

# **NRT Training Recommendations on the Use of Incident Command System/Unified Command (ICS/UC) for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Incidents and Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant Program Training**

## **Introduction**

The U.S. National Response Team (NRT) recommends the following document as guidance for responder training on the use of ICS/UC at incident sites, including incidents involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). This document is based on the NRT recommendation submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) after Exercise TOPOFF 2000 and subsequent action by the NRT. Other actions have been taken by the NRT to support the use of ICS/UC, including the development of ICS/UC Technical Assistance Documents.

## **Background**

WMD events begin as local emergencies. Most local agencies and departments immediately implement ICS to coordinate the initial response. The established ICS structure (i.e., command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration) is then expanded and modified during the course of the response to reflect changes in the complexity of the incident and the number of responding resources. Unified command (UC) is used to allow multiple jurisdictions with legal authority over the incident to work together on the mitigation efforts and command of the incident response.

ICS/UC is the most widely accepted incident response management system in the United States. All federal, state, and local responders should be trained in ICS/UC in order to coordinate effectively at WMD incident sites. Response to WMD incidents should be conducted using the response management structure outlined in the ICS/UC system (i.e., command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration). NRT member agencies recommend the response management structure outlined in the NRT ICS/UC Technical Assistance Documents for responses to all such incidents to ensure consistent application of unified command coordination, command, and control. ICS/UC has been widely used throughout the United States for more than 25 years. Considerable progress has been made in recent years to expand its use, especially by federal agencies. Experience has shown, however, that much more needs to be done, especially in the area of training before all levels of government can conduct a coordinated response.

The baseline ICS/UC structure (command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration), as reflected in the NRT ICS/UC Technical Assistance Documents, is used by most fire service organizations nationally. Details of the ICS/UC structure are documented in several sources, including National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) courses and protocols, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120 regulations, NFPA standards, FIRESCOPE protocols, Fire Service Incident Management System guidelines, and U.S. Fire Administration training programs.

## **Training Standards for Responders**

All persons participating in the response to WMD incidents should be trained to competently perform within the ICS/UC structure. The competency and training requirements for local responders and technical expert resources are defined in OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120, EPA 311, NFPA standards 471, 472, and 473, and in reference resources, such as DOT/FEMA Guidelines for Public Sector Hazardous Materials Training.

All local responding personnel must be trained at least to the First Responder Operations Level and must receive annual refresher training to maintain their competency to respond. Persons functioning in more complex roles, such as Incident Commander, Hazmat Team Leader, and Technician, must have additional and complete training appropriate for the functions to be performed. All training competencies for each of these roles and functions are fully defined in the above standards and regulations and all include required training to perform correctly within the ICS/UC structure at an incident.

Federal personnel and agency representatives that join in the response to hazmat and WMD emergencies should also be trained to properly participate in the ICS/UC structure being deployed at the incident. If some agencies or jurisdictions choose not to use the most widely used incident command systems (e.g., NIIMS), the NRT Training Subcommittee and NRT member agencies recommend that agencies and their personnel should nevertheless be trained in ICS/UC to ensure effective response coordination.

It is recommended that all federal personnel who may participate in the response to such incidents be required to take initial and annual refresher training at least comparable to operations level responder training for hazmat and WMD incidents, and that such training include full instruction on the roles of those federal responders in the ICS/UC structure to be employed at such incidents.

### **Recommended Actions**

1. It is recommend that all local fire and emergency services departments adopt policies endorsing the use of the ICS/UC structure in all responses to hazmat and WMD emergencies.
2. It is recommend that all federal, state, and local agencies, and the Office of Homeland Security (OHS), adopt policies endorsing the use of the ICS/UC structure in all responses to hazmat and WMD emergencies.
3. It is recommended that federal responder ICS/UC training programs be developed or adapted, and that all federal personnel who may participate in the response to such incidents be required to take initial and annual refresher training at least comparable to operations level responder training for hazmat and WMD incidents. Such training should include full instruction on the roles of those federal responders in the ICS/UC structure to be employed at such incidents.
4. It is recommend that agencies not using ICS/UC in their response efforts should nevertheless be trained in ICS/UC to ensure effective response coordination with those agencies that utilize ICS/UC.
5. It is recommended that federal agencies with local responder training missions, such as the U.S. Fire Administration, undertake outreach programs to ensure that all local responder training courses and exercises being conducted by state and major metropolitan departments include preparation to respond with federal responders within the ICS/UC structure.
6. It is recommended that federal agencies with fire exercise responsibilities, such FEMA, including the Comprehensive Hazardous Materials Emergency Response - Capability Assessment Program (CHER-CAP), expand their efforts to include annual drill and practice in ICS/UC for all potential federal responders to hazmat and WMD emergencies.
7. As HMEP grantees develop HMEP grant applications it is recommended that grantees use the information in this document.