Community Emergency Response Team

Contra Costa CERT Coalition

CERT Organization

Released: 10 August 2025 **Contra Costa CERT Coalition**

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Community Emergency Response Team

- Personal safety is ALWAYS the number one priority
- Show up prepared
  - Wear appropriate clothing and footwear, have WATER
  - Wear PPE – your personal protective equipment …gloves, helmet, goggles, mask, boots, etc.
  - Have at least one communications device: cell, radio, etc.
- Work as a team
- Size-up - maintain situational awareness
- The CERT goal is to do the **Greatest Good for the Greatest Number**
- *Hope for the best but plan for the worst!*

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Unit Objectives & Topics

- The emergency management structure (Incident Management System)
- How CERT members can fit into a larger emergency response and recovery structure (CERT Organization)
- Why, what, and how CERTs document their activities

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Need for CERT Organization

- Individual CERT members may operate as part of organized CERT units or as part of a larger emergency response effort
- Larger emergency responses typically require multi-agency coordinated effort
- Familiarity with common emergency response organizational structures is necessary and expected

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Purpose of On-Scene Management

- Maintain physical safety of disaster workers
- Maintain mental well being of disaster workers
- Provide clear leadership and organizational structure
- Improve effectiveness of rescue efforts





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Objectives of CERT Organization

- Identify the scope of the incident
  - *What is the problem?*
- Determine an overall strategy
  - *What can CERT do, and will they do it?*
- Deploy resources
  - *Who is going to do what?*
- Document actions and results
  - *If you didn't write it down, it didn't happen!*



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Incident Command System

- ICS provides:
  - Well-defined management structure
  - Manageable span of control
  - Common terminology
  - Effective communication
  - Consolidated action plans
  - Comprehensive resource management
  - Accountability



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Incident Command System

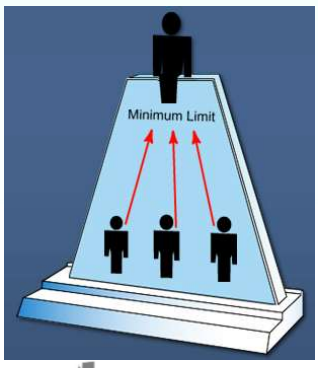
- Key Concepts
  - Unity of Command – each CERT reports to only one person
  - Common terminology and organizational structure
  - Manageable Span of Control
- Provides flexibility of resource management
  - Positions filled as needed
  - Modular units

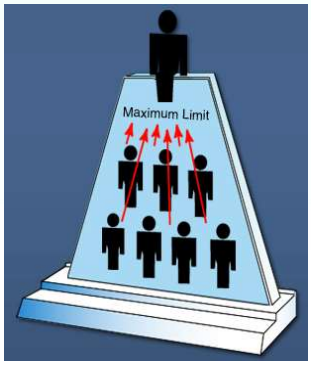
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ICS Management

- Span of Control
  - Is between 3 and 7 team members
  - Optimally does not exceed 5 team members





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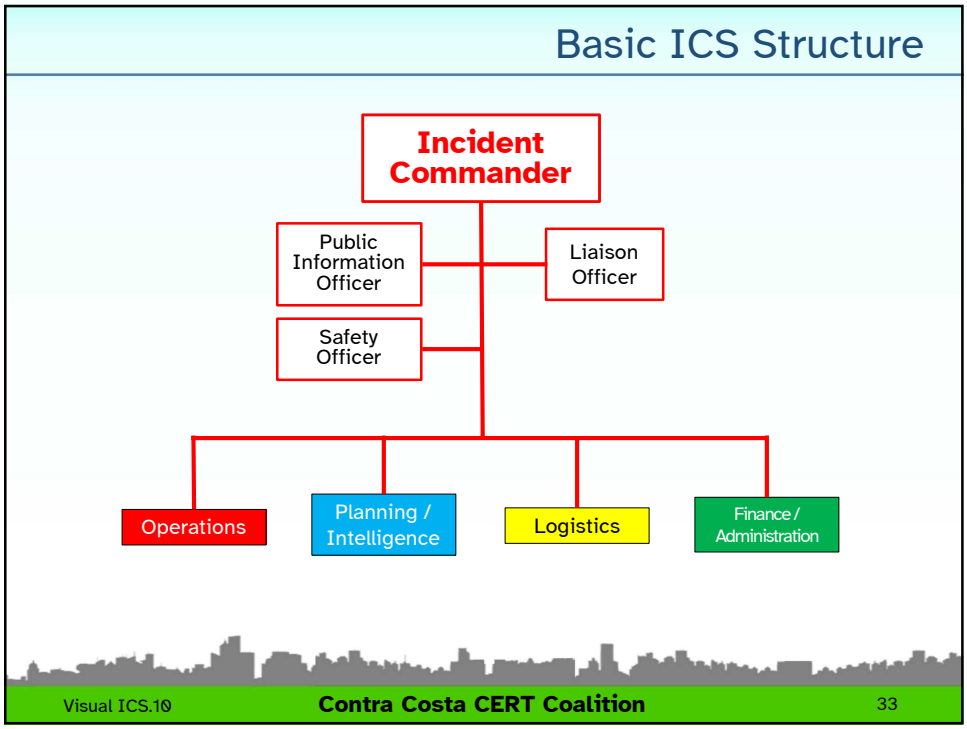
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Incident Command System

