

EMERGENCY RESPONSE GUIDE

F O R E L E C T E D O F F I C I A L S

ROLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL

You play a critical role during emergencies in maintaining public confidence, supporting responders and helping communities stay informed. Operational decisions during a response are handled by trained emergency managers and responders. In the event of an emergency impacting your community, we understand the importance of working with you and your team to address your needs and the needs of your community, and to ensure that we leave your community the same or better as it was before we got there.

Ways to Partner:

- Staying informed through **OFFICIAL** channels
- Sharing **VERIFIED** messages
- Securing needed resources **WHEN REQUESTED**
- Deferring tactical decisions to emergency professionals

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A RESPONSE

When an incident occurs:

- **RESPONDERS** establish an **INCIDENT COMMAND POST (ICP)** and begin tactical operations
- Emergency managers may activate **EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTERS (EOC)** to support them
- **OPERATORS** and **TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS** handle containment, safety, and stabilization
- Updates will be provided to your office through scheduled briefings and official liaison channels. You should provide the liaison officer with your preferred meeting cadence and format.



INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS): HOW THE RESPONSE IS ORGANIZED

The Incident Command System (ICS) is the nationally recognized, standardized structure used for emergency responses. It organizes responders under a common hierarchy so they can work effectively within a clear chain of command. The structure helps prevent confusion, duplicative efforts, and provides clear direction during a response.

Who participates:

- **INCIDENT COMMANDER (IC) / UNIFIED COMMAND (UC)**
 - **RESPONSIBLE PARTY(RP)**- The entity that has been identified as responsible for the vessel or facility involved. For a response covered by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, the RP is required to promptly respond, mitigate environmental damage, and cover all associated response costs and damages under federal oversight.
 - **FEDERAL ON-SCENE COORDINATOR (FOSC)**- Representative of the lead Federal agency such as the United States Coast Guard or the **EPA**.
 - **STATE ON-SCENE COORDINATOR (SOSC)**- State official designated to coordinate and direct state responses to a Spill Event under state law.
- Operations, Planning, Logistics, and financial/administration staff.
- Local, State, and Federal **RESPONSE AGENCIES**, all of which bring varying levels of expertise and resource availability.
- Technical specialists and operators.

Note:

- While local officials do not have a formal role within the ICS structure, they contribute to the success of a response by helping reinforce the authority within that structure and working to remove obstacles.
- This separation allows responders to focus on safety and operational success while your office focuses on leadership and public confidence in the response.

PUBLIC INFORMATION, THE JIC/LIASON OFFICER & HOW YOU GET UPDATES

Joint Information Center (JIC):

As the central hub for all public information, the JIC ensures your office, the media and communities receive one consistent, accurate message. For incidents where a JIC is not established, a designated liaison officer or other point of contact will be assigned.

Liaison Officer:

Your designated point of contact within the response. Working closely with the JIC and Public Information Officer, the Liaison Officer is the key point of contact for your office.

They can provide you with:

- Situation summaries
- Key messages for the public
- Response timelines and planned updates

How to stay informed:

- Attend scheduled briefings
- Use the Liaison Officer, not field responders, for information
- Share only JIC-approved messaging
- Coordinate all public statements with the JIC



GUIDANCE FOR MEDIA OR CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

If approached for comment, effective responses include:

- Trained responders are managing the situation using established emergency protocols
- Updates will be shared through official channels as details are confirmed
- My role is to support the response and help to provide the community with accurate information

Operators routinely conduct exercises. As an elected official, you are encouraged to attend exercises in your jurisdiction to have the opportunity to learn, provide feedback, and build relationships.

FOR A MORE DETAILED INTRODUCTION TO ICS YOU CAN ACCESS FEMA'S EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE HERE:
[IS-0200.c Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response, ICS 200 - Course Welcome: Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response \(ICS 200\)](#)