INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

NATIONAL TRAINING CURRICULUM

COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF

MODULE 12
I-400

REFERENCE
TEXT
OCTOBER 1994

NFES 2462

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

on behalf of the

NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

The following training material attains the standards prescribed for courses developed under the interagency curriculum established and coordinated by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. The instruction is certified for interagency use and is known as:

Command and General Staff

Member NWCG and Training Working Team Liaison

Date 11/7/94

Chair, Training Working Team

Date 10/24/94

Description of the Performance Based System

The Wildland Fire Qualifications System is a "performance based" qualifications system. In this system, the primary criteria for qualification is individual performance as observed by an evaluator using approved standards. This system differs from previous wildland fire qualifications systems which have been "training based." Training based systems use the completion of training courses or a passing score on an examination as a primary criteria for qualification.

A performance based system has two advantages over a training based system:

- Qualification is based upon real performance, as measured on the job, versus perceived performance, as measured by an examination or classroom activities.
- Personnel who have learned skills from sources outside wildfire suppression, such as agency specific training programs or training and work in prescribed fire, structural fire, law enforcement, search and rescue, etc., may not be required to complete specific courses in order to qualify in a wildfire position.

1. The components of the wildland fire qualifications system are as follows:

   a. Position Task Books (PTB) contain all critical tasks which are required to perform the job. PTB's have been designed in a format which will allow documentation of a trainee's ability to perform each task. Successful completion of all tasks required of the position, as determined by an evaluator, will be the basis for recommending certification.

      IMPORTANT NOTE: Training requirements include completion of all required training courses prior to obtaining a PTB. Use of the suggested training courses or job aids is recommended to prepare the employee to perform in the position.

   b. Training courses and job aids provide the specific skills and knowledge required to perform tasks as prescribed in the PTB.

   c. Agency Certification is issued in the form of an incident qualification card certifying that the individual is qualified to perform in a specified position.

2. Responsibilities

   The local office is responsible for selecting trainees, proper use of task books, and certification of trainees, see the Task Book Administrators Guide 330-1 for further information.

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PREFACE

This module is one of seventeen modules which comprise the Incident Command System (ICS) National Training Curriculum. The entire curriculum has been developed by an interagency steering group and a contract consultant. The curriculum was sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, and development was directed and supported by the National Interagency Fire Center, Division of Training. The Steering Group was represented by several application areas (Search & Rescue, Law Enforcement, Structural Fire, Wildfire, etc.) which guided the work of the contractor in the development of this package.

The Steering Group was:

David P. Anderson - USDA, Forest Service
Mike Colgan - Orange County Fire Department
Dave Engle - USDI, Bureau of Land Management
Dan Francis - California Department of Forestry
Ken Mallette - New Jersey State Police
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Bill Vargas - State of New Mexico Department of Public Safety

The Contract Consultant was:

The Terence Haney Company
Woodland Hills, California

Each Command and General Staff position is explained in terms of principal responsibilities and importance to the organization. Guidelines for activation of the Command and General Staff positions and the role of deputies and assistants are discussed. Relationships and duties are covered for each Command Staff member and for Agency Representatives.

Objectives:

1. Identify the steps built into the ICS design to compensate for previous incident management problems.

2. Describe the primary guidelines related to Command and General Staff positions.

3. Summarize principal responsibilities for each Command and General Staff member.

4. Describe the roles of deputies and assistants in incident management.

5. Describe the purposes and responsibilities of agency representatives, reporting relationships, and how they can be effectively used within the incident organization.

6. Develop a Command and General Staff organization around a simulated scenario.

I. Background Related to Command and General Staff Development

The Incident Command System was developed in response to problems that create major difficulties in incident management. These problems are often familiar to emergency service personnel. They include, for example, several agencies or jurisdictions with shared responsibility on a single incident, different organization structures, lack of communications, different terminology, etc.

In addition to the problem of the single agency approach to incident management, one of the major other problems in previous incident management organizations was that there was too much authority vested in the top leadership role. The person in charge made virtually all the decisions. Assistants and deputies were usually not empowered to take independent actions. The result was that the incident organization took on the character, training and experience of the person in charge.

