UNIT 6: UNIFIED COMMAND

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UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 6.1

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

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

Key Points

Activity Purpose: To reinforce your 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.

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)

Your Notes:

UNIFIED COMMAND: DEFINITION AND BENEFITS

Visual 6.4

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

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

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.

(Continued on the next page.)

UNIFIED COMMAND: FEATURES

Visual 6.6 (Continued)

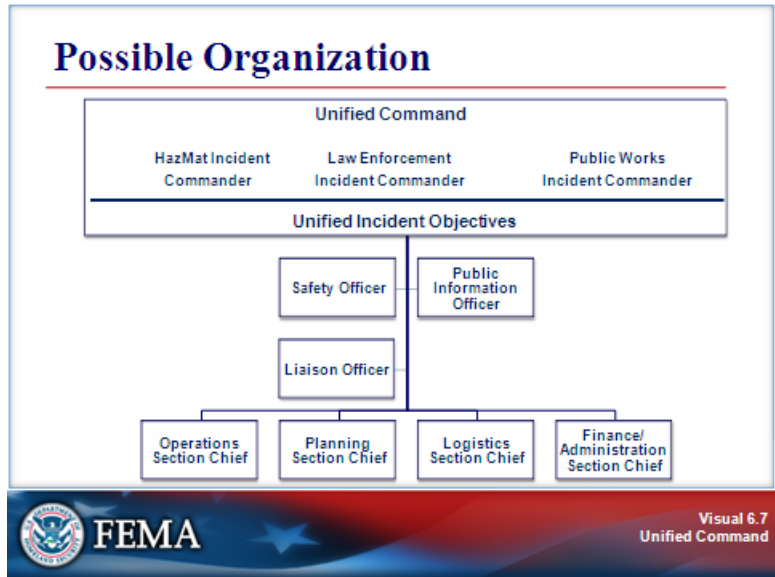Continue reviewing the following features of Unified Command:

- **Integrated General Staff:** Integrating multijurisdictional and/or multiagency personnel into various other functional areas may be beneficial. For example:

  - o In Operations and Planning, Deputy Section Chiefs can be designated from an adjacent jurisdiction.
  - o 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:

  - o Deployment of scarce resources to meet high-priority objectives.
  - o Potential cost savings through agreements on cost sharing for essential services.
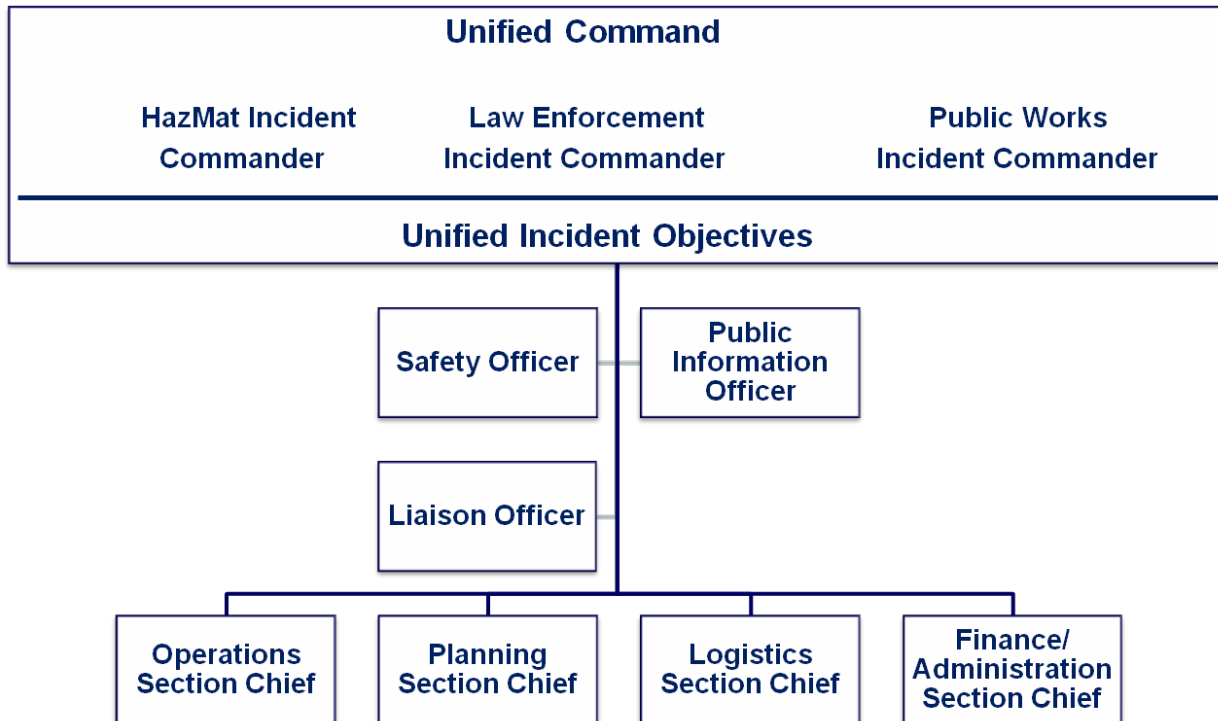
UNIFIED COMMAND: ORGANIZATION
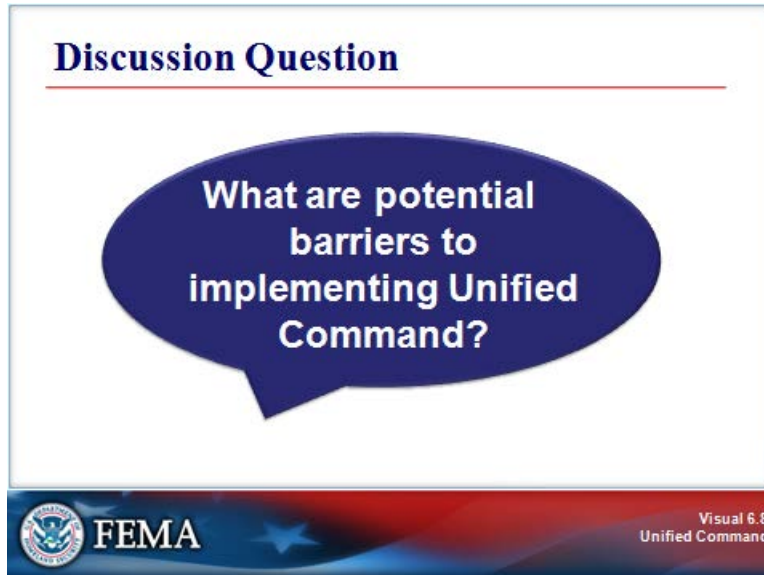
Visual 6.7

Key Points

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

UNIFIED COMMAND: ORGANIZATION

Visual 6.8

Key Points

What are some potential barriers to implementing Unified Command?

How can you overcome these barriers?

UNIFIED COMMAND: STRATEGIES

Visual 6.9

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

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

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

Key Points

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

Instructions: Working as a team:

1. Review the scenario and questions presented on the next page.
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.

ACTIVITY

Visual 6.12 (Continued)

<u>**Scenario:**</u> 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

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.

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