



# Area Command

Last Update: 3/11/2015



# Primary Focus Areas:

When the complexity or magnitude of the incident(s) exceeds capacity of the local unit(s), Area Command will:

- Manage Type 1, 2, and 3 Incident Management Teams (IMTs)
- Ensure span-of-control standards are understood and followed;
- Prioritize zones and/or incidents;
- Allocate critical resources;
- Coordinate complex aviation issues;
- Simplify data collection and reporting;



# Primary Focus Areas:

- Provide strategic support to decision makers by collecting, evaluating, and interpreting information, and developing accurate, timely intelligence reports and other products as needed -
  - *MAC Groups;*
  - *Agency Administrators/Executives;*
  - *Geographic Area Coordination Centers/Groups*
  - *Emergency Operation Centers*
  - *Agency Operation Centers;*
  - *Joint Field Office (FEMA)*





# Primary Focus Areas:

- But above all . . .

*Ease* the burden/impact on the local/host unit(s),

*Add* value,

*Foster* relationships,

&

*Facilitate* safe, effective, efficient operations.



# Area Command

- **HISTORICALLY:**
  - Developed in the mid-80s by land management agencies
  - Deployed to provide over-arching command to large scale incidents or multiple large incidents within a geographic area
- **TODAY:**
  - Part of NIMS, DHS, and core ICS curriculum
  - Deployed by USCG, FEMA, state/local government, and internationally



# Who's on Area Command?

A group of highly experienced Subject Matter Experts:

- Area Commander
- Assistant Area Commander Plans
- Assistant Area Commander Logistics
- Area Command Aviation Coordinator
  
- May also include:
  - Situation Unit Leader
  - Resource Unit Leader
  - Information Officer
  - Liaison Officer
  - Facilities Unit Leader
  - Incident Business Advisor
  - Trainees
  - What positions are missing?





# Area Command

- Provides strategic leadership for Agency Administrators by:
  - Ensuring clarity of objectives;
  - Coordinating implementation of objectives and strategies for the incidents;
  - Setting priorities for the allocation of critical resources within the theater of operation;
  - Overseeing the daily battle-rhythm of the incident(s) to ensure continued progress is being made toward incident objectives;
  - Assuring safe air-space and aviation management;
  - Setting priorities among zones/incidents;
  - Identifying and allocating critical/scarce resources;



# Area Command

- Provides strategic leadership for Agency Administrators by:
  - Assessing risk and providing mitigation directions or actions;
  - Ensuring logistical support is in-step with incident needs;
  - Collecting, compiling, and disseminating information;
  - Coordinate the zone/incident “glide-path”;
  - Ordering and releasing IMTs as appropriate;
  - In-briefing & out-briefing IMTs;
  - Managing transitions;
  - Completing IMT evaluations; and
  - Securing incident documentation package(s).





# Area Command

- Provides strategic leadership for Agency Administrators by:
  - Shouldering risk management responsibilities
    - Reducing /simplifying complexity
    - Maintaining organizational certainty
    - Sharing assessment and decision duties
  - Insuring national cohesive strategy goals are identified and addressed
    - Landscapes
    - Communities
    - Response



# Area Command

- AC's do not:
  - Interfere with IMT battle rhythm
  - Staff an Operations Section Chief position
  - Direct tactical operations
  - Prevent or slow AA and stakeholder interactions with IMT(s)



# How is Authority Delegated?

- Direction to Area Command is provided through a Delegation of Authority (DOA), a Letter of Expectations (Leaders Intent), a Tasking Order (FEMA), or some other written instrument
- Regardless of how, direction is provided by:
  - ❖ Agency Administrator(s), and/or
  - ❖ Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)





# Authority Having Jurisdiction?

- Regional Forester / Forest Supervisor
- Park or BIA Superintendent
- Refuge Manager
- Field Office / District Manager
- Tribal Chair
- State Forester
- County Judge / Sheriff
- Local Government Chief Executive
- Other Administrator(s) as appropriate



## What can you expect?

- Area Command is an “asset” managed by NMAC .... BUT once assigned, works for the requesting Agency Administrator(s) and/or Authority Having Jurisdiction
- Self-contained small work unit
- Normally takes 24-36 hours to mobilize to the area once ordered



# During First Operational Period

- AC will meet with the Agency Administrator(s) and key cooperators to:
  - ❖ determine expectations;
  - ❖ review existing strategy and objectives;
  - ❖ confirm reporting timeframes and other issues;
  - ❖ accept direction
- AC will contact each IMT to:
  - ❖ announce arrival and change of command (as appropriate);
  - ❖ review status; and
  - ❖ arrange to meet





## First Meeting w/IMTs

- ICs & key staff –
  - Will occur as soon as can be scheduled (typically within first 24-36 hours);
  - Provides opportunity for the ICs to brief on their incident(s):
    - IMT strategy
    - Progress, challenges, opportunities
    - Review current maps, Incident Action Plans (IAPs), ICS-209's, etc
  - Provides opportunity for AC to validate existing priorities, strategy, objectives, set reporting standards, and/or adjust direction as appropriate



# General Strategy for Area Command

## Success =

- Reducing complexity and easing the burden on local unit(s)
- Managing incident(s) to achieve objectives in a safe, efficient, effective manner
- Managing transition, if needed, to the next stage of overall management:
  - Another AC Team;
  - Additional IMTs;
  - Another Type of IMT(s); and/or
  - Back to the local unit(s)



# When to consider Area Command?

(Current and/or within 72-hours)

- Complex or multiple incidents are exceeding the normal span of control
- Long term incidents are taxing/diverting the AA(s) or AHJ away from other important business
- Fatigue is becoming a factor
- Multiple IMTs are in the same area/unit
- Prioritizing competing incidents is required
- Identification and allocation of critical resources is required





# When to consider Area Command?

(Current and/or within 72-hours)

- There are escalating political, social, and informational issues and needs
- When the military, FEMA (including ESF4) or other entities are engaged that are outside the scope of experience of those involved.
- Incident reporting requirements are diverse, time-sensitive, and require consolidation and clarity
- Incident(s) are having difficulty achieving objective
- IMT's are uncertain as to strategy based upon competing interests and direction



# When to consider Area Command?

(Current and/or within 72-hours)

- Growing safety issues and concerns (ie. near misses, fatalities, etc)
- The concept of “Theater of Operations” is present in the thinking, planning, and operational choices of decision makers.
- When an ‘incident within an incident’ event(s) severely impacts agency oversight
- Predicted significant events (i.e. weather, large public events, etc)

# Questions?

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