below and select the optimal strategy that provides the best solution.
2. Be prepared to share your answer in 5 minutes.

Time: 10 minutes

Debrief Instructions:

1. Monitor the time. Notify the participants when 2 minutes remain.
2. Ask for volunteers to present their answers.

Scenario: Response to a hazardous materials spill involves hazmat cleanup crews, law enforcement agencies to conduct evacuations and perimeter control, and public works responders to help with cleanup and rerouting traffic.

Select the optimal strategy.

- ☐ Divide the incident along functional lines so that each agency can establish its own ICS organization with well-defined areas of responsibilities.
- ☐ Create a single ICS incident structure that allows for an effective multiagency approach.

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 6.3 (Continued)

Allow the participants time to select a strategy. Facilitate a discussion. If not mentioned by the participants, make the following points:

Unified Command: The preferred solution is to **create a single ICS incident structure with a built-in process for an effective and responsible multijurisdictional or multiagency approach**. This solution became Unified Command.

Separate Commands: The other option of dividing the incident into separate command structures may be the simplest political solution but is often not effective. If separate commands are used, there is a danger of:

- Critical life-safety incident objectives being missed because each command assumes that another one was taking responsibility.
- Duplication of efforts and competing for the same scarce resources.
- Inconsistent messages being reported to the media and community.

UNIFIED COMMAND: DEFINITION AND BENEFITS

Visual 6.4



Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

Unified Command:

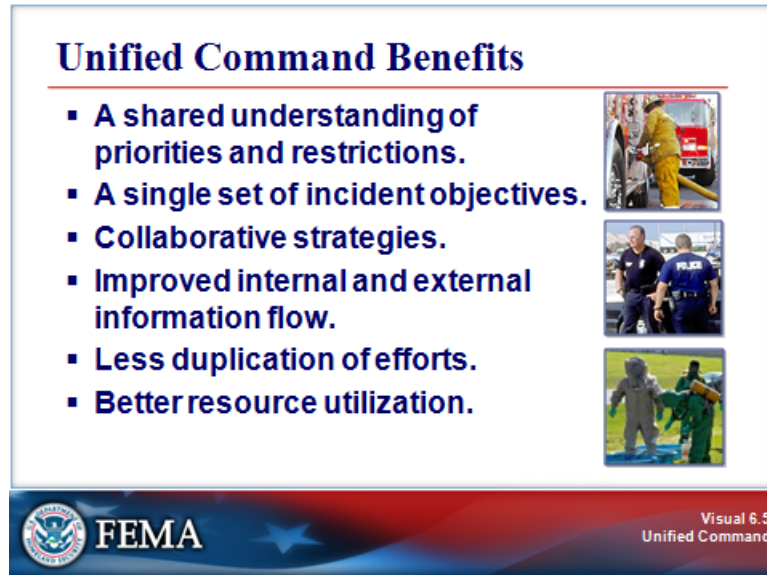
- Applies ICS in incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or organizations.
- Enables institutions and agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.

The Incident Commanders within the Unified Command make joint decisions and speak as one voice. Any differences are worked out within the Unified Command.

Unity of command is maintained. Each responder reports to a single supervisor within his or her area of expertise. Within a Unified Command, the police officer would not tell the firefighters how to do their job.

UNIFIED COMMAND: DEFINITION AND BENEFITS

Visual 6.5



Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

In a Unified Command, institutions and responding agencies blend into an integrated, unified team. A unified approach results in:

- A shared understanding of priorities and restrictions.
- A single set of incident objectives.
- Collaborative strategies.
- Improved internal and external information flow.
- Less duplication of efforts
- Better resource utilization.

UNIFIED COMMAND: FEATURES

Visual 6.6



Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

Review the following features of Unified Command:

- **A Single Integrated Incident Organization:** As a team effort, Unified Command overcomes much of the inefficiency and duplication of effort that can occur when agencies from different functional and geographic jurisdictions, or agencies at different levels of government, operate without a common system or organizational framework.
- **Co-located (Shared) Facilities:** In a Unified Command, incident facilities are co-located or shared. There is one single Incident Command Post.
- **One Set of Incident Objectives, Single Planning Process, and Incident Action Plan:** Unified Command uses one set of incident objectives and a single planning process, and produces one Incident Action Plan (IAP). The planning process for Unified Command is similar to the process used on single-jurisdiction incidents.

