Incident Command System

What is it?
A method of organizing the functions necessary to manage a search.

What's so cool about it?
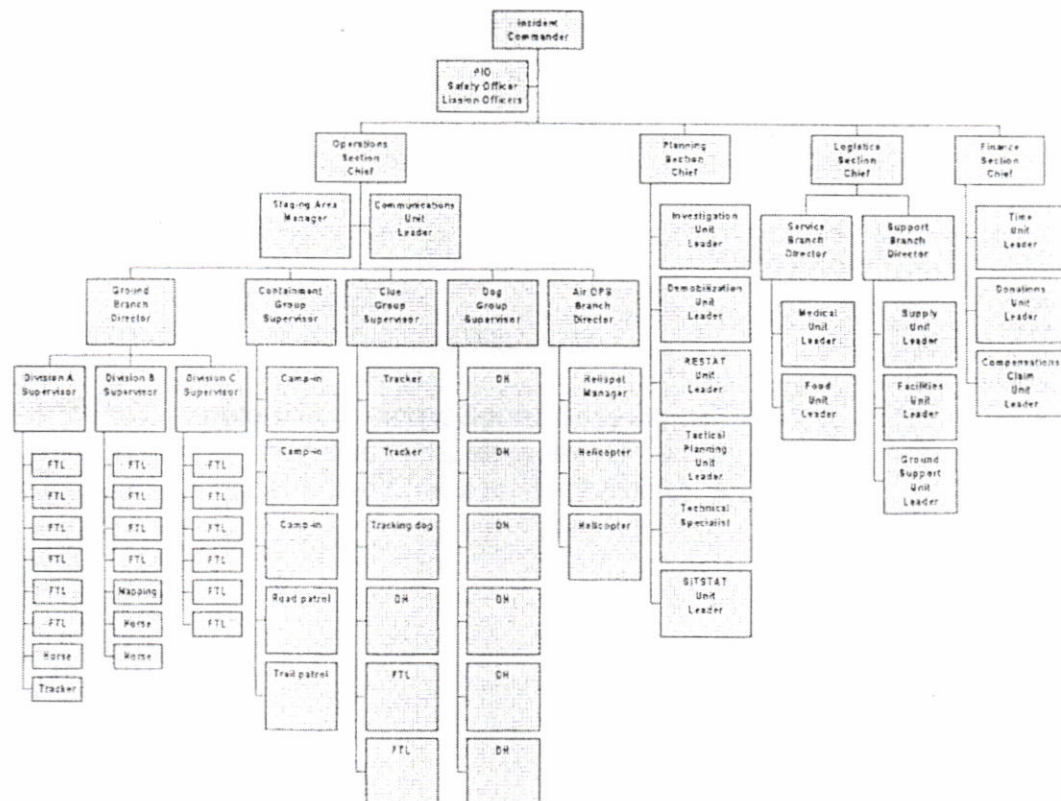ICS is highly flexible. It is able to expand and contract to meet the needs of any given situation.

Do other people know about it?
Yes! But it doesn't matter. The beauty of ICS is that it is easy to integrate local people and members of other agencies into the system. Just assign them to a function and they're in!

Tell me more about integrating locals!
If used properly, ICS can keep you out of the eyes of all the volunteers, with whom we tend to be a little weak on relating with. By placing trained locals into "frontline" positions such as staging and briefer/debriefer, volunteers will deal only with people they're already familiar with while we work behind the scenes.

Enough talk. Show me some ICS!

SAR Theory

Objectives:

➢ Employ Incident Command Structure
➢ Develop search strategy
➢ Utilize feedback from field teams

A little about the functions (from the Field Operations Guide for SAR):

> Incident Commander: responsible for all incident activities including the development and implementation of strategic decisions and for approving the ordering and release of resources
> Responsible Agent: member of local state agent that is legally responsible for the search
> Public Information Officer: responsible for the formulation and release of information about the incident to news media and other appropriate agencies and organizations and to incident personnel
> Family Liaison: responsible for providing a point of contact for all family members for information on the status of the search
> Safety Officer: responsible for monitoring, managing, assessing stress, hazardous, and unsafe situations
> Ops: responsible for the management of all operations directly applicable to the primary mission
> Plans: responsible for the evaluation and use of information about the development of the incident and future contingencies
> Logistics: responsible for providing and obtaining facilities, services, and materials in support of the incident
> Finance: responsible for all financial accounting and cost analysis of the incident and for supervising staff
> Staging: responsible for managing all activities within a staging area including personnel classification, tracking, and logistics
> Briefer/Debriefer: responsible for obtaining the TAF and providing the FTL with a complete picture of what is expected of the task and other relevant information and interviews the FTL to obtain pertinent information upon returning to base
> Commo: responsible for developing plans for the effective use of incident communications equipment and facilities, installing and testing of communications equipment, supervision of incident communications, distribution of communications equipment, documentation of incident communications, and the maintenance of communications equipment
> Investigations: responsible for the ongoing investigation of the lost subject and all circumstances of the disappearance

Practical
Develop an ICS structure for a small search (2 staff):

Develop an ICS structure for a medium search (8 staff):

Develop an ICS structure for a large search (15 staff):

Search Strategy

Review time...

What do PLS and LKP mean?

What are reflex tasks?

How is a search area determined?

How are search segments drawn?

PRACTICAL

You have just arrived at a search for a missing 73 year old female with possible Alzheimer's. She was last seen by a neighbor walking southeast on road at A2329. Her house is at A2231. Investigations has revealed that she grew up at the house at A3418. No searching has been accomplished previous to your arrival. Your job is to:
1. Draw up 4 reflex tasks
2. Define a search area
3. Draw up 4 search segments

Next time we'll talk about writing up these tasks, briefing the teams, and debriefing the teams. For now, we'll assume these have been done so we can skip ahead...
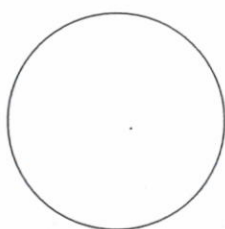
Feedback from field teams

Feedback comes in from every team that goes out in the field. While they provide a wide variety of information, the two pieces most beneficial to the search are the probability of detection (POD) and clues.
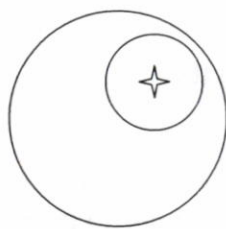
Quick review…

What is POD?

This number is important to base for a variety of reasons. First of all, it shows you how well your segments have been covered. When PODs are placed together for all segments on a map, a picture of previous search efforts appears in front of you. This will tell you what areas you haven't hit well enough and more importantly, what areas you haven't hit well enough yet. PODs are also useful in determining when to expand the search area and when to suspend a search. Finally, PODs are easy to understand. A staff member can quickly explain what has taken place to the responsible agent, family, and media.
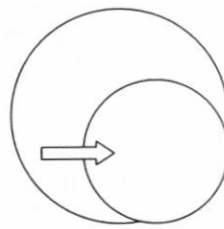
While PODs are a measure of where the subject is not likely to be, clues reveal places where the subject has been at some point. We constantly stress clue awareness because of the effect a clue can have. Every clue that is found refocuses and shrinks the search effort. Some clues such as footprints can even show a direction of travel to narrow in even more. Clues are taken very seriously by base. Every clue, seemingly relevant or not, is documented and followed up on. For significant clues, this means the immediate dispatching of a field team, preferably a specialized resource such as a signcutter or bloodhound, to follow up.

Original Search
Area

After finding
a clue

After finding
a footprint