INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM PUBLICATION

AREA COMMAND

ICS 420-1.3

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This document contains information relative to the Incident Command System (ICS) component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). This is the same Incident Command System developed by FIRESCOPE.

Additional information and documentation can be obtained from the following sources:

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The Fire and Rescue Service Advisory Committee/FIRESCOPE Board of Directors has approved the information contained in this document for application in the statewide Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid System.

This material is a development of the FIRESCOPE Program.

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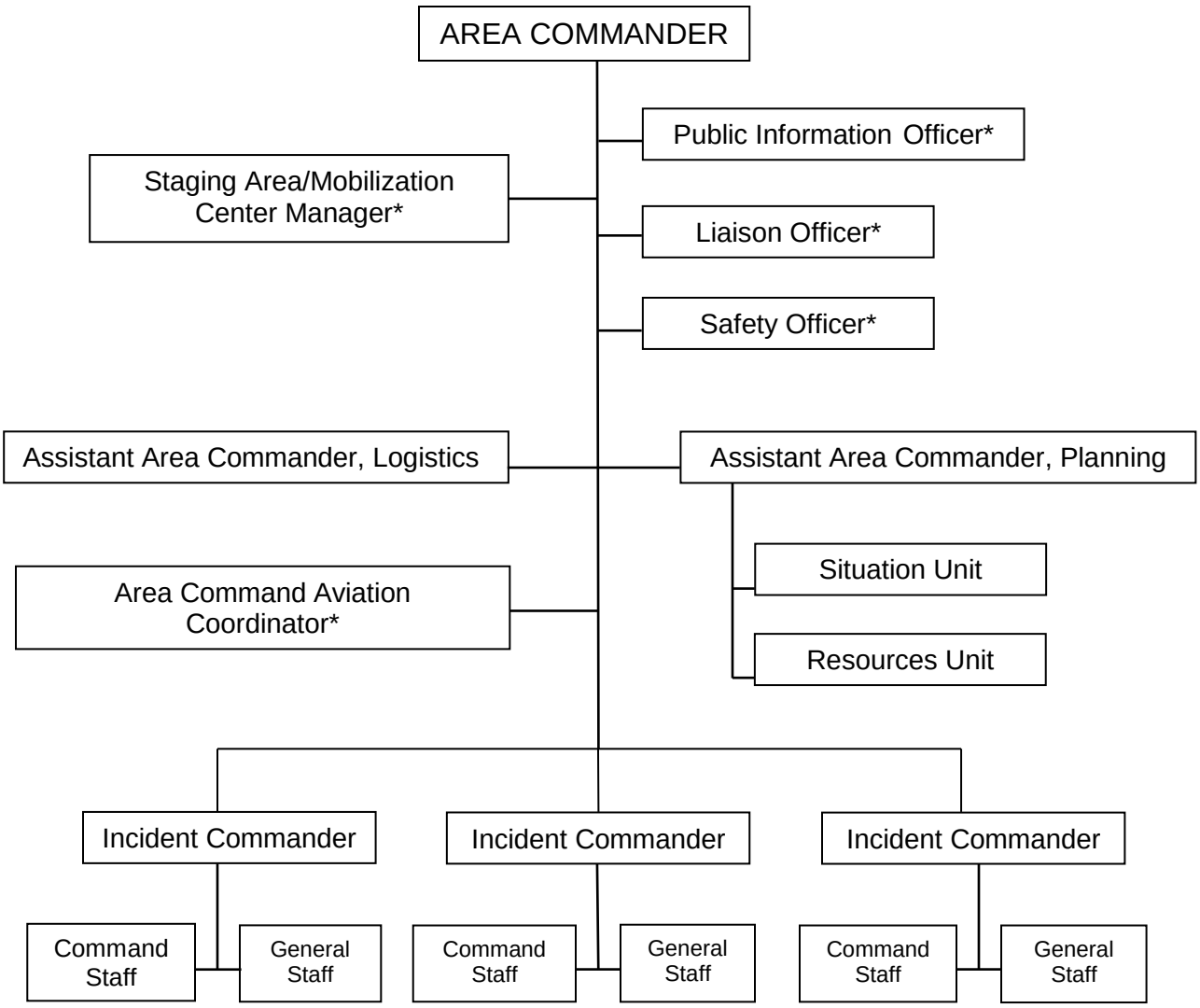
AREA COMMAND

Area Command is an expansion of the incident command function primarily designed to manage a complex or large incident/event or an area that has multiple incident management organizations assigned. An Area Command may be established when incidents are close enough that oversight is required among the incident management organizations to ensure conflicts do not arise.

