

# KERN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

1350 Norris Road, Bakersfield, CA 93308  
661.391.7500 - [www.kernsheriff.org](http://www.kernsheriff.org)

DONNY YOUNGBLOOD  
Sheriff - Coroner - Public Administrator



**ISSUE: 25-10**

## **TRAINING BULLETIN**

**DATE: April 7, 2025**

### **UNIFIED COMMAND UPDATE/OVERVIEW**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this training document is to provide an understanding of the Unified Command (UC) structure within the Incident Command System (ICS) and how it is applied in multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional incidents to ensure coordinated response and resource utilization.

#### **WHAT IS UNIFIED COMMAND?**

Unified Command is a collaborative incident management approach used when multiple agencies or jurisdictions share responsibilities during an incident. It allows for a unified response where leadership and decision-making are shared, ensuring all involved entities work towards common goals.

Key features of Unified Command:

- Single Set of Objectives: Collaboratively established goals and priorities.
- Joint Incident Action Plan (IAP): A unified strategy for operational consistency.
- Collaborative Decision-Making: Ensures that all entities with jurisdictional or operational authority have input in key decisions.
- Shared Accountability: All participating agencies are equally responsible for the outcomes.

Unified Command fosters efficiency by eliminating duplication of effort, resolving jurisdictional conflicts, and ensuring seamless communication among responding entities.

#### **WHEN IS UNIFIED COMMAND USED?**

Unified Command is used when:

- Multiple jurisdictions are involved in managing the incident (e.g., city, county, state, federal).
- The incident involves multiple agencies with shared responsibilities (e.g., law enforcement, fire, public health).
- Resources and response efforts require coordination to ensure an effective and efficient response.

## **WHEN TO ESTABLISH UNIFIED COMMAND?**

Unified Command is appropriate when incidents:

1. Involve Multiple Jurisdictions:
  - When an incident crosses city, county, or state boundaries.
  - Example: A wildfire spreading from Kern County into neighboring counties.
2. Require Multi-Agency Response:
  - When multiple agencies have distinct but complementary responsibilities.
  - Example: A hazardous material spill involving law enforcement, fire services, and environmental agencies.
3. Demand Coordinated Resources:
  - When operational resources are drawn from various entities that must work together.
  - Example: A mass casualty event requiring coordination between Kern County Sheriff's Office, local fire departments, and EMS providers.
4. Involve Shared Authority or Responsibility:
  - When multiple organizations share legal or functional responsibility for managing the incident.
  - Example: A major public event requiring input from local law enforcement, federal agencies, and private security firms.
5. Occur in Complex or Large-Scale Situations:
  - When incidents involve multiple layers of complexity requiring cross-discipline coordination.
  - Example: A terrorist attack requiring collaboration between local, state, and federal law enforcement.
6. Are Subject to Regulatory or Legal Mandates:
  - When legal frameworks or policies dictate a joint management approach.
  - Example: An oil spill requiring Unified Command under the National Contingency Plan (NCP).

## **BENEFITS OF UNIFIED COMMAND**

- Improved Coordination: Promotes seamless collaboration between agencies and jurisdictions.
  - Efficient Resource Management: Reduces duplication of effort and optimizes resource allocation.
  - Clear Communication: Ensures unified messaging to stakeholders and the public.
-

- Shared Accountability: Encourages joint ownership of incident outcomes.

## **STEPS TO ESTABLISH UNIFIED COMMAND**

1. Determine the Need for Unified Command:
  - Evaluate the scope, jurisdictional involvement, and complexity of the incident.
2. Identify Responsible Entities:
  - Include all agencies with jurisdictional or operational responsibilities.
3. Establish Common Objectives:
  - Collaboratively define goals and priorities to guide incident management.
4. Develop a Unified Incident Action Plan (IAP):
  - Outline strategies, tactics, and resource assignments.
5. Designate Roles and Responsibilities:
  - Assign leadership roles such as Unified Incident Commanders, Operations Section Chief, and other ICS positions as appropriate.
6. Implement Unified Communications:
  - Establish clear communication protocols to ensure consistent information sharing.

## **CONCLUSION**

Unified Command is an essential tool for managing complex incidents involving multiple jurisdictions, agencies, or organizations. By establishing Unified Command proactively, Kern County Sheriff's Office personnel can ensure a coordinated, effective, and efficient response to incidents that demand a collaborative approach.

All sworn personnel of the Deputy Sheriff, Reserve Deputy, Special Deputy, Detentions Deputy, and Park Ranger ranks are required to review this training bulletin. By acknowledging this training bulletin, you certify you have reviewed this bulletin. **Your review and acknowledgment of these policies are due no later than May 7, 2025.**

---