

Incident Command Role Cards

Five roles. One person per role. Designated in writing at incident declaration. Deactivated in writing at incident closure.

Companion to: *Fix the System*, Chapter 11. **Who uses it:** the Incident Commander at incident declaration; each named role-holder during the event. **Where posted:** on the wall of the designated war room. Print one card per sheet, laminate, hang in the order below.

CARD 1 — INCIDENT COMMANDER

Authority: Owns the response. Makes every displacement, resource, and escalation call. Can commit company resources up to the plant manager's standing authorization for emergency response.

Reports to: Plant manager (informational). No one tactically.

Who reports to IC: All four other war room roles.

Responsibilities

- Within the first hour of incident declaration, send the written activation message: "I am Incident Commander on [event]. Roles: Safety [name], Ops [name], Logistics [name], Comms [name]. All decisions route through me."
- Chair the 7 a.m. morning stand-up and the 7 p.m. evening stand-down.
- Review the shift changeover handoff at every shift change.
- File the end-of-day written summary to the plant manager and executive office by 7:30 p.m. each day of the event.
- Make all displacement calls (which planned work the response displaces).
- Approve all resource expenditures outside standing authorization.
- Communicate with the plant manager and any corporate / executive stakeholders.
- At incident closure: send the deactivation message. Schedule the debrief within 72 hours.

Authority boundaries

- The IC does NOT override the Safety Officer on stop-the-work calls.
- The IC does NOT perform the actual repair work themselves.
- The IC does NOT make customer / regulator / media communications without plant manager sign-off.

Most common failure mode

IC starts doing the Ops Lead's job when the repair gets complicated. The moment the IC is in the tunnel instead of in the war room, the response has lost its coordinator. If the IC has to go look at something, they delegate the chair to the Comms Lead and come back within 60 minutes.

CARD 2 — SAFETY OFFICER

Authority: Can stop the work at any time, in any location, for any safety concern. Cannot be overridden during the event. Reports to the IC for coordination but stands apart for authority.

Reports to: IC (coordination only).

Responsibilities

- At incident declaration: walk the site, identify safety hazards specific to the event (confined spaces, energized systems, hot work, weather, fatigue exposure).
- Establish the safety boundary for the response. Post signage, tape, or physical barriers as needed.
- Attend all three daily synchronization moments. At each, give a 60-second safety assessment.
- Review every vendor / contractor safety documentation (certificates, harness inspections, lockout procedures) before they work on site.
- Monitor crew fatigue. Call for shift extensions, additional coverage, or work stoppage if fatigue is degrading safety.
- Issue stop-the-work orders in writing (short note, timestamped, posted on the war room board).
- At the debrief: report on stop-the-work events and near-misses.

Authority boundaries

- The Safety Officer does NOT direct the repair work or the logistics.
- The Safety Officer does NOT give tactical orders to the crew. Stop-the-work orders go through the Ops Lead, who executes them.

Most common failure mode

Safety Officer is assigned but never given the authority in writing. Crew interprets them as advisory. Result: speed pressure overrides safety judgment. The IC's activation message is the fix — it states the Safety Officer role has stop-the-work authority. No ambiguity.

CARD 3 — OPERATIONS LEAD

Authority: Directs the crew and vendors performing the actual repair work. Owns the physical timeline on the ground. Makes tactical calls about procedure, tool, technician, and vendor representative.

Reports to: IC.

Who reports to Ops Lead: The crew. Vendor crews on site.

Responsibilities

- Execute the repair plan. If the plan needs to change, communicate the change to the IC for approval before implementing.
- Run the actual repair work. Direct the crew minute to minute.
- Coordinate with on-site vendor representatives on tactical matters (scheduling, sequencing, access).

- Maintain the written shift changeover handoff (see separate artifact — to be captured on a standing handoff form).
- Attend the three daily synchronization moments. Report: what is done, what is in progress, what is blocked, what is needed next.
- At the debrief: report on the repair timeline, technical decisions, and any close calls.

