

# Preparedness



**U.S. Department of Education, Office of  
Safe and Healthy Students**

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# Overview of Preparedness Session

- Define the emergency phase
- Identify steps to creating an emergency management plan
- Address elements to include in an emergency plan
- Introduce Incident Command System
- Review coordination and communication
- Discuss training and exercises
- Practice a tabletop activity



# Phases of Emergency Management



# Learning Objectives for Preparedness

- Understand the basic elements of an emergency plan
- Gain awareness of Incident Command System principles, terminology, and implementation
- Learn multiple strategies for effective emergency exercises and training
- Engage in an interactive scenario



# What is the Preparedness Phase?

The Preparedness phase is designed to strengthen the school community by coordinating with community partners through:

- Developing emergency policies and protocols
- Adopting the principles of the Incident Command System (ICS)
- Conducting staff training and drills
- Conducting and assessing emergency response exercises



# Goal of the Preparedness Phase

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Facilitate a rapid, coordinated, and effective response in the event of an emergency



# Steps for Developing an Emergency Management Plan

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- Step 1: Collect existing resources
- Step 2: Conduct necessary assessments
- Step 3: Identify gaps and weaknesses
- Step 4: Start assembling plan based on the four phases of emergency management



# Steps for Developing an Emergency Management Plan

- Step 5: Incorporate vulnerability data
- Step 6: Conduct trainings and exercises
- Step 7: Revised plans based on outcomes of trainings and exercises
- Step 8: Disseminate plan to stakeholders
- Step 9: Establish accountability measures to ensure ongoing refinement



# Elements to be Addressed in an Emergency Management Plan

- All-hazards emergency procedures
  - *Lockdown*
  - *Evacuation*
  - *Shelter-in-place*
- Command and control (ICS)
- Communication plans
- Parent reunification plans
- Emergency equipment lists (see example & handout)



# Elements to be Addressed in an Emergency Management Plan (Cont'd.)

- Procedures for students and staff with disabilities or other unique needs
- Public health surveillance
- Food defense
- Evacuation plans approved by first responders
- Student accountability procedures
- Mental health recovery plans
- Drill and exercise schedule
- Considerations for anniversaries and memorials
- Legal review
- Annual accountability and plan revisions



# Command and Coordination

- Pre-incident planning with community partners:
  - Develop memorandum of understanding (MOUs) or mutual aid agreements with community partners
  - Coordinate with state and local emergency management agencies
    - Join Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)
    - Ensure evacuation routes are coordinated with police and fire
  - Share information with first responders



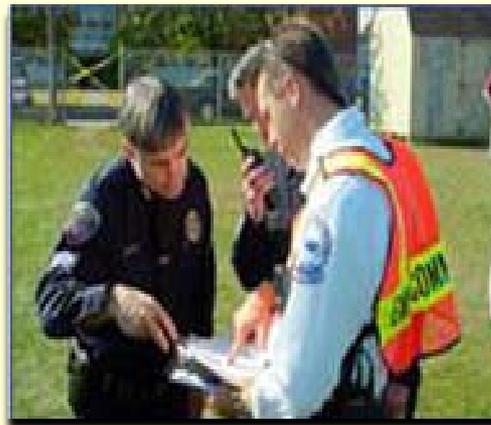
# Business Continuity Planning

- Succession planning
- Record retention and safe-keeping
- Pre-negotiated contracts



# Incident Command System

Incident Command System (ICS) is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
LAW ENFORCEMENT  
FIRE DEPARTMENTS  
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES



ICS



SCHOOLS



# ICS Functional Areas

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- Command
- Operations
- Planning
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration



# ICS: Principles

- Emergencies require certain tasks or functions to be performed
- Nature of the incident determines level of activation and response
- Expandable and collapsible
- One incident commander:
  - May vary for different types of incidents
  - May change during incident response
  - Incident command responsibility should be determined in advance
- Clear, pre-determined reporting lines
- Span of supervisory control does not exceed 3-7 subordinates



# ICS: Common Terminology

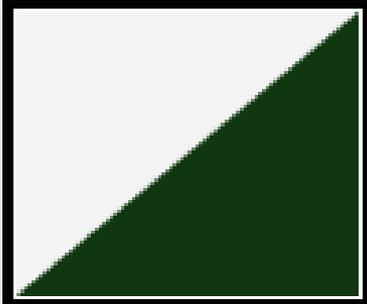
- Ability to communicate in a crisis is essential
- ICS requires use of common terminology including standard titles for facilities and positions
- ICS uses plain English (NO CODES)
- Uses common terminology
- Example:
  - *Unclear language:*
    - *“Teachers and students, this is a Code Yellow.”*
  - *Clear language:*
    - *“Teachers and students, this is a lockdown.”*



# ICS Common Terminology (Cont'd.)

- Incident Command Post (ICP)
- Staging Areas
- A Base

**Incident Command Post**



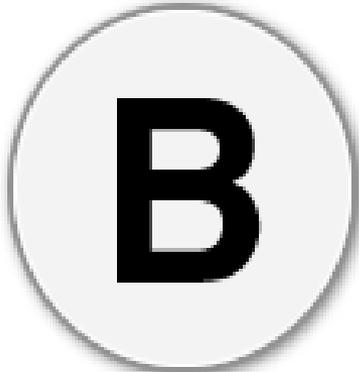
On a map, the ICP location appears as a green and white square.

