
Unit 4: Incident/Event Assessment & Agency Guidance in Establishing Incident Objectives



**Unit 4:
Incident/Event Assessment &
Agency Guidance for Establishing
Incident Objectives**



Visual Description: Unit Introduction

Key Points

This unit focuses on the assessment of incidents/events and on developing incident objectives. It includes a discussion of steps in the planning process that are completed as the assessment is done and initial incident objectives are established.



Unit Objectives

- Describe methods and tools used to assess incident/event complexity.
- Describe types of agency(s) policies and guidelines that influence management of incident or event activities.
- Describe the process for developing incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.
- Describe the steps in transferring and assuming incident command
- As part of an exercise, develop incident objectives for a simulated incident.

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Visual 4.2

Visual Description: Unit Objectives

Key Points

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

- Describe methods and tools used to assess incident/event complexity.
- Describe types of agency(s) policies and guidelines that influence management of incident or event activities.
- Describe the process for developing incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.
- Describe the steps in transferring and assuming incident command.
- As part of an exercise, develop incident objectives for a simulated incident.

These objectives were developed by the National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG) and were revised in coordination with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2005.



Activity: Incidents vs. Events

Instructions:

1. Review the definitions below.
 - **Incident:** An unexpected occurrence that requires immediate response actions through an ICS organization.
 - **Event:** A future activity that will include the activation of an ICS organization.
2. Working as a team, identify the differences and similarities between planning for incidents versus events. Record your answers on chart paper.
3. Choose a spokesperson and be ready to present your answers to the large group in 10 minutes.

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Visual 4.3

Visual Description: Activity: Incidents vs. Events

Key Points

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to identify the differences and similarities between planning for incidents versus events.

Instructions:

1. Review the definitions below.
 - **Incident:** An unexpected occurrence that requires immediate response actions through an ICS organization.
 - **Event:** A future activity that will include the activation of an ICS organization.
2. Working as a team, identify the differences and similarities between planning for incidents versus events. Record your answers on chart paper.
3. Choose a spokesperson and be ready to present your answer to the large group in 10 minutes.



Planning for Incidents

The incident planners must take into account the following factors:

- Time criticality
- Unstable, changing situation
- Potential rapid expansion of incident and response
- Incomplete communications and information
- Lack of experience managing expanding incidents

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Visual 4.4

Visual Description: Planning for Incidents

Key Points

Unplanned incidents are by far more common than events. Incidents are often characterized by several important factors that need to be considered when planning for the incident:

- Time is of the essence (time criticality).
- The situation is unstable.
- The incident has the potential to expand rapidly.
- Communications and information may be incomplete.
- Staff on scene may be experienced in control measures, but are usually junior in the organization and not necessarily experienced in managing expanding incidents.

This kind of situation requires immediate organizing actions that must be taken to ensure effective incident management and control. It is obvious, but too often overlooked, that the number of considerations will increase as the situation deteriorates and the incident grows.

The first responding units to the incident must take the initial steps to provide organization for the incident. While that may appear obvious, the longer term importance of these initial decisions is often overlooked.



Planning for Events

The planner of an event should know:

- Type of event
- Location, size, expected duration, history, and potential in order to project incident objectives
- Number of agencies involved
- Single or multijurisdiction
- Command staff needs
- Kind, type, number of resources required
- Projected aviation operations
- Staging Areas required
- Other facilities required
- Kind and type of logistical support needs
- Financial considerations
- Known limitations or restrictions
- Available communications

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Visual 4.5

Visual Description: Planning for Events

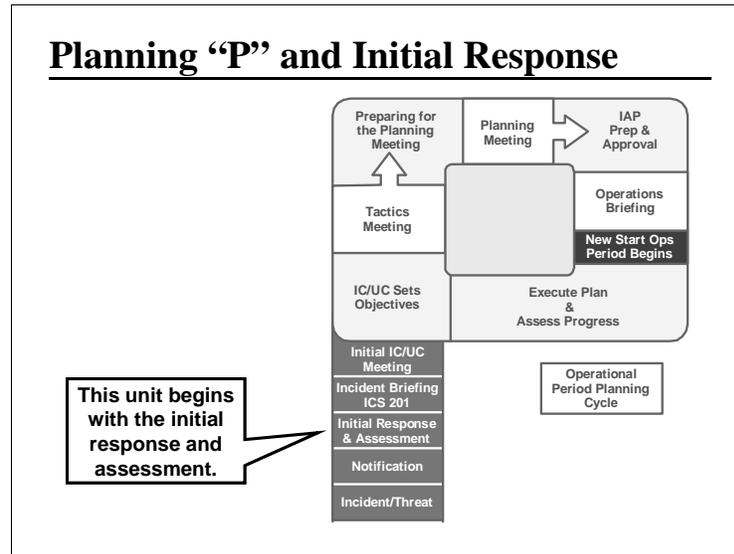
Key Points

The planner of an event should know the following:

