

CREATING OR MORPHING AVALANCHE RESCUE PLANS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

Michael Ferrara

ABSTRACT: Most avalanche rescue plans were developed before 1990. Since that time the Incident Command System has become the standard working model for unified command. The Incident Command System (ICS) has specific organizational features and nomenclature. It is now essential that all rescue plans be designed or revised using this format. This allows for agencies to work together using common language. Individuals and resources understand how they will be organized and utilized.

Although in the past certain titles, such as site commander, have been generally accepted they are no longer relevant. Although many of the tasks remain the same the individuals or groups need to have commonly recognized designations. This allows for multiple leaders over an incident or period of time to smoothly and effectively utilize and manage resources and tasks. In some cases the Incident Command System will redesign rescue plans. Groups may be reorganized into more effective formats. The ICS system will set limits on the scope of leadership and responsibilities, thus making leaders and resources more effective.

In the case of those agencies that have not had to affect a large rescue the ICS system will provide a stencil of tasks and organization from which to plan.

Once a stencil is in place agencies can begin assessing available and appropriate individuals and resources to fill positions. This allows for more effective preplanning. Once those individuals and resources are realized they become more effective. Those groups will begin to consider their tasks and how to be most effective.

Preplanning exercises and drills become more effective. Individuals, groups and task forces know how they will be activated and will be better prepared. Preplanning in the ICS system also allows for assigning the appropriate personnel to the appropriate task.

A presentation will be made outlining the ICS format. A brief explanation of the history and importance of the ICS system will be provided. It will be shown how previous commonly accepted titles can be reassigned to the ICS system. Suggestions will be made as to who and what to use to fill positions. Concepts will be proposed to facilitate expanded avalanche rescue preparedness and drills.

Corresponding author address:

Michael Ferrara
PO Box 11988
Aspen, CO 81612
(970) 927-0998
Mongoinco@msn.com