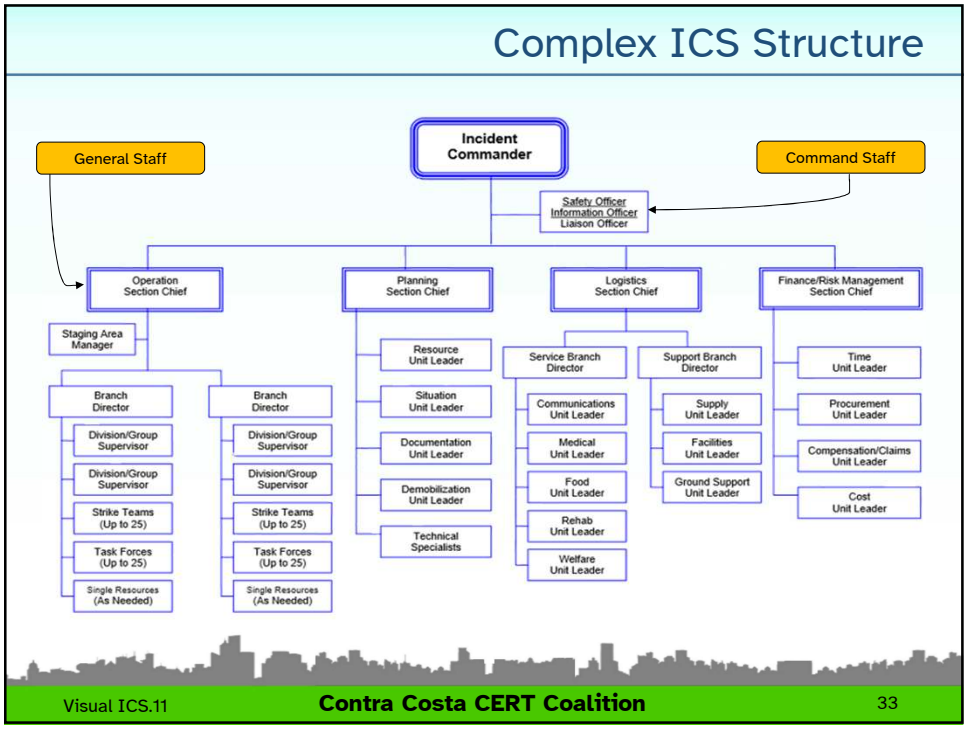
- The five major functional areas of ICS
  - **Command**
  - Operations
  - Planning / Intelligence
  - Logistics
  - Finance / Administration