- Type of event
- Location, size, expected duration, history, and potential in order to project incident objectives
- Number of agencies involved
- Single or multijurisdiction
- Command staff needs (public information, safety, and liaison)
- Kind, type, and number of resources required
- Projected aviation operations
- Staging Areas required
- Other facilities required
- Kind and type of logistical support needs (e.g., communications, food, medical)
- Financial considerations
- Known limitations or restrictions
- Available communications



Planning “P” and Initial Response



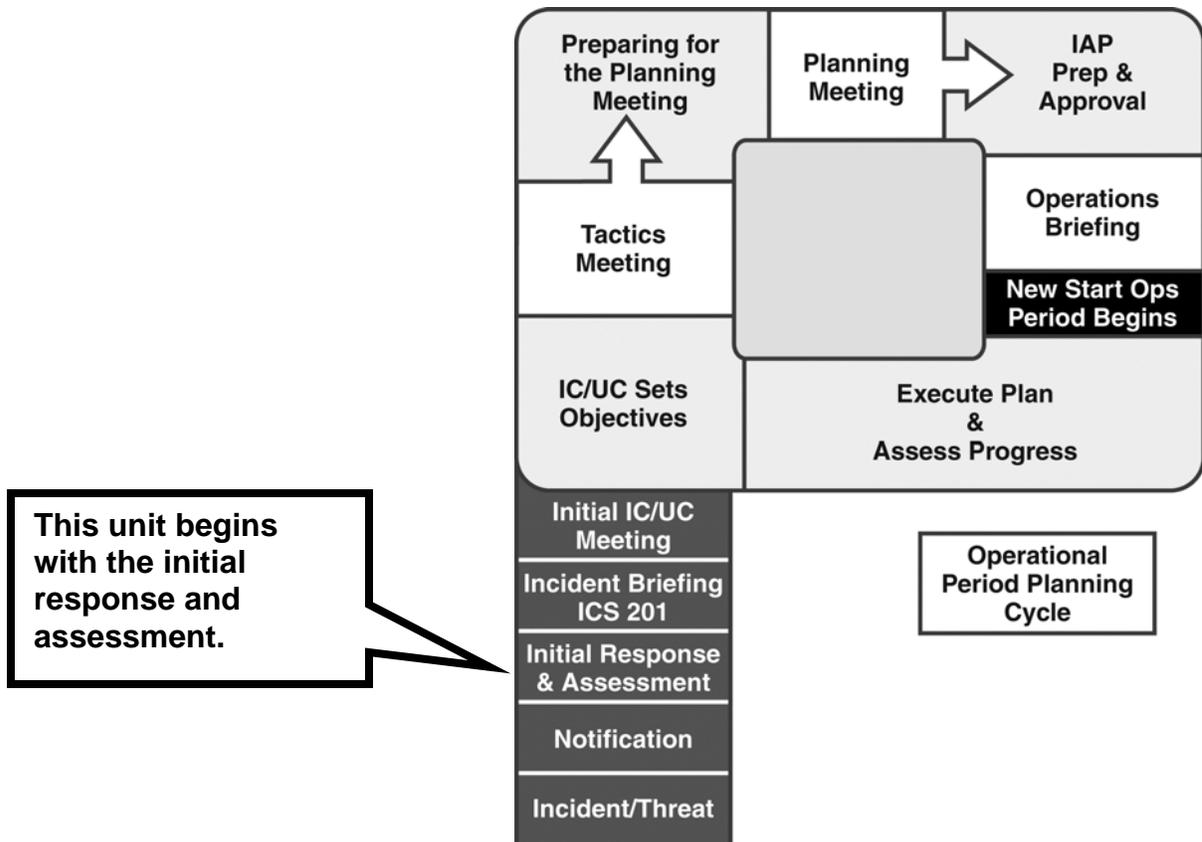
Visual Description: The Planning “P” and Initial Response

Key Points

Remember: The Planning “P” illustrates the process and steps involved in planning for an incident.

This unit involves the initial response and assessment as highlighted in the Planning “P” visual.

Refer to the larger version of this graphic shown on the following page.



Caption: The Planning "P" illustrates the incident planning process.