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UNIFIED COMMAND: FEATURES

Visual 6.6 (Continued)

Continue reviewing the following features of Unified Command:

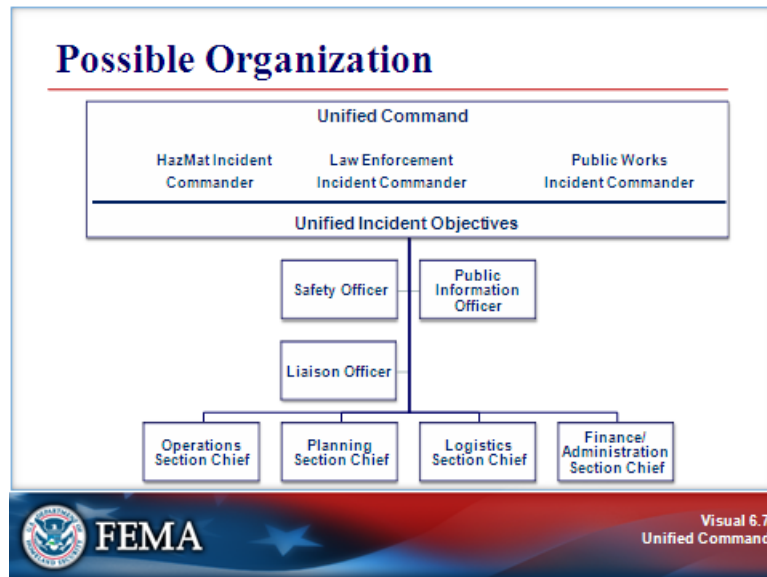
- **Integrated General Staff:** Integrating multijurisdictional and/or multiagency personnel into various other functional areas may be beneficial. For example:
 - In Operations and Planning, Deputy Section Chiefs can be designated from an adjacent jurisdiction.
 - In Logistics, a Deputy Logistics Section Chief from another agency or jurisdiction can help to coordinate incident support.

Incident Commanders within the Unified Command must concur on the selection of the General Staff Section Chiefs. The Operations Section Chief must have full authority to implement the tactics within the Incident Action Plan.

- **Coordinated Process for Resource Ordering:** The Incident Commanders within the Unified Command work together to establish resource ordering procedures that allow for:
 - Deployment of scarce resources to meet high-priority objectives.
 - Potential cost savings through agreements on cost sharing for essential services.

