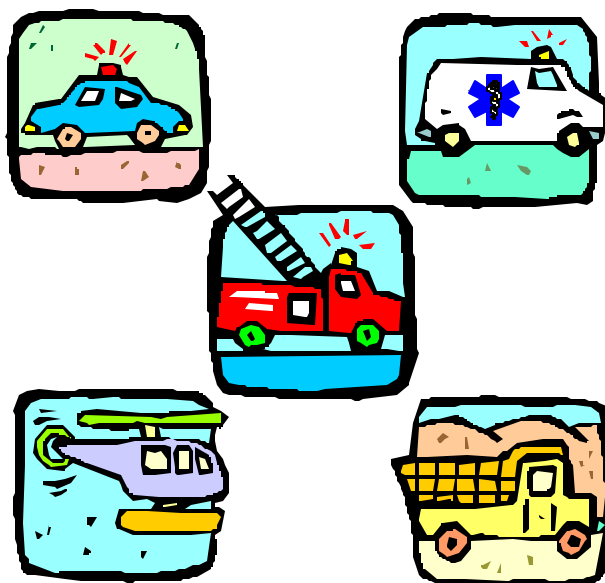


Austin-Travis County
Multi-Agency
Incident Command System

ICS OPERATIONS PLAN



Adopted by
Austin-Travis County
Multi-Agency ICS
Task Force
January 1998

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Agency Endorsement Signatures

The agencies, whose chief executives have signed below, are participants in the Austin-Travis County Multi-Agency Incident Command System and endorse this plan as the basic framework for applying ICS to the management of personnel and resources at the site of major emergencies.

Endorsement of this plan does not require agencies to relinquish their legal authority to act during emergencies.

Operations Plan Austin-Travis County Multi-Agency Incident Command System

Introduction

This plan describes policies for implementing a standardized Incident Command System at major emergencies involving multiple agencies or multiple political jurisdictions anywhere in Travis County.

Multi-Agency ICS Task Force Members

This plan was developed by a Multiple Agency ICS Task Force which began meeting in April 1996 to discuss how to integrate the operations of multiple agencies into a single ICS structure during major incidents. The Task Force consisted of the following members:

Pete Baldwin, Emergency Management Coordinator, Travis County Emergency Management

Michael Berg, Medical Liaison
Travis County Emergency Services

Eric Carter, Emergency Planner,
Travis County Emergency Management

Steve Collier, Director
Austin Office of Emergency Management

Jim Evans, Assistant Chief
Austin Fire Department

Jim Fealy, Commander, Training
Austin Police Department

Robert Gross, Deputy Chief
Austin Police Department

Jim Hall, Austin Energy
(Electric Utility Department)

Ann Hutchison, Director of Victim Services
Austin Police Department

Duane McNeill, Commander
Austin Police Department

Terry Pickering, Major, Law Enforcement
Travis County Sheriff's Office

Casey Ping, Commander of Special Operations
Emergency Medical Services

Scott Swearengin, Assistant Director
Austin Office of Emergency Management

Randy Templeton, Battalion Chief, Training
Austin Fire Department

Bruce Watson, Chief
Hudson Bend Fire Department

Ken Williams, Deputy Chief
Austin Police Department

Background

The Incident Command System in use today is an outgrowth of California's FIRESCOPE program developed in the 1970s to improve management of large wildfires. It was designed to provide a commonly accepted management structure that would result in better decisions and more effective use of available resources. It was specifically designed for incidents that involve many local, state, and federal agencies and multiple political jurisdictions.

Since that time, the use of ICS has spread across the country and has been employed to manage all kinds of major incidents, not just fires. As ICS spread, however, it was often implemented as basic operating procedures within individual agencies, particularly fire departments. Efforts to implement ICS among multiple agencies or in multiple jurisdictions were rare. When agencies with internal ICS procedures responded to incidents together, they often established parallel ICS structures, which were not well integrated. This led to confusion and conflict about who is in-charge, who is involved in strategic and tactical decision-making, and who supervises personnel. There are some successful models for multiple-agency operations. In many cases, however, the original intent of ICS as a structure for effective interagency and interjurisdictional operations has not been fully realized. In that sense, the efforts of the Multi-Agency ICS Task Force are both ambitious and on the cutting edge.

