Incident Command System

Unit 7: ICS
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What is present in any incident?
[Chaos (uncertainty, misinformation, etc..)]
The Incident Command System is a means for reducing chaos.

Search Crucials

- Search is an Emergency
- Search is a classic mystery
- Search for clues not just the subject
- Know if the subject leaves the search area
- Grid search as a last resort
- **Manage by objectives**
- **Search management is information management**

Two of the search crucials highlight the importance of ICS

"Manage by objectives" (a core ICS principle) – focus on the things that you can control. set SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, Time specific). By 18:00, route search all of the travel corridors from the IPP to the containment boundary.

And, "Search management is information management", ICS identifies specific information tracking functions (such as the situation unit within the planning section),

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- Multi-agency response
  - Common management framework
  - Common vocabulary

The nature of an incident is chaos.

ICS lets us organize, manage, reduce the chaos.

Searches (and other incidents) are usually multi-agency. ICS gives us a common management framework and a common vocabulary.
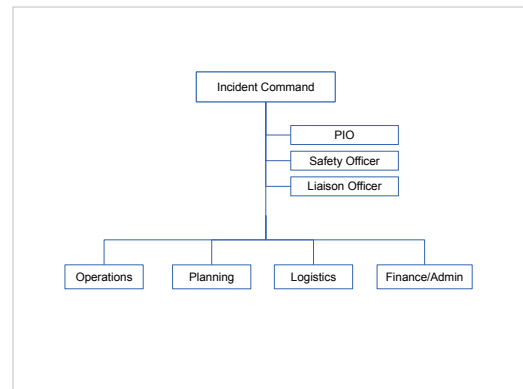
So, let's look at ICS, and how it can function to assist in reducing chaos in a search (or a SAR training event, or any incident).

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ICS Scales

Incidents Scale

ICS is designed to scale

More organization as more resources come in. Less organization as resources are demoblizied

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Searches can grow

- 50% over in about 3 hours
- ~20% take more than one operational period
- 8% take more than 24 hours
- 2% take three days or more

- Andy Warburton: 8 days, > 5000 people
- Lisk Sisters: 3 Days, 1200 people.
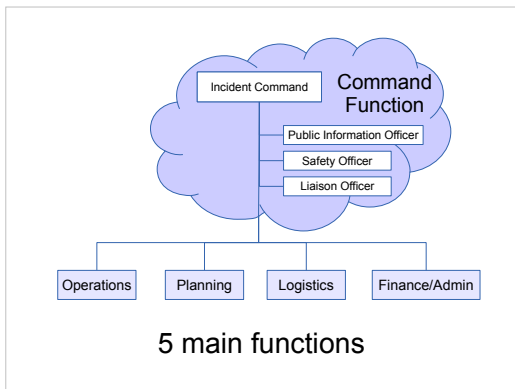- South Williamsport: 58 hours, 350 people
- Bluff Mountain: 5 days, > 350 people

Most searches are over fairly quickly and involve few agencies.

Searches can grow to last for days and involve hundreds (or thousands) of responders from many different agencies.

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Command Function

Incident Command
Public Information Officer
Safety Officer
Liaison Officer

Operations   Planning   Logistics   Finance/Admin

5 main functions

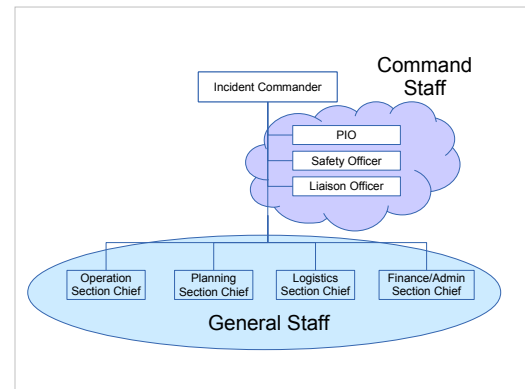ICS defines five functions that are performed at most incidents.