**Staging Area**



On a map, the Staging Area appears as a circle with an S in it.

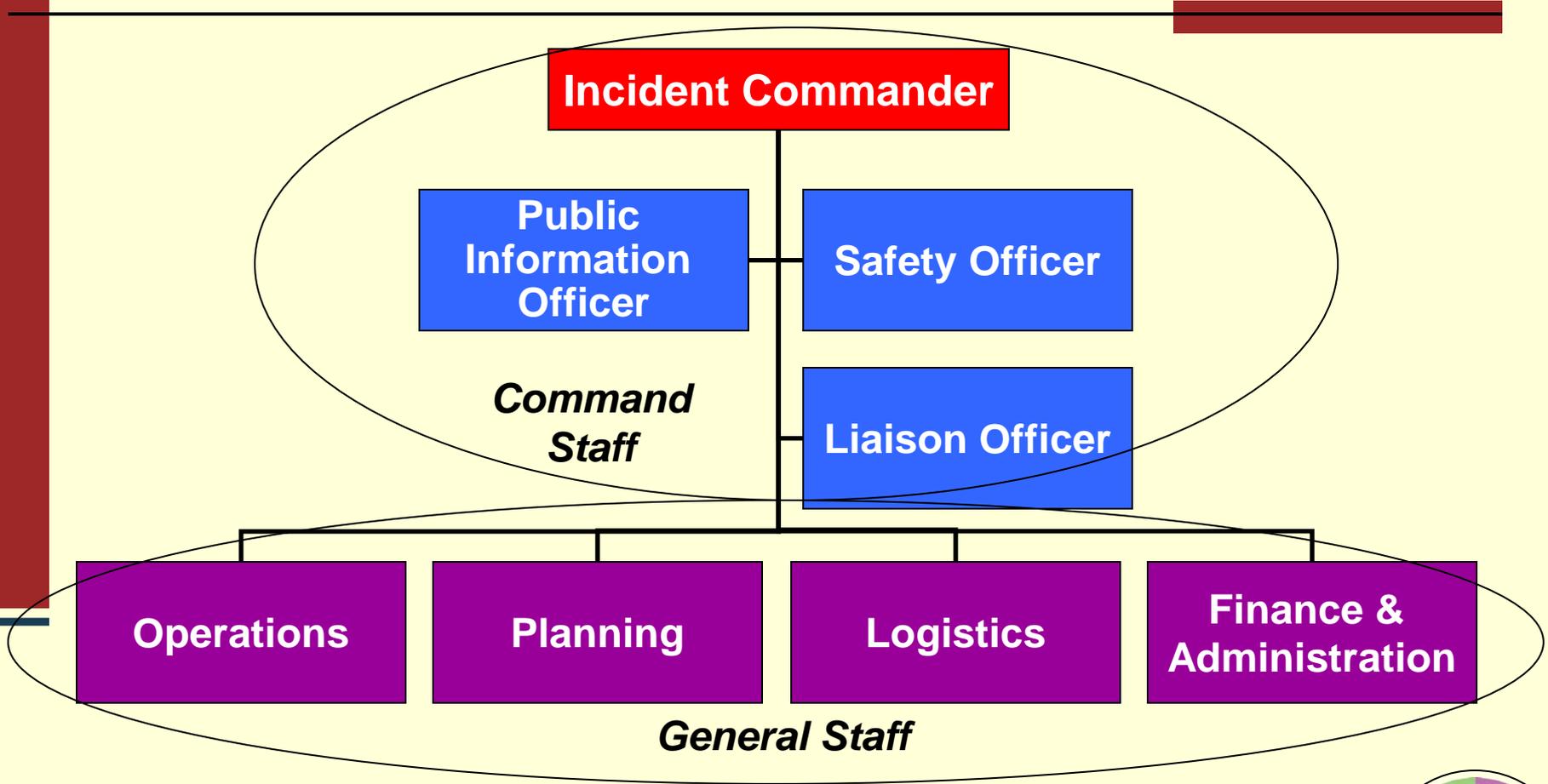
**Base**



On a map, the Base appears as a circle with a B in it.



# ICS: Roles



# Unified Command

- Used on larger incidents when multiple agencies are involved.
- Typically includes command representatives from involved agencies.
- Acts as a single entity.
- Lead agency acts as Incident Commander.
- Each agency sends someone who does not need to ask permission to make a decision.



