



# SHIFT BRIEFING



## HAZMAT AWARENESS - INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS) SUPPORT

Public Works and Utility Departments may be called to assist local Fire and Police Departments with hazardous material releases because they have equipment that may be needed to control the incident. When they are requested, they must operate within an Incident Command System as required by the State of New Jersey. This briefing will review the key elements of the Incident Command System, or ICS, as they pertain to support agencies such as ours.

The ICS uses standardized language and structure but is also flexible to the needs of each incident. Therefore no two ICS are identical. The most basic tenet of the ICS is that duties are broken into functional areas, and a single person is responsible for the functions. The first function is the overall command of the incident. That person is called the Incident Commander or IC. Each Command is given a name, usually based on the location of the incident, such as Main Street Command.

*ASK: If we had a major chemical spill here at the Public Works, what would be the name of the Incident Command?*

At large incidents, there will be a lot for the IC to control. The IC will typically give someone else the actual control and clean-up of the chemical spill. That person is called Operations or Operations Chief. For very large operations, the Operations Chief may split up some of the duties to multiple persons. These persons will be called by their function (such as Diking) or their location (such as Divisions – more on locations later).

This is important to understand because if we are called to respond, we will be told who to report to, such as Operations or Division B Director. Once there, you will probably be given a name, such JetVac 1, and a person (by title) within the ICS who you will get your assignment from, request support from, or give updates.

It is also important to understand that once you are in the Incident Command System, your orders may only come from the ICS supervisor you are assigned to. Our departmental authority structure is not part of the ICS. In other words, if the Superintendent/Director of Public Works redirects you to an incident scene, you should respectfully ask them to contact the IC and confirm that order through the incident's Command Structure.

In addition to being told WHO to report to, we will be told WHERE to report to. The NJ ICS gives specific names to locations at an incident. They are called DIVISIONS and given a letter or number suffix, such as Division A or Div. 1.

- Divisions AROUND the building or area involved in the incident, are given LETTER designations. The side of the incident that faces the street address will always be Division A. Moving clockwise around the building, the left side of the scene will be Division B, the rear will be Division C, and the right side will be Division D.
- Divisions VERTICALLY in the building are given NUMBER designations. The ground level is Division 1. The second floor is Division 2, and so forth.
- You may be directed to report to STAGING. You will be given the location of the Staging Area and told who to report to, such as a Staging Officer or Staging Manager.

*ASK: If we had a chemical spill here at the Public Works, and you were told to report to Division C (Charlie), point to where you would go.*

The Incident Command System was adopted by the State to accomplish two primary goals, 1) effectively manage the many tasks at large incidents by breaking down assignments into manageable chunks and assigning a single person to accomplish them, and 2) ensure the safety of responders by coordinating their tasks within and between the chunks. We must work within the System. If you are not sure of an assignment, ask the person you are assigned to. Do not assume or guess.