One result was that as an incident grew, the management and decision-making load on the organization's leader also increased. As a result, major decisions often were not being made in a timely manner.

Another consequence was that span of control also expanded as the organization grew. Often, the organizational leader had far too many "points of contact" to be effective. Too large a span of control has often been cited as a major problem in incident management.

To resolve these problems, the ICS design contained the following requirements:

A. A standardized functional organization must be established.

B. Related functions should be grouped together within the organization.

C. Subordinates within the organization must be delegated the necessary authority to manage their assigned functions with maximum autonomy, in accordance with the action plan objectives.

D. Every incident, small or large, simple or complex, must have some form of an action plan whether oral or written.

The action plan must be made known to all supervisory personnel. It will guide their operational actions for a prescribed period of time.

As a result of including these requirements in the ICS design, it was possible to adequately organize and manage, delegate authority, and share responsibility.

Obvious outgrowths of this were to reduce the span of control for the organizational leader to an effective level, and reduce the need for continual instructions to subordinates.

The use of distributed authority in ICS is a primary factor in creating an incident organization that is responsive to management by objectives.

II. Determination of Command and General Staff Functions

ICS was designed by identifying the primary activities or functions necessary to effectively respond to incidents.

Analyses of incident reports, and review of military organizations were all used in ICS development. These analyses identified the primary needs of incidents.

As incidents became more complex, difficult, and expensive, the need for an organizational manager became more evident. Thus in ICS, and especially in larger incidents, the Incident Commander manages the organization and not the incident.

In addition to the Command function, other desired functions and activities were:

- To delegate authority and to provide a separate organizational level within the ICS structure with sole responsibility for the tactical direction and control of resources.

- To provide logistical support to the incident organization.

- To provide planning services for both current and future activities.

- To provide cost assessment, time recording, and procurement control necessary to support the incident and the managing of claims.

- To promptly and effectively interact with the media, and provide informational services for the incident, involved agencies, and the public.

- To provide a safe operating environment within all parts of the incident organization.

- To ensure that assisting and cooperating agencies needs are met, and to see that they are used in an effective manner.

While other activities were identified, these major incident activities became the basis for the ICS organization. All other functions support these activities.

A. Line and Staff Organizations

In reviewing the list of the seven primary activities, some of them, e.g., tactical direction and logistical support, have quite specific responsibilities. These kinds of activities also require the most support to accomplish their assignments. Other functional areas, e.g., safety or information, have a more general relationship to the incident.

Therefore, the ICS development team placed certain functions into a classic direct line management organization, and the others became support staff functions.

The primary direct line management functions were established as Sections in the ICS organization and were called:

- Operations
- Planning
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration

The primary Support Staff functions were designated as:

- Information
- Safety
- Liaison

From this breakout, the ICS Command and General Staff organizations developed.

The four line General Staff functions and the three Command Staff support functions have worked well in a variety of incident applications.

It became evident as ICS was used for a wider variety of incident types, that these functions would apply to the management of any incident of any size, independent of the nature of the incident, and could also be applied to the management of planned events.

B. Command and General Staff Titles

To provide an even clearer distinction, personnel filling Command and General Staffs positions were given distinctive titles.

All General Staff managers in the ICS are Chiefs.

All Command Staff personnel are Officers.

All other levels within the organization have distinctive titles to help in identifying their position in the organization. These will be covered shortly.

The reason for using titles in the organization is often not understood. The use of titles provides another level of consistency, especially in:

1. Multi-agency incidents - where many agencies must come together rapidly and work together effectively.

2. In ordering resources - where ordering will require some title be attached to the position.

3. Having unique position titles allows for the use of the best qualified persons in the position without regard to any single agency's rank structure.

III. Major Responsibilities of Command and General Staff Positions

Responsibilities of the Command and General Staff positions have been covered in previous modules. The following is a brief summary of each position.

The Incident Commander is technically not a part of either the General or Command staff.

