
Unit 8: Supervision and Communication

STUDENT GUIDE

Objectives

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Describe the principles of supervision, delegation, and communication as they relate to the position of the Operations Section Chief
- Define a Supervisor's role and responsibilities within the ICS system
- Describe techniques for communicating instructions and expectations
- Describe techniques for effective delegation
- Describe the Operations Section Chief's duties in preparing for and executing the Operational Period Briefing
- Describe the appropriate timing and content of Operations Subbriefings

Methodology

This unit uses lecture, a handout, an exercise, and discussion.

Students will be tested on this unit's content through the administration of Quiz 2 (to be administered upon completion of Unit 10). In addition, Instructors will evaluate students' understanding of the unit content through the facilitation of Exercise 4 (to be administered upon the completion of this unit). Knowledge of unit content will also be evaluated through the administration of the Final Exam (to be administered upon completion of the course).

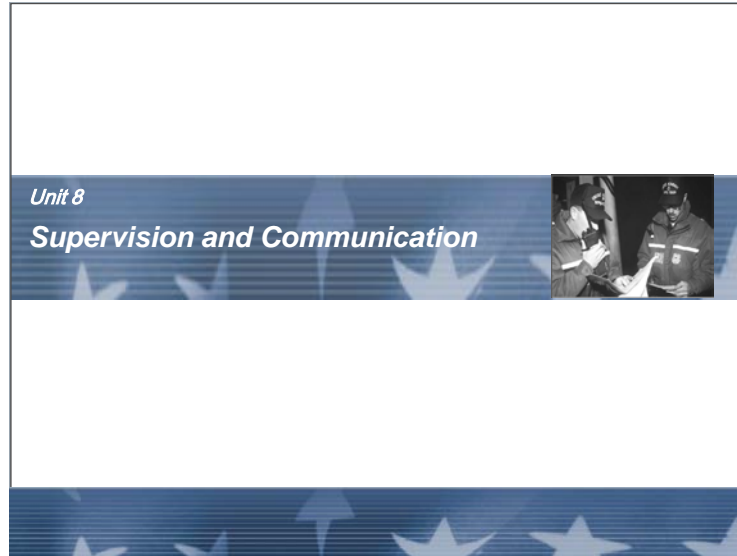
The purpose of this exercise is to provide participants with an opportunity to practice the roles and responsibilities of an Operations Section Chief in a controlled tabletop environment. The focus of this exercise is to highlight the characteristics of good and poor incident briefings. This is a small group exercise in which each participant, based on their own experiences, will contribute to a group list of characteristics of good and poor incident briefings.

Time Plan

A suggested time plan for this unit is shown below. More or less time may be required based on the experience level of the group.

Topic	Time
Lesson	1 hour 30 minutes
Exercise 4	1 hour
Total Time	2 hours 30 minutes

TopicUnit Title Slide

**Key Points**

Scope Statement

Through this unit, students will learn the fundamental principles of effective delegation, communication, and supervision as they relate to the position of the Operations Section Chief within the ICS system. Proper facilitation, preparation, and presentation of the Operational Period Briefing will be discussed in this unit.

Unit Terminal Objective

Describe the principles of supervision, delegation, and communication as they relate to the Operations Section Chief.

**Key Points**

Unit Terminal Objectives

Describe the principles of supervision, delegation, and communication as they relate to the position of the Operations Section Chief.

Unit Enabling Objectives

- Define a Supervisor's role and responsibilities within the ICS system
- Describe techniques for communicating instructions and expectations
- Describe techniques for effective delegation
- Describe the Operations Section Chief's duties in preparing for and executing the Operational Period Briefing

Effective supervision, communication, and delegation are the charge of the Operations Section Chief. The Operations Section Chief is responsible for communicating critical information in the Operational Period Briefing. This unit will provide an overview of the briefing, as well as the Operations Section Chief's duties within it.

Topic Definition of a Supervisor

Definition of Supervisor

Any individual, regardless of the job description or title, having authority in the interest of the employer to direct human resources.



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Visual 8-3

Key Points

A Supervisor is any individual, regardless of job description or title, who has the authority to direct human resources in the interest of the employer.