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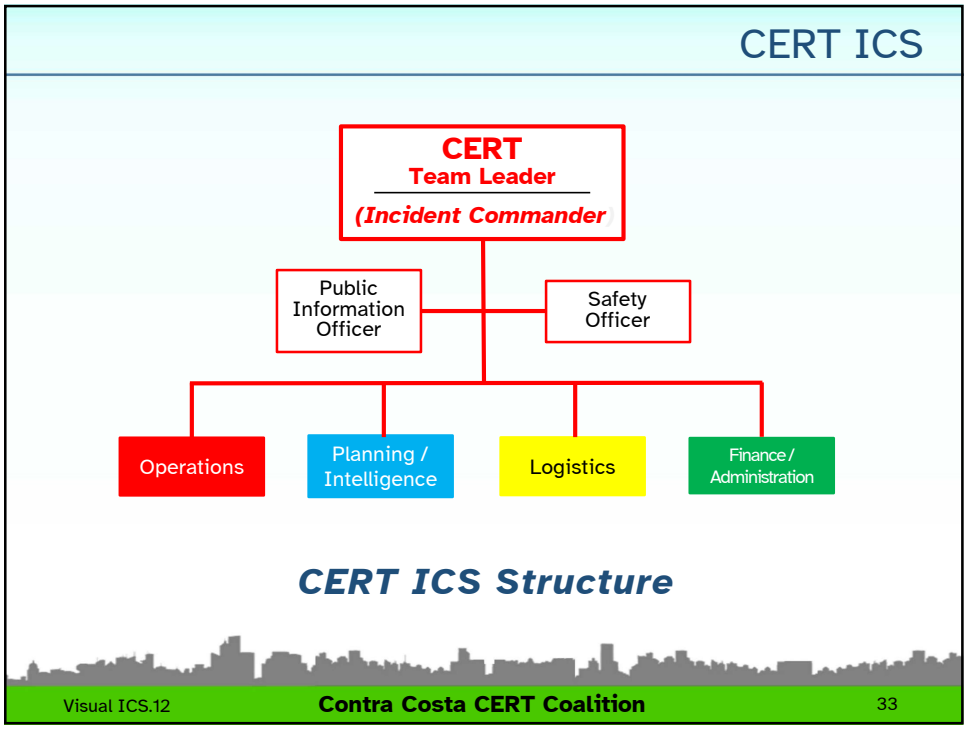
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Basic ICS Structure
Incident Commander
Public Information Officer
Liaison Officer
Safety Officer
Operations
Planning / Intelligence
Logistics
Finance / Administration
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Complex ICS Structure
General Staff
Incident Commander
Command Staff
Safety Officer
Information Officer
Liaison Officer
Operation Section Chief
Planning Section Chief
Logistics Section Chief
Finance/Risk Management Section Chief
Staging Area Manager
Branch Director
Division/Group Supervisor
Division/Group Supervisor
Strike Teams (Up to 25)
Task Forces (Up to 25)
Single Resources (As Needed)
Branch Director
Division/Group Supervisor
Division/Group Supervisor
Strike Teams (Up to 25)
Task Forces (Up to 25)
Single Resources (As Needed)
Resource Unit Leader
Situation Unit Leader
Documentation Unit Leader
Demobilization Unit Leader
Technical Specialists
Service Branch Director
Communications Unit Leader
Medical Unit Leader
Food Unit Leader
Rehab Unit Leader
Welfare Unit Leader
Support Branch Director
Supply Unit Leader
Facilities Unit Leader
Ground Support Unit Leader
Time Unit Leader
Procurement Unit Leader
Compensation/Claims Unit Leader
Cost Unit Leader
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Command and Control

- Incident Commander – *"What to do"*
  - CERT Leader
- Operations – *"How to do it"*
  - Manage the teams in the field
- Planning / Intelligence – *"What's going on and what should happen next"*
  - Collects and displays information and makes incident plans
- Logistics – *"How to support it"*
  - Manage resources, supplies and equipment
- Administration – *"What gets recorded"*
  - Collect and compile documentation