The function of the Area Command is to develop broad objectives for the impacted area and coordinate the development of individual incident objectives and strategies. Additionally, the Area Command will set priorities for the use of critical resources allocated to the incidents assigned.

An Area Command organization is normally small with personnel assigned to Command, Planning and Logistics functions. Depending on the complexity of the interface between the incidents, specialists in other areas such as aviation, hazardous materials, environment, and finance may also be assigned to Area Command.

BASIC AREA COMMAND ORGANIZATION FOR THREE INCIDENTS



*Optional Positions

An Area Commander may have the need to pre-position resources prior to allocating them to individual incidents. This can be a Staging Area when it is desirable to have the resources ready for deployment within three minutes or a Mobilization Center when resources are being held prior to assignment, reassignment, or demobilization.

POSITION CHECKLISTS

AREA COMMANDER (Single or Unified Area Command) - The Area Commander (ACDR) is responsible for the overall direction of incident management teams assigned to the same incident or to incidents in close proximity. This responsibility includes ensuring that administrative issues are resolved, compatible incident objectives are established and strategies are selected for the use of critical resources.

Area Command also has the responsibility to coordinate with local, state, federal, tribal, and volunteer organizations and agencies that are operating within the incident area:

a. Obtain a briefing from the agency executive(s) on agency expectations, concerns and constraints.
b. Obtain and carry out delegation of authority from the agency executive for overall management and direction of the incidents within the designated Area Command.
c. If operating as a Unified Area Command, develop working agreement for how Area Commanders will function together.
d. Delegate authority to Incident Commanders based on agency expectations, concerns, and constraints.
e. Establish an Area Command schedule and timeline.
f. Resolve conflicts between incident "realities" and agency executive "wants."
g. Establish appropriate location for the Area Command facilities.
h. Determine and implement an appropriate Area Command organization.
i. Determine the need for a Staging Area/Mobilization Center.
j. Determine the need for Technical Specialists to support Area Command.
k. Obtain an incident briefing and Incident Action Plans from Incident Commanders.
l. Assess situational awareness information prior to Area Command strategy meetings.
m. Conduct a joint meeting with all Incident Commanders.
n. Review objectives and strategies for each incident.
o. Periodically review critical resource needs.
p. Maintain close coordination with the agency executive.
q. Establish priorities for use of critical resources.
r. Review procedures for interaction within the Area Command.
s. Approve Incident Commanders' requests for and release of critical resources.
t. Coordinate and approve Demobilization Plans.
u. Maintain a log of major actions/decisions.

ASSISTANT AREA COMMANDER, PLANNING - The Assistant Area Commander, Planning (ACPC) is responsible for collecting information from incident management teams in order to assess and evaluate potential conflicts between established incident objectives, strategies and the priority use of critical resources:

a. Obtain a briefing from Area Commander.
b. Assemble information on individual incident objectives and begin to identify potential conflicts and/or ways for incidents to develop compatible operations.
c. Recommend the priorities for allocation of critical resources to incidents.

d. Maintain status on critical resource totals.
e. Ensure that advance planning beyond the next operational period is being accomplished.
f. Prepare and distribute Area Commander's decisions or orders.
g. Prepare recommendations for the reassignment of critical resources as they become available.
h. Ensure Demobilization Plans are coordinated between incident management teams and agency dispatchers.
i. Conduct a strategy meeting with Incident Commanders (may be by phone) to assist in the planning processes.
j. Prepare Area Command briefings as requested or needed.
k. Maintain a log of major actions/decisions.

ASSISTANT AREA COMMANDER, LOGISTICS - The Assistant Area Commander, Logistics (ACLC) is responsible for providing facilities, services and material at the Area Command level, and for ensuring effective use of critical resources and supplies among the incident management teams:

a. Obtain a briefing from the Area Commander.
b. Provide facilities, services and materials for the Area Command organization.
c. In the absence of the Area Commander Aviation Coordinator, ensure coordinated airspace and temporary flight restrictions are in place and understood.
d. Ensure coordinated communication links and frequencies are in place.
e. Assist in the preparation of Area Command decisions.
f. Ensure the continued effective and priority use of critical resources among the Incident Management Teams.
g. Maintain log of major actions/decisions.