Command – overall management

Operations – the actual boots on the ground, the resources carrying out the incident action plan.

Planning – collecting, managing, and evaluating information about the incident

Logistics – service and support (staging areas, rest areas, food, water, fuel, supplies, medical services for incident personnel).

Finance/Administration – on site financial activities to support the incident (tracking hours, maintaining purchasing records, injury and damage claims, etc). Key in large searches and in disasters where there may be reimbursement from FEMA.

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Command Staff

Incident Commander
PIO
Safety Officer
Liaison Officer

Operation Section Chief   Planning Section Chief   Logistics Section Chief   Finance/Admin Section Chief
General Staff

ICS designates specific titles for roles that may be filled in an incident.

ICS scales, all functions can be wrapped up in the IC (as in a traffic stop), or the IC can designate as needed (e.g IC, Operations Section Chief, resources in the Operations Section, and a Safety Officer in a small fire (with the IC able to handle all public information, liaison, planning, logistics, and finance/admin functions).

If filled out, there is a general staff composed of section chiefs, the IC and a command staff composed of the public information officer, safety officer, and liaison officer.

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Standard Terminology

- Incident Commander
- PIO
- Safety Officer
- Liaison Officer → Officer
- Section Chief
  - Operation Section Chief
  - Planning Section Chief
  - Logistics Section Chief
  - Finance/Admin Section Chief
- Branch Director
- Investigation Unit Leader
- Situation Unit Leader → Unit Leader
- Strike Team Leader
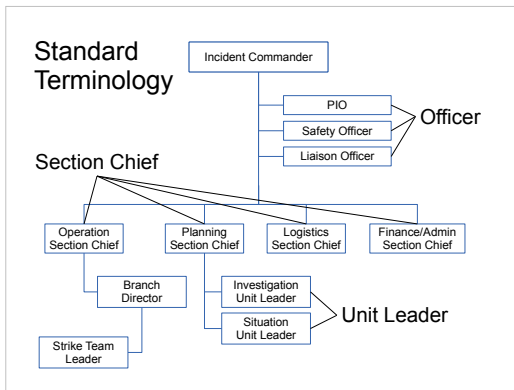
In an incident, multiple people from different agencies (police, fire, medical, SAR) and different jurisdictions work together.

One mechanism for reducing chaos is teaching everyone a standard terminology – so that everyone at an incident speaks the same language and understands how the incident is organized.

Standard terminology includes titles for positions.

Seems picky, but is important. (Why?) [for managing chaos – getting everyone on the same page]

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Standard Titles

- Incident Commander
- Command Staff: Officer
  - Safety Officer, Liaison Officer, Public Information Officer
- Section Chief:
  - Operations Section Chief
- Branch Director
- Division Supervisor
- Group Supervisor
  - Search Group Supervisor, Rescue Group Supervisor
- Unit Leader

Some of the key titles.

Only "Officers" are in the command staff: Safety, Liasion, Public Information.

Sections have Section Chiefs. Divisions and groups have Supervisers.

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Look closely at this picture: The Fire chief in the white helmet is the operations section chief, subordinate to the firefighter in the black helmet who is the incident commander.

A purpose of the standard roles and titles in ICS is to allow positions to be filled by the most qualified individuals, regardless of their ranks within their organization.

Another purpose is to reduce chaos by having all responders speak a common language.

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Standard Places

- Incident Command Post
- Staging Area (S)
- Base (B)
- Camp (C)
- Helibase (H)

H-2
Helispot

Locations are given standard names and are places for standard functions.
Management of the incident at the ICP – separated from distractions (e.g. keep the family out).

Staging area – resources that are available (for deployment within 3 minutes).

Base – Logistics section – primary service and support activities.

Camp – temporary food/water/sleep support areas, resources may be available or out of service

Helispot – landing zone
Helibase – fuel, maintenance, etc.