- The leg of the "P" describes the initial response period: Once the incident/threat begins, the steps are Notification, Initial Response & Assessment, Incident Briefing (ICS 201), and Initial Incident Command/Unified Command Meeting.
- At the top of the leg of the "P" is the beginning of the first operational planning period cycle. In this circular sequence, the steps are IC/UC Sets Objectives, Tactics Meeting, Preparing for the Planning Meeting, Planning Meeting, IAP Prep & Approval, and Operations Briefing.
- At this point a new operations period begins. The next step is Execute Plan & Assess Progress, after which the cycle begins again.

This unit begins with the initial response and assessment.



Initial Actions

What actions must the first responding units take to organize an incident?

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Visual 4.7

Visual Description: Initial Actions

Key Points

Answer the following question:



What actions must the first responding units take to organize an incident?



Initial Response Actions

Assessment and Safety

- Size up the situation.
- Determine if life is at risk.
- Ensure personnel safety.
- Identify environmental issues to address.

Planning and Resource Management

- Assume command and establish Incident Command Post.
- Establish immediate incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.
- Determine resource needs.
- Establish initial organization that maintains span of control.

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Visual 4.8

Visual Description: Initial Response Actions

Key Points

Note the importance of the initial actions by reviewing the following:

- Emergencies such as fires, searches, law enforcement operations, hazardous materials incidents, and emergency medical situations have different characteristics and require specially trained personnel. Yet they are quite similar in how they are approached from an incident management standpoint.
- For any incident, the person currently in charge (Incident Commander) must do at least the following:
 - Size up the situation. A thorough size-up will provide the Incident Commander with the information needed to make initial management decisions.
 - Determine if life is at immediate risk.
 - Ensure that personnel safety factors are taken into account.
 - Determine if there are any environmental issues that need to be addressed. For example, will a hazardous materials spill affect a nearby lake or stream? Is there a toxic plume that requires evacuation?

(Continued on next page.)

- Assume command and establish Incident Command Post.
- Establish immediate incident objectives, strategies, and tactics. The size-up should provide information about what needs to be done first to prevent loss of life or injury and to stabilize the situation. For small incidents, the initial Incident Action Plan (IAP) may be verbal and may cover the entire incident. For larger, more complex incidents, the initial IAP may cover the initial operating period. A written IAP will then be developed.
- Determine if there are enough resources of the right kind and type on scene or ordered. The incident objectives will drive resource requirements. What resources are required to accomplish the immediate incident objectives? If the right kind and type of resources are not on scene, the Incident Commander must order them immediately.
- Establish the initial organization that maintains span of control. At this point, the Incident Commander should ask: What organization will be required to execute the IAP and achieve the objectives? He or she should establish that organization, always keeping in mind safety and span-of-control concerns. Consider if span of control is or will soon approach practical limits. The span of control range of three to seven is to ensure safe and efficient utilization of resources.



Initial Response: Conduct a Size-Up

The first responder to arrive must assume command and size up the situation by determining:

- Nature and magnitude of the incident
- Hazards and safety concerns
 - Hazards facing response personnel and the public
 - Evacuation and warnings
 - Injuries and casualties
 - Need to secure and isolate the area
- Initial priorities and immediate resource requirements
- Location of Incident Command Post and Staging Area
- Entrance and exit routes for responders

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Visual 4.9

Visual Description: Initial Response: Conduct a Size-Up

Key Points

In an initial incident, a size-up is done to set the immediate incident objectives.

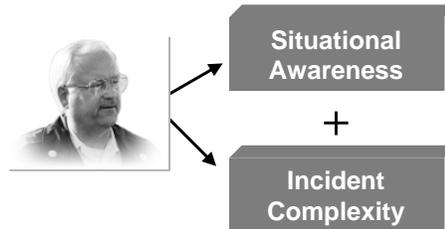
First responder to arrive must assume command and size up the situation by determining:

- Nature and magnitude of the incident
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 - Hazards facing response personnel and the public
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 - Injuries and casualties
 - Need to secure and isolate the area
- Initial priorities and immediate resource requirements
- Location of Incident Command Post and Staging Area
- Entrance and exit routes for responders



Initial Management Decisions

A thorough size-up provides information needed to make initial management decisions.



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Visual 4.10

Visual Description: Initial Management Decisions

Key Points

Size-up, or a clear understanding of an incident or event, is critical to determining incident objectives and strategies and applying tactics.

Many factors must be considered when performing this assessment, but the most important and all-encompassing factors are “situational awareness” and “incident complexity.”



Situational Awareness

Situational awareness is the perception of:

- What the incident is doing, and
- What you are doing in relation to the incident and your objectives.

Situational awareness involves the ability to predict:

- Changes in the incident, and
- Your future actions.

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Visual 4.11

Visual Description: Situational Awareness

Key Points

“Situational awareness” is the perception of what the incident is doing and what you are doing in relation to the incident and your objectives. It involves an awareness of potential incident behavior and the ability to predict where the incident, and you, will be in the future.