OPTIONAL POSITIONS

An Area Commander may have the need to implement the following positions based on Incident scope, complexity and span of control.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER - The primary function of the Public Information Officer is the coordination of information across the incident with agency Public Information Officers (PIOs), Incident PIO's, and Joint Information Centers (JICs), when implemented. The Public Information Officer is responsible for the coordination of a consistent, accurate, and timely message about the incident to the news media, to incident personnel, and to other appropriate agencies and the public.

Normally, detailed information regarding response specifics will be referred to and handled by the appropriate incident-level PIO. The Public Relations Officer will generally provide information on overall progress and status of the response.

Major responsibilities of the Public Information Officer include:

a. Obtain a briefing from Area Commander on expectations, concerns, and constraints.
b. Provide coordination to ensure consistent, timely, and accurate information is provided by

the PIOs and JICs on the incident(s) to the media and other interested parties.
c. Identify and communicate to the Area Command organization and IMTs the Area Commander's policy and procedures regarding release of information.
d. When directed, establish and manage the Area Command JIC.
e. Coordinate with applicable incident-level PIO(s) to obtain information and to ensure consistency in release of information.
f. Closely coordinate with incident-level PIOs to develop and establish an effective public information strategy.
g. Evaluate public and media perception of response effectiveness and keep the Area Command organization and IMTs informed.
h. Keep the Area Commander staff informed of news releases, press conferences, and community meetings.
i. Prepare briefing materials and coordinate the press conferences and community meetings.
j. Provide speaker preparation and coaching to members of the Area Command staff.
k. Carry out the protocol function for visiting dignitaries, including coordination and conduct of briefs and site visits. As much as possible, Area Command will coordinate VIP site visits in an effort to minimize the impact on specific IMTs.
l. Participate in agency administrator/executive close-out/after-action review.
m. Ensure coordinated and efficient transfer of command.

LIAISON OFFICER - The Liaison Officer is responsible for establishing liaison, as needed, with representatives of assisting /cooperating agencies and stakeholders. This could be with the same agencies represented at the incident level, but will typically be a link to a more senior organizational level than represented at an incident.

Major responsibilities of the Liaison Officer are:

a. Obtain briefing from Area Commander on expectations, concerns, and constraints.
b. Establish liaison, as needed, with assisting/cooperating agencies and stakeholders including environmental, economic, and political groups. It is anticipated that the majority of stakeholder service and support will be handled at the incident level.
c. Support incident-level Liaison Officer(s) efforts to establish strong ties and communications with assisting/cooperating agencies and stakeholders keeping Area Command advised regarding their issues and concerns.
d. Maintain liaison with all responding agencies to minimize impact on incident response operations.
e. Coordinate Area Command site visits with IMTs and Incident Commanders.
f. Participate in agency administrator/executive close-out/after-action review.
g. Ensure coordinated and efficient transfer of command.

SAFETY OFFICER - The Safety Officer function is to develop and recommend measures for ensuring personnel health and safety and to assess and/or anticipate hazardous and unsafe situations. The Safety Officer generally provides information on overall safety issues and progress/status of the response.

Major responsibilities of the Safety Officer include:

a. Obtain briefing from Area Commander on expectations, concerns, and constraints.
b. Develop Area Command Facility Safety Plan and monitor for compliance.
c. Evaluate thoroughness of incident-level Site Safety Plan(s).
d. As requested, provide assistance to incident-level Safety Officers and IMTs in investigating accidents, injuries, fatality's, etc.
e. Prepare and present health and safety briefings.
f. Review IAPs for safety implications for common health and safety issues.
g. Participate in agency administrator/executive close-out/after-action review.
h. Ensure coordinated and efficient transfer of command.
i. Conduct incident wide safety analysis.
j. Ensure Safety Officers have necessary specialists.