ICP
(clarify status) by John Borges

Incident Command Post can be set up in a building, or be a mobile command post vehicle. Here is the MA Department of Fire Services Incident Support Unit serving as the command post for a search.

Camp

Out of service resources, resting, rehabilitating, servicing.

Staging Area

Available resources ready (within three minutes) for assignment

Resource Status

Assigned

Ⓢ Available
Ready to deploy within 3 minutes
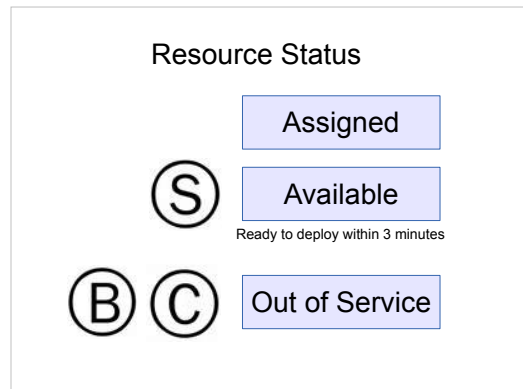
Ⓑ Ⓒ Out of Service

Resources can have one of three possible statuses at an incident.

Assigned – performing some assigned task.

Available – ready for assignment within 3 minutes.

Out of service.

Resources don't just show up.

All Resource Requests Must Be Approved by the Incident Commander

One element of managing the chaos: All resource requests must be approved by the incident commander.

Resources don't just show up, a need is identified, the IC approves the request for a resource, then the resource gets requested.

Is pre-planning important?

Chain of Command

Everyone has exactly one supervisor.

Supervisor is up the chain of command in the incident command system, not necessarily up the normal agency chain of command.

A task force leader may report up to a Division Supervisor, who reports to the Operations Section Chief, who reports to the Incident Commander.

Chain of Command: Within ICS

Rank relationship within agency in blue – member reporting to officer.

Operating as part of a task force in ICS, the yellow relationship applies – everyone in the task force reports to the unit leader (the canine handler).

Grouping Resources

- Single Resource
  - One of one sort of resource
  - Single Resource Boss
- Strike Team
  - Multiple resources of similar type
  - Common Communications
  - Strike Team Leader
- Task Force
  - Multiple resources of different types
  - Common Communications
  - Task Force Leader

Resources are of one of three types:

Single Resource – One of one sort of resource (an ambulance) lead by a Single Resource Boss.

Strike Team – Multiple of the same sort of resource (an ambulance strike team) with common communications and operating under a Strike Team Leader.

Task Force – More than one sort of resource (USAR Task Force) with common communications and operating under a Task Force Leader.
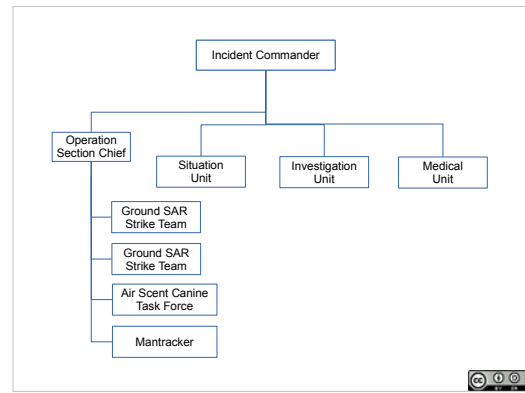
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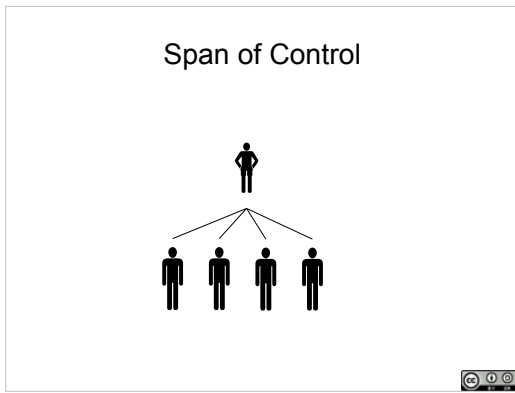
Span of Control

How many people can you manage in an incident?

