Unit 4: Area Command

STUDENT MANUAL

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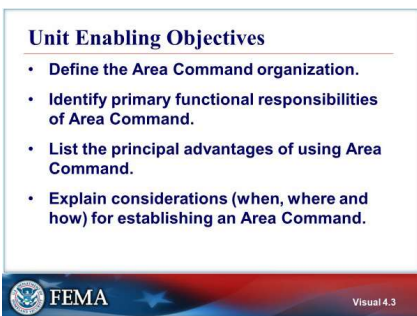Visual 4.1

UNIT 4: AREA COMMAND

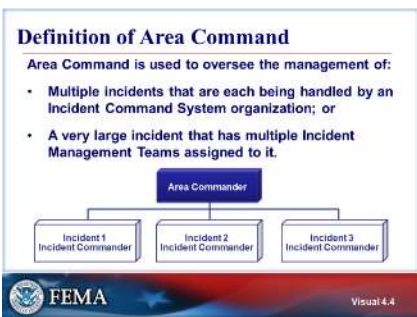Visual 4.2

UNIT TERMINAL OBJECTIVE

Given a scenario, develop an Area Command organization.

Visual 4.3

UNIT ENABLING OBJECTIVES

- Define the Area Command organization.

- Identify primary functional responsibilities of Area Command.

- List the principal advantages of using Area Command.

- Explain considerations (when, where and how) for establishing an Area Command.

Visual 4.4

DEFINITION OF AREA COMMAND

An Area Command is activated to address competition for resources among multiple ICPs based on the complexity of the incident and incident management span-of-control considerations.
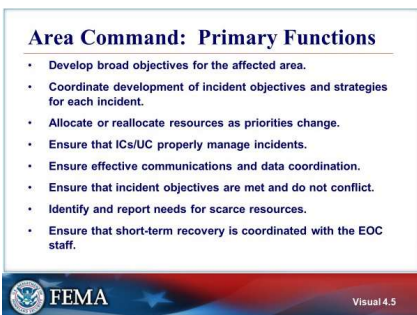
Examples include two or more hazardous materials spills, fires, etc. It is usually these kinds of incidents that may be vying for the same resources.

When an incident expands to a large geographic area, the agency officials may choose to divide the incident into smaller pieces each of which will be managed by an Incident Management Team (IMT).

When incidents are of different kinds and/or do not have similar resource demands, they would usually be handled as separate incidents.

If an Area Command is established, EOCs are usually activated to provide support.

Due to the scope of incidents involving Area Commands and the likelihood of cross-jurisdictional operations, Area Commands are frequently established as Unified Area Commands, working under the same principles as a Unified Command. **Unified Area Command** is a version of command established when incidents under an Area Command are multi-jurisdictional.

Area Command: Primary Functions
- Develop broad objectives for the affected area.
- Coordinate development of incident objectives and strategies for each incident.
- Allocate or reallocate resources as priorities change.
- Ensure that ICs/UC properly manage incidents.
- Ensure effective communications and data coordination.
- Ensure that incident objectives are met and do not conflict.
- Identify and report needs for scarce resources.
- Ensure that short-term recovery is coordinated with the EOC staff.

FEMA   Visual 4.5

Visual 4.5

AREA COMMAND: PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

Area Command is designed to ensure the effective management of assigned incidents.

To do this, the Area Commander/Unified Area Command has the authority and responsibility to do the following for incidents within the Area Command:

- Develop broad objectives for the affected area.

- Coordinate development of incident objectives and strategies for each incident.

- Allocate or reallocate resources as priorities change.

- Ensure that Incident Commanders and/or Unified Commands properly manage incidents.

- Ensure effective communications and data coordination.

- Ensure that incident objectives are met and do not conflict with each other or with agency policies.

- Identify needs for scarce resources and reporting the needs to Agency Administrators directly or through a MAC Group or an EOC.

- For incidents that have a recovery dimension, ensuring that short-term recovery is coordinated with the EOC staff to assist in the transition to long-term recovery operations.

