

TYPES OF INFORMATION CENTERS

0652

(September 1991)

There are several different types of centers. An incident usually has a main Incident Information Center based at a central point, such as the Unit Headquarters or the Incident Base. Information personnel establish other types of centers, with the approval of the Incident Commander, based on the incident's needs.

INTERIM INFORMATION CENTER

0652.1

(September 1991)

Until the Incident Information Center is operational, the unit ECC establishes an Interim Information Center to handle all inquiries and media calls. Information personnel must take care when switching from the interim center to the Incident Information Center to refer callers to the new center.

In many areas an Interim Information Center is unnecessary because Incident Information Center locations are pre-established.

If the Interim Information Center needs additional help, the local ECC should advise the Incident Information Officer as soon as possible.

Before the interim center can begin handling incoming calls, the Incident Information Officer must rapidly determine what information has been reported so far. He/she should also obtain a general "run-down" of the current fire situation from the dispatch record (FC-34 and FC-9), logs, radio reports, and personal contact with the duty dispatcher. The Information Officer writes down and uses details about the first report, personnel, crews, equipment, fuel type, current incident status, incident size, conditions, weather factors, cause, etc., for an initial Incident Status Summary (ICS-209).

Information personnel should notify local media about the hours of operation and make a special effort to provide this information to wire services. Wire services should be asked to send out an "editor's advisory" on both press and radio wires. City editors of local newspapers and assignment editors of area radio and television stations should also be notified, and deadlines should be ascertained during the first contact with each outlet.

Information officers should establish a specific change-over time and advise interim center personnel of the main center location and phone numbers for incoming calls, as well as the unlisted number for internal use. Personnel should relay the current information and Incident Status Summary (ICS-209) to the Incident Information Center just prior to the transition.

After the transition, personnel should continue to staff the Interim Information Center for at least a half hour to handle the remaining traffic. If possible, an answering machine can provide correct numbers for the new center. However, as soon as possible, the staff should assemble records, working materials, and extra maps and promptly report to the Incident Information Center for further assignment.

INCIDENT INFORMATION CENTER (IIC)

0652.2

(September 1991)

The Incident Information Center (IIC) is the main contact location for the media and the public. It is coordinated by the Incident Information Officer. Personnel direct most phone inquiries regarding incident status to this center. In most cases, the Incident Information Center is not located at the incident site. When determining a location for the IIC, information personnel should consider the following:

- A minimum of four telephones must be in place or readily available in a system without lines or switchboards. Three incoming lines are placed on a rotary system and one is used as a private line.
- From the IIC, personnel should be able to contact the Incident Command Post (ICP) within a reasonable amount of time.
- The center should be easily accessible to the media.
- Do not interfere with ICP activities, dispatchers, and other work locations.
- The center should have sufficient floor space, wall space, lighting, and access to tables and chairs.
- IICs should provide access to a copy machine, FAX and telecopier machines, computers, and Data General (DG).
- The location should have room to expand the operation.

Many CAL FIRE units and other agencies have pre-established locations (conference rooms, fairgrounds, etc.) which are often completely stocked with materials and have pre-established phone numbers.

When the center has not been pre-established, some locations to consider are:

- Schools
- Fairgrounds
- Motels (conference rooms)
- Fire stations

FIELD INFORMATION CENTER (FIC)

0652.3

(September 1991)

The Field Information Manager manages the Field Information Center and reports to the Incident Information Officer. The FIC is normally located at or near the Incident Base or Incident Command Post for easy media access.

The Field Information Center is the primary in-person contact place for the news media. In fact, most Field Information Centers do not have telephones. If phones do exist, however, their main use should be to keep the Information Center informed. Therefore, the FIC should be highly visible and always staffed with sufficient information personnel.

The Field Information Center functions include gathering and relaying incident information to the IIC and incident personnel, escorting the media, coordinating media activity, and posting incident information in neighboring communities.

As an incident develops, the information function may need to expand to meet increasing needs. The following sections describe additional types of information centers that may become necessary during an incident.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTER (CIC)

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The department normally uses a community center as an Incident Information Office when an incident affects a populated area. As an incident becomes more visible and the effects upon a community increase, public and media information needs escalate. Information personnel can address community demands and concerns in one of two ways:

- As an extension of the Field Information Center, a trained information specialist would assume the responsibility of keeping the community informed.