# ICS: Scenario

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A student reports to a teacher that he witnessed another student carrying a weapon.



# ICS: Activation

At the moment the student reports the issue, the teacher is the Incident Commander.

**Teacher = Incident Commander**

The teacher reports the incident to the principal. The principal determines the nature of the emergency and decides to activate the Incident Command System. He or she becomes the Incident Commander.

**Principal = Incident Commander**



# ICS: Scalability

The principal places the school in lockdown and calls 911 and the district office. The police arrive on the scene and the officer in charge takes over as the Incident Commander. The principal assists the police response and becomes part of the unified command staff.

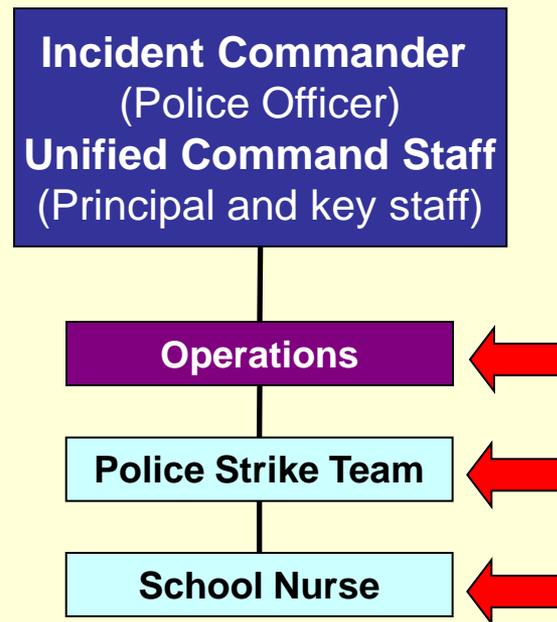
**Police Officer = Incident Commander**

**Principal = Unified Command Staff**



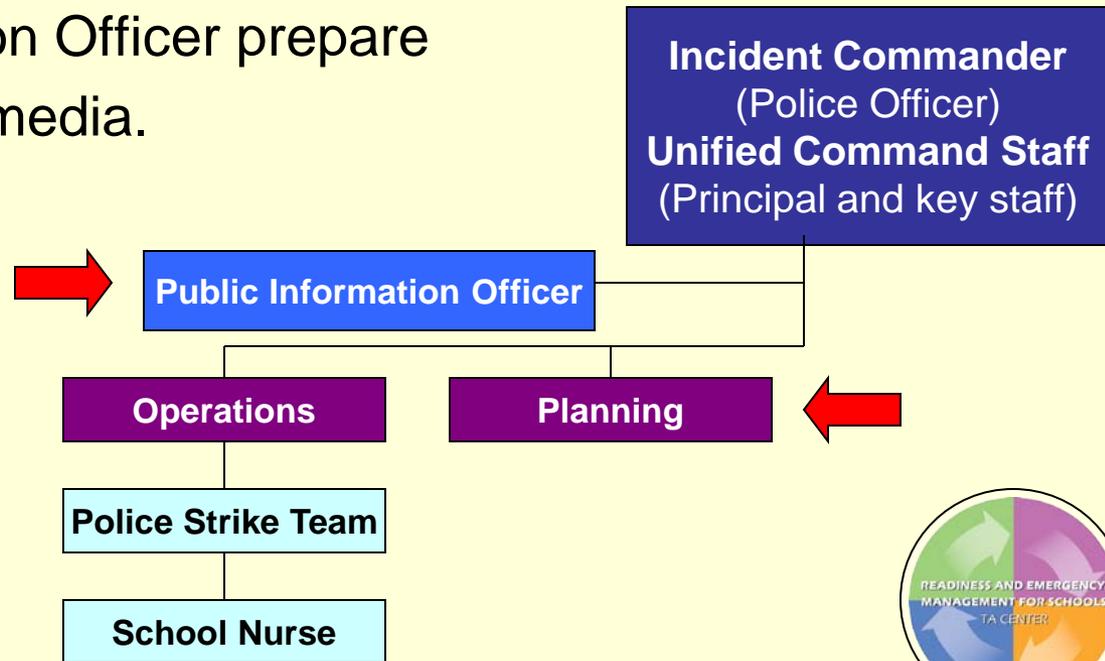
# ICS: Scalability (Cont'd.)

- The Incident Commander designates another police officer as the Operations Section Chief, who in turn assembles a strike team to locate the student with the weapon.
- While the school is in lockdown, a student suffers an asthma attack. The teacher must render aid until the school nurse can assist.