A. Responsibilities of Incident Commander

- Make sure you have clear authority and know agency policy.
- Ensure incident safety.
- Establish an Incident Command Post.
- Obtain a briefing from the prior Incident Commander and/or assess the situation.
- Establish immediate priorities.

- Determine incident objectives and strategy(s) to be followed.
- Establish the level of organization needed, and continuously monitor the operation and effectiveness of that organization.
- Manage planning meetings as required.
- Approve and implement the Incident Action Plan.
- Coordinate the activities of the Command and General Staff.
- Approve requests for additional resources or for the release of resources.
- Approve the use of students, volunteers, and auxiliary personnel.
- Authorize the release of information to the news media.
- Order demobilization of the incident when appropriate.
- Ensure incident after-action reports are complete.

B. The ICS General Staff Positions

The ICS General Staff consists of the following positions:

- Operations Section Chief
- Planning Section Chief
- Logistics Section Chief
- Finance/Administration Section Chief

General guidelines related to General Staff positions:

- Only one person will be designated to lead each General Staff position.

- General Staff positions may be filled by qualified persons from any agency or jurisdiction.

- Members of the General Staff report directly to the Incident Commander. If a General Staff position is not activated, the Incident Commander will have responsibility for that functional activity.

- Deputy positions may be established for each of the General Staff positions. Deputies are individuals fully qualified to fill the primary position. Deputies can be designated from other jurisdictions or agencies, as appropriate. This is a good way to bring about greater interagency coordination.

- General Staff members may exchange information with any person within the organization. Direction takes place through the chain of command. This is an important concept in ICS.

- General Staff positions should not be combined. For example, to establish a "Planning and Logistics Section" it is better to initially create the two separate functions, and if necessary for a short time place one person in charge of both. That way, the transfer of responsibility can be made easier.

The reasons not to combine positions are:

- If they need to be separated at a later time, this could cause confusion due to the mix of assignments, staffing, etc.

- This creates a "non-standard" organization which would be confusing to incoming agencies.

1. Operations Section Chief

   The Operations Section Chief is responsible for managing all tactical operations at an incident. The Incident Action Plan provides the necessary guidance. The need to expand the Operations Section is generally dictated by the number of tactical resources involved and is influenced by span of control considerations.

   Major responsibilities of the Operations Section Chief:

   - Manage tactical operations.
   - Ensure interaction is taking place with other agencies.
   - Assist in the development of the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan.
   - Supervise the execution of the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan.
   - Maintain close contact with subordinate positions.
   - Ensure safe tactical operations.
   - Request additional resources to support tactical operations.
   - Approve release of resources from active assignments (not release from the incident).
   - Make or approve expedient changes to the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan.

- Maintain close communication with the Incident Commander.

2. Planning Section Chief

The Planning Section Chief is responsible for providing planning and status services for the incident. Under the direction of the Planning Section Chief, the Planning Section collects situation and resources status information, evaluates it, and processes the information for use in developing action plans. Dissemination of information can be in the form of the Incident Action Plan, formal briefings, or through map and status board displays.

Major responsibilities of the Planning Section Chief:

- Collect and manage all incident-relevant operational data.
- Provide input to the Incident Commander and Operations Section Chief for use in preparing the Incident Action Plan.
- Supervise preparation of the Incident Action Plan.
- Conduct and facilitate planning meetings.
- Reassign personnel already on site to ICS organizational positions as needed and appropriate.
- Establish information requirements and reporting schedules for Planning Section units.
- Determine the need for specialized resources to support the incident.

- Assemble and disassemble task forces and strike teams not assigned to Operations.

- Establish specialized data collection systems as necessary. (e.g., weather)

- Assemble information on alternative strategies and contingency plans.

- Provide periodic predictions on incident potential.

- Report any significant changes in incident status.

- Compile and display incident status information.

- Oversee preparation of the Demobilization Plan.

- Incorporate Traffic, Medical, Communications Plans, and other supporting material into the Incident Action Plan.

3. Logistics Section Chief

The Logistics Section Chief provides all incident support needs with the exception of air logistics support.