- When the community workload exceeds the capacity of the Field Information Center, information personnel should establish a Community Information Center. This center should be based within the community and be highly visible.

An Information Center Manager supervises the Community Information Center and reports directly to the Incident Information Officer. The Information Center Manager should:

- Make contacts with political and community leaders to keep them informed and answer questions.
- Make and maintain contacts with the community media. This activity must be coordinated with the Incident Information Center to avoid duplication of effort and misinformation.
- Develop flyers or newsletters to keep the community members apprised of the situation.
- Coordinate information center activities with allied agencies that may be requested to become part of the center (e.g., sheriff's office, Red Cross, USFS, local fire departments, etc.).
- Make presentations at public gatherings, civic groups, schools, boards of supervisors, etc.
- Be a central point for addressing public concerns.
- The CIC should only address community oriented news stories. Although the CIC will not normally disseminate incident information to the media, the center must be available as a media contact point and direct the media to the Incident Information Center or Field Information Center.
- When the news media arrive at the community center, the following information should be available via handouts and interviews:
 - The Incident Status Summary (Form-209) and incident releases, and other basic facts
 - The impact of the incident on the community
 - Community action as a result of the incident
 - Quotes from community leaders and fire officials (mayor, supervisors, fire chief, etc.), and the Unit Chief
- The Information Center Manager must stay in constant contact with the Unit Chief or the designee.

SATELLITE INFORMATION CENTER (SIC)

0652.3.2

(September 1991)

On larger incidents, one Field Information Center may not be sufficient to accommodate the media and public needs, so Satellite Information Centers (SIC) may be established at base camp locations. SICs, coordinated by a Center Manager, report to the Incident Information Officer.

EVACUATION INFORMATION CENTER

0652.3.3

(September 1991)

The department is responsible for setting up an Evacuation Information Center anytime the public is displaced by an incident within CAL FIRE protection areas. As soon as the Incident Information Officer receives notice of a possible evacuation, it is crucial to establish an Evacuation Information Center staffed with qualified personnel. The public will base much of its judgment of the department---both during and after the incident---on the operation of the Evacuation Information Center.

When setting up an Evacuation Information Center, information personnel should take the following steps:

- Obtain a copy of the Evacuation Plan from law enforcement officials.
- Request qualified information personnel.
- Obtain resources to set up the center through the facilities unit or unit.
- Work closely with the Liaison Officer.
- Contact and determine the needs of the following:
 - Unit Chief
 - Board of Supervisors
 - City Council
 - Local legislatures
 - Community leaders
 - Law enforcement
 - Local Office of Emergency Services (OES) representative
 - United States Forest Service (USDA)

- American Red Cross (local, regional, state)
- County Health Department
- Salvation Army/Goodwill
- Obtain a list of evacuees (names and addresses).
- Notify news media via the Incident Information Officer.

Once the Evacuation Information Center has been established, it will be necessary to keep in constant contact with the Liaison Officers, Incident Information Officer, Damage Assessment Team, Incident Commander, and Unit Chief.

The Evacuation Information Center should be able to provide information in the following areas:

- General incident facts (Form ICS-209, maps, incident newsletter, newspaper, etc.).
- Road closures (statement from the responsible law enforcement agency, with maps).
- Structure loss or damage (statement from assessment team).
- Current threat to structures.
- Communications with and status of friends and family.
- Predicted incident activity. Personnel obtain most information from the Incident Information Center; the information should be posted or available in the Evacuation Information Center. Information from other sources should be forwarded to the IIC for clearance and verification prior to its use.
- Monitor, defuse, and relay information to the Incident Information Center about ill feelings circulating among evacuees.

Reentry is the process of returning the evacuees' lives back to normal:

- Make sure that the Incident Information Office is informed of the reentry.
- Prepare and disseminate reentry news release.
- Monitor media coverage.

As the evacuation sites close down, it is important to demobilize the center.

- Inform all appropriate people the center is closing.
- Notify the media through the Incident Information Officer.
- Prepare and evaluate a historical record to give to the Incident Information Officer.

COMPLEX INFORMATION CENTER

0652.4

(September 1991)

Since so many fires occurred during the fire siege of 1987, it was impractical to establish an information center at each incident. Instead, the fires were divided into groups based on geography and each group was assigned an information office. These groups were called "complexes" and functioned as a single fire information system.

