

EMERGENCY RESPONSE:

**USING THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM
TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS
IN LARGE RETIREMENT COMPLEXES,
LARGE RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES FOR THE ELDERLY, AND
SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES**

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IV. EMERGENCY RESPONSE

THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a method for managing emergencies which is widely used by emergency responders throughout the State of California. The system provides for an organized response to meet the demands of emergency incidents and larger disasters in a rapid and efficient manner. ICS is a practical method for dividing labor and responsibilities when responding to these events.

The following version of ICS has been adapted to meet the needs of large retirement complexes and large residential care facilities for the elderly. It can also be used by skilled nursing facilities which are co-located with retirement complexes as well as large free-standing care homes. It is important to note that:

- ◆ In large retirement complexes, ICS positions will be filled primarily by residents since most facilities do not have on-site staff other than the administrator and possibly maintenance personnel.
- ◆ In large residential care facilities, staff will assume ICS response roles, possibly supplemented by residents, if appropriate.
- ◆ In skilled nursing facilities, staff will assume all ICS response roles and may need a higher than normal staff-to-patient ratio to maintain patient care.

Skilled Nursing Facilities lend themselves to having a significant first aid function due to staff's medical capability. During disasters, this care could extend to the surrounding community, much like a medical clinic. In addition, the facility could receive and care for patients transferred to it from acute care hospitals.

The ICS is flexible and allows for the use of people present at the time of an incident. For planning and training purposes, it is preferable to assign people to perform each function so that they develop an understanding of what will be required in responding to an emergency.