AREA COMMAND AVIATION COORDINATOR – The Area Command Aviation Coordinator (ACAC) is a Technical Specialist responsible for ensuring effective use of critical aviation resources among multiple management teams:

a. Obtain briefing from Area Commander.
b. Coordinate with local unit(s) aviation managers, dispatch centers, and aviation facility managers.
c. Monitor incident(s) aviation cost, efficiency, and safety.
d. Ensure agency rules, regulations, and applicable procedures are followed.
e. Provide to incidents local initial attack forces and other interested parties an area aviation plan that outlines Area Command aviation procedures and specifics of the area aviation operation.
f. Allocate air and ground based aviation resources according to Area Command priorities and objectives.
g. Ensure inter-incident movement of aircraft is planned and coordinated.
h. Coordinate with local and adjacent initial attack aircraft bases and local dispatch to ensure that procedures for transiting incident area and corridors are in place. Ensure flight following procedures, entry/exit routes and corridors, hazards, frequencies and incident airspace are known to all affected.
i. Coordinate with Incident Air Operations Branch Directors, dispatch, FAA, DOD, and local aviation authorities and administrators to ensure that Temporary Flight Restrictions are in place, coordinated, and do not overlap. Ensure that potential risks of operating on, near, or within Military Training Routes and Special-Use Airspace have been mitigated.
j. Ensure that a process is in place for timely transmittal of incident reports and oversee the process to ensure corrective action is taken.
k. Coordinate with incidents, dispatch centers, and coordination centers to determine availability and status of committed and uncommitted aviation resources, give status reports and situation appraisals for aviation resources.
l. Coordinate with Incident Air Operations Branch Directors, Communications Unit Leaders, frequency coordinators, coordination centers and initial attack dispatch to establish coordinated aviation communications plans to ensure aviation frequency management.
m. Coordinate and manage aviation program and operations if aviation assets are assigned to Area Command.
n. Coordinate the scheduling and movement of aviation safety assistance teams among incidents.

o. Assist incidents by coordinating with Contracting Officers, local aviation managers, and vendors concerning a variety of issues (fueling, contract modifications, contract extensions, etc.).
p. Coordinate with military officials and Agency Representatives concerning the assignments, utilization, status, and disposition of military aviation assets.

Maintain log of major actions/decisions.

FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION TECHNICAL SPECIALIST – The Finance/Administration Technical Specialist is responsible for all financial, administrative, and cost analysis aspects of the Area Command**.**

Major responsibilities include:

a. Obtain briefing from Area Commander on expectations, concerns, and constraints.
b. Ensure the collection of relevant information from outgoing Finance /Administration Technical Specialist.
c. Determine Area Command requirements for cost accounting.
d. Coordinate with incident-level Finance/Administration Section Chief(s) to assure methodology for reporting cost information.
e. Collect, analyze, and summarize cost data.
f. Participate in preparation of the Area Command Management Plan.
g. Keep the Area Command organization briefed on response costs.
h. Ensure response costs are managed within the established financial ceilings and guideline.
i. Coordinate and advise the Area Command organization on financial ceiling adjustments when necessary.
j. If required, develop cost sharing agreements with members of the Area Command organization.
k. Monitor use of high cost specialized equipment and keep the Area Command organization advised
l. Assist in development and implementation of the Area Command Demobilization Plan.
m. If required, coordinate processing of claims resulting from response actions.
n. Participate in close-out with agency administrative representative.
o. Participate in agency administrator/executive after-action review.
p. Ensure coordinated and efficient transfer of command.

STAGING AREA MANAGER/MOBILIZATION CENTER MANAGER - The Staging Manager is responsible for managing all activities within a Staging Area when resources may be immediately deployed. The major responsibilities of the Staging Manager include:

a. Obtain a briefing from the Area Commander.
b. Determine types and numbers of resources to be maintained in Staging.
c. Confirm process for requesting additional resources for Staging.
d. Confirm process for reporting status changes.
e. Coordinate with Assistant Area Commander, Finance/Administration to determine procurement procedures.
f. Establish Staging Area layout and Staging Area needs.
g. Post areas for identification and traffic control.

h. Determine any support needs for equipment, food distribution, sanitation, and security to include staged resources.
i. Establish check-in function as appropriate
j. Determine environmental impacts/ownership.
k. Request maintenance service for equipment at Staging Area, as needed.
l. Respond to requests for resource assignments.
m. Obtain and issue receipts for radio equipment and other supplies distributed and received at Staging.
n. Maintain the Staging Area in orderly condition.
o. Demobilize the Staging Area in accordance with the Incident Demobilization Plan.
p. Participate in agency administrator/executive close-out/after-action review.
q. Ensure coordinated and efficient transfer of command.