Older NIMS: 3-7, optimum 5.

Current NIMS: As many/few as can be effectively managed.

<mark>How do you manage a grid team of 15 firefighters in thick brush?</mark>

So how does ICS maintain span of control:

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Here's what an organizational chart might look like early in an incident.

The IC is handling all the command staff functions.

The IC has designated an operations section chief to manage four assigned resources in the field.

The IC has an investigation unit working on the investigation.
The IC has assigned someone to write down what is getting done (as the Situation Unit Leader).
The IC has called for an ambulance to come and stand by if any searcher gets hurt – as the Medical unit (which supporting the responders, falls under logistics).
<mark>What's the IC's span of control? The Operation Section Chief's?</mark>

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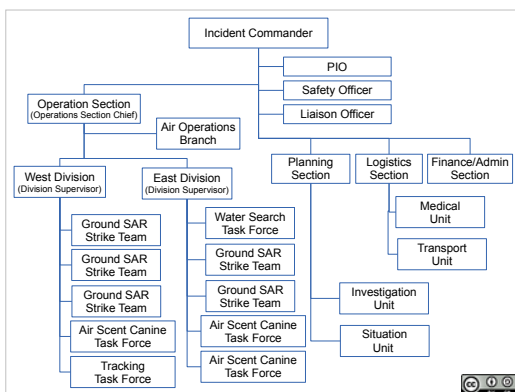
As things scale up, it is necessary to maintain span of control. IC Delegates responsibilities as needed.

The Operations Section Chief has split the operation into two geographic divisions (each lead by a Division Supervisor) and a branch (lead by a Branch Director, air operations always go in their own branch).

The IC has delegated the PIO/Safety/Liaison functions by filling the command staff positions.

The IC has also filled all the general staff positions.

<mark>What is the IC's span of control?</mark>

<mark>What's the operations section chief's span of control?</mark>

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Manage by Objectives
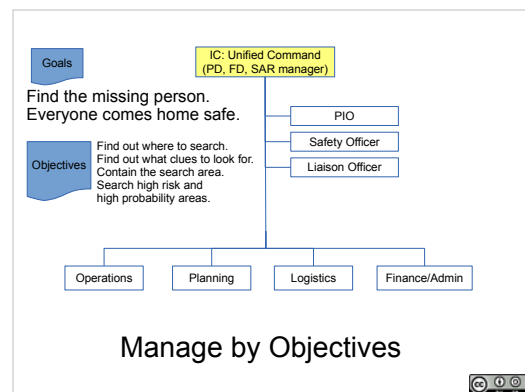
In the chaos of a search, there will be things you can control, and things you can't control. Focus on the things you can control, and set SMART objectives.

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.
Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, Time-bounded.

At high level, IC sets informal goals, then command and general staffs in the planning meeting establish a list of incident objectives.   In initial response, less formal statement of incident objectives by the IC – but key driver of what happens.

Objectives focus on strategy, not getting into details of tactics (leave that to operations).

Establish containment on the 95% probability perimeter by 16:30. (with no statement of containment tactics or resources).
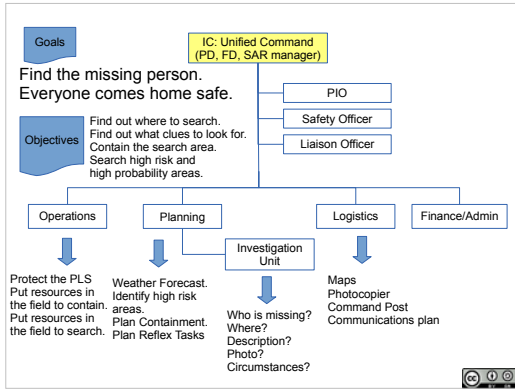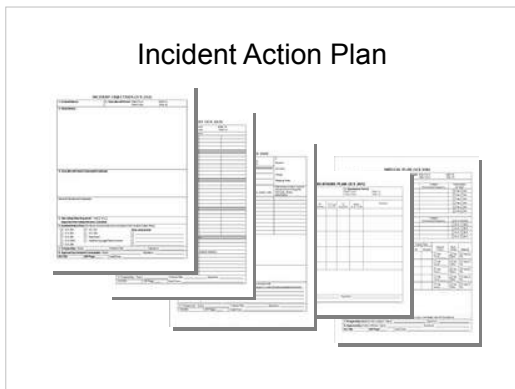
Incident objectives then drive the activities of the search – focusing them on actions on things that can be changed.