Situational Awareness Skills

- Identify problems/potential problems.
- Recognize the need for action (atypical situations).
- Do NOT ignore information discrepancies; rather, analyze discrepancies before proceeding.
- Seek and provide information before acting.
- Continue collecting information about the incident and assignments made.
- Assess your own task performance.
- Identify deviations from the expected.
- Communicate your situational awareness to all team members!

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Visual 4.12

Visual Description: Situational Awareness Skills

Key Points

Situational awareness depends both on individual perception and sharing it with the rest of the team, and involves these actions:

- Identify problems or potential problems.
- Recognize the need for action (atypical situations).
- Do not ignore information discrepancies; rather, analyze discrepancies before proceeding.
- Seek and provide information before acting.
- Continue collecting information about the incident and assignments made.
- Assess your own task performance.
- Identify deviations from the expected.
- Communicate your situational awareness to all team members!



Loss of Situational Awareness

Tunnel vision is an indicator of losing situational awareness.

How might you know if you are experiencing tunnel vision?

What causes tunnel vision? How can it be avoided?

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Visual 4.13

Visual Description: Loss of Situational Awareness

Key Points

When under stress, adrenaline in the body may shut down or reduce some body functions to be able to enhance others. Tunnel vision can occur on both physiological and psychological levels. Hearing and vision may become narrow to focus on the most immediate physical setting or needs. As one's ability to take in new information decreases, it can cause a decisionmaker to lose the "big picture" and miss important factors.

Answer the following questions:



How might you know if you are experiencing tunnel vision?



What causes tunnel vision? How can it be avoided?



Complexity Analysis Factors

- Impacts to life, property, and the economy
- Community and responder safety
- Potential hazardous materials
- Weather and other environmental influences
- Likelihood of cascading events
- Potential crime scene (including terrorism)
- Political sensitivity, external influences, and media relations
- Area involved, jurisdictional boundaries
- Availability of resources

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Visual 4.14

Visual Description: Complexity Analysis Factors

Key Points

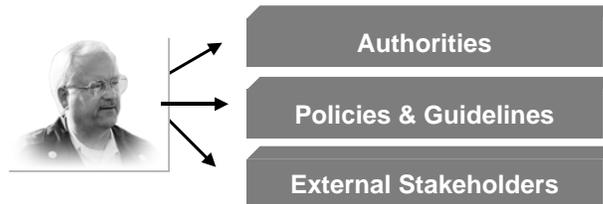
Complexity analysis is that combination of involved factors that affect the probability of control of an incident. Many factors determine the complexity of an incident, including:

- Impacts to life, property, and the economy.
- Community and responder safety.
- Potential hazardous materials.
- Weather and other environmental influences.
- Likelihood of cascading events.
- Potential crime scene (including terrorism).
- Political sensitivity, external influences, and media relations.
- Area involved and jurisdictional boundaries.
- Availability of resources.



Authorities, Policies, and External Stakeholders

In addition to the information collected during the size-up, the Incident Commander must take into account:



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Visual 4.15

Visual Description: Authorities, Policies, and External Stakeholders

Key Points

The Incident Commander must also be aware of authorities, policies, and external stakeholders as part of the incident size-up.

Agency policy can affect the establishment of incident objectives. All agencies develop policies and guidelines for accomplishing their responsibilities. The Incident Commander must be fully aware of agency policy including any limits of authority.

On the majority of incidents, agency policy is known by the Incident Commander because the incident occurs in his/her jurisdiction. These guidelines and policies may be for routine activities or for emergency activities, or both. All or some of these policies and guidelines may come to bear in the management of an incident or a planned event based upon the jurisdiction of an agency. Some agencies will require agency policies in writing on large incidents; others do not.

These policies, guidelines, and authorities may give direction on the following:

- Safety
- Control objectives
- Cleanup and rehabilitation guidelines
- Spending
- Resource sharing

External stakeholders are those parties not directly affected by the incident who, nonetheless, could be affected by decisions that are made in conjunction with the incident. External stakeholders can usually be identified when the question is asked, “Who else could be affected by this decision?”



Agency Policies and Guidelines

What are some examples of agency policies and guidelines that can affect your management of an incident?

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Visual 4.16

Visual Description: Agency Policies and Guidelines

Key Points

Answer the following question:



What are some examples of agency policies and guidelines that can affect your management of an incident?