Area Command is established through a delegation of authority.
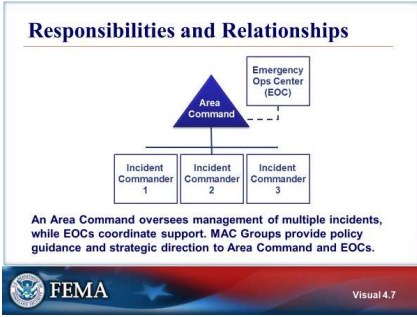
Visual 4.6

Visual 4.7

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Area Command is particularly relevant to situations with several ICPs requesting similar scarce resources. Logistics management is a primary reason for establishing an Area Command.

Incidents of different types or without similar resource needs are usually handled as separate incidents. Additional coordination structures, such as EOCs or MAC Groups, may assist with coordinating the resource needs of multiple incidents.
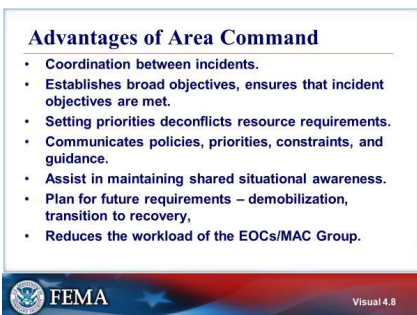
An Area Command oversees management of multiple incidents, while EOCs coordinate support. MAC Groups provide policy guidance and strategic direction to Area Command and EOCs.

UNIFIED COMMAND VS. AREA COMMAND

What is the difference between Unified Command and Area Command?

Advantages of Area Command
- Coordination between incidents.
- Establishes broad objectives, ensures that incident objectives are met.
- Setting priorities deconflicts resource requirements.
- Communicates policies, priorities, constraints, and guidance.
- Assist in maintaining shared situational awareness.
- Plan for future requirements – demobilization, transition to recovery,
- Reduces the workload of the EOCs/MAC Group.

FEMA   Visual 4.8

Visual 4.8

ADVANTAGES OF AREA COMMAND

Area Command is particularly relevant to situations with several ICPs requesting similar scarce resources. In situations where multiple incidents (e.g., earthquakes, floods, fires, major storms, disease outbreaks, etc.) are occurring, the use of an Area Command makes the jobs of Incident Commanders and agency officials easier for the following reasons:

- Much of the coordination between incidents that is typically performed by each Incident Commander is accomplished at the Area Command level. This allows the Incident Commanders to focus their attention on their incident objectives, strategies, and tactics.

- The Area Command develops broad objectives for the impacted area(s) and ensures that incident management objectives are met and do not conflict with each other or with agency policies.

- By setting priorities between incidents, Area Command deconflicts resource requirements. Critical resources are allocated by the overall priorities established by the agency officials.

- Area Command communicates agency policies, priorities, constraints, and guidance to the Incident Commanders for implementation across incidents.

- Area Command can assist in maintaining shared situational awareness between the various incidents, supporting EOCs and the MAC Group.

- Area Command can plan for future requirements such as demobilization and transition to recovery, allowing Incident Commands to focus on their incident.

- Area Command also reduces the workload of the EOCs and MAC Group officials, reducing the number of incident management organizations with whom they must coordinate.
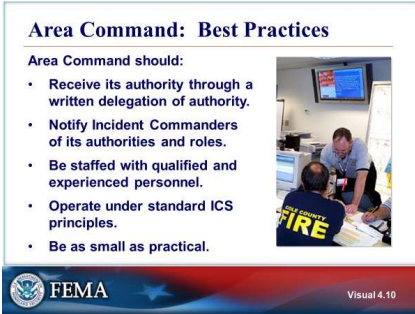
Visual 4.9

CHAIN OF COMMAND & REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

When Area Command is established, Incident Commander(s) will report to the Area Commander/Unified Command. The Area Commander is accountable to the agency or jurisdictional executive or administrator(s).

If one or more of the incidents within the Area Command are multijurisdictional, a Unified Area Command should be established. Incident Commanders would report to the member of the Unified Area Command for their jurisdiction.

Incident Commanders under the designated Area Commander are responsible to, and should be considered part of, the overall Area Command organization. Incident Commanders must be provided adequate and clear delegation of authority.

Visual 4.10

AREA COMMAND: BEST PRACTICES

- Receive its authority through a written delegation of authority.