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CERT Leader
Normally assumed by the first person on scene
Incident command post (ICP) location may be pre-established or it may be created by the CERT Leader
Leadership position may be transferred when a more qualified person arrives
CERT Leader may appoint CERT members to positions in Operations, Plans, Logistics, Administration, Safety Officer, etc. as incident expands
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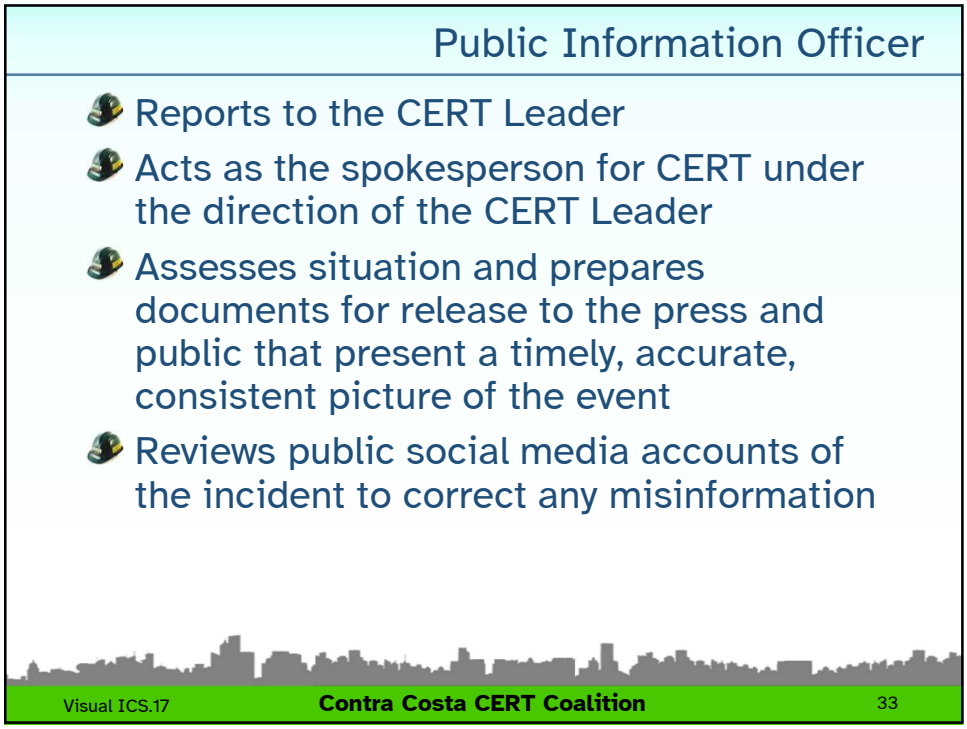
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CERT Leader Duties
Is Incident Commander unless part of a larger ICS structure
Has overall responsibility for all CERT actions
Sets objectives and priorities
Assigns personnel as needed
Ensures coordination of staff actions and activities
Communicates with higher authorities (police, fire, EMS, EOC, etc.)
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CERT Safety Officer
Reports to the CERT Leader
Assesses and anticipates hazardous and unsafe situations
Develops and recommends measures for assuring personnel health and safety
May develop a Site Safety Plan
Reviews the Incident Action Plan for safety implications
Can halt any operation at any time for safety concerns
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Public Information Officer
Reports to the CERT Leader
Acts as the spokesperson for CERT under the direction of the CERT Leader
Assesses situation and prepares documents for release to the press and public that present a timely, accurate, consistent picture of the event
Reviews public social media accounts of the incident to correct any misinformation
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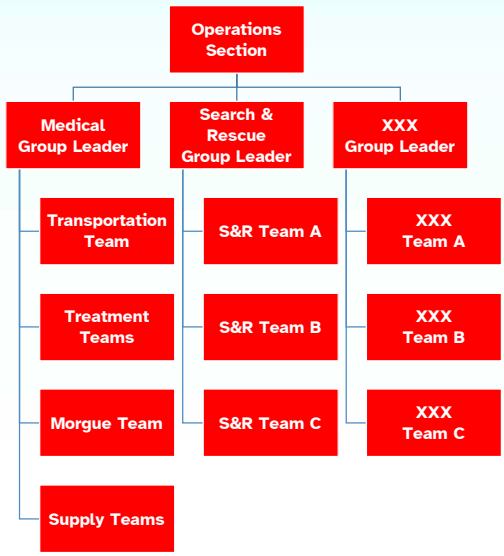
Operations Section

- Develops the operations tactics
- Develops the Operations Section organizational structure
- Conducts tactical operations to carry out the plan
- Directs all operational resources deployed

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Operations Section



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Planning / Intelligence Section

- **Planning**
  - Develops the **Incident Action Plan** to accomplish the objectives defined for the event
  - Maintains resource status on all deployed personnel and equipment during the event
  - Maintains active incident documentation
  - May utilize Advance Planning to anticipate future needs
- **Intelligence**
  - Collects and evaluates information
  - Validates information into intelligence

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Logistics Section

- **Provides resources and all other services needed to support an incident:**
  - Personnel
  - Food
  - Communications
  - Facilities
  - Transportation
  - etc.