Policies and Guidelines: Examples

- Pre-incident plans
- Standard operating procedures
- Emergency operations plans
- Continuity of operations plans
- Community preparedness plans
- Mutual-aid agreements
- Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA)
- Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP)
- Corrective action plans
- Mitigation plans
- Recovery plans
- Tribal, State, regional, and national mobilization guides
- Field operations guides

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Visual 4.17

Visual Description: Policies and Guidelines: Examples

Key Points

The following are examples of agency policies and guidelines that can affect management of an incident:

- Pre-incident plans
- Standard operating procedures
- Emergency operations plans
- Continuity of operations plans
- Community preparedness plans
- Mutual aid agreements
- Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA)
- Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP)
- Corrective action plans
- Mitigation plans
- Recovery plans
- Tribal, State, regional, and national mobilization guides
- Field operations guides



Responsibility for Developing Objectives

- On small incidents, the Incident Commander is solely responsible for developing incident objectives.
- On larger incidents, Command and General Staff contribute to the development of incident objectives.



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Visual 4.18

Visual Description: Responsibility for Developing Objectives

Key Points

Note the following points:

- On small incidents, the Incident Commander is solely responsible for developing incident objectives.
- On larger incidents, Command and General Staff contribute to the development of incident objectives.

The following are examples of the relationship between incident objectives, strategies, and tactics:

- Incident objectives state what will be accomplished.
- Strategies establish the general plan or direction for accomplishing the incident objectives.
- Tactics specify how the strategies will be executed.



Overall Priorities

Incident objectives are established based on the following priorities:

#1: Life Saving

#2: Incident Stabilization

#3: Property Preservation



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Visual 4.19

Visual Description: Overall Priorities

Key Points

Throughout the incident, objectives are established based on the following priorities:

- **First Priority:** Life Saving
- **Second Priority:** Incident Stabilization
- **Third Priority:** Property Preservation



Writing “SMART” Objectives

- **Specific** - Is the wording precise and unambiguous?
- **Measurable** - How will achievements be measured?
- **Action Oriented** - Is an action verb used to describe expected accomplishments?
- **Realistic** - Is the outcome achievable with given available resources?
- **Time Sensitive** - What is the timeframe? (if applicable)

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Visual 4.20

Visual Description: Writing “SMART” Objectives

Key Points

Incident objectives should have the following **SMART** characteristics:

1. **Specific** – The wording must be precise and unambiguous in describing the objective.
2. **Measurable** – The design and statement of objectives should make it possible to conduct a final accounting as to whether objectives were achieved.
3. **Action Oriented** – The objective must have an action verb that describes the expected accomplishments.
4. **Realistic** – Objectives must be achievable with the resources that the agency (and assisting agencies) can allocate to the incident, even though it may take several operational periods to accomplish them.
5. **Time Sensitive** – The timeframe should be specified (if applicable).



Sample Objectives

- Release all hostages safely with no further casualties as soon as practical.
- Complete Preliminary Damage Assessments of all damaged residential structures in Anytown within the next 24 hours.
- Restore water to the business district by 0900 hours tomorrow.
- Contain fire within existing structures (during the current operational period).

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Visual 4.21

Visual Description: Sample Objectives

Key Points

- Note the following sample objectives:
 - Release all hostages safely with no further casualties as soon as practical.
 - Complete Preliminary Damage Assessments of all damaged residential structures in Anytown within the next 24 hours.
 - Restore water to the business district by 0900 hours tomorrow.
 - Contain fire within existing structures (during the current operational period).



Activity: SMART Objectives? (1 of 2)

Situation: It's midnight and heavy rains have caused localized flooding. In one neighborhood, residents are becoming trapped in their homes.

Incident Objective: As needed, provide assistance to those who might have localized flooding problems.

Is this objective
SMART?

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Visual 4.22

Visual Description: Activity: SMART Objectives (1 of 2) Is this objective SMART?

Key Points

Situation: It's midnight and heavy rains have caused localized flooding. In one neighborhood, residents are becoming trapped in their homes.

Incident Objective: As needed, provide assistance to those who might have localized flooding problems.

After reviewing the situation and incident objective, answer the following question:



Is this objective SMART?



Activity: SMART Objectives? (2 of 2)

Situation: Blocked storm drains are causing standing water on major roadways.

Incident Objective: Notify public works of storm drain blockages causing standing water, or clear the drains to prevent traffic accidents.

How would you improve this objective?

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Visual 4.23

Visual Description: Activity: SMART Objectives (2 of 2) How would you improve this objective?

Key Points

Situation: Blocked storm drains are causing standing water on major roadways.

Incident Objective: Notify public works of storm drain blockages causing standing water, or clear the drains to prevent traffic accidents.