  When Area Command is activated, an Area Commander will be designated and given appropriate delegated authority. The authority given to the Area Commander should be written as a delegation of authority statement. A written delegation of authority helps to eliminate confusion and provides the Area Commander with authority to oversee the management of the incidents.

- Notify Incident Commanders of its authorities and roles.

  Incident Commanders covered by the Area Command must be notified that an Area Command is being established. Depending upon the agencies and incidents involved, the Area Command may issue delegation of authority or re-delegations to the respective Incident Commanders. This will help to ensure that agency direction is made clear to all parties.

- Be staffed with qualified and experienced personnel.

  The Area Command team should consist of the best qualified personnel with respect to their functional areas. The functions of Area Command require personnel that have experience in, and are qualified to oversee, complex incident situations. The concepts of Area Command should be part of planning, training, and exercises.

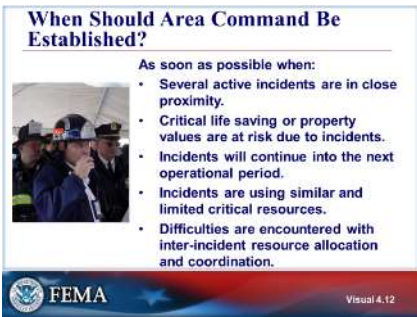- Operate under ICS principles.

  Area Command operates as an expansion of the ICS organization.
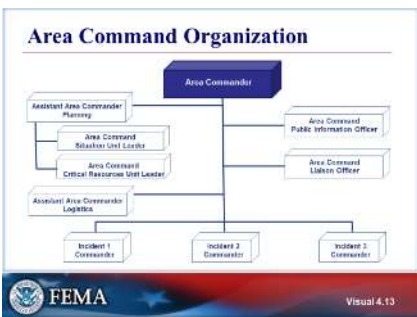
- Be as small as practical.

  The Area Command organization should always be kept as small as possible.

Visual 4.11

ACTIVITY 4.1: KATRINA AREA COMMAND SCENARIO

Questions:

- Why did the Coast Guard choose to use Area Command?

- How did the Coast Guard adapt the Area Command structure? Why?

- What are the lessons learned for your agency or jurisdiction?

Visual 4.12

WHEN SHOULD AREA COMMAND BE ESTABLISHED?

It is best to be proactive when considering the use of Area Command.

- Several active incidents are in close proximity.

- Critical life saving or property values are at risk due to incidents.

- Incidents will continue into the next operational period.

- Incidents are using similar and limited critical resources.

- Difficulties are encountered with inter-incident resource allocation and coordination.

Refer to Handout 4-2: Location of Area Command.

Visual 4.13

AREA COMMAND ORGANIZATION

Area Command does NOT in any way replace the incident-level ICS organizations or functions.

The positions illustrated in the visual are strictly related to Area Command operations. Specific duties and responsibilities will be established by the Area Commander.

Visual 4.14

AREA COMMAND: STORM

The Area Command organization is established based on the following factors for an approaching storm:

- County government officials have been briefed by the local weather service, which is predicting a major snowfall of 3 feet within the next 36 hours.

- Officials are concerned about the large amount of snowfall in an area not used to receiving much snow. The current infrastructure will not be able to remove snow quickly enough.

- Officials will be shutting down businesses and all schools while maintaining operations of critical emergency response infrastructure.

- Three cities (Springfield, Dayton, and River Bend) will each have their own Incident Management Teams, with the Area Command being located in the county courthouse.

Visual 4.15

AREA COMMAND: JULY 4TH CELEBRATION/TERRORIST THREAT

The organization is designed based on the following factors for July 4th celebrations and potential terrorist threats:

- Two adjacent communities (Central City and River Bend) and the county (Liberty) are all planning large July 4th celebrations that will include parades, fairs, and evening fireworks.

- The organizers of the three celebrations are planning separate activities and are not coordinating with one another. Local government leaders are concerned about this lack of coordination and the need for tight security.

- Law enforcement has heard chatter indicating a high probability of civil unrest and potential WMD activity.

- This region of the State has limited vendor resources and has experienced severe health problems when using fair vendors from outside the area.

- Traffic problems associated with each separate celebration will impact the other venues as well.

