

## Why do Amateur Radio Operators learn and use ICS?

The Incident Command System ([ICS](#)) facilitates effective disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts by providing an organizational structure, which allows all levels of government, not-for-profit, and other public service organizations to work efficiently together.

The Hawaii ARES® April COMEX provides an example of an ICS Organizational plan at the state level. We hope that this and the additional information presented will convey a clear view of what ICS is about, and how it applies to disaster preparedness and the Amateur Radio Service.

### Hawaii ARES® April 16th COMEX:

This COMEX was organized statewide but focuses on local operations. We have a collection of [ICS forms](#) that tell everyone what they need to know in order to participate. Under ICS, this is called an **Incident Action Plan**. The IAP includes the ICS-201 Incident Briefing, ICS-202, 203, etc. For this particular COMEX, the Incident Command is formed at the state level. Refer to the [ICS Organizational Chart](#).

We pass communications from local areas to the EOC. In Hawaii County messages are sent to the Auxiliary Communications Service, which is a group created by the County Civil Defense, staffed by trained amateur radio operators. The following describes the structure of this COMEX, and the titles defined under ICS:

- EOCs and Hawaii County ACS are at the top at the County level. In this COMEX each County is a branch, under the operations section. stations representing the role of the EOC generally have the title of Branch Director and fall under the

management of the Operations Section Chief, at the state level.

- ARES DECs are generally in the role of Division Supervisor. They are under the Branch Director for their County. The [ICS 204](#) & [ICS 205](#) for each branch and division describe how operations work in each area.
- ARES CECs and others handling hub and official relay stations have the title of "Unit Leader." They are listed in box 5 of each [ICS 204](#).
- Stations initiating messages have the title "RADO" which is short for Radio Operator. A RADO is an example of what is referred to as a "Single Resource" in ICS.

The overall idea of organizing in this way is to help us become more familiar with how ICS is used to help everyone work together, to help our communities. The structure created for each incident varies. It is not the same as the organization chart of any participating group.

**There is no relationship intended between the Hawaii ARES® hierarchy and the ICS organizational chart.** ARES® leaders listed are the volunteers who stepped up to participate, and have knowledge about ICS and Amateur Radio.

***ICS helps different organizations work well together.***

Exercises under ICS are at their best when more than a single group is the focus of an exercise. Ideally, the position of Incident commander as well as the operations,

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planning, and logistics section chief would be held by someone in an emergency management agency. These people are trained in ICS, can define useful goals and objectives, and contribute significantly to the planning of any exercise.

It is important for Amateur Radio operators involved in disaster communications to exercise using ICS. We exercise in a way that is similar to how Government Agencies, and others do, so we can all work better together in the future.

In ICS, People hold leadership roles in an incident because they are trained in ICS, emergency operations, logistics, and planning. Position titles in ICS are not assigned because someone has a high position or title in their organization.

Leadership roles are often given to an Emergency Management Agency employee, a member of a trained incident management team, a fire chief, a battalion commander, or a police commander because they have the training and skills needed to lead their section.

### **Another Example of ICS: Organizing via Functional Branches.**

Consider a drill where the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, and other NGOs that support SESF#6 (Mass Care) held a joint exercise.

The Hawaii Red Cross director might become the Branch Director for SESF#6 statewide. Divisions would be established based upon geography, and each Division Supervisor would report to the Branch Director. In any particular division, all the volunteers at each organization work under

their division supervisor, regardless of which organization the supervisor or volunteers are affiliated with normally.

This is an example of a clear chain of command. The ICS branches in this example are organized based on function, and divisions are organized based on geography. The Organizational Chart might include other statewide functional branches as needed, such as public safety (SESF#13) or any other SESF needed in the incident response. Each branch would be organized as needed. ICS is a VERY flexible structure.

**ICS is all about groups working together for common specific objectives defined by the planning section, carried out by the operations section, under the direction and authorities given to the IC.**

No matter how the ICS organizational chart is set up for an incident, Amateur Radio operators would be working for the IC. We would not necessarily be volunteering for any particular organization. However leaders involved in incident response planning and operations do recognize and appreciate the skills and resources each group brings to the table.

Amateur Radio Operators would typically start out under the Logistics Section, Service Branch, in a Communication Unit. (ComU) These units are organized and led by someone who is qualified to be the Communications Leader. (ComL)

Any ComU may be assigned to any level of the ICS organizational chart where they are needed. This includes Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, Accounting, and subdivision under these sections.

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***Exercises planned under ICS are most effective when several organizations exercise together.***

It is good to start with discussions, then tabletop exercises, and finally we move on to functional and full-scale exercises.

Incident Command would often be at the County or community level, often under the authority delegated to the director of the EMA, by the Mayor.

The director of the EMA further delegates authority to the IC, and resources are made available through [Mutual Aid Agreements](#) and other arrangements made in advance.

***There are many ways to organize under ICS, depending upon the size, scope, complexity, and nature of the incident.***

- We are all volunteering to help our communities.
- We work to achieve common goals and objectives.
- We have a clear chain of command and unity of purpose.

The [free training](#) from FEMA and others will help us understand how it all fits together. Information under [this link](#) covers the various positions and titles used in ICS.

With ICS, we take off our organizational "hat" and become a part of a team, for the benefit of the whole community.

We encourage all FCC Part 97 license holders to sign up for this COMEX, which happens on April 16<sup>th</sup> from 0900-1200. Amateur Operators may sign up by clicking the link to the [Google form](#).

73,

*Hawaii ARES® COMEX Planning Team*

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