The Logistics Section is responsible for providing:

- Facilities

- Transportation

- Communications

- Supplies

- Equipment maintenance and fueling
- Food Services (for responders)
- Medical services (for responders)
- All off-incident resources

Major responsibilities of the Logistics Section Chief:

- Manage all incident logistics.
- Provide logistical input to the Incident Commander in preparing the Incident Action Plan.
- Brief Logistics Branch Directors and Unit Leaders as needed.
- Identify anticipated and known incident service and support requirements.
- Request additional resources as needed.
- Develop as required, the Communications, Medical, and Traffic Plans.
- Oversee demobilization of the Logistics Section.

4. Finance/Administration Section Chief

The Finance/Administration Section Chief is responsible for managing all financial aspects of an incident. Not all incidents will require an Finance/Administration Section. Only when the involved agencies have a specific need for finance services will the Section be activated.

Due to the specialized nature of the administration and finance function, the Finance/Administration

Section Chief is usually a member of the jurisdiction or agency requiring financial services. However, that is not an absolute requirement.

Major responsibilities of the Finance/Administration Section Chief:

- Manage all financial aspects of an incident.
- Provide financial and cost analysis information as requested.
- Ensure compensation and claims functions are being addressed relative to the incident.
- Gather pertinent information from briefings with responsible agencies.
- Develop an operating plan for the Finance/Administration Section; fill Section supply and support needs.
- Determine need to set up and operate an incident commissary.
- Meet with assisting and cooperating agency representatives as needed.
- Maintain daily contact with agency(s) administrative headquarters on finance matters.
- Ensure that all personnel and equipment time records are accurately completed and transmitted to home agencies, according to policy.
- Provide financial input for demobilization planning.

- Ensure that all obligation documents initiated at the incident are properly prepared and completed.

- Brief agency administrative personnel on all incident-related financial issues needing attention or follow-up.

5. Activating General Staff Positions

General Staff positions on an incident are activated only as needed. Smaller incidents may not require activation. A primary concern is always span of control.

There are no guidelines as to which positions would be activated first. The complexity of the incident, experience, training, and the judgment of the Incident

Commander will determine the order of activation.

An important consideration in ICS is that those positions not activated remain the responsibility of the Incident Commander.

C. The Command Staff

There are three other important activities that are the responsibility of the Incident Commander, in addition to the primary command and general staff functions.

- Handling public information and media relations.

- Maintaining close contact with assisting and cooperating agencies.

- Ensuring maximum possible safety for all assigned personnel.

As incidents grow in size or become more complex, any one of these activities can consume much of the Incident Commander's time. Therefore, it is important for the Incident Commander to recognize the importance of and quickly fill needed Command Staff positions.
The Command Staff in ICS consists of:

- Information Officer
- Safety Officer
- Liaison Officer

Guidelines related to Command Staff Positions:

- Only one person will be designated for each Command Staff position. This applies to all incidents including multijurisdictional incidents.

- Command Staff positions should not be combined.

- Command Staff positions may be filled by qualified persons from any appropriate agency or jurisdiction.

- There are no deputy positions at the Command Staff level.

- Each of the positions may have one or more assistants as necessary.

- Assistants are recommended for larger incidents.

- Assistants can be designated from other jurisdictions or agencies as appropriate.

- Command Staff members report directly to the Incident Commander.

- Command Staff members may interact with any position within the ICS for purposes of information exchange.

1. Information Officer

The Information Officer is responsible for developing information about the incident for the news media, incident personnel, and other appropriate agencies and organizations. Reasons for the Incident Commander to designate an Information Officer include:

- An obvious high visibility or sensitive incident.
- Media demands for information may interfere with the IC's effectiveness.
- The media's capability to acquire (and interpret) its own information is increasing.
- Reduces the risk of multiple sources releasing possibly conflicting information.

The following are the major responsibilities of the Information Officer: (Note that agencies will have different policies and procedures relative to the handling of public information. For example, in some areas incident media releases must be first cleared by the Agency Executive.)

- Determine from the Incident Commander any limits on the information to be released.
- Develop information for use in media briefings.
- Obtain Incident Commander's approval of media news releases.
- Conduct periodic media briefings.
- Arrange for tours and other interviews or briefings that may be required.