During periods when California experiences several major incidents at the same time, it is important for information personnel to be flexible and adapt quickly. It may even be necessary to completely reorganize the incident information system to include additional information centers. The following system is recommended:

- Several single Incident Information Centers report to a unit Information Coordination Center (ICC) (see [Region ICC exhibit](#)). The unit ICC will consolidate information for release. Some general guidelines are:
 - The unit ICC should handle the major portion of the news media and public calls.
 - The ICC should refer specific calls to an appropriate incident information center.
 - Staffing for the ICC would be increased to make sure enough personnel are on hand to gather information on each separate fire.
 - The media and public should be able to obtain general information on all incidents with one call.

REGION MULTI-AGENCY COMMAND (REMAC) INFORMATION COORDINATION CENTER (ICC)

0652.5

(September 1991)

The region ICC will release information to the media from a regional overview and provide internal information to the region chief and staff. Personnel should refer requests for specific incident information to the respective incident information center.

CALIFORNIA MULTI-AGENCY COMMAND (CALMAC) INFORMATION COORDINATION CENTER (ICC)

0652.6

September 1991

The Information Coordination Center (ICC) at Sacramento Headquarters is activated when multiple major fires or major emergency incidents are in progress. Besides releasing information as a statewide overview and as a general incident recap, the Sacramento ICC also provides internal information for the Director, CALMAC assigned staff positions, and high government officials.

CALMAC serves the following functions:

- Prepares and releases summary information to the news media and participating agencies. Examples of the type of information released include:
 - Total number of major incidents
 - Total number of personnel and suppression resources assigned
 - General geographic location of major incidents and the names of incident commanders
 - Agencies in charge of each incident and names of assisting agencies
 - Total acreage involved
 - Costs of suppression and damage
 - Total number of serious injuries, resource and property losses, etc., reported to the CALMAC center
 - Summary of regional weather picture provided by fire weather, anticipated fire behavior, and suppression difficulty
 - Incident Status Summaries (ICS-209) from each incident
 - Names of individual incident information officers and phone numbers of incident information centers, and agency contacts
 - Any other information deemed appropriate by the Department Information Officer

(NOTE: Tactical or specific operational information, as well as any other sensitive information, will not be released.)

- Assists news media representatives who visit the CALMAC center and provides information about its function. It also makes sure that joint agency involvement is stressed in dealings with the media.
- Assists in arranging news conferences, briefings, preparation of informational material, etc. when requested by CALMAC group or CALMAC coordinator.
- Coordinates all information activities (e.g., tours for dignitaries). Acts as the escort for agency tours and contacts when appropriate.

PERSONNEL

0652.6.1

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The Sacramento Information Coordination Center is normally supervised by a trained incident information officer with experience working in the CALMAC ICC (normally the Department Information Officer or selected field personnel).

Depending on the complexity of a statewide incident situation, the center may include the following positions (see [CALMAC](#)).

- CALMAC Information Officer

The CALMAC Information Officer serves as a liaison between the department and the media and reports directly to the CALMAC coordinator. The CALMAC Information Officer supervises information specialist operations, obtains related incident information (last big lightning fire year, etc.), schedules available staff for interviews, and escorts the media to and from the ECC.

- Information Center Manager

The Information Center Manager reports directly to the CALMAC Information Officer. He/she coordinates all information distributed to the Information Specialists. The CALMAC Information Officer acts as a liaison between the intelligence unit and the Information Specialists.

- Information Specialists

Information Specialists report to the Information Center Manager. They answer media questions about specific incidents and provide a statewide overview by releasing approved information, such as that found on form ICS-209 and information from the CALMAC Information Officer or the Information Center Manager. If more specific information is necessary, phone numbers will be posted for each incident, and the media may be referred directly.

An intelligence briefing paper will be issued on a regular basis with the latest information on the incident(s). The media will be given a copy of the same briefing paper. The CALMAC Information Officer attends briefing meetings throughout each day and reports any updates to the Information Specialists.

CALMAC AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE

0652.6.2

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Agencies involved in an incident will normally assign representatives to CALMAC. These individuals, available for interviews, act as their agency's information specialists.

NATIONAL INTERAGENCY FIRE CENTER (NIFC)

0652.7

(September 1991)

Incident information is forwarded to the National Interagency Fire Center (formerly the Boise Interagency Fire Center) once a day to be used in the National Fire Summary Report and as a national tool for resource allocation.

[\(see next section\)](#)

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