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Finance / Administration Section

- Responsible for documenting costs related to incident
- Provides accounting, procurement, time recording and cost analysis
- Volunteer time is used for Federal matching dollars, and tracking is very important
  - The value in California was $**38.61** per hour in 2023
- Retains Documentation at end of event

Dealing with the Media

- You may get questions from the public or from media representatives
- Refer inquiries to CERT Team Leader, Incident Commander, or **Public Information Officer**
- Do not let media interfere with CERT activities
- ***Do not*** divulge any sensitive information



National Incident Management System

- NIMS provides ability to work together
- IS-100: Introduction to ICS https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.c
- IS-700: Introduction to NIMS https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-700.b



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CERT Mobilization

- CERTs take care of themselves, their family, their home, and their neighbors
- Depending on local CERT protocols, CERT members may respond to pre-designated locations, ready for response
- CERT organization should have effective communications, a manageable span of control and maintain accountability

The greatest good for the greatest number without placing CERT members in harms way

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CERT Mobilization

- CERT Leader will develop an organization plan
- Priorities may change as operation continues; CERT Leader needs to stay on top of these shifting priorities
- Communications must be organized, efficient and effective
- ICS was developed to assist in the management of major incidents – Use it
- Goal is always to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people while maintaining CERT safety

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Documentation

- Each level of authority is responsible for documentation (CERT Leader, Ops, Plans, Logs, Admin)



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Documentation

- CERT Teams provide the Command Post with ongoing information and documentation on:
  - Damage assessment
  - Team status
  - Ongoing needs
- Command Post documents:
  - Incident status
  - Incident locations: access routes and identified hazards
  - Support locations: Staging areas, treatment/triage areas and morgue



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CERT Forms

- Vary by local CERT protocols
  - Damage Assessment
  - Personnel Resources Sign-in (ICS-211)
  - Incident/Assignment Tracking Log (ICS-204)
  - Briefing/Assignment (ICS-201/203)
  - Victim Treatment Area Record
  - Activity Log (ICS-214)
  - Equipment Inventory (ICS-209/210)
  - General Message (ICS-213)

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In the End, Calm Heads Prevail



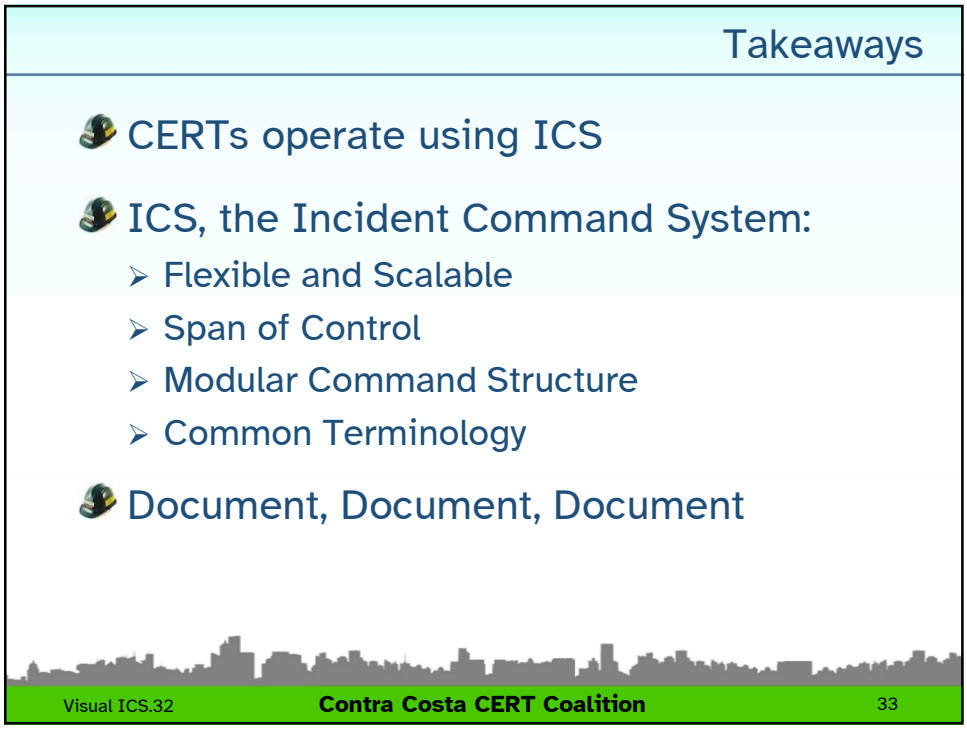
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Questions?



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Takeaways
CERTs operate using ICS
ICS, the Incident Command System:
Flexible and Scalable
Span of Control
Modular Command Structure
Common Terminology
Document, Document, Document
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