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## **EPA's Incident Management Teams and National Incident Management Assistance Team**

### **Introduction**

In support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency preparedness for nationally significant incidents under EPA's National Approach to Response, each region will maintain an incident management team with at least three personnel in each key leadership position who are trained and ready to respond. Agency headquarters will provide trained KLPs to support regional IMTs. There are 11 KLPs for which additional training is required. IMTs should be able to mobilize to any point in their region within 12-24 hours to manage a regionally significant incident. Each region and headquarters is responsible for developing its own IMT plan to provide its framework for the planning and maintenance of the IMT, including training and exercises, maintenance of the IMT roster, and procedures for activating the IMT.

The agency will also maintain a national incident management assistance team with the ability to mobilize within 24-48 hours to provide support and depth in each of the KLPs to the regional IMTs during the initial phase of an incident.

### **Purpose of the Directive**

This document was developed to facilitate national consistency in the development and maintenance of regional and headquarters IMTs, as well as the National IMAT, while allowing for flexibility to meet regional needs. It also draws from best practices to establish standards for activation and deployment of agency personnel trained to fill KLP positions during nationally and regionally significant incidents.

### **Background**

On June 27, 2003, the Administrator introduced a new agency-wide NAR to increase preparedness for multiple, simultaneous nationally significant incidents across several regions. This multi-faceted mechanism included a new management approach designed to provide consistency and coordination in addressing key aspects of a response. These key aspects include: organizational elements (emergency response assets, support personnel and national teams); exercises and training; equipment; laboratory capability and capacity; and, contracts. In

addition, the approach defined roles for field operations, regional offices and headquarters.

In March 2004, in compliance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, the Secretary, Department of Homeland Security, issued the National Incident Management System and required all federal agencies to implement NIMS. The NIMS represents a core set of doctrine, concepts, principles, terminology and organizational processes to enable effective, efficient and collaborative incident management at all levels. A key component of NIMS is the incident command system. EPA headquarters has a NIMS coordinator and each region has a regional ICS coordinator to assist with the implementation of ICS.

Events such as September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Columbia Shuttle recovery effort, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Superstorm Sandy, and the Gold King Mine response have demonstrated that current and future incidents will require the development of new and flexible approaches. Past experience has emphasized the need for an IMT structure in each region and the value of additional ICS trained and experienced National IMAT personnel that can provide support during the initial phases of an incident.

The agency must prepare for the very real possibility of multiple simultaneous nationally significant incidents, including chemical, biological or radiological emergencies and natural disasters. The successful response to incidents of this magnitude and complexity requires consistent training, operations, procedures and coordination among all agency offices. IMTs are the leadership component of the ICS structure, and are supported as appropriate by the National IMAT.

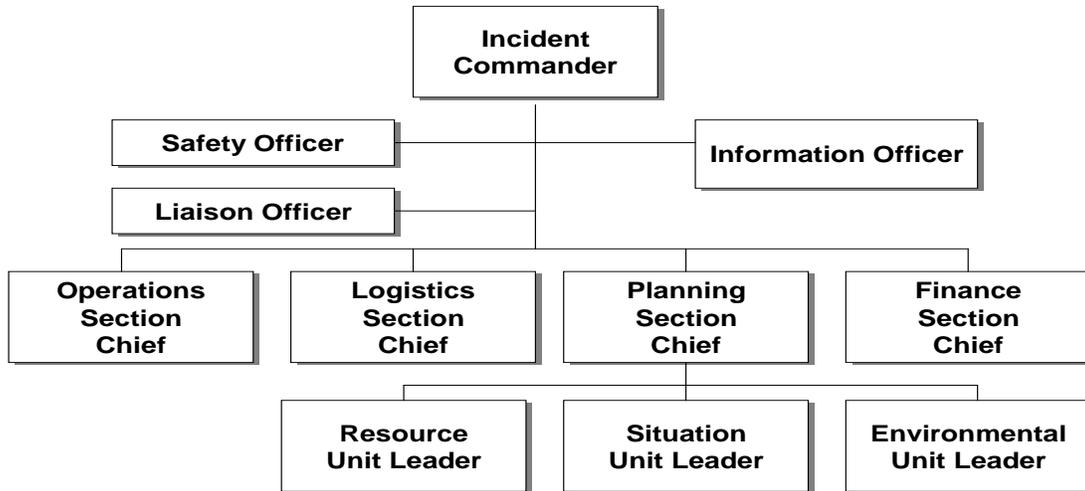
**Key Leadership Positions**

The 11 KLPs identified as essential to agency operations are:

Incident Commander, Safety Officer, Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer, Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, Finance Section Chief, Situation Unit Leader, Environmental Unit Leader and Resource Unit Leader. For the IMAT, a Deputy IC will be deployed instead of an IC.

When activated and deployed, these KLPs will make up the command and general staff, as well as essential unit leader positions of an IMT. Figure 1 depicts key leadership positions on the IMT.

# Incident Management Team (IMT)



**Figure 1: Key Leadership Positions (KLPs)**

## **IMT Development and Maintenance**

Each region and headquarters shall develop an IMT implementation plan that includes the components listed below.

**A. IMT roster, including:**

- KLP personnel, listed by name, including removal program personnel and response support corps;
- KLP personnel contact information; and,
- Dates and titles of training and exercises completed by KLP personnel.

**B. IMT mobilization procedures, including:**

- Call down notification procedures to ensure that one 11 person IMT is always available to respond to an incident, as required.