- Monitor and forward media information that may be useful to incident planning.

- Maintain current information summaries and/or displays on the incident.

- Make information about the incident available to incident personnel.

- Participate in the planning meeting.

2. Safety Officer

The Safety Officer's function on the Command Staff is to identify, assess and/or anticipate hazardous and unsafe situations, and to develop and recommend measures for assuring personnel safety. Working through the chain of command, the Safety Officer will correct unsafe situations.

An important point to remember is that the Safety Officer may exercise emergency authority to directly stop unsafe acts if personnel are in imminent life-threatening danger.

Under OSHA regulation 1910.120, the Safety Officer function is required by law at the tactical operations level on hazardous materials incidents.

Major responsibilities of the Safety Officer are:

- Participate in planning meetings.

- Identify hazardous situations associated with the incident, and make sure that problems are taken care of prior to an accident.

- Assign assistants qualified to evaluate special hazards.

- Review the Incident Action Plan for safety implications and prepare incident specific safety message or plan based on hazards, problems, or agency requirements.

- Exercise emergency authority to stop and prevent unsafe acts.

- Initiate preliminary investigation of accidents that have occurred within the incident area.

- Review and approve the Medical Plan.

- Ensure safety messages and briefings are made as needed.

3. Liaison Officer

Incidents that are multijurisdictional or that have several agencies involved at the incident scene may require the establishment of the Liaison Officer position on the Command Staff.

The Liaison Officer will be the point of contact for Agency Representatives assigned to the incident by assisting or cooperating agencies. These are usually personnel other than those directly associated with resources on direct tactical assignments.

The following are some of the main reasons to establish the Liaison Officer position at an incident:

- When several agencies send or plan to send Agency Representatives to an incident in support of their resources.

- When the IC can no longer provide the time for individual coordination with each Agency Representative.

Major responsibilities and duties of the Liaison Officer at an incident:

- Act as a point of contact for Agency Representatives.
- Maintain a list of assisting and cooperating agencies and Agency Representatives.
- Assist in setting up and coordinating interagency contacts.
- Monitor incident operations to identify current or potential inter-organizational problems.
- Participate in planning meetings, providing current resource status, including limitations and capabilities of agency resources.
- Provide agency-specific demobilization information and requirements.

IV. Agency Representatives

An Agency Representative is an individual assigned to an incident from an assisting or cooperating agency. An Agency Representative is different than an individual assigned to an incident to be a part of a Unified Command.

The Agency Representative must be given authority to make decisions on matters affecting that agency's participation at the incident.

Agency Representatives can function as IC's in a Unified Command if they are IC qualified by their agencies.

Even in a Unified Command organization, agencies may provide other Agency Representatives to assist in the multiagency coordination.

Agency Representatives report to the Liaison Officer, or to the Incident Commander in the absence of a Liaison Officer.

Major responsibilities of the Agency Representative:

- Ensure that all of their agency resources have completed check-in at the incident.
- Obtain briefing from the Liaison Officer or Incident Commander.
- Inform their agency personnel on the incident that the Agency Representative position has been filled.
- Attend planning meetings as required.
- Provide input to the planning process on the use of agency resources unless resource technical specialists are assigned from the agency.
- Cooperate fully with the Incident Commander and the Command and General Staff on the agency's involvement at the incident.
- Oversee the well-being and safety of agency personnel assigned to the incident
- Advise the Liaison Officer of any special agency needs, requirements or agency restrictions.
- Report to agency dispatch or headquarters on a pre-arranged schedule.
- Ensure that all agency personnel and equipment are properly accounted for and released prior to departure.
- Ensure that all required agency forms, reports, and documents are complete prior to departure.
- Have a debriefing session with the Liaison Officer or Incident Commander prior to departure.

MODULE 12

COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF

Command and Staff Questions
Exercise Scenario

Command and Staff Questions

At the end of this module you will given a scenario of an incident. Working in teams you will be asked to develop an incident management organization for that scenario.