Philosophy

It is the intent of the Multi-agency ICS Task Force to implement ICS in the Austin-Travis County area as a true multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional management system that fully integrates the activities of all agencies operating at the site. This will require all participating agencies to agree to use a standard system and to agree on fundamental issues concerning decision-making, command and control, terminology, and the use and supervision of resources.

Planning Assumptions

The group has established the following assumptions for the development of plans and procedures:

1. There is a need for multi-agency ICS plans and procedures because of the number of incidents that cross agency and jurisdictional boundaries.
2. ICS policies and procedures should be consistent with a standard national model.
3. ICS policies and procedures developed by this Task Force may require changes in ICS implementation and philosophy for departments that currently use ICS.
4. Effective implementation of a regional ICS program will require comprehensive, multi-level training.
5. The current public safety communications system will not fully support an optimal ICS system. A new communications system, now in the design phase, will support the ICS structures we are developing and will be in place soon after those structures are fully implemented.

Classes of Incident

Incidents will be divided into three classes as described below:

- **Class I** - Routine, single-site incident, which employs either Single or Unified Command.
- **Class II** - Advanced multiple agency or multiple jurisdictional incident with a single site. Unified Command is employed at the site.
- **Class III** - Advanced multiple agency or multiple jurisdictional incident with multiple sites or with diffuse, area-wide impact. Unified area-wide Command is established at the Emergency Operations Center.

The Multiple Agency ICS plan will generally take effect with Class II and Class III incidents, including implementation of Unified Command and deployment of position-specific certified personnel in key ICS positions.

ICS Functional Areas

Command Section

- The Command Section includes Incident Command, Public Information Officers, Liaison Officer, and Safety Officer.
- General Staff refers to the Section Chiefs of Operations, Plans, Logistics, Finance/Administration.

Command Philosophy

Incident command or “who’s in-charge” is a major point of contention in the use of ICS. On the one hand there is the obvious need to make timely and meaningful strategic decisions that make use of every available resource. Complex incidents involve various agencies with different legal mandates. These agencies often have different operational objectives, which may conflict with each other. These factors support the need for a **single commander** to make timely decisions and to resolve conflict.

On the other hand, it may not be possible or desirable to identify a single incident commander. More than one agency may have legal responsibility for resolving the incident. Command may rest equally among a small group of commanders - **Unified Command**. This configuration formalizes a joint decision-making process designed to assure input from key agencies.

Poor command-level decision-making is often the result of inadequate external input into the decisions rather than agency conflict or indecisiveness. Effective decision-

making and action planning cannot be accomplished without input from agencies having key roles. While Incident Command normally solicits input from involved agencies, IC may not know whose input is needed. This suggests that key agencies should have representatives at the command post to listen to discussions and provide appropriate input.

Incident Command Responsibilities

Incident Command, whether a single commander or group of commanders, is responsible for the following:

- Establishing a single command post and CP operations
- Establishing an overall incident management organization
- Identifying overall incident objectives
- Establishing and maintaining scene safety
- Conducting and leading planning meetings with Command and General Staffs
- Developing a single, written, Incident Action Plan

Command Considerations

- “Turf” issues are not trivial. Agencies have legal roles and responsibilities, which they cannot legitimately relinquish.
- Unified Command involves equal partners.
- Incident Commanders must have strong “people” skills including the ability to diplomatically facilitate strategic decision-making and to assure coordination among all the players.
- Incident Commanders must delegate tactical decision-making to the Operations Section.
- Incident Commanders must focus on overall incident problems; they must not “fixate” on one part of the problem to the exclusion of others.

Single Command

Single Command is generally indicated when **both** of the following are true:

- An incident is contained within and affects a single political jurisdiction, **and**
- A single agency has the legal responsibility for managing the principal hazard of the incident.

Unified Command

Unified Command will be used in Class II incidents in which **either** of the following are true:

- An incident involves multiple, uncontrolled hazards in which more than one agency has legal responsibility for managing, **or**
- An incident is situated in more than one political jurisdiction.