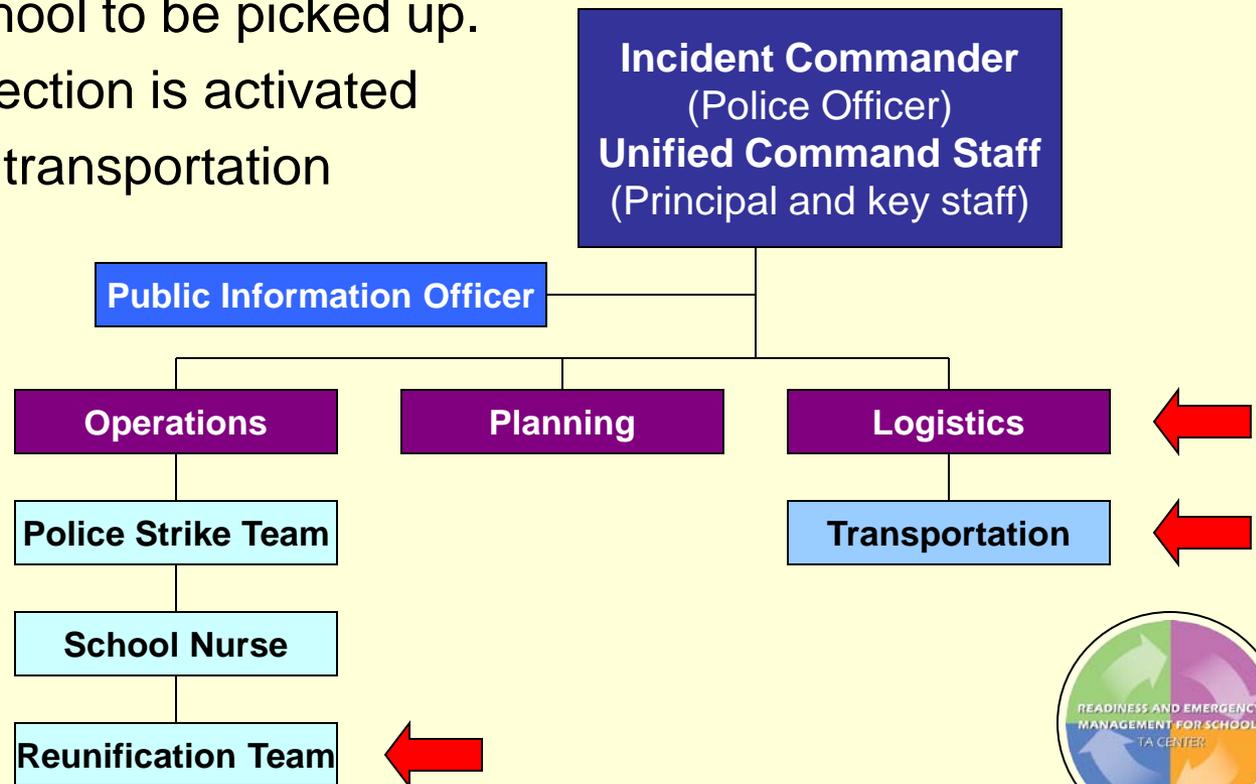
# ICS: Scalability (Cont'd.)

- Since the duration of the incident may be prolonged, the Incident Commander activates the assistant principal as Planning Section Chief to plan for possible scenarios with regard to student care and long-term needs.
- The Incident Commander requests that the Public Information Officer prepare a statement for the media.