Ensure the safety of all responders and the general public through out the entire duration of the incident.

Goal: Everyone goes home safe.

SMART Objective...

Incident Action Plan

Searches run on paper. However:

Don't get bogged down in paperwork and planning.

Evaluate the situation, come up with a plan (reflex actions, short checklist of things to get done in every search), write down a list of objectives, get boots (and paws) on the ground, document who is doing what where.

The ICS Planning **P**

First Full Operational Period

Begin Second Full Operational Period
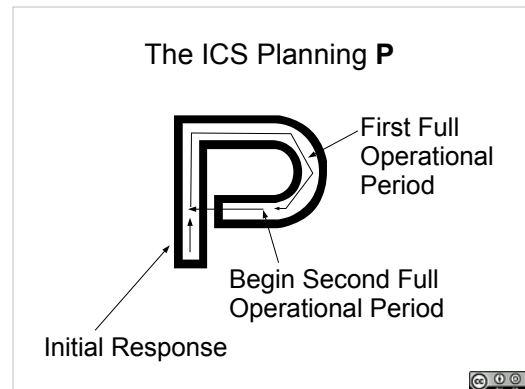
Initial Response

Remember the ICS planning P.

The ICS Planning **P**

Continue Reflex Tasks
As Overhead Team
Scales up and Plans

First Full
Operational
Period

Reflex Tasks
Koester's
Bicycle Wheel

Apply Formal Search Theory
Apply Full set of ICS Forms
Expand the ICS overhead team

Initial Response
50% of searches are over in the first three hours.
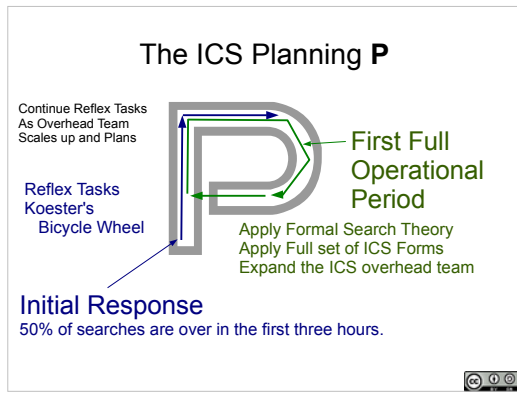
Very important not to get bogged down in paperwork during the initial response. But also very important to document the search effort.
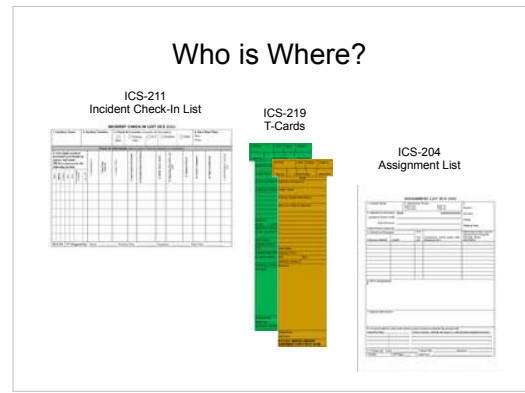
Keep it simple.

Set objectives (using Koester's bicycle wheel or a checklist as a guide) for reflex tasks.