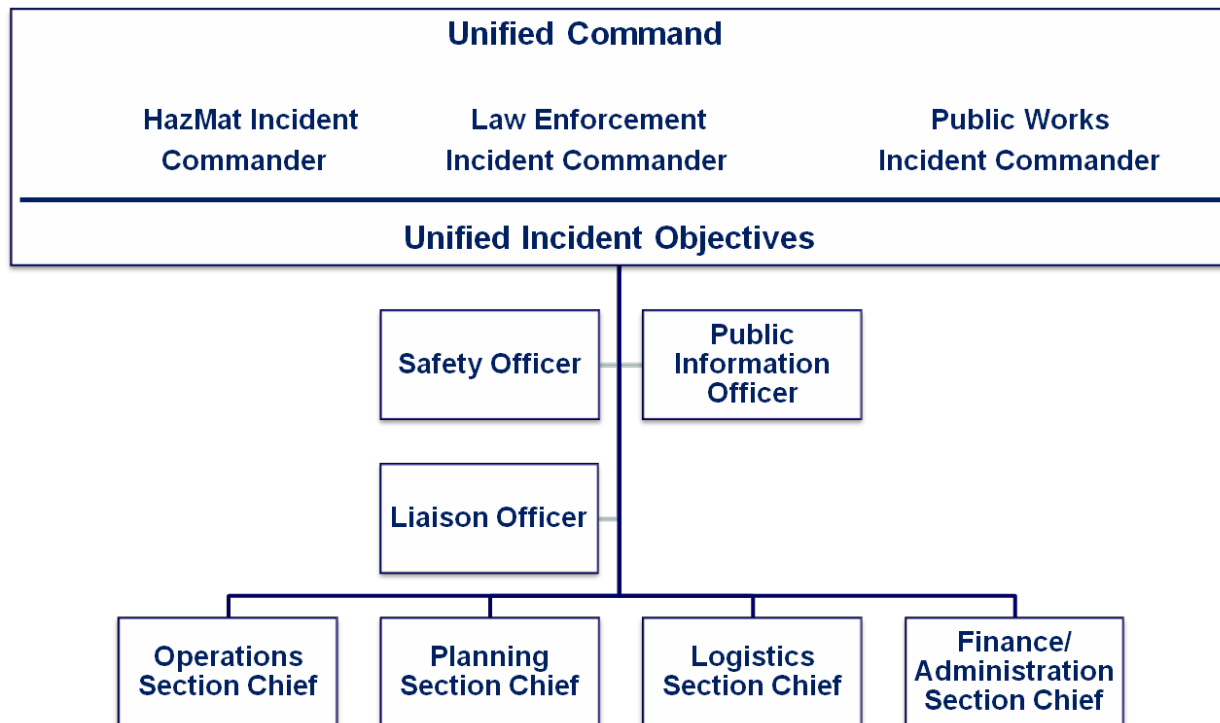
UNIFIED COMMAND: ORGANIZATION

Visual 6.7



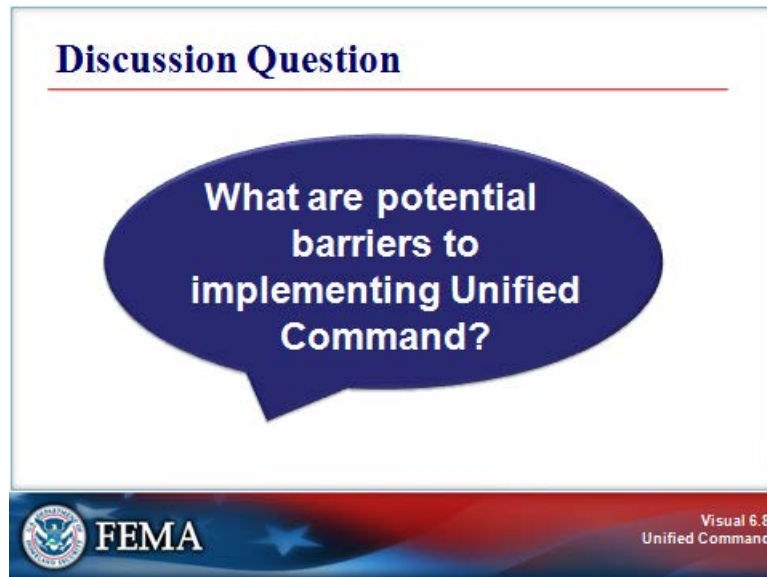
Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

Review the possible Unified Command organizational structure for a hazardous materials incident provided on the visual.



UNIFIED COMMAND: ORGANIZATION

Visual 6.8



Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

Ask the participants: What are some potential barriers to implementing Unified Command?

Then follow up by asking the participants: How can you overcome these barriers?


Acknowledge the participants' responses. Proceed to the next slide for a discussion of ways to overcome barriers and make Unified Command work.


UNIFIED COMMAND: STRATEGIES

Visual 6.9

Making Unified Command Work

- Include key community response personnel.
- Make sure that first responders know their legal and ethical responsibilities.
- Learn ICS.
- Train and exercise together.



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Visual 6.9
Unified Command

Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

For Unified Command to be used successfully, it is important that institutions and agencies prepare by:

- Including key community response personnel in your institution's planning process.
- Making sure that first responders know what the institution's legal and ethical responsibilities are during an event.
- Learning ICS so that they can blend into the response structure.
- Train and exercise together.

COORDINATION

Visual 6.10

Incident Coordination



Coordination activities include:

- Establishing policy.
- Collecting information.
- Establishing priorities.
- Resolving resource issues.
- Facilitating support.
- Synchronizing public messages.

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Unified Command

Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

Coordination includes the activities that ensure that the onsite ICS organization receives the information, resources, and support needed to achieve the incident objectives. Coordination takes place in a number of entities and at all levels of government.

Examples of coordination activities include:

- Establishing policy based on interactions with agency executives, other agencies, and stakeholders.
- Collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information to support the establishment of a common operating picture.
- Establishing priorities among incidents.
- Resolving critical resource issues.
- Facilitating logistics support and resource tracking.
- Synchronizing public information messages to ensure everyone is speaking with one voice.


