

### **National Incident Command System**

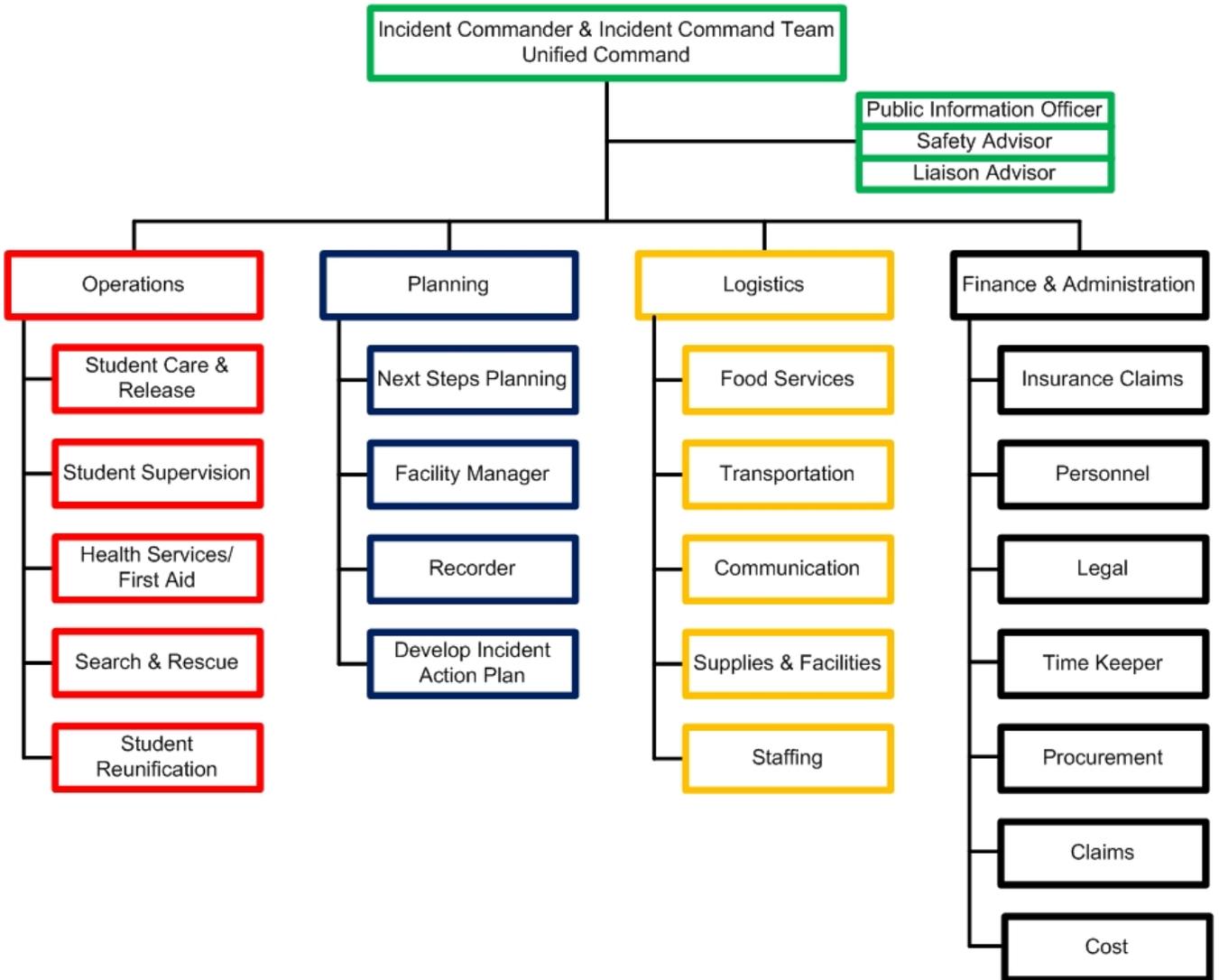
The National Incident Command System (ICS) is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment standards and an incident management organization with five functional areas (command, operations, planning, logistics and finance & administration) for management of all major incidents.

ICS was developed over 30 years ago in the aftermath of catastrophic wildfires in California. Numerous agencies responded to the fires with little coordination or communication. As a result, Congress directed the U.S. Forest Service to improve the effectiveness of interagency coordination. By mid-1970s, the U.S. Forest Service and several California agencies developed and field tested the Incident Command System (ICS). By 1981, ICS was used widely in Southern California in response to fire and non-fire incidents. In March 2004, ICS was included as a mandate in the *National Incident Management System (NIMS)*.