The text material which will be presented during the module will help you in making appropriate decisions regarding the scenario incident organization.

In your presentation to the full group, you will be asked to address some or all of the following questions.

1. The organization needed to work this scenario could be:

   Single Command
   Single Command with deputies
   Unified Command
   Which would you suggest? Why?

2. If other than a single command, how would you structure the command? Which agencies/jurisdiction, etc.?

3. Which General Staff positions would you activate? Explain.

4. What would be your order of activation of the General Staff? Explain.

5. Within Operations, would you favor a branch structure? If so, do you feel it should be a functional or geographic/jurisdictional structure? Explain.

6. Does this incident call for the use of staging areas? If so, should there be one or more staging areas established?

7. Where would you place staging area(s)? Explain.

8. Would staging areas be set up by function, i.e., for one kind of resource; by agency or open to all resources? Explain.

9. Would this incident call for any air operations? If so, diagram the organization to be used.

10. If you establish a Planning Section, what units would you activate for this incident? Would you designate a deputy? If a deputy is assigned, do you see the deputy coming from within the same agency or from another agency/jurisdiction? Explain.

11. If you establish a Logistics Section, what units would you activate for this incident? In what order? Explain.

12. What facilities other than staging would you establish? Explain.

13. Is there a need for a deputy Logistics Section Chief? If so, from what agency/jurisdiction? Explain.

14. Is there a need for a Finance/Administration Section? If so, what units would you establish?

15. Is there a need for a Command Staff? If so, how would it be prioritized and organized? Would there be a need for assistants? What agency/jurisdiction would they come from?

V. Small Group Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is to have you develop an ICS General and Command organization around a simulated scenario.

SCENARIO

Thunder Mountain Wildfire

You are the Incident Commander on the Thunder Mountain Fire. You have two wildland engines with you, a Type 4 and a Type 5. The fire is burning in an area with limited access. The time is 1400.

The fire is threatening the Thunder Mountain watershed, which is the main source of water for the Warrington township. The fire is burning in brush and is estimated to be 125 acres and is headed toward a prime stand of timber on Thunder Mountain. The top of the mountain has all types of the electronic equipment for Warrington (telephone system, television, etc.) The fire is being pushed in the direction of a summer home area on Thunder Lake, five miles away. Estimated control date for the fire is 4 days from now.

Additional resources due on scene within one hour:

5 engines, 3 Type 4s and 2 Type 5s
1 Type 2 Water Tender
1 Dozer Type 2 with single resource boss and operator
4 Type 2 hand crews
2 Type 3 helicopters
1 Helibase manager

Additional background:

You have been on scene for 15 minutes.

You currently have 2 single resources reporting to you, an additional 14 are ordered and due on scene within the hour.