Record who is going on what task.

Get boots on the ground.

Work on a full IAP later as you go into cycles of planning/operations in full operational periods.

Who is Where?

ICS-211
Incident Check-In List

ICS-219
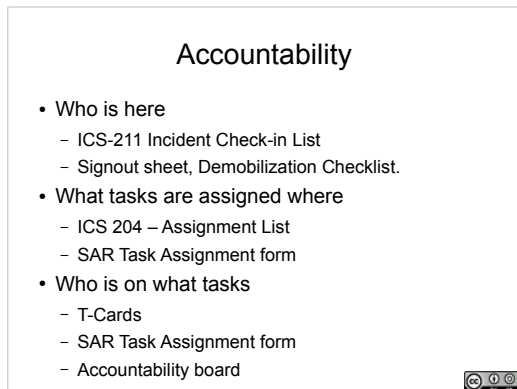T-Cards

ICS-204
Assignment List

Accountability

You have people off searching: Who are they? Where are they searching? How do we communicate with them?

You have people not searching yet – who are they, where are they, are they ready to search.

Resources are returning from assignments: Did everyone come back? Is any searcher unaccounted for?

ICS has forms designed to manage this information.
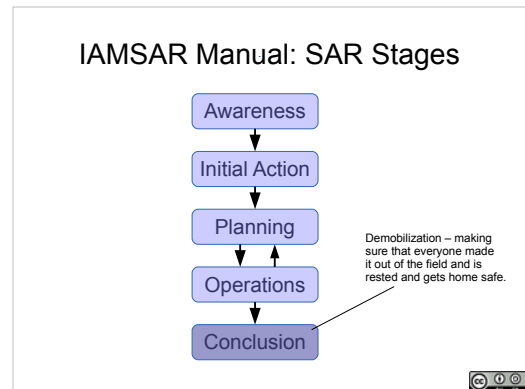Always sign everyone in.
The search isn't over until everyone is home.
Starting out, write it down on a blank piece of paper, and assign someone to keep an activity log.

Accountability

- Who is here
  - ICS-211 Incident Check-in List
  - Signout sheet, Demobilization Checklist.
- What tasks are assigned where
  - ICS 204 – Assignment List
  - SAR Task Assignment form
- Who is on what tasks
  - T-Cards
  - SAR Task Assignment form
  - Accountability board

Can also use:

Accountability board – write out who is where, what their status is.

Accountability Tags (tag in/tag out – common in the fire service).

IAMSAR Manual: SAR Stages

Awareness

Initial Action

Planning

Operations

Conclusion

Demobilization – making sure that everyone made it out of the field and is rested and gets home safe.

In the SAR stages model there is a conclusion stage: sending resources home, after action review, finishing up the documentation.

An element in ICS is demobilization (which is continuous in ICS, resources are released when they are no longer needed). Accountability is part of this – making sure that everyone got out of the field and gets home safe (which can include rest before they drive home).

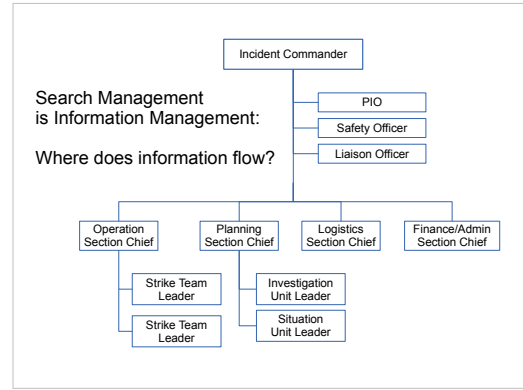Usually a signout sheet for a search.

ICS has a Demoblilization Checkout process and form (returned all issued equipment, etc.).

You have a lot of tools in your bag.

ICS isn't one of them.

ICS is the bag.

Where does the information flow?
Objectives to planning section to operations section, and back to planning section.