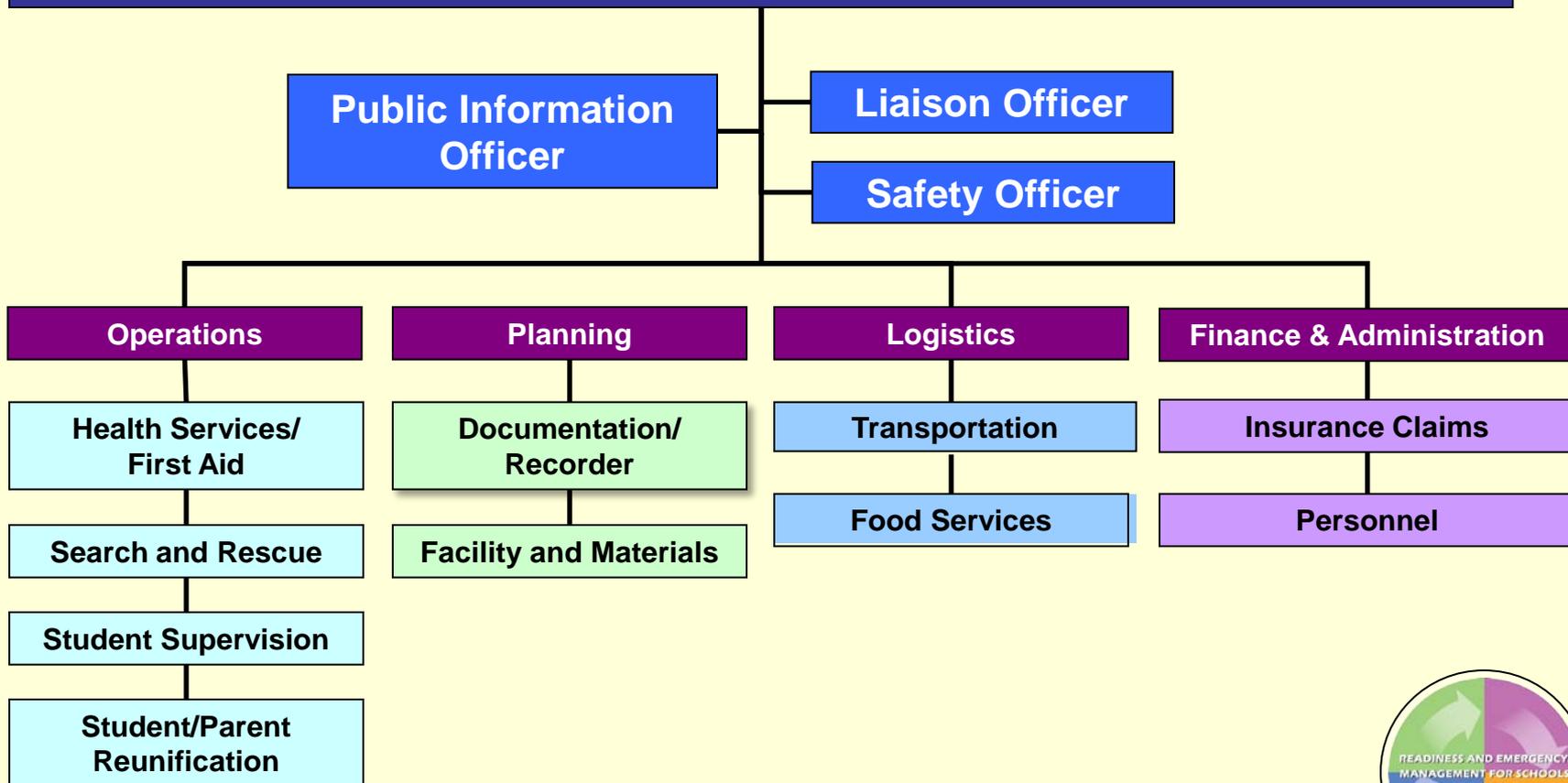
# ICS: Scalability (Cont'd.)

- The police investigate the incident and arrest the student. The school is closed for the day to complete the investigation. Parents are notified that students will be evacuated to a local elementary school to be picked up. The logistics section is activated to provide bus transportation and food.

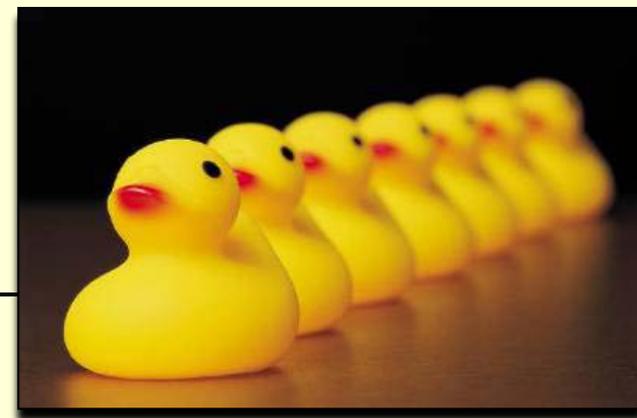


# Sample School Based ICS

## Incident Commander and Incident Command Team



# Establishing an ICS



- Assess staff skills, training, aptitude, and personalities
- Assign roles and train staff
- Create lines of succession/backups for all key positions
- Establish a “buddy teacher system” to allow staff to fill ICS roles. Individual teachers will supervise two classes to free up staff.
- Coordinate with community partners to clarify transfer of command and unified command



# Communication Considerations

Develop communication protocols in advance:

- Develop agreements with community agencies about the release of information and designation of the PIO
- Develop template letters that can be used in a crisis
- Communication considerations should include parents/guardians, school staff, and the media
- Notify other schools and districts of an incident, even if not directly impacted by the event



# Communication Considerations: Parents

- Provide information on emergency response procedures
  - Reunification procedures:
    - Communicate what is expected of parents
    - Translate information as necessary for English Language Learners
  - Emergency notification systems:
    - Identify media partners
    - School webpage
    - Automatic phone/email notification
    - Incorporate redundancy
- Update parent and emergency contact information periodically



# Communication Considerations: School Staff

- Establish system to verify information before responding
- Establish and refine a system for communicating with staff under a variety of scenarios
  - E-mail, cellular phones, radio
- Develop a system for staff and student accountability:
  - Need for up-to-date class rosters and student emergency information
  - Have a plan to identify students who are not accounted for
- Develop a plan and training for unique staff categories (substitutes, after-school activity managers)