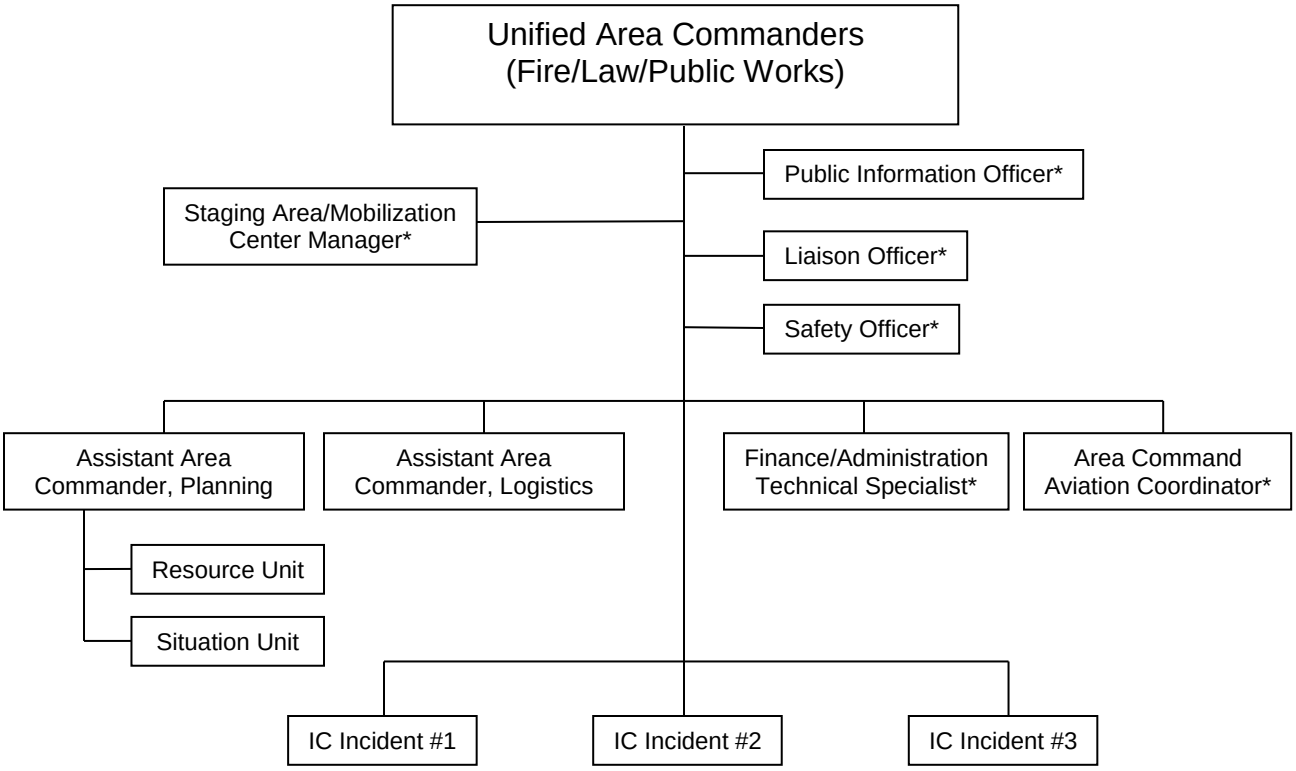
DEPUTIES - The Area Commander, Assistant Area Commander Logistics, and Assistant Area Commander Planning may have Deputies. Deputies must be ready to take over the position at any time, and, therefore, must have the same qualifications as the person for whom they work.

Major responsibilities of the Deputies include:

a. Obtain briefing from Area Commander on expectations, concerns, and constraints.
b. Assist Area Commander or Assistants in the execution of their duties/responsibilities.
c. Perform duties in the absence of the designated Area Commander or Assistants.
d. Oversee and facilitate Area Command organizational functions on behalf of the Area Commander or Assistants.
e. Administer special projects as assigned.
f. Participate in agency administrator/executive close-out/after-action review.
g. Ensure coordinated and efficient transfer of command.
h. Perform other duties as assigned.

