*It is highly recommended that all organizations have a predetermined command structure that takes charge in the event of an emergency. Some organizations have chosen to adopt the Incident Command System (ICS), sometimes referred to as Incident Mangement System (IMS), which is common to emergency response agencies, police and fire departments throughout North America. Having your Emergency Response Team (ERT) follow this type of structure will help streamline internal communications, coordinate actions with public safety officials, and promote good relations with the media.*

**Introduction to the ERT**

We recommend that all ERT members as well as general personnel receive training in how to respond to medical emergencies.

[Here](https://www.redcross.ca/training-and-certification/course-descriptions/workplace-and-corporate-first-aid-courses) you can find Workplace and Corporate First Aid courses offered through the Canadian Red Cross. [Here](https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class) you can find courses offered by the American Red Cross.

Organized by roles, the top ERT decision maker is called the Incident Commander. This person reports to management and directs the organization’s response to the emergency. While this position is sometimes filled by the head of the organization, this is not always the case. Often, personnel may have special experience or skills that make them a better choice for the role of Incident Commander. When possible, it is advisable to have a second person prepared to assume this role should the primary Incident Commander not be available at the time of the emergency.

Following the ICS model, other ERT members are organized into five areas of responsibility as shown below. In smaller organizations, the same person may perform more than one role.

While not shown on the command chart, Safety Wardens are key members of the ERT. During an emergency, their efforts are focused on tasks such as helping to evacuate a building and not on incident management. Safety Wardens report to the Safety and Security Manager.

To maintain their efficiency, all ERT members should receive at least annual training on their role(s) in an emergency. A listing of typical job responsibilities for each member of the ERT follows.

**Incident Commander Responsibilities:** This role is responsible for determining the severity of the emergency and overseeing the appropriate response. Other responsibilities include:

* Assisting in the development of the Emergency Action Plan using information gained from training exercises and up-to-date hazard and vulnerability assessments.
* Overseeing the training plan for the ERT and other personnel.
* Monitoring potential disasters, emergencies and other disruptions.
* Determining the level of response needed to manage an emergency.
* Briefing management during an emergency.
* Documenting the nature of the emergency and the response effort.
* Deciding whether to put all or some of the elements of the Emergency Action Plan into effect.
* Mobilizing appropriate resources including members of the ERT.
* Coordinating internal response activities with first responders, both public and private.
* Assuming responsibility for the organization’s response.
* Establishing a command and communication centre (if necessary).
* Managing ERT personnel during the emergency.
* Supervising recovery or damage assessment efforts with onsite first responders.
* Working towards the resumption of normal operations as soon as possible.
* Deciding when to declare an end to the emergency and issue the all-clear signal.

**Communications Officer Responsibilities:** This individual advises management on how to respond to media and stakeholder inquiries. This person(s) consolidates facts and can periodically release status information to the public. This role reports to the Incident Commander and indirectly to management. Specific responsibilities include:

* Preparing background information on the organization for quick use during an actual emergency.
* Training management and personnel on how to deal with media inquiries.
* Providing current and accurate information to personnel and their families.
* Monitoring media to assess public perceptions of the organization.
* At the direction of the Incident Commander, officially declaring that an emergency has occurred.
* Implementing an incident-specific Communication and Media Plan once an emergency has been declared.
* Working closely with the Incident Commander to stay abreast of the developing situation.
* Acting as the primary point of contact for all stakeholder inquiries including the media.
* Periodically briefing management and personnel on the status of the response.
* Providing external stakeholders, including the media, with accurate and appropriate information on a timely basis.
* Working to maintain an accurate and positive image of the organization during the emergency.
* Coordinating all communications using traditional and social media.
* Following up after the emergency to help manage perceptions of the organization and its operations.

**Finance and Administration Officer Responsibilities:** An emergency may trigger an urgent need to purchase materials or spend money in other ways such as arranging for a temporary workspace or rental equipment. The Finance and Administration Officer is the person responsible for initiating and supervising these actions. This position reports to the Incident Commander. Other responsibilities include:

* Contributing to the development of the Emergency Action Plan.
* Working on plans with vendors and business partners outlining how they will respond to requests during an emergency.
* Establishing purchasing guidelines and spending controls which can be put into action during an emergency.
* Coordinating the budgeting and spending of funds during an emergency.
* Tracking expenses and documenting any damage incurred during the event.
* Advising management on how the emergency is impacting cash flow.
* Working with insurance companies, municipal/provincial finance, federal aid, and other groups to ensure ongoing access to assistance programs.
* Reviewing and approving any extraordinary spending, up to pre-designated limits, during the crisis.
* Preparing an impact analysis report for management, detailing the financial impact of the event.

**Operations Officer Responsibilities:** The Operations Officer is responsible for minimizing the impact of the emergency on day-to-day business. This includes communicating information to business partners, clients, regulators, and other stakeholders. All public communications should be coordinated with the Media Liaison. This position reports to the Incident Commander. Other responsibilities include:

* Reviewing possible operational responses as outlined in the Emergency Action Plan.
* Developing work-around strategies and mitigating responses to various types of disruption.
* Overseeing ongoing operations during the emergency to meet the mission of the organization throughout the disruption.
* Coordinating personnel assignments for the duration of the disruption.
* Working closely with the facility’s management and landlords (if relevant) to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.
* Managing the post-event assessment team who must determine the impact to operations caused by the incident.
* Overseeing repairs or other contractor work for the duration of the emergency.

**Safety & Security Officer Responsibilities:** The Safety and Security Officer advises management on how to respond to media and stakeholder safety/security-related inquiries. This person(s) consolidates safety and security facts and works with the Communications Officer to periodically release status information to the public. This role reports to the Incident Commander and indirectly to management. Specific responsibilities include:

* Overseeing the recruiting and training of Safety Wardens.
* Acting as a subject matter expert to those developing the Emergency Action Plan.
* Helping to ensure a safe and secure working environment at the worksite as well as any alternate location being used during an emergency.
* Ensuring that work safety is not compromised during an emergency.
* Overseeing compliance with safety regulations and standards during an emergency.
* Developing, implementing, and managing a security plan.

**Safety Wardens (Optional):** Safety Wardens are volunteers who report to the Safety and Security Officer and perform several non-managerial jobs including:

* Directing personnel and any visitors to safety along the evacuation route, particularly those with disabilities.
* Determining if the immediate area has been completely evacuated. Having verified that everyone has evacuated their area, reporting the status to the Safety & Security Officer.
* Ensuring that doors and windows are closed but not locked.
* Assisting anyone unable to leave an area. If additional support is needed, ensuring it is reported to the ERT and first responders.
* Shutting down critical services (e.g., gas) before evacuating their area.
* Retrieving and bringing first aid equipment to the assembly/shelter area.
* Supporting first responders with other tasks such as search and rescue if they have the training to do so.
* Informing their immediate manager of any special language skills.