In Unified Command, key agency commanders work together to jointly develop incident priorities, strategic goals, and integrated action plans. Unified Command does **not** call for abdication of authority or responsibility.

Generally, a lead or spokesperson for Unified Command will rapidly emerge depending on the primary uncontrolled hazard at the time. If members of Unified Command treat each other as equal partners and with respect for the responsibilities and assets they bring to the table, conflict or indecisiveness will rarely result.

Responsibilities of Members of Unified Command

1. To assist other members of Unified Command in determining overall strategic objectives, priorities, and needed resources from the perspective of their discipline;
2. To determine objectives, priorities, and needed resources pertaining to their areas of responsibility;
3. Assuring that Incident Command responsibilities listed above are carried out; and
4. To retain the responsibility to stop actions which that agency's ranking officers feel are dangerous to their personnel.

Lead Agency

In some cases, it may become necessary to identify a Lead Agency for one of the following reasons:

1. Rapidly developing emergency conditions require immediate action.
2. Members of Unified Command cannot agree on a general course of action.
3. Members of Unified Command fail to resolve conflict.

In these cases, a member of Unified Command may call for establishing a Lead Agency. The Lead Agency will transfer between existing or new members of Unified Command as the incident evolves.

Resorting to designating a Lead Agency generally represents a failure of the agency commanders to work together cooperatively. These incidents should be reviewed by agency heads to determine why this situation developed and what can be done to prevent future occurrences.

Determining the Lead Agency

Determining the Lead Agency first requires determination of the Lead Discipline. Table 1 below designates the Lead Discipline based on the primary uncontrolled hazard. In the case of multiple hazards, the highest priority will take precedence.

Determining the Lead Discipline

Hazard Priority*	Lead Discipline
1. Civil disturbance, ongoing criminal episode, bomb device, bomb detonation	Law Enforcement
2. Rescue (non-criminal)	Fire
3. Uncontrolled or potential fire, explosion, or toxic materials release	Fire
4. Structural collapse	Fire
5. Mass casualties	EMS
6. Continuing damage to the environment	Fire
7. Continuing property damage	Fire
8. Criminal investigation - Mass fatalities	Law Enforcement
9. Continuing utility or consumer service outage	Utility, Public Works

* Hazards are listed in decreasing order of priority.

Table 1

Hazard Priority

To determine Lead Discipline and Operations Section Chief

Once the lead discipline is determined, the jurisdictional agency responsible for that discipline is the Lead Agency. Table 1 may also be used to designate the Operations Section Chief.

In some cases, the Lead Agency may not be apparent because of overlapping or concurrent political or organizational jurisdictions. In these cases the Lead Agency will be determined by the following:

- Pre-existing memorandum of understanding or mutually agreed upon plan, or
- The first arriving, appropriate agency.

Responsibilities of the Lead Agency

1. To lead a joint strategic decision-making process among the other members of Unified Command;
2. To lead planning meetings and briefings (maybe rotated among members of Unified Command);
3. To assure that time-critical decisions are made in time to implement them. He or she may make immediate decisions, without the consent of Unified Command when absolutely necessary; and
4. To resolve disagreements or conflicts among members of Unified Command or other responding agencies.

Limitations on the Lead Agency

1. The Lead Agency should be designated only when necessary; it should not be the “approach of choice”.
2. The Lead Agency should not use this authority to establish dominance over other key agencies or to limit their involvement in strategic decision-making. This will inevitably lead to agency conflict.
3. In some cases, designating the Lead Agency may not be clear-cut. Commanders must not focus on resolving that issue when the incident requires immediate joint action.
4. The Lead Agency should be guided by the concerns of other members of Unified Command in areas where they have a legal duty to act. The Lead Agency may **not** make operational decisions or direct the activities of other agencies when he or she does not have the legal authority to do so.

Strategic Decision-Making and Command Post Operations

- Strategic decision-making is often a process of facilitating group decision-making and coordinating among agencies.
- Decisions need to involve all key agencies regardless of their apparent involvement in the incident.