# Communication Considerations: Media

- Assign a trained PIO to handle media inquiries
- Identify media staging areas
- Establish policies and procedures for dealing with media requests/inquiries
- Coordinate media releases with community partners—*All releases must be first cleared by the Incident Commander*
- Limit media exposure to students



# Reunion

Parent/student  
reunion

Student  
Assembly  
Area

Incident Command  
Post



On a map, the ICP  
location appears  
as a green and  
white square

Building  
B

Staging Area

**S**

On a map, the Staging  
Area appears as a  
circle with an S in it.

Base

**B**

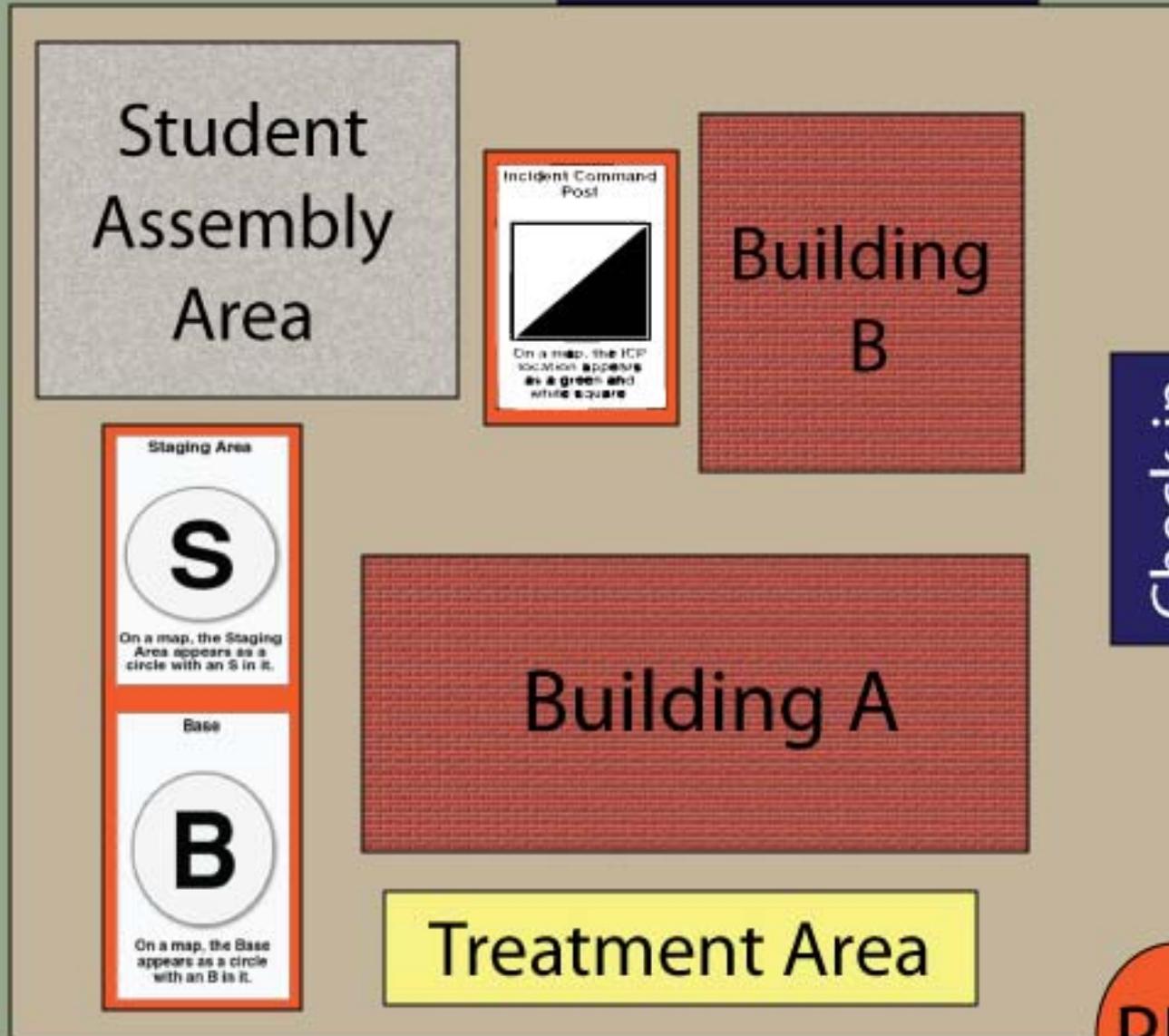
On a map, the Base  
appears as a circle  
with an B in it.