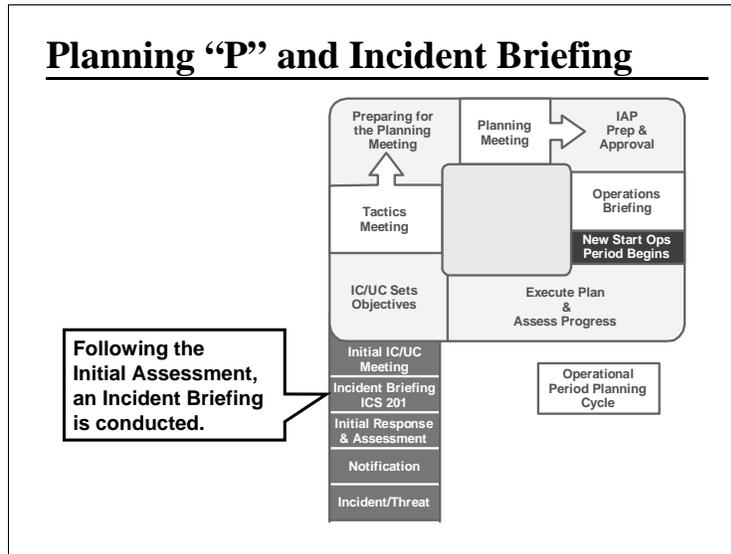
After reviewing the situation and incident objective, answer the following question:



How would you improve this objective?



Planning “P” and Incident Briefing



Visual Description: Planning “P” and Incident Briefing

Key Points

Again, the Planning “P” illustrates the incident planning cycle. Following the Initial Assessment, an Incident Briefing is conducted, using ICS 201, the Incident Briefing form.



Incident Briefing (Form ICS 201)

- Provides Command Staff with information about the incident situation and the resources allocated to the incident.
- Serves as a permanent record of the initial response to the incident.
- Can be used for transfer of command.

INCIDENT BRIEFING	INCIDENT NAME	INCIDENT PRIORITY	INCIDENT TYPE
INCIDENT SITUATION			
INCIDENT OBJECTIVES			
SUMMARY OF CURRENT ACTIONS			
STATUS OF RESOURCES ASSIGNED OR ORDERED			

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Visual 4.25

Visual Description: ICS Form 201, Incident Briefing

Key Points

The ICS 201 Incident Briefing form:

- Provides Command Staff with information about the incident situation and the resources allocated to the incident.
- Serves as a permanent record of the initial response to the incident.
- Can be used for transfer of command.



Transfer of Command

You have been serving as the initial Incident Commander. A more qualified staff member has just arrived at the scene and will assume command of the incident.

What steps must occur before command is transferred?



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Visual 4.26

Visual Description: What steps must your supervisor take before assuming command?

Key Points

Review the following scenario:

You have been serving as the initial Incident Commander. A more qualified staff member has just arrived at the scene and will assume command of the incident.

Answer the following question:



What steps must occur before command is transferred?



Steps in Assuming Command

- Assess the situation with the current Incident Commander.
- Receive a briefing from the current Incident Commander.
- Determine an appropriate time for the transfer of command and document the transfer (ICS Form 201).
- Notify others of the change in incident command.
- Assign the current Incident Commander to another position in the incident organization.

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Visual 4.27

Visual Description: Steps in Assuming Command

Key Points

The person assuming command should do the following:

- Assess the situation with the current Incident Commander.
- Receive a briefing from the current Incident Commander.
- Determine an appropriate time for transfer of command and document the transfer (ICS Form 201).
- Notify others of the change in incident command.
- Assign the current Incident Commander to another position in the incident organization.



Exercise Instructions

Instructions:

1. Working as a team, review the scenario and partially completed ICS Form 201, Incident Briefing.

Remember the overall priorities . . .

#1: Life Saving

#2: Incident Stabilization

#3: Property Preservation

2. Write initial incident objectives on the ICS Form 201 in your exercise materials. Also record the objectives on chart paper.
3. Select a spokesperson and be prepared to present your work in 30 minutes.

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Visual 4.28

Visual Description: Exercise Instructions

Key Points

Follow the steps below to complete this exercise:

1. Working as a team, review the scenario and partially completed ICS Form 201, Incident Briefing.

Remember the overall priorities . . .

- #1: Life Saving
- #2: Incident Stabilization
- #3: Property Preservation

2. Write initial incident objectives on the ICS Form 201 in your exercise materials. Also record the objectives on chart paper.
3. Select a spokesperson and be prepared to present your work in 30 minutes.