- In any major incident, representatives from the jurisdictional Fire, EMS, and Law Enforcement agencies should have representatives assigned to the Command Section at the command post either as part of Unified Command or as agency representatives. Other agencies may be asked to assign representatives if needed. Agency representatives who are not part of Unified Command report to the Liaison Officer.
- Incident Command should hold regular briefings involving the Command Section and General Staff (Section Chiefs from Operations, Plans, Logistics, Finance). These briefings should entail reports from all key agencies operating at the scene and review by those agencies of Action Plans developed by Command and the Plans Section.

Command Staff

Public Information Officer(s)

- Public Information Officers may respond from all agencies having significant involvement in the incident.
- Incident Command will assign a lead PIO. This PIO will normally be from the same agency as the Operations Section Chief, but may be from any appropriate agency.
- The Lead PIO, with guidance from Incident Command, will develop an incident media policy that includes what information may be released and what must not be released. The Lead PIO will communicate this policy to all other PIOs.
- The lead PIO will work with other PIOs to setup a media briefing area. This area should be near the Command Post, but **isolated** from it. All media interviews will be conducted at or near this area unless cleared by the lead PIO.
- All PIOs will act to promote a unified public information strategy by coordinating the release of accurate, timely, and consistent information.
- In the event of a major disaster such as a bombing or aircraft crash, the PIOs will work with the City PIO to establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) in a nearby location to accommodate intensive, long-term local and network media coverage.

Liaison Officer

- The Liaison Officer is assigned by Incident Command and is responsible for coordinating Agency Representatives from local, state, federal, and private agencies that have responded to the command post.
- These representatives may have incidental involvement in the incident or may have technical or resource information needed by Incident Command, Plans, or Logistics.

Safety Officer

- Incident Command will identify a Safety Officer generally from the same agency or discipline as the Operations Chief. The Safety Officer monitors overall safety at the incident and has the authority to stop operations he or she feels are dangerous.
- More than one Safety Officer may be identified depending on the complexity of the operation. In this case the IC will identify a Lead Safety Officer who will coordinate all safety activities.

Operations Section

The Operations Section is responsible for developing tactics and plans to meet the incident objectives established by Command. The following are key factors in establishing the Operations Section:

- The Operations Chief becomes the key tactical decision-maker in large complex operations.
- Incident Command will designate a single Operations Chief using Table 1 as a guide.
- The Operations Chief may be assisted by deputies if needed to avoid becoming a bottleneck for decision-making or communications.
- The Operations Chief is not required to authorize all requests for resources from below, but needs to be aware of them and why they are needed.
- All activities associated with providing emergency response services should be part of Operations; they should not be delegated to other sections such as Logistics and Plans. Those sections are exclusively support for Incident Command and Operations.

Figures 1 and 2 depict acceptable ways of organizing the Operations Section.

Determining the Operations Section Chief

Class II incidents will employ Unified Command, but a single Operations Section Chief will be designated from the agency responsible for managing the primary uncontrolled hazard. Table 1 above will serve as a guide for determining the discipline that should provide the Operations Section Chief. Incident Command is responsible for determining the primary uncontrolled hazard at the time of the incident. The primary uncontrolled hazard may change as the incident progresses, in which case the Operations Section Chief will transfer to a different agency. ***Incident Command may designate the Operations Section Chief from other agencies if the situation warrants.***