What are the Key elements of information to be communicated?
Searching Information, Clues, Where was searched, How well it was searched, Hazards found, field decision points. Where wasn't searched.

Briefings

- Operational Period Briefing

- Briefing for assignment

We have briefings to communicate the plan to the responders. Two main sorts in SAR. Operational period briefing, and briefings for assignments.

What can we expect in an operational period briefing?
Highly stylized. Many people. Here's who is running the show. Here's the situation. Here's how we are going to deal with it. Here are the safety issues. Go out and do it. **Not the place for questions.**

What about a briefing for an assignment?
A few people, or one on one – operations section chief (or other operational supervisor) with leader of an assignment (or leaders of assignments).   Specifics of assignment and logistics. **Place to ask questions.**

Briefing for specific assignment

- Who should be present?
- What information should be communicated?

- Search operates under "Need To Know"
  - You will not learn everything

Leaders of SAR field assignments should be briefed on their assignments. Generally just operations section chief or a supervisor from operations doing the briefing either one on one or with a small group of field team leaders.

Information flowing from command and planning functions into the resources going out into the field.

Task Assignment Form/Team Assignment

There's a (non ICS form) tool often used to support the information flow between field resources and planning in SAR.

Under various names and in various formats. Often called a Task Assignment Form.

Essence is details of a specific assignment:

Who is assigned?

What are they assigned to do?

How do they get there?

How do they communicate?

Then, when they return, what did they do?

Record of the assignment. Record of the debriefing.

A good practice: One copy goes out with the task, copy of the cover page stays with Operations. On return, a completed copy with the debriefing goes back to Planning.

Think of each ICS-204 Assignment list going with a stack of SAR Task Assignment forms, one for each assignment listed on the ICS-204.

A SAR Task Assignment Form might match with a T-card, but the T-card serves only to track resource status, the SAR Task Assignment Form serves to document the plan, resources, and results from an assignment.

In SAR, resources are often mixed and matched into Task Forces for assignments, then when complete, remixed into a different set of Task Forces for new assignments. SAR Task Assignment forms are effective for tracking the particular set of individuals on an assignment.

Task Assignment Form Lifecycle
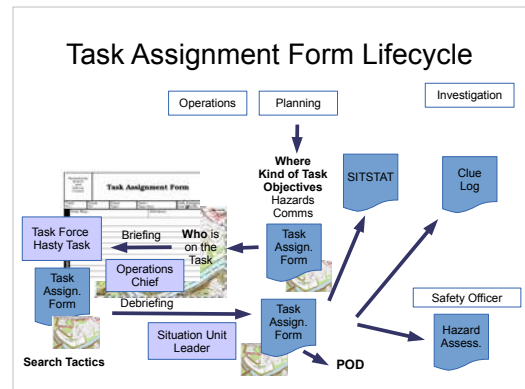
Search management is Information management.

Who frames objectives?

Who determines strategy?

Who assigns particular resources to particular tactical assignments?

TAF life cycle epitomizes the information flow in SAR: TAF starts in planning, where to search, hazards, communications. Then to operations: Specific tactical assignment, who is on the assignment, brief them. Task in the field, field tactics, return, debrief, TAF goes to planning (situation unit leader), information from it into SITSTAT, clue log, hazard assessment, feeds into planning for next operational period (in particular, the reported POD).

Debriefing

This is the key bit. Why?

Discuss. What are the consequences of information gathered in the field not getting back to the planning section?

- Areas Not Covered
- Clues
- Hazards
- POD
- Sweep Width
- Area Size/Time
- Tactics
- Terrain
- Vegetation
- Light
- Weather
- Team Composition/Fatigue

How well was the area covered?

Debriefing should cover: Areas not searched, Clues, POD, hazards observed, and all of the factors that can influence POD.

Practical Evolution:

(1) Complete a Task Assignment Form
In pairs of small groups, given a general description of an assignment have each group fill out a task assignment form for the other, then exchange and brief on a simulated assignment.