Building A

Treatment Area

Check-in

PIO



# Training and Exercises

- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Evaluate plans and procedures
- Develop effective agency relationships
- Assess resources and capabilities
- Identify needs and solutions
- Provides significant benefits to school and community
- States have legislation requiring school exercises and drills

*Many emergency management agencies and other accredited public safety agencies must conduct various types of exercises on an annual basis.*



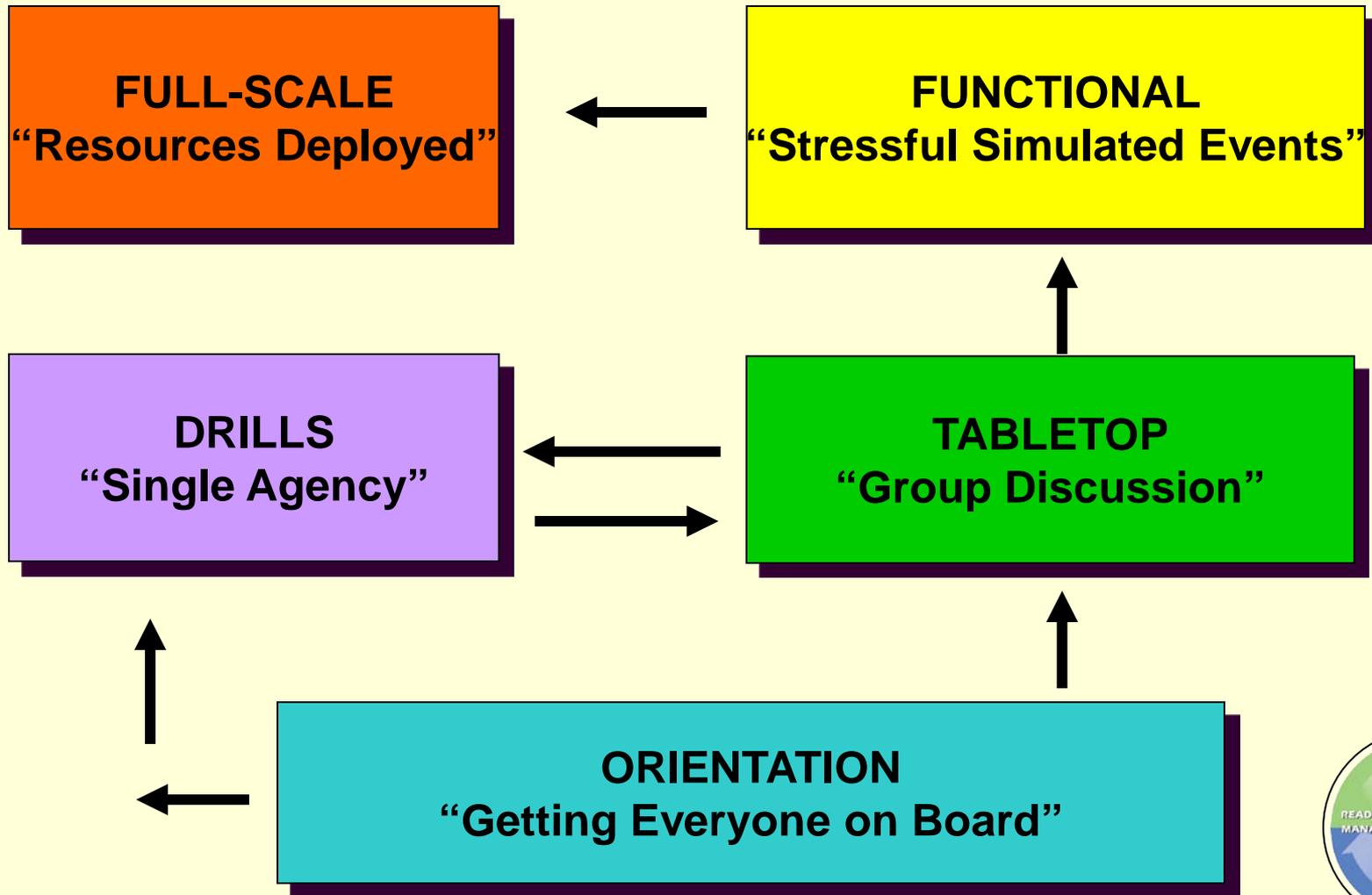
# Training for District & School Staff

The benefits are clear:

- Increased confidence in students, staff and parents
- Greater consistency of response
- More efficient use of resources
- Stronger relationships with partners



# Types of Exercises



# After-action Review

- Captures key lessons learned
- Makes recommendations for improvements.
  - Key Components :
    - Conduct exercise / emergency activities overview
    - Relevance of goals and objectives;
    - Analysis of outcomes;
    - Analysis of capacity to perform critical tasks;
    - Recommendations;
    - Specific improvements for each partner; and
    - Accountability plan for follow-up.