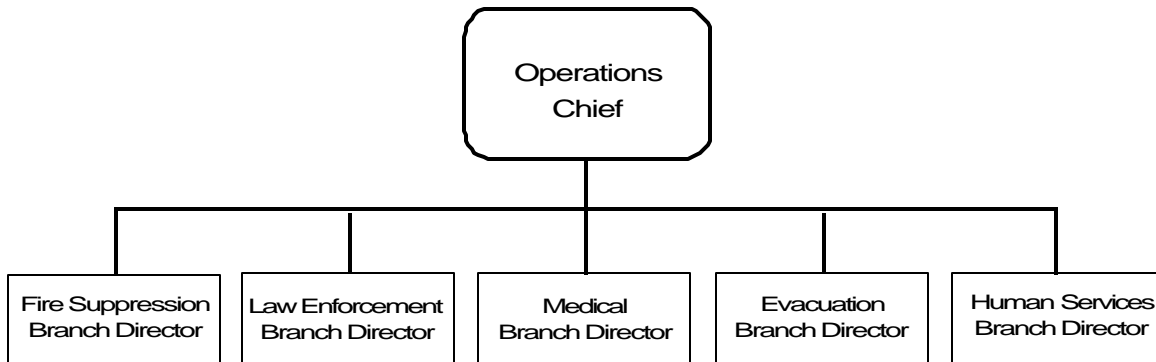


Figure 1
Single Operations Chief

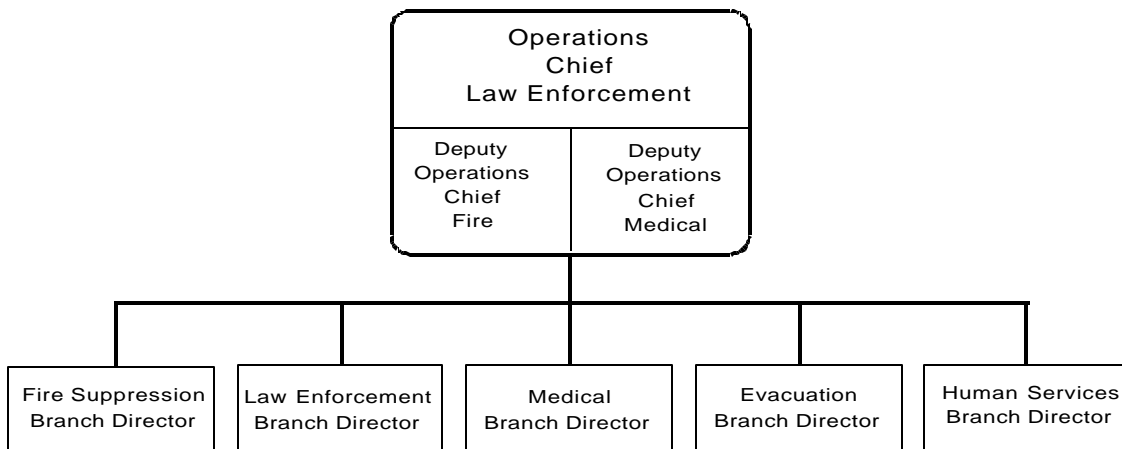


Figure 2
Single Operations Chief with Deputies

Incident Organization and Structure

Incident organization below the General Staff level may take many forms depending on local procedures and the nature of the incident. Standard ICS models allow substantial latitude in organizational terminology. The following will be standard procedures for the Austin-Travis County region:

Branches: Major Functional or Management Elements

- Branches are major components within Sections (Operations, Logistics, etc.)
- Branches may be established to maintain acceptable span-of-control when the number of groups or sectors becomes too large for the Section Chief.
- Branches may be established to manage major functions such as medical, law enforcement, evacuation.
- Branches may be geographical if there are too many sectors or there are distinct geographical areas within a single incident.
- Branches are supervised by Directors.

Sectors: Horizontal Geographical Elements in Operations-

- Sectors are Operations elements assigned to specific **horizontal geographical** areas such as sides of a building or areas of land.
- Sectors are designated by letters of the alphabet or the phonetic alphabet (alpha, bravo).
- Building sides are designated clockwise when viewed from above beginning with the front of the building as determined by the street address.
- Wildland fire sectors are designated clockwise beginning with the area of origin.
- Sectors are supervised by Supervisors.

Divisions: Vertical Geographical Elements in Operations

- Divisions are Operations elements assigned to specific **vertical geographical** areas such as floors of a building.
- Divisions are designated by numbers. In buildings, Division numbers correspond to the building numbering scheme. Division 1 is the ground or main level as viewed from the main entrance of the building. There is no Division 13 if the building does not designate a 13th floor. Levels below Division 1 are termed Subdivision 1, Subdivision 2, etc.
- Divisions are supervised by Supervisors.