**C. IMT maintenance and outreach program elements, including:**

- Approach to ensure the regional IMT members are familiar with their local and state counterparts.

**D. IMT program management responsibilities, including:**

- Role of the regional ICS coordinator, and
- Role of regional senior managers and the regional incident coordination team.

**E. Procedures for documenting feedback from the IMT members to be used in post-incident debriefs as a basis for improvements to the IMT Plan.**

Regions may specify additional requirements for their IMTs in their regional IMT plans. Each plan should be updated as appropriate.

### **IMT Activation and Deployment**

Each region should be able to mobilize at least one, eleven-person, fully trained and equipped IMT, to any point in the region within 12-24 hours for the management of a regionally significant incident. Although deployment of a full IMT is the default option, most incidents will not require activation of all of the IMT positions. The regional IMT roster is the source for all regional KLP resources.

Activations will be requested by the responding on-scene coordinator in consultation with the regional removal manager, or his/her designee. The removal manager may also make the decision to activate an IMT if the need for information and coordination at the regional and HQ levels makes it necessary. If personnel to fill the KLPs are not available within the affected region, the region would request assistance from their assigned backup region(s). KLP resources should be requested through the RICT.

During responses that exhaust the resources of a region, the region will first obtain additional resources from their backup regions before pursuing resources from other regions. Requests and coordination will be made through the respective regional emergency operations center. Where there are multiple simultaneous incidents, or a significant precedent-setting incident, the headquarters emergency operations center may assume the responsibility of managing and allocating resources. Headquarters will coordinate resource management through the national incident coordination team and RICTs. The agency may also request IMT support from other federal agencies to fill KLPs. For example, the agency may request ICS-qualified individuals from national response system special teams (e.g., U.S. Coast Guard Strike Force) or other federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Forest Service) to establish or augment a response management infrastructure.

### **Partial IMT Activations**

Scenarios for partial activation:

- Agency personnel assigned and trained to fill KLPs can be activated and inserted into a multi-agency response, where the IC is from another agency;
- Agency personnel assigned and trained as KLPs may be tasked to support area commands; and
- Smaller regional responses that do not require activation of a full IMT.

**Responsibilities of  
IMT Personnel  
Deployed to an  
Incident**

Once activated, IMT members will arrange for coverage of regional responsibilities, advise management of ongoing or pending projects, and deploy to the incident. IMT members should arrive at the incident site and report to the IC within 12-24 hours of activation if within their region, and as quickly as possible if in support of another region. Within that time period, coordination and logistics operations will be the responsibility of the REOC staff. Once fully staffed the REOC will provide support to the Logistics section (if requested) by making or assisting with travel and lodging accommodations, especially for incoming personnel traveling from other regions and headquarters.

Upon arrival at the designated check-in location (either at the REOC or the incident command post) all IMT members must follow routine ICS procedures (refer to the agency incident management handbook for check-in procedures).

**Deployment  
Periods and  
Transitions**

The default planned duration of IMT deployment is two weeks. Depending upon the needs of the incident, this may be extended. IMT members who have completed their tour of duty will be relieved by incoming IMT member replacements. Incoming personnel will be thoroughly briefed by the outgoing members. The transition period should be a minimum of one operational period and planning cycle. If possible, individual member turnover should be staggered to prevent gaps during the team transition process.

The agency Office of Emergency Management, in consultation with the regions, shall maintain a National IMAT of ICS-trained and experienced personnel to provide support and depth to the regional IMTs during the initial phase of incidents. The National IMAT will be prepared to mobilize at least one fully trained and equipped team of 11 KLPs to any location in the United States within 24-48 hours of notification to quickly establish a response management infrastructure in support of the IC or affected regions.

**National IMAT**

The National IMAT is comprised of a cadre of personnel from across the Agency who are trained and experienced in the 11 KLPs, consisting of OSCs and RSC staff to be selected for two-year commitments by the Regions in consultation with OEM. National IMAT members may also concurrently serve in regional IMT positions. The National IMAT Program Manager in OEM will, among other duties, provide direction, training and coordination for the activities of the IMAT.

The National IMAT will always be activated and deployed under the following two scenarios: 1) if the agency caused or is directly involved in the release or incident; or 2) the release or incident involves multiple regions. The OEM Director, in consultation with their regions, shall

identify additional situations in which regions may consider requesting National IMAT support. The National IMAT may be deployed either as a full team or as a targeted subset of KLP positions at the discretion of the regional division director or the NIC.

Once deployed, the National IMAT may, but is not limited to, assist the regions in the following roles: standing up an organizational structure to support response efforts in the field at the Incident Command Post, supporting the region in the REOC, coaching individual IMT KLP positions, or establishing and staffing area command if appropriate. It can also be used as a scalable resource to support the region by providing personnel who can assist in major incident management activities. The National IMAT shall be demobilized as soon as deemed appropriate by the NIC, IC, RIC, and IMAT Deputy IC, in consultation with the regional DD(s) according to the needs of the incident.

The OEM director shall develop a National IMAT Implementation Plan and approve Standard Operating Procedures, which should include a National IMAT staffing structure, mobilization and demobilization procedures, and training and exercise protocols to maintain the team's capabilities.

**Reference  
Materials**

Reference materials including NIMS implementation documents, the agency's incident management handbook and various job aids are available on the NIMS Integration Team Web site at:  
[http://epaossc.net/doc\\_list.asp?site\\_id=963](http://epaossc.net/doc_list.asp?site_id=963).