Visual 4.16

AREA COMMANDER/UNIFIED AREA COMMAND: RESPONSIBILITIES

Area Commander is responsible for:

- Overall direction of assigned incidents

- Ensuring that conflicts are resolved, incident objectives are established, and strategies are selected for the use of scarce resources

- Coordinating with local, state, tribal, territorial, and Federal departments and agencies, as well as NGOs and other private sector elements

- An Area Command does not have operational responsibilities, but prioritizes the use of scarce resources among the incidents

Refer to Handout 4-3: Area Commander: Checklist of Actions.

Visual 4.17

AREA COMMANDER: CRITICAL ACTIVITIES

The Area Commander establishes:

- Incident and agency/jurisdictional priorities

- Priorities for assignments of critical resources

- Schedules of meetings and briefings

- Information requirements to include Essential Elements of Information (EEI) which is Important and standard information items, which support timely and informed decisions

- Requirements for Situation Reports and Incident Action Plans

- Points of contact with agency officials

- Media relations and contact procedures

- Unusual situation or emergency procedures reporting

- Demobilization and transition to recovery procedures
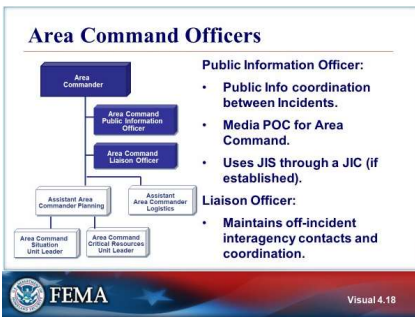
Visual 4.18

AREA COMMAND OFFICERS

The Area Command Public Information Officer:

- Provides coordination between incident locations.

- Serves as the point of contact for media requests to the Area Command.

- Uses the Joint Information System (JIS). This will be accomplished at the Joint Information Center (JIC), if established.

The Area Command Liaison Officer maintains off-incident interagency contacts and coordination.

Area Command officers do not replace the Public Information and Liaison Officers who are assigned to the individual incidents.
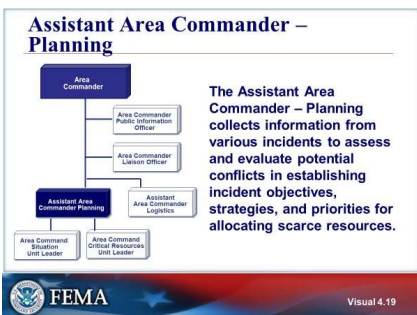
Visual 4.19

ASSISTANT AREA COMMANDER – PLANNING

The Assistant Area Commander – Planning collects information from various incidents to assess and evaluate potential conflicts in establishing incident objectives, strategies, and priorities for allocating scarce resources to include:

- Assembling information on individual incident objectives

- Recommending the priorities for resource allocation

- Maintaining status on critical resources

- Ensuring that advance planning is being accomplished

- Ensuring demobilization plans are coordinated

- Preparing Area Command briefings, as requested

- Reviewing Incident Action Plans and completed ICS Form 209 forms that are submitted from assigned incidents

The Area Command Situation Unit Leader may be assigned to support the Assistant Area Commander for Planning. The Area Command Situation Unit Leader monitors the status of objectives for each incident or Incident Management Team assigned to the Area Command.
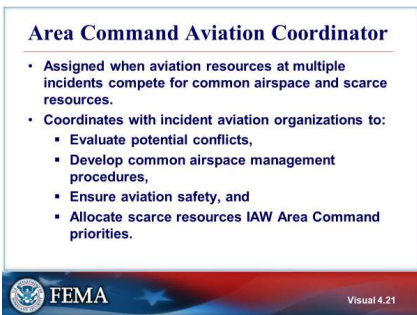
Visual 4.20

ASSISTANT AREA COMMANDER – LOGISTICS

The Assistant Area Commander – Logistics provides facilities, services, and materials at the Area Command level (by ordering resources needed to support the Area Command) and ensures the effective allocation of scarce resources and supplies among the incidents to include:

- Obtaining briefings from the Area Commander

- Providing facilities, services, and materials for the Area Command

- Designating and coordinating the ordering process

- Ensuring coordinated communications are in place

- Assisting in the development of Area Command decisions

- Ensuring that critical resources are used effectively on a continuous basis

The Area Command Critical Resources Unit Leader can be assigned to support the Assistant Area Commander for Logistics. The Area Command Critical Resources Unit Leader tracks and maintains the status and availability of critical resources assigned to each incident under the Area Command.