Groups: Functional Elements

- Groups are responsible for specific functions.
- Groups are not limited to specific geographical areas.
- Groups are generally designated in the Operations Section
- Groups are supervised by Supervisors.
- Figure 3 below shows the hierarchy of basic ICS management positions.

Hieracrhy of ICS Management Positions

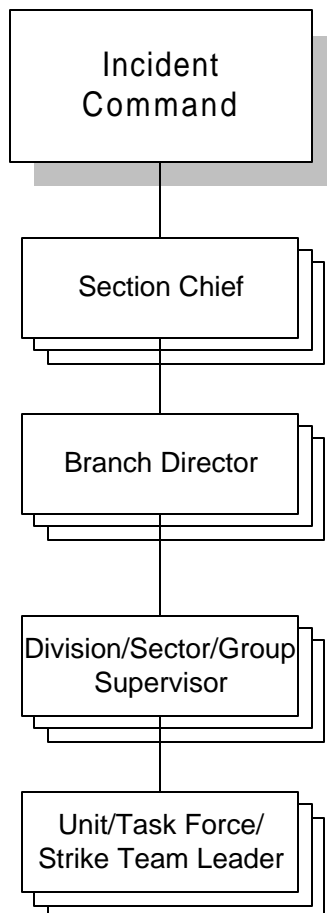


Figure 3
Hierarchy of ICS Management Positions

Training

The ICS Task Force formed a Training Committee, Chaired by Michael Berg, to develop and implement a countywide ICS training program. The Committee has adopted an existing training program developed by the State of California, called the Standard Emergency Management System (SEMS). This program is based on, and virtually identical to, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group FIRESCOPE curriculum and includes student manuals, instructor guides, and PowerPoint presentations.

The Training Committee has developed an 8-hour Basic ICS training program based on Modules two through six of the SEMS program plus an additional Module 6b which describes ICS standards for Travis County. The committee has developed a 12-month training calendar for course offerings to law enforcement, fire, EMS, and utilities. An important objective of this training is to recruit students from different disciplines and to mix instructors to encourage multi-agency interaction in the class setting.

The committee has also developed a two-hour Refresher Module for those who have had equivalent training to the Basic ICS course, but without the Travis County ICS Standards.

ICS Certification

In order for ICS to function properly at major incidents, all responding agencies must have confidence that key managers are basically competent. The ICS Task Force is in the process of developing a certification system modelled on the U. S. Forest Service "Red Card" system. This system will establish minimum standards of training and experience for serving in key ICS positions in Class II or Class III incidents. Personnel holding Forest Service Red Cards will automatically be certified in the Austin-Travis County system.

The purposes of the certification system are the following:

- To assure predictable, consistent operations;
- To assure safe operations;
- To assure well coordinated operations;
- To assure effective communications; and
- To provide qualified personnel to assist jurisdictions who cannot fully staff a large ICS structure.

Certifications will be developed for the following positions:

Incident Commander	Resources Unit Leader (Plans)
Public Information Officer	Situation Unit Leader (Plans)
Safety Officer	Documentation Unit Leader (Plans)
Liaison Officer	Support Branch Director (Logistics)
Operations Chief	Service Branch Director (Logistics)
Plans Chief	Air Operations Branch Director
Logistics Chief	Branch Director (generic)
Finance/Admin. Chief	

Class III Incident: Multiple Site and Area-Wide Emergencies

In some types of emergencies there may be several individual sites such as multiple tornado touchdowns or a large-scale civil disturbance. Others, such as widespread flooding or an ice storm, have a major community impact with a large number of smaller, "routine" incidents. These are referred to as Class III incidents because they require area-wide coordination and policies. This section describes the establishment of Area Command and the relationship between the EOC, Department Operations Centers (DOC), and field sites in Class III incidents. Figure 4 depicts these relationships which are described below.

Area Command

In Class III incidents Area Command will be established at the EOC. Area Command is responsible for developing area-wide incident objectives, response priorities, operational policies, resource priorities and requesting assistance from the state and federal governments.

The EOC will generally coordinate with DOCs directly, but may also coordinate with Incident Command at major incidents to establish area-wide objectives, identify response priorities, and allocate limited resources.