Instructions/Expectations

Must communicate instructions and expectations well:

- In briefings
- One-on-one
- Request feedback
- Clarify
- Evaluate



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Visual 8-4

Key Points

Operations Section Chiefs have several avenues for communicating instructions to the people who they supervise:

- Formally and in writing through ICS Form 204
- Verbally, which is the best way to clarify field questions and ensure that subordinates get the message

A good way to double-check whether your communications are clear is to ask your subordinates to repeat your instructions.

Effective Delegation

- Empower subordinates
- Listen to and use your people
- Assign personnel according to their qualifications, experience, and abilities



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Visual 8-5

Key Points



Empowering your subordinates allows them to conduct their assigned responsibilities with the flexibility to make necessary adjustments. When you create ICS Form 204, state tactics in a manner that leaves some flexibility. One method for doing this is to focus on *what* needs to be done instead of *how* it should be done.

- Listen to and use your people
- Assign personnel according to their ICS qualifications, experience, and ability

Topic Physical Arrangements

Physical Arrangements

- Away from noise
- Good lighting
- PA system
- Posting of maps
- Elevated platform

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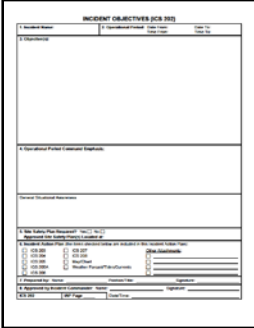
Visual 8-6

Key Points

- Away from noise such as generators and traffic
- Plenty of light for people to see the IAP, maps, and presenters
- Public address system that can easily be heard by all
- Space to post maps where everyone can see them
- Elevated platform so the speaker can be seen from the back rows

IAPs and Maps

- Adequate copies of IAPs
- Hand out IAPs to those who are filling critical positions
- Display large map of incident
- Post copies of current IAP at incident base



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Visual 8-7

Key Points

IAPs and maps are usually the responsibility of the Planning Section. The Situation Unit is responsible for completing them, as well as for posting them for the Operational Period Briefing. The Operations Section Chief should confirm with the Situation Unit Leader or Planning Section Chief to ensure that the maps meet the needs of the Operations Section.

Copies of the IAP should be distributed down the command chain, at least to the DIVS, but possibly down to the Strike Team Leader level.

Post copies of the current IAP at the Incident Command Post and other places where it can be seen by responders, newcomers, and others. The best place to post it is always the “chow line.”

Topic Preparation and Presentation

Preparation and Presentation

The Operations Section Chief must:

- Review IAP ahead of time
- Be on time
- Speak clearly
- Ask attendees to put all communication devices on silent mode
- Hold questions until after briefing



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Visual 8-8

Key Points

Minimize distractions at the Operations Briefing. The Operations Briefing won't last long—typically, it's no more than 30 minutes. To prevent possible disruptions, ask everyone to place their communication devices on silent mode.

During the Operations Briefing, ask that personnel hold their questions until the completion of the briefing. Repeat any questions that you field from the assembled personnel. This ensures that everyone at the briefing can hear the question and not just the answer.

Resources can be overlooked during the Planning Meeting or show up in the middle of the night after the plan has been established. To identify unassigned resources (supply, apparatus, or personnel), ask at the end of the Operations Briefing whether any resources are unassigned.

Topic Planning Section Chief

Planning Section Chief

Planning Section Chief facilitates the Operational Period Briefing, as well as all formal meetings in ICS.



Handout 8-1: Sample Generic Operational Briefing Agenda

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Visual 8-9

Key Points

The Planning Section Chief (PSC) facilitates the Operational Briefing, as well as most formal meetings in ICS. The main exception is the Tactics Meeting, which is almost always run by the Operations Section Chief. On rare occasions, however, the Operations Section Chief can ask the PSC to facilitate the Tactics Meeting.

Situation Update

Presented by previous operational period Operations Section Chief and/or Situation Unit Leader.