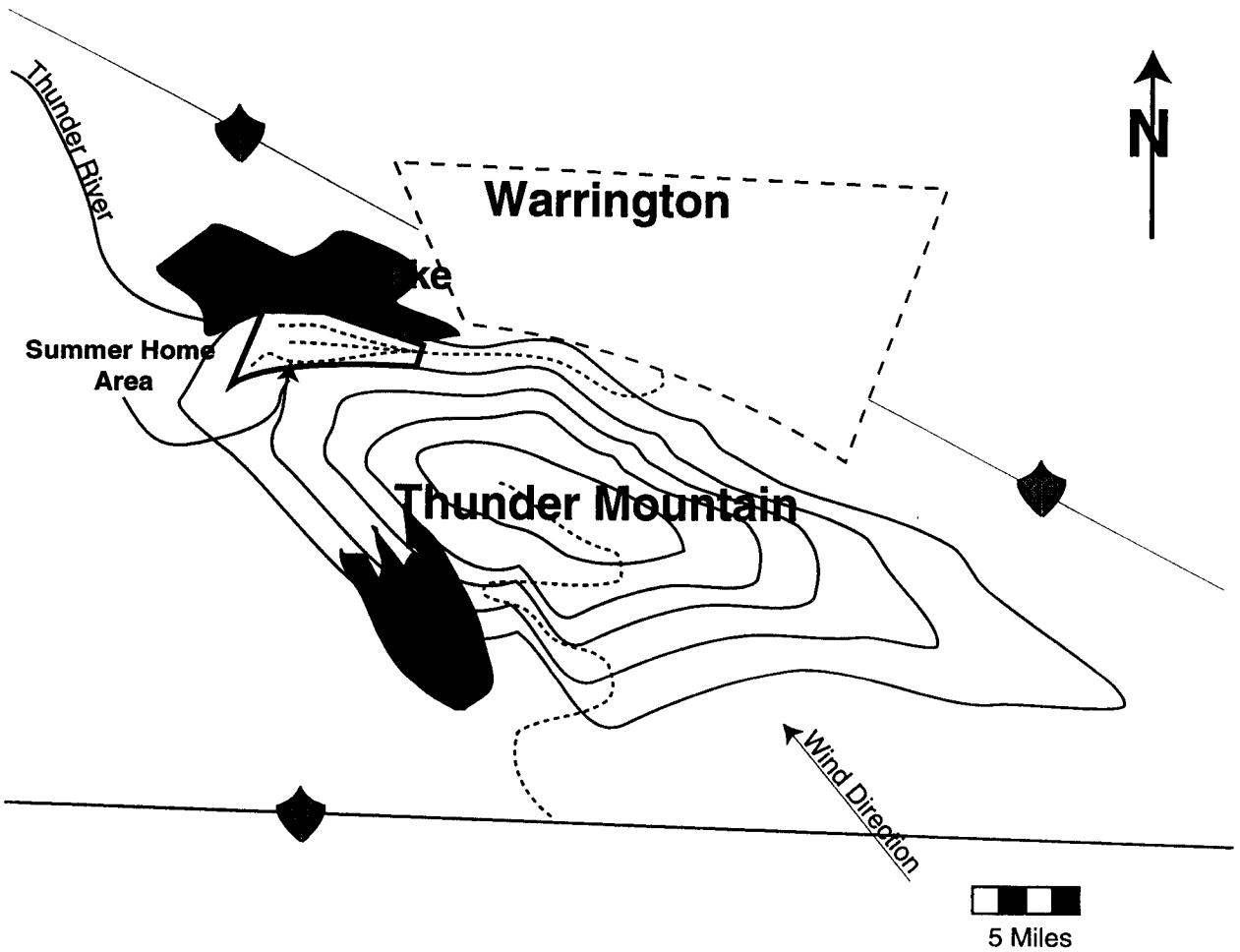
A small remote summer home area is located 5 miles from the fire. It is in the direct path of the fire. Property is not immediately in danger but, if the winds pick up, the summer home area and the radio equipment on top of the mountain could be in danger.

The news media have just arrived with a TV ground crew.

Weather for the area is predicted to be hot and dry for the next several days.

Your agency has primary responsibility for the incident, but may need to request assistance from other agencies.

Staff is limited. However four qualified people are available who could assume staff role (Command and General). These are in addition to the single resources on scene.



THUNDER MOUNTAIN WILDFIRE

RESOURCE TABLE FOR USE IN EXERCISES

Exercise Planners: Change names or add to this list as you desire. Depending on the exercise needs, use blank columns to show: # resources available, typing, resources needed, resources ordered, resources in Staging Areas, resources assigned by agency, etc.

KIND OF RESOURCE				
ALS UNITS				
BLS UNITS				
BULLDOZERS				
BUSES - 30 PASS 50 PASS				
COAST GUARD VES.				
COMM. UNITS				
CRANES				
DUMP TRUCKS				
EMS UNITS				
FIRE ENGINE CO'S				
FIRE TRUCK CO'S				
FIREBOATS				
FOUR WHEEL DRIVE PASS. VEH.				
HAZMAT UNITS				
HELICOPTERS				
K-9 UNITS				
MARINE RESCUE UNITS				
MOTORCYCLE UNITS				
PASSENGER VEHICLES				
PATROL UNITS				
PICKUP TRUCKS				
PRIVATE AMBULANCES				
SAR UNITS				
STATION WAGONS				
WATER TENDERS				

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