# Conducting Exercises

- Practice a variety of different scenarios with community partners
- Practice a variety of different response procedures
- Communicate information about drills early and often
- Drill under different conditions (weather, time of day)
- Document lessons learned and implement recommendations



# Learning Objectives for Preparedness

- Understand the basic elements of an emergency plan
- Gain awareness of Incident Command System principles, terminology, and implementation
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# Tabletop Activity



# Location

- Brentwood High School (fictitious)
- Brentwood City population – 125,000
- No *active* Local Emergency Planning Council (LEPC)
- Brentwood High – 1,200 students
- School lost their 2 SROs last year due to funding issues and police department staff reallocations
- Mid-April, weather mild



# Scenario

- Sometime shortly after lunch a visitor who had just parked in the school parking lot and was walking to the school heard a gunshot – then shortly after, heard another.
- As he ran to the school, he witnessed a popular student slumped over the wheel of her car, apparently dead, with a single gunshot wound to the head. The visitor recognized the popular student/athlete, knew her name, but did not know her personally.
- The traumatized visitor ran to the school office and reported a possible murder/suicide.



# Additional Context

- The “danger zone” appears to be limited to the school parking lot.
- No other witnesses appear to be present. No additional injuries are reported.
- The student was *not* known to have a history of mental illness.
- The student has one younger brother who attends school in the district.
- Two students committed suicide two years ago and the school/district was scrutinized/criticized for their “lack of response” and because of the high levels of reported bullying at the school. Both of the victims had repeatedly been bullied.



# Problem Statement

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- A student has either been murdered or committed suicide on school grounds.
- Q: How do we ensure the safety of other students/staff and prepare for the community response? What immediate actions should the school take?
- Small group discussions.



# What Actions Have Been Taken?

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- The office staff called 911 and alerted the Assistant Principal (the principal was out of town, traveling with the basketball team to the state tournament).
- The Assistant Principal made the decision to place the school in lockdown.
- She made the call over the intercom announcing the school was going into lockdown and asked for teachers to check their email for further notification.



# Messages

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- 911 dispatch informs school that EMS should arrive on scene within 10 minutes
- City police are en route.



# Additional Questions

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- Was the decision to go into lockdown a good one?
- Should someone go out onto the scene?
- Why email?
- What information should the office convey to teachers?
- What information should the teachers convey to students?



# Additional Information

- 10 minutes into lockdown and after receiving an update email from office, one of the English teachers messages back saying she is concerned about a female student (different from the one in the parking lot) who did not show up for class. The incident in the parking lot reminds the teacher of the suicides two years ago. The teacher reports that the student of concern had been depressed, likely had access to weapons and was possibly suicidal.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> female student *had* been in classes during the a.m.
- Police have been on scene for 5 minutes.



# Additional Questions

- Does this information impact your current response actions in any way?
- What communications need to be occurring within the school, to the district?
- What ICS functions are being employed?
- Who would be performing these functions?
- Does lockdown complicate ICS roles?



# Message

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- 15 minutes after lockdown was initiated, a gunshot is heard near the location of the school auditorium stage. One of the nearby classroom teachers picks up the phone and frantically calls this information into the office.
- What now?
- What is going through the minds of the teachers, of the students?
- Discussion...



# Message

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- Upon police investigation of the auditorium, the second female student (the one mentioned earlier by the English teacher) is found behind the stage, dead, of an apparent self inflicted gunshot wound.



# Additional Questions

- How does this second death change your response procedures?
- How long will you remain in lockdown and who will cancel it?
- What will you do for the rest of the day?
- Tomorrow?
- How will you handle media that is now on scene outside the school?



# Final Questions

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- What if these events were a double suicide versus a murder-suicide?
- What will be your mid-long term mental health recovery plans?
- How should we plan for the anniversary?



# Resources

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TA Center, “Emergency Exercises”  
newsletter

[http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/HH\\_EmergencyExeMarch20th.pdf](http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/HH_EmergencyExeMarch20th.pdf)

FEMA’s “The Comprehensive Exercise  
Curriculum”

[www.training.fema.gov/emiweb](http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb)

The Virginia Educator’s Guide for Planning  
and Conducting School Emergency Drills

[www.dcjs.org/vcss/documents/educatorsGuideForDrills.pdf](http://www.dcjs.org/vcss/documents/educatorsGuideForDrills.pdf)



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The REMS TA Center was established in October 2007 by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students.

The center supports schools and school districts in developing and implementing comprehensive emergency management plans by providing technical assistance via trainings, publications and individualized responses to requests.

For additional information about school emergency management topics, visit the REMS TA Center at <http://rems.ed.gov> or call 1-866-540-REMS (7367). For information about the REMS grant program, contact Tara Hill ([tara.hill@ed.gov](mailto:tara.hill@ed.gov)).

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# For More Information Contact:

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