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Visual 8-10

Key Points

Topic What the Operations Section Chief Covers

What the Operations Section Chief Covers

- Give overall Division/Group assignments
- Identify resources
- Defer questions
- Finish with positive, motivating comments
- Refer Branch/Division Subbriefings to another site

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Key Points

The Operations Section Chief provides clarifications for Division/Group assignments. The Operations Briefing should be considered a first pass at transmitting assignments. It's not intended to be comprehensive or detailed like subbriefings are. For this reason, subbriefings may be the better place to create documentation of the briefing.

- Give general overall assignments by the Division/Group
- Have Division/Group Supervisors and other resources identify themselves when called upon
- Defer questions
- Finish with positive, motivating comments
- Designate sites for later Branch/Division Subbriefings

In the past few years, a number of fatalities have been attributed to holes in briefing procedures (this is especially true of HAZMAT incidents). For this reason, mechanisms have been established to provide legal cover for the Operations Section Chief. For example, sometimes responders are required to initial a roster to indicate that they were briefed. If an Operations Section Chief would like to do this, they can have Logistics create a roster sheet for responders to initial as they leave the briefing.

The Operations Section Chief should allow for questions after the briefing. Branch- or Group-specific questions should be addressed after the subbriefing. If an incident has

continued for any length of time, Logistics will designate subbriefing areas with signs (e.g., DIV A). At the subbriefing site, Branches, Divisions, and Groups can gather to get more specific directions.

When the Operations Section Chief describes the tactics of a Branch, Division, or Group, he/she should ask the Division/Group Supervisor being identified to raise his/her hand. This ensures that leaders are aware of their assignments. It also ensures that subordinates know who to report to.

All resources assigned, regardless of the level, should identify themselves when their name or resource identifier is called. That way, everyone throughout the organization is familiar with everyone else.

After the Operations Briefing, the Operations Section Chief should remain and be available to Branch Directors or Division/Group Supervisor who have questions.

Topic Other Personnel

Other Personnel

PSC may call on other personnel to comment:

- Meteorologist
- Safety Officer
- Communications Unit Leader
- Air Operations Branch Director
- Medical Unit Leader
- Technical Specialists
- Members of General Staff
- Closing comments by Incident Commander

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Key Points

- Meteorologist
- Safety Officer
- Communications Unit Leader
- Air Operations Branch Director (AOBD)
 - Operations Section Chief is responsible if no AOBD has been assigned
- Medical Unit Leader
- Technical Specialists

Give General Staff members a chance to comment. Planning, Finance/Administration, and Logistics, or sometimes one of their subfunctions, such as Ground Support or Supply, may need to comment to the group.

Topic Other Briefings

Other Briefings

Specific Branch/Division Operations Subbriefing:

- Done after Operational Period Briefing
- Branch Director or Division/Group Supervisor provides more specific directions on assignments
- Specific questions are answered (two-way)
- Timelines are reviewed and confirmed

Status Check:

- Give Branch Directors updates on the effectiveness of tactics
- Give responders down the chain access to new information and resources

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Visual 8-13

Key Points

The Operations Section will take part in three briefings: Operations Briefings, Branch Subbriefings, and Mid-Operational Period Briefings. The timing of the Mid-Operational Period Briefing is at the discretion of the person leading the Branch. The purpose of the Mid-Operational Period Briefing is to: (1) give Branch Directors updates on the effectiveness of tactics; and (2) give responders down-the-chain access to new information and resources. This is because after the operational period begins, supervisory personnel will get information and feedback from subordinates coming off the line. This feedback may result in changes in tactics or a mid-course correction in strategy.

Status Check:

- Give Branch Directors updates on the effectiveness of tactics
- Give responders down-the-chain access to new information and resources



Key Points

Follow directions from the instructor on how to complete this exercise.

Objectives Review

1. *What is a Supervisor's role and responsibilities within the ICS system?*
2. *What are the techniques for communicating instructions and expectations?*
3. *What are the techniques for effective delegation?*
4. *What are the Operations Section Chief's duties in preparing for and executing the Operations Briefing?*
5. *What is the appropriate timing and content in an Operations Subbriefing?*

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Visual 8-15

Key Points

Unit Terminal Objective

Describe the principles of supervision, delegation, and communication as they relate to the Operations Section Chief.

Unit Enabling Objectives

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