AREA COMMAND ORGANIZATION

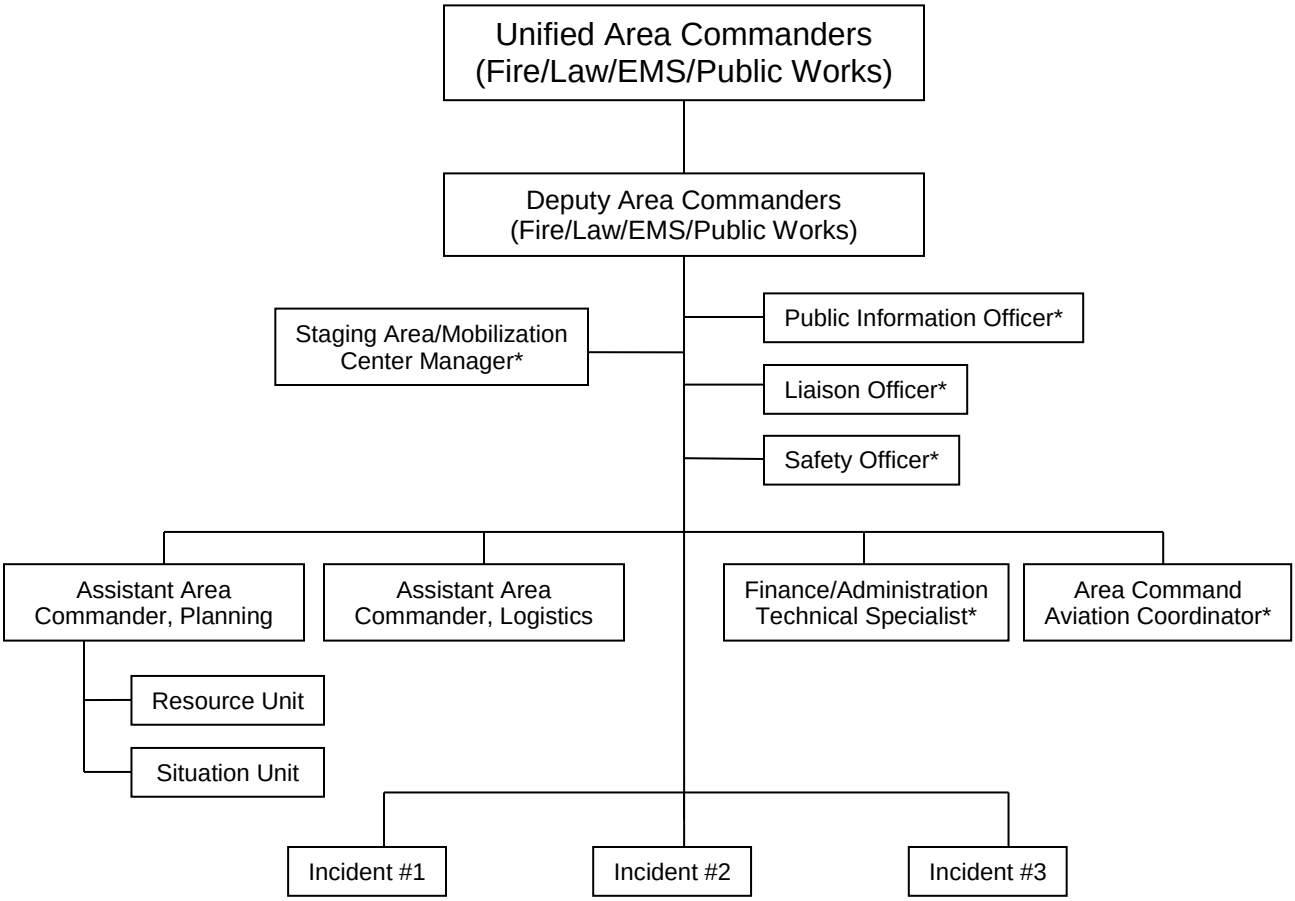
Example 1: The following organization chart below of a Unified Area Command with an Assistant Area Command for Planning, Logistics, and an Aviation Coordinator is established to manage two to seven incidents. Area Command may be established as Unified Area Command when the incident is multi-jurisdictional or multi-agency.