Scenario

On August 4, at 0835, 10 cars of a southbound freight train derailed on the outskirts of Crescent City. Beginning with the car immediately behind the engine, the cargo includes:

- Cars 1-4: Newsprint
- Car 5: Molten sulfur
- Car 6: Liquid yellow phosphorus (12,000 gallons)
- Car 7: Tallow
- Cars 8-10: Empty car carriers

The derailment occurred on a bridge over Wilson Creek near a residential area. Cars 5 through 7 are extensively damaged and on fire. The primary concern is the phosphorus car. Phosphorus self-ignites in the presence of oxygen, and is water reactive. Phosphorus fires can be controlled by excluding oxygen with water or foam, and/or reducing the temperature below the level required for self-ignition.

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Visual 4.29

Visual Description: Scenario

Key Points

Review the following scenario:

Scenario

On August 4, at 0835, 10 cars of a southbound freight train derailed on the outskirts of Crescent City. Beginning with the car immediately behind the engine, the cargo includes:

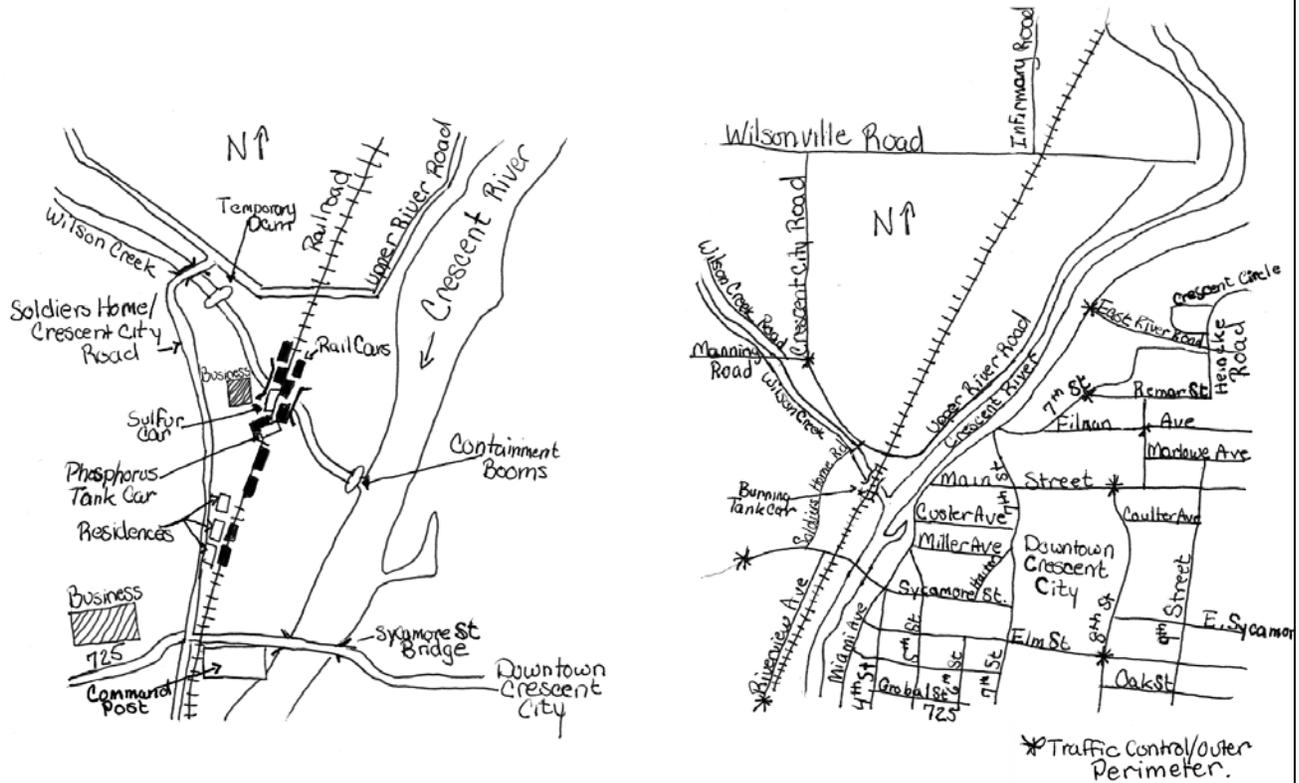
- Cars 1-4: Newsprint
- Car 5: Molten sulfur
- Car 6: Liquid yellow phosphorus (12,000 gallons)
- Car 7: Tallow
- Cars 8-10: Empty car carriers

The derailment occurred on a bridge over Wilson Creek near a residential area. Cars 5 through 7 are extensively damaged and on fire. The primary concern is the phosphorus car.