Visual 4.21

AREA COMMAND AVIATION COORDINATOR

Assigned when aviation resources at multiple incidents compete for common airspace and scarce resources.

This role works in coordination with incident aviation organizations to

- Evaluate potential conflicts

- Develop common airspace management procedures

- Ensure aviation safety

- Allocate scarce resources in accordance with Area Command priorities

Area Command Technical Specialists

Assign technical specialists as additional command advisors, depending on the nature, scope, complexity, and location(s) of the incident(s), or according to specific needs the Incident Commanders or Unified Commands establish.

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Visual 4.22

Visual 4.22

AREA COMMAND TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS

Examples of Technical Specialists

- Access and Functional Needs Advisor
- Agricultural Specialist
- Community Representative
- Decontamination Specialist
- Environmental Impact Specialist
- Epidemiologist
- Flood Control Specialist
- Health Physicist
- Industrial Hygienist
- Intelligence Specialist
- Legal Advisor
- Behavioral Health Specialist
- Meteorologist
- Science and Technology Advisor
- Pharmacist
- Veterinarian
- Toxicologist

Refer to Handout 4-4: Roles of Area Command Positions and Handout 4-5: Consolidating the Management of Multiple Incidents.
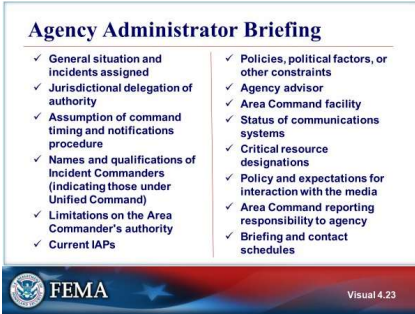
Visual 4.23

AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR BRIEFING

Upon assignment, the Area Commander should arrange a meeting with the agency/jurisdiction officials.

NIMS 2017 describes this briefing as follows: The Agency Administrator Briefing is a presentation to the personnel who will be managing or supporting the incident by the administrator or other senior official of the jurisdiction, agency, or organization affected by the incident. This briefing occurs when the Area Commander or Unified Area Command are assuming duties.

The briefing provides supporting details to the delegation of authority or other document that the jurisdiction, agency, or organization typically provides to the Area Command.

During the briefing, the agency administrator or a designee provides information, guidance, and direction—including priorities and constraints—necessary for the successful management of the incident.

The briefing is intended to ensure a common understanding between the jurisdiction, agency, or organization and the incident personnel regarding such things as the environmental, social, political, economic, and cultural issues relevant to the incident and its location.

The Agency Administrator Briefing allows the Area Commander to determine:

- General situation
- Which incidents are assigned.
- Jurisdictional delegation of authority
- Assumption of command timing and notifications procedure
- Names and qualifications of assigned Incident Commanders
- Limitations on the Area Commander's authority over Incident Commanders (should be in the delegation of authority)

- Current IAPs

- Policies, political factors, or other constraints

- Agency advisor assigned

- Area Command facility designated

- Status of communications systems to incidents and agency/jurisdictional headquarters

- Critical resource designations

- Policy and expectations for interaction with the media

- Area Command's reporting responsibility to agency

- Schedules for required briefings and contacts

These issues are usually delineated on the Delegation of Authority document.
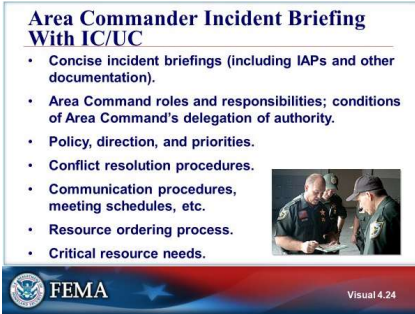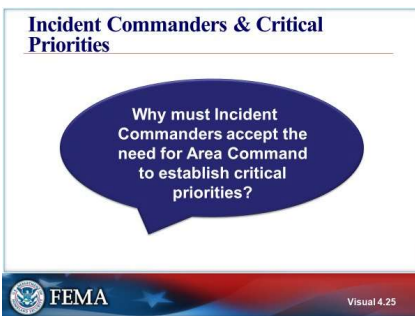
Visual 4.24

AREA COMMANDER INCIDENT BRIEFING WITH IC/UC

The Area Commander should have an initial joint meeting with the Incident Commanders/Unified Commands. During the meeting, the Area Commander should:

- Obtain concise individual incident briefings (including IAPs and other documentation).