Department Operations Centers (DOC)

Department Operations Centers or DOCs are facilities from which individual departments control their operations which will experience a dramatic increase in service demand. DOCs may be regular communications or control centers such as a law enforcement dispatch center or an electric control center. It may be an ad hoc center set up by departments to deal with resource needs, personnel callback, altered business hours, etc. It may be a mobile fire chief coordinating response activities of his or her department. In a Class III incident the individual field units or crews will generally report to the DOC. Incidents with single command and involving

a single department may also report to the DOC. However, major incidents involving Unified Command should coordinate directly with Area Command at the EOC.

In Class III incidents some strategic decisions must be made by chief executives such as the Mayor, City Manager, or County Judge. These decisions, which include government office closures, large-scale evacuations, and curfews, will be made in consultation with Unified Area Command at the EOC.

Figure 4 depicts Unified Area Command established at the EOC. Individual agencies (departments A and B) have established DOCs from which they coordinate field units or crews and may coordinate single command incidents such as structure fires, or power outages. DOCs coordinate with departmental representatives at the EOC. Unified Command at major incidents coordinates directly with Unified Area Command at the EOC.

Emergency Operations Center

An emergency operations center (EOC) is a central facility that permits coordinated decision-making and support for major emergencies. The City of Austin and Travis County operate a joint EOC. Other municipalities, such as the City of Lakeway, also operate EOCs for their communities. The following discussion of EOC operations pertains to the Austin-Travis Co. EOC.

The Austin-Travis County EOC may be activated by the Austin or Travis County Emergency Management Coordinator or at the request of any government agency. The EOC deploys an ICS structure to manage its response to the incident which includes Unified Command, Operations, Plans, Logistics, and Finance/Administration. This becomes Area Command in Class III incidents.

The following are some key functions of the EOC.

Executive Policy and Strategic Decision-making

The EOC will be the focus for strategic decision-making in Class III incidents involving multiple sites or the area as a whole. Decision-making at this level involves such things as curfews, emergency ordinances, evacuations, government business closures, incident response priorities, external resource requests, and public information releases. Although most strategic decisions will be made by Unified Command at the EOC, decisions involving such things as government office closures, curfews, or emergency ordinances will be made by the City Manager, Mayor, or County Judge. In a declared disaster emergency the Mayor and County Judge have legal authority to direct emergency operations in their jurisdictions.