COORDINATION


Visual 6.11

Joint Information Center

The Joint Information Center (JIC):

- May be established to coordinate public information activities.
- Serves as the central point of contact for all news media.



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Visual 6.11
Unified Command

Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

As mentioned previously, an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) can serve as a coordination entity. Another coordination entity is the Joint Information Center (JIC). The JIC:

- May be established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities.
- Serves as the central point of contact for all news media. When possible, public information officials from all participating agencies should co-locate at the JIC.

JICs may be established at various levels of government or at incident sites.


ACTIVITY

Visual 6.12

Activity: Unified Command

Instructions: Working as a team . . .

1. Review the scenario and questions presented in the Student Manual.
2. Refer to the quick-reference guides in the Student Manual as needed.
3. Select a spokesperson and be prepared to present your work in 20 minutes.



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Visual 6.12
Unified Command

Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

Activity Purpose: To reinforce participants' understanding of the Unified Command structure.

Instructions: Working as a team:

1. Review the scenario and questions presented in the Student Manual.
2. Refer to the quick-reference guides in the Student Manual as needed.
3. Select a spokesperson and be prepared to share your answers in 20 minutes.

Time: 25 minutes

Debrief Instructions:

1. Monitor the time. Notify the participants when 5 minutes remain.
2. Ask one team to present who they would include in the Unified Command structure.
3. Ask the other teams if they had different responses. Compare the similarities and differences among the teams. There is no one correct answer.
4. Next, ask a different team to present their answer to the next question. After the team presents, ask the other teams to comment. Continue with this process until all teams have presented.
5. Summarize the key learning points. Make sure to provide any needed guidance or correct any misunderstandings or inaccurate application of ICS principles and concepts.

ACTIVITY

Visual 6.12 (Continued)

Scenario: A football team is returning home from a State tournament. Their bus is involved in an accident on the bridge that marks the county line.

- Most of the bus is in Franklin County.
- A small part of the bus is in Revere County (their home county).

Which agencies/organizations should be included in the Unified Command structure?

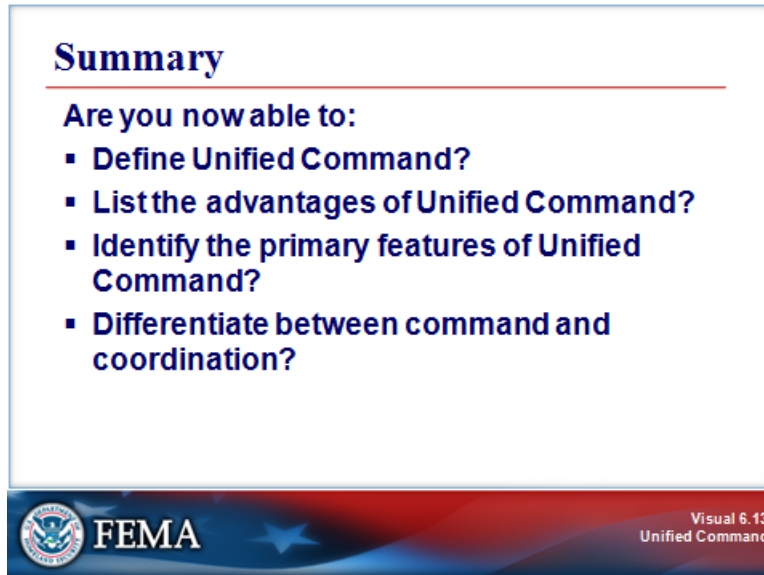
Which ICS positions/Sections will be activated?

How many Operations Section Chiefs will be assigned representing each of the agencies?

What is one example of an incident objective that the Unified Command group might establish?

UNIT SUMMARY

Visual 6.13



Instructor Notes: Present the following key points.

Are you now able to:

- Define Unified Command?
- List the advantages of Unified Command?
- Identify the primary features of Unified Command?
- Differentiate between command and coordination?

The purpose of this unit was to familiarize you with Unified Command features. Additional ICS training is required to prepare you to implement Unified Command.

Remember that Unified Command:

- Applies ICS in incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies.
- Enables institutions and agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.

Ask if anyone has any questions about anything covered in this unit.

The next unit focuses on putting together the information learned in this course to prepare to implement ICS.