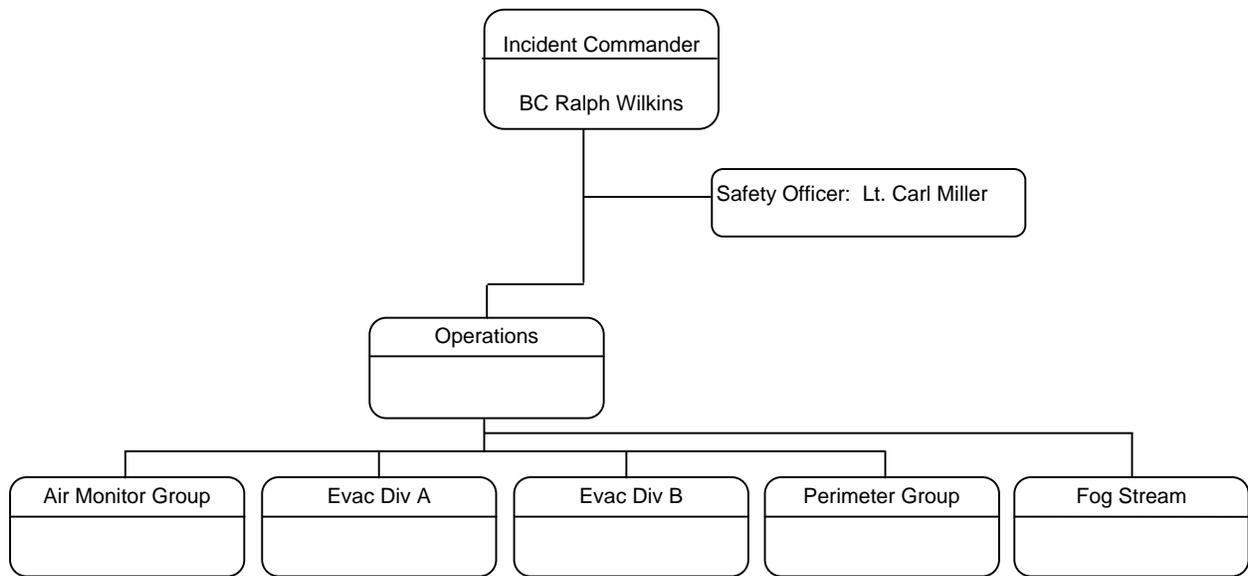
Phosphorus self-ignites in the presence of oxygen, and is water reactive. Phosphorus fires can be controlled by excluding oxygen with water or foam, and/or reducing the temperature below the level required for self-ignition.

INCIDENT BRIEFING	1. Incident Name	2. Date	3. Time
	Crescent City Hazmat	8-4	0920

4. Map Sketch



5. Current Organization



Page 1 of 2	6. Prepared by (Name and Position) IC Ralph Wilkins
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6. Resources Summary				
Resources Ordered	Resource Identification	ETA	On Scene	Location/Assignment
8 police/marked vehicles		0910		Outer perimeter (see map)
HazMat Team	CC/LC Hazmat 1		X	ICP
10-20 passenger buses		1000		To staging/Evac Divs A & B
Engines (3)	ME 1,2,3	0915		Evac Div A
Trucks (2)	MT 1,2	0915		Evac Div A
Engines (3)	OF 1,2,3	0930		Evac Div B
Trucks (2)	OTR 1, OTR 2	0930		Evac Div B
Engine/master-stream	OF 4	0930		Fog stream or plume
7. Summary of Current Actions				
<p>INSERT OBJECTIVES: <i>Based on the information provided, develop the initial incident objectives.</i></p>				
<p>Situation: Outer perimeter established (see map). Air monitoring points will be established at the direction of HazMat Team. Requested HazMat Team report on hazards & strategic options. Due by 0930. Requested additional Command and General Staff. Contacted school bus service for buses and Red Cross to open shelter for evacuees. Staging Area established at Crescent City Junior High-Remar St. Called Liberty County E.M. suggested they open EOC. Briefed Mayor Billingsley and Chief Howard. Told Chief we need a full Command and General Staff—he will activate—eta 1000. Also told him we might need to move ICP.</p>				
Page 2 of 2				



Summary

Are you now able to:

- Describe methods and tools used to assess incident/event complexity?
- Describe types of agency(s) policies and guidelines that influence management of incident or event activities?
- Describe the process for developing incident objectives, strategies, and tactics?
- Describe the steps in transferring and assuming incident command?
- As part of an exercise, develop incident objectives for a simulated incident?

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Visual 4.30

Visual Description: Summary

Key Points

Are you now able to:

- Describe methods and tools used to assess incident/event complexity?
- Describe types of agency(s) policies and guidelines that influence management of incident or event activities?
- Describe the process for developing incident objectives, strategies, and tactics?
- Describe the steps in transferring and assuming incident command?
- As part of an exercise, develop incident objectives for a simulated incident?