- Explain the roles and responsibilities of the Area Command and the conditions of the Area Command's delegation of authority.

- Review policy, direction, and priorities received from the Agency Administrator.

- Describe procedures for resolving conflicts that arise.

- Coordinate communication procedures, meeting schedules, etc.

- Review resource ordering process.

- Discuss critical resource needs.

The Area Commander must ensure that all appropriate decisions and procedures are made clear to organizations involved in the Area Command.

Note that following this briefing any significant concerns or unresolved issues brought up at the meeting should be communicated to agency officials.

INCIDENT COMMANDERS & CRITICAL PRIORITIES

Why must Incident Commanders accept the need for Area Command to establish critical priorities?

Visual 4.25

Area Command Meeting and Briefings
- Incident situation
- Incident priorities
- Technical specialist reports
- Identification of critical resource needs
- Allocation and reallocation of resources
- Public Information Officer report
- Liaison Officer report
- Demobilization of resources and transition to recovery

FEMA   Visual 4.26

Visual 4.26

Demobilization and Transition to Recovery

Demobilization
- Area Command coordinates the demobilization of critical resources with the ICs.
- Area Command must ensure that personnel and equipment resources being released from demobilizing incidents can be made available to other active or growing incidents if needed.

Recovery
- Area Command coordinates with EOCs to ensure necessary actions to support recovery efforts.

FEMA   Visual 4.27

Visual 4.27

AREA COMMAND MEETING AND BRIEFINGS

The Area Command will have to establish a cycle of meetings and briefings that is synchronized with the operational cycle of the various incidents and supporting EOCs.

DEMOBILIZATION AND TRANSITION TO RECOVERY

Area Command will be involved in the demobilization process. Area Command does not directly demobilize resources. Rather, the role of Area Command is to coordinate the demobilization of critical resources with the Incident Commanders. Demobilization planning should begin at the incident level based on priorities and procedures established with Area Command.

Area Command must ensure that personnel and equipment resources being released from demobilizing incidents can be made available to other active or growing incidents, if needed. This is particularly critical for scarce resources. Another purpose is to ensure that transportation resources and other services are not being duplicated. Resources from an agency or jurisdiction that may have been divided to support other incidents should be consolidated during demobilization, when feasible.

Written instructions should identify critical resources and provide instructions for clearing those resources with Area Command before demobilization.

Incident Commanders should provide copies of their demobilization schedules to the Area Command prior to actual demobilization, and then wait for approval.
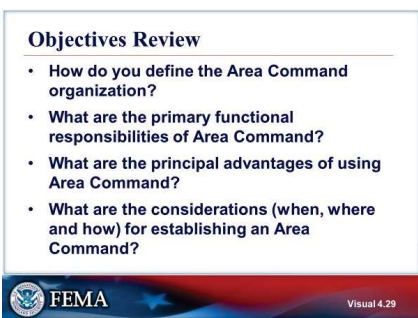
Recovery

Response to complex incidents will almost always be followed by a recovery effort.

Area Command coordinates with EOCs to ensure necessary actions to support recovery efforts.

Visual 4.28

ACTIVITY 4.2: DESIGN AN AREA COMMAND ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS FOR A SIMULATED INCIDENT

The instructor will explain Activity 4.2.

You will a have one hour to complete the activity and one hour to hear feedback/debrief.

Visual 4.29

OBJECTIVES REVIEW

Unit Enabling Objectives

- Define the Area Command organization.

- Identify primary functional responsibilities of Area Command.

- List the principal advantages of using Area Command.

- Explain considerations (when, where and how) for establishing an Area Command.