

Handout 3-3: Option 3: Expand the Planning Capability

Some incidents are so complex that the Planning Function must be enhanced or expanded. For example, cascading events may make managing the response more difficult. Planning is required to project the risk of cascading events. It may also be difficult to make cost-effective resource management decisions without advanced planning. The consequences of poor resource management decisions could be unnecessary loss of life and property.

Expanding the planning capability at an incident may take several forms, including:

- Tactical Planning within the branches
- Separating advanced incident planning from the day-to-day IAP planning process

Branch Tactical Planning

Branch Tactical Planning is not a new concept. It normally means that the Operations Section at the Branch level develops the detailed action plans, and the Planning Section provides support and coordination.

For example, Branch Tactical Planning is often used in search and rescue operations, when detailed tactical assignments are developed at the Branch Director level. In situations like this, the Planning Section provides support to the Branch Director.

It can also mean that an element outside of both the Planning and Operations Sections has planning responsibilities. An example of this is when the Intelligence/ Investigations function is established as a separate ICS General Staff I/I Section.

Branch Tactical Planning: When To Use It

Tactical planning at the Branch level may be used when:

- The incident becomes so large that there is no single set of objectives that would logically pertain to the entire incident.
- Special technical expertise is needed for planning.
- Because of the immediacy of the operation, it is not feasible to wait for inclusion in the next IAP timeframe (the planning, approval and execution all occur before the publication of the next IAP).

The following are examples of when Branch Tactical Planning may be implemented:

- In a mass fatalities incident, when the Medical Examiner/Morgue Operations Branch may be best suited to establish its own incident tactical plans
- In a structural collapse, when the Search and Rescue Branch typically will include its own planning component

- The Intelligence/Investigation Function is responsible for developing and implementing an intelligence/ investigations plan separate from the IAP

When Branch Tactical Planning is used, the Planning Section provides:

- General incident objectives
- Strategy for the Branch for the next operational period
- Branch resource summary for the next operational period
- Weather and safety information
- Changes to logistical support
- Personnel to support planning

With this information, individual Branches can perform detailed tactical action planning. The Planning Section would have to ensure that necessary inter-Branch coordination took place wherever necessary.

Any additional resource requirements (over those already authorized) that are identified by the Branch must be communicated to the Operations Section Chief to include them in the IAP and normal resource ordering and tracking process.

A modification to this model could be accomplished by limiting Branch Tactical Planning to certain Branches (e.g., those with less complex situations). Other Branches would continue under a central planning structure. In either case, the Planning Section would provide each Branch doing individual Branch planning with the required support in terms of personnel and other support resources to get the planning accomplished.

Separate Advanced Incident Planning

Advanced planning is also referred to as future planning. Advanced planning can include future planning for things we can anticipate will happen, and contingency planning for things that might happen (what if).

One of the functions of the Planning Section is to assess all available information and to provide periodic predictions on incident potential. The Planning Section is also responsible for developing any contingency plans that may be required.

To ensure that advanced planning occurs, the Planning Section Chief may:

- Assign a Deputy Planning Section Chief to manage advanced planning.
- Assign technical specialists to perform advanced planning.
- Establish a special unit within the Planning Section.

Advanced Incident Planning: Considerations

The goal of this advanced planning effort is to provide the Planning Section Chief and the Incident Commander or Unified Command with a range of alternatives related to management of the incident beyond the next operational period.

Advanced planning should project ahead beyond the next operational period. A common practice is to look forward 36 to 72 hours, but the incident may dictate other advanced planning timeframes:

- The probable course of the incident (is it getting bigger/ smaller, more/ less complex)
- Incident Overall goal and objectives
- Adequacy of previous and present plans
- Future resource requirements and availability
- Strategy assessment and alternatives
- Environmental factors
- Assessment of the effectiveness of the organizational structure and development of alternatives
- Political and economic issues
- Future demobilization timeline and plan
- Transition to Recovery needs