**The Incident Command System**

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The use of a centralized database for managing the direct response to a hazard by various organizations drastically reduces the chances of human errors. Delays in responding immediately to a disaster may result in inexplicable damage to life and property. Programs like the Incident Command System (ICS) help make sure that the process of reacting to a sudden disaster is as smooth as it can be. Firefighters form a part of these organizations who serve by responding to routine hazards or non-routine natural disasters. The foremost reason for firefighters using ICS is prompt response since it coordinates the emergency response into a steady flow of events and eliminates the time wasted in managerial preparations. However, another significant motivator is reducing the number of firefighters lost to fires. A majority of firefighters who died in the line of duty lost their lives because of problems with the leadership, communication failures, poor task allocation and poor decision making. (Griffith, 2015) Using a management system which dramatically reduces the risk of a firefighter dying because of these reasons is hence crucial. Another fundamental reason for using ICS is the fact that it integrates all federal, state and local agencies into one team with an instructional flowchart on the chain of responsibilities allotted to each personnel. ICS also has the distinct ability to expand or shrink owing to the appropriate requirement of the calamity that has befallen. Limited resources in these agencies therefore get used in a cost-effective and highly efficient manner.

The use of ICS by every organization responding to all hazards has been mandated by the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The NIMS document was published for the first time in 2004. This is basically a set of guidelines or rules for all governmental or non-governmental organizations in order to prevent, protect against or recover from any hazardous incidents. NIMS made it mandatory in 2004 for organizations like firefighters, law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services and public-work departments to use ICS for responding to natural or man caused hazards. (Jensen, 2016) An intense wildfire in Southern California in the 1970s exposed many flaws in the firefighting system that was in place at that time. Most of these problems related to the management of resources and personnel and issues related to a smooth chain of command. This led to rising concerns and eventual demands for using management programs for first responders. These programs were similar to the Crew Resource Management (CRM) already used in aviation and emergency medical services. Slowly and steadily, firefighters in several states followed each other’s footsteps to inculcate the use of these programs for effective response to tragedies. After 9/11, President Bush issued a directive to formulate a National Response Plan (NRP) which mandated the training of disaster responders so that they were capable of responding to large scale tragedies. (Chang, 2017) This led to the formation of NIMS which eventually made it essential for ICS to be used by all responding organizations in all hazardous events from active shootings to HazMat incidents. This was controlled and mandated by enforcement of the rule that in order to receive federal funding, ICS had to be used. The Superfund Amendment and Re-Authorization Act III mandated this requirement. Ever since NIMS was originally published, it has been revised twice owing to national security concerns or crucial lessons learned from the flaws or drawbacks in earlier versions. The first revision happened in December 2008 which was followed by another in October 2017. The 2017 version is therefore the most recent version currently in use.

# References

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