*optional positions

An Area Commander may have the need to implement a Liaison Officer, Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, Area Command Aviation Coordinator, Finance/Administration Technical Specialist, or a Staging/Mobilization Manager. An Area Command may have the need to pre-position resources prior to allocating them to individual incidents. This can be a Staging Area when it is desirable to have the resources ready deployment within three minutes or a Mobilization Center when resources are being held for an assignment, reassignment, or demobilization.

Example 2: The following example is how a Unified Area Command involving several disciplines may be utilized for localized disasters and events that may result in several individual incidents each having a rapidly changing demand for different agency resources. The organizational chart below depicts an organization to establish a multi-discipline Unified Area Command with a Deputy from Fire, Law, EMS, and Public Works.

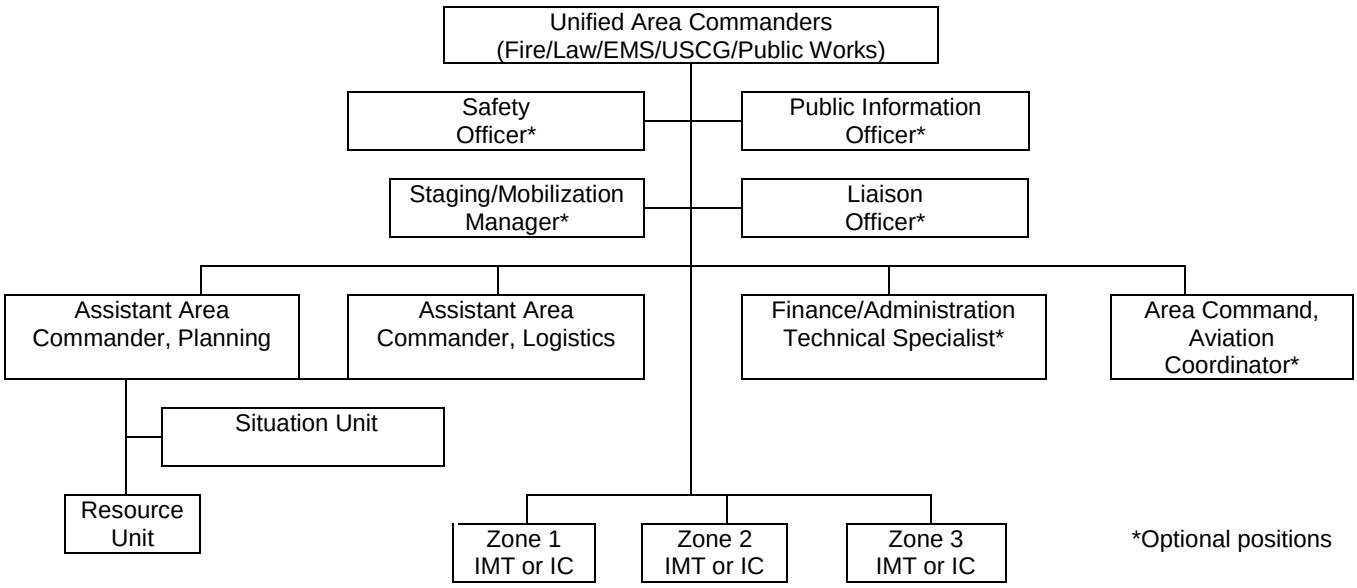


*Optional Positions

ZONE

A zone is a tool that may be used in Area Command. A planned or standardized Area Command implementation and operating policies and procedures should be developed, fully integrated, understood, and exercised prior to implementation. Pre-incident planning, coordination, training, and exercises are defined as Preparedness Elements of NIMS.

Zone – ***A defined geographic area or function utilized to support the management of an Incident (i.e., Area Command). A Zone may be assigned an Incident Management Team(s) or IC to provide management of a defined area or function. Zones may be identified geographically, numerically, or by functional name.***

Geographic Zones are primarily used to provide an effective span of control. Area Command can use Functional Zones by assigning resources or Assisting/Cooperating Agencies in a logistical support role. This can also be used during Pre-Planned Events, Natural Disasters, or Public Health emergencies for the distribution of equipment and/or supplies from defined points with or without being involved in actual incident operations.

Example – Unified Area Command with subordinate Zones and assigned IMT's or IC's managing each Zone.