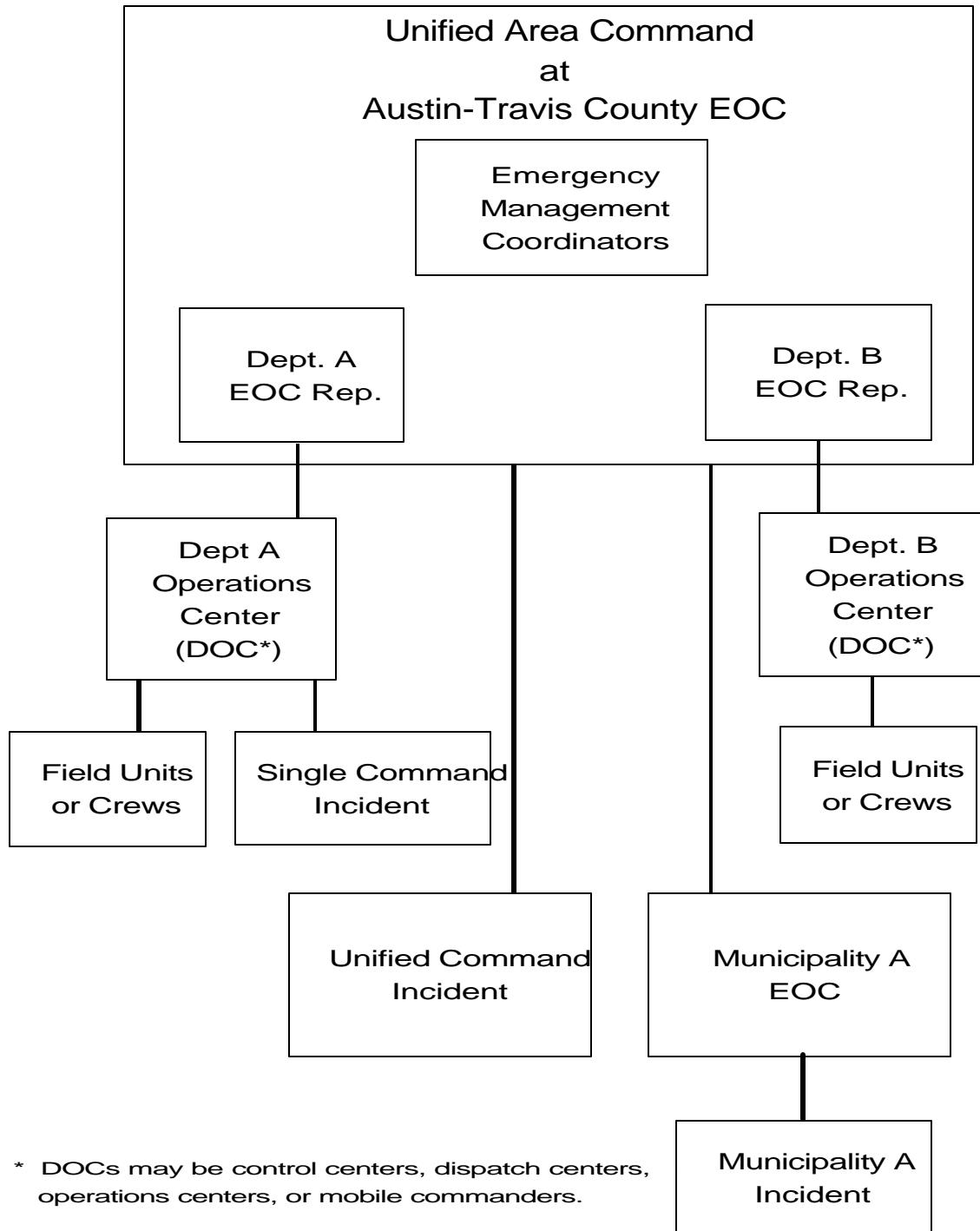


Figure 4
 EOC Unified Area Command
 Class III Emergency

In Class I or II incidents (single-site emergencies, such as an aircraft crash or bombing) on-site Incident Command will be the focus of strategic decision-making. The EOC will function in a support role.

Interagency Coordination

The EOC brings together representatives from all agencies involved with the incident, whether on-site or off-site. EOC representatives communicate with their personnel in the field and at DOCs (communications or control centers) and feed information to the EOC Operations table during regular briefings. A variety of problems, including confused directives, miscommunication, rumors, duplications and omissions, can be detected. In some cases these can be resolved in the EOC while in others the EOC advises the IC so he or she can correct it at the site.

Resource Support

The EOC can identify and mobilize resources not available at the scene through other government agencies, disaster relief agencies, and private businesses. Requests for extensive assistance from the state or federal governments must come through the Austin or Travis County Office of Emergency Management.

Public Information and Warning

The EOC is the coordination point for public information activities in area-wide or multiple site incidents. Public Information should be coordinated from the scene in single-site incidents; the EOC can assist Incident Command and the PIOs in disseminating information.

The EOC is responsible for disseminating warnings through off-site media. It can disseminate information through AWACS pagers, the Emergency Conference Network, fax broadcast, low-power AM radio (Holly neighborhood, Lakeway), and the new Emergency Alert System.

On-site warning activities, using door-to-door notifications and emergency vehicle PA systems, will be controlled by Incident Command.

Communications between the EOC and Incident Sites

The primary communication between the EOC and field Incident Sites should be with the Incident Commanders, particularly concerning response policies, incident objectives, and resources priorities. However, there may also be direct communications of a coordination nature, between comparable sections in the EOC and at the scene. For example, the field Logistics Section may communicate directly with the Logistics Section in the EOC regarding specific resource availability. The Plans Section at the scene may get a weather forecast from the Plans Section at the

EOC. The Operations representatives at the EOC will need regular activity updates from Operations representatives in the field.