On February 28th, 2003 President George W. Bush issued DHS Presidential Directive 5 which requires a single comprehensive national incident management system. NIMS requires that all responses to domestic incidents utilize a common management structure, the Incident Command System. ICS represents organizational "best practices" and has become the standard for incident management across the country. Understanding ICS helps build the cultural bridge between schools and emergency response agencies. It helps get everyone on the same page, speaking the same language.



**Example of an Incident Command System structure in a school:**



**The ICS's mission can be best understood in terms of three vital tasks:**

**Communication and Intelligence:** The ICS must be able to effectively communicate and receive information. It is critical to inform everyone involved at the ICS about an event. It is equally important to undertake intelligence gathering to manage an incident and to provide notification to crisis managers, employees, governments and the public.

**Command and Control:** The ICS must provide the command and control functions necessary to put multiple response and recovery plans into action triggering them as needed, providing the structure required to allocating resources and personnel, and assuring effective direction of the response operations.

**Coordination and Documentation:** The ICS must create a mechanism to coordinate all of the steps taken to respond to an event and document those actions to protect employees and infrastructure as well as demonstrate adherence to “best practices” by documenting all information received and steps taken.



**Four Phases of Emergency Management**



### **Mitigation & Prevention**

Schools should conduct an assessment to identify all potential hazards that they could face, including both natural events and man-made events. The assessment should include a review of fights, crimes, and other disciplinary events that have occurred on or around school property.

This will help ensure that resources are properly deployed to areas of the school where they are most needed.

School officials should take steps to reduce the likelihood that people or property will be harmed when disaster strikes. For example, if a school is located in a flood zone, officials can ensure that valuable material is kept from low-lying areas.

School administrators should consider the location of special student or staff populations, such as those who have disabilities, to ensure that they are not situated near potentially dangerous or inaccessible areas of the school building.

Safety planning efforts should involve the school custodian or maintenance director. Typically this person has the "full run" of the building and can provide valuable insight into changes that could be made to the school's physical structure to make it safer.

### **Preparedness**

Local emergency management, law enforcement, health, and mental health personnel should be involved in developing crisis protocols. Written agreements should be drafted, such as memoranda of understanding, which clearly delineate the roles of both emergency responders and school officials during a crisis.

Parents should be made aware of the crisis plans at their child's school. In a crisis, their knowledge of the crisis plan can help reduce confusion, panic, and perhaps serious injury.

Schools need to work closely with health providers and volunteer organizations to develop lists of their available resources before a disaster strikes. Knowledge of available human resources and stocks of equipment can save precious time during an emergency.

Frequent drills using as many alternate evacuation routes as possible, should be conducted to reduce the possibility of students and staff becoming unnecessary victims in a crisis. Frequent drills help ensure that responses by public safety officials are well thought out and appropriate and that staff and students know what their responsibilities are during a crisis.



### **Response**

In a crisis, emergency responders must be aware of the overall makeup and population of the school.

Emergency responders must also be aware of the physical layout of the school. Schools should provide them with confidential access to floor plans.

A response must always take into consideration the ages and mental health of students and staff, as well as their physical abilities and limitations.

Schools must become familiar with the Incident Command System, the system that emergency responders use to manage crises that require a multi-agency response. This system unifies terminology, structure, objectives, and functions and ensures that there is one central chain of command with information flowing smoothly to all of the agencies concerned.

### **Recovery**

Efforts to return to the school after a disaster must be carefully timed and coordinated to meet the needs of both students and staff.

Schools should work with qualified professionals to assess the emotional needs of students and staff and arrange for counseling and other appropriate interventions.

To support the recovery process, schools should assemble lists of qualified mental health professionals and community organizations during the preparedness phase, so they will be available and pre-screened to help in the recovery phase as soon as needed.

School and health care officials should have resources available to help school children cope with disaster anniversary dates or memorials.

School buildings may incur considerable damage during an event such as a hurricane or a tornado. Schools should be prepared for the possibility of the need to relocate staff and students to alternate sites while repairs are made. Some districts have developed plans to have schools function in dual shifts, thereby splitting the school day in half. This decreases the chance for the school environment to become overwhelmed.



## NIMS - ICS

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FOR A MORE COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING AND INTEGRATION OF ICS AND NIMS PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES THE IDAHO STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THAT ALL PERSONNEL WHO ARE INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, INTEGRATION AND EXECUTION OF ANY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN COMPLETE BASIC NIMS AND ICS TRAINING AVAILABLE THROUGH THE FOLLOWING SOURCES;

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[ICS Glossary](#)

[ICS History](#)

[www.idahoprepares.com](http://www.idahoprepares.com)

<http://training.fema.gov/>

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is100SC.asp>

(Introduction to ICS for Schools)

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700.asp>

(Introduction to NIMS)

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS800b.asp>

(National response framework, an introduction)

[http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/nims\\_training.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/nims_training.shtm)