Authority boundaries

- The Ops Lead does NOT talk to the plant manager, the executive office, customers, regulators, or the outside world. Comms Lead handles all external information flow.
- The Ops Lead does NOT approve expenditures. Logistics Lead sources, IC approves.
- The Ops Lead CAN and MUST stop the work if the Safety Officer issues a stop.

Most common failure mode

Ops Lead gets pulled into external conversations (the plant manager walks up, a vendor calls directly, a corporate VP asks for an update) and loses the thread on the repair. The rule that Ops Lead does not talk to the outside exists specifically to protect the repair's attention. Comms Lead intercepts.

Shift-split option

Ops Lead CAN be split across shifts (night Ops / day Ops), but only one Ops Lead is active at a time, with a clean written handoff at shift change. Both Ops Leads attend the morning stand-up together for the first 15 minutes of their overlap.

CARD 4 — LOGISTICS LEAD

Authority: Sources anything physical the response needs. Parts, tools, rentals, contractors, food, shift coverage, hotel rooms, rental vehicles, security clearances, permits.

Reports to: IC.

Responsibilities

- Take requests from the Ops Lead, the Safety Officer, and the IC. Produce the physical items needed.
- Manage vendor logistics: arrival, on-site access, tooling, materials, demobilization.
- Manage crew welfare: food, hydration, rest breaks, shift coverage. On multi-day events, this is the difference between a crew that holds up and a crew that breaks down at hour 48.
- Track expenditures in real time. Submit the running tally to the IC at each daily synchronization moment.
- Arrange for planned PM work displaced by the response to be covered by the sister plant, a contractor, or a deferred plan approved by the IC.
- Attend the three daily synchronization moments.
- At the debrief: report on resource flow — what arrived late, what cost more than expected, what vendors performed well.

Authority boundaries

- The Logistics Lead does NOT take direction from the Ops Lead on which parts to source. Ops Lead makes the technical request; Logistics Lead sources the best physical option. IC approves the expense.
- The Logistics Lead does NOT approve vendor safety documentation. Safety Officer reviews.

Most common failure mode

Logistics Lead becomes a yes-person to everyone and overcommits. The fix is that all requests route through the IC before they become commitments. The Logistics Lead's job is to say, "Let me check with the IC and get back to you in ten minutes."

CARD 5 — COMMUNICATIONS LEAD

Authority: Single voice of information out of the war room. Maintains the status board. Facilitates daily synchronization moments. Drafts all external communications for IC sign-off.

Reports to: IC.

Responsibilities

- Maintain the war room status board: current state, next-12-hours plan, open issues, escalations, resource tally.
- Facilitate the morning stand-up, shift changeover, and evening stand-down. Timekeeping. Keeps the meetings to 15 minutes.
- Draft the end-of-day written summary; IC edits and signs; Comms Lead sends to plant manager and executive office by 7:30 p.m.
- Intercept all external communication requests (plant manager, corporate, customers, vendors, media). Triage and route: IC handles, plant manager handles, or Comms Lead handles directly with IC oversight.
- Maintain the stakeholder update list: who needs to be updated, how often, by what channel.
- Post war room decisions to the shared board within 30 minutes of the decision being made.
- At the debrief: report on information flow — what got through, what got lost, what escalations worked.

Authority boundaries

- The Comms Lead does NOT make technical decisions or commit resources.
- The Comms Lead does NOT talk to customers, regulators, or media without IC sign-off.

Most common failure mode

Comms Lead is assigned but never given a real status board. Information flow defaults back to ad-hoc phone calls between individuals. The fix is that the war room has a physical or digital board the Comms Lead maintains, and the rule is that if it is not on the board, it is not official. Decisions made in hallway conversations are not decisions until they are on the board.

Temperament note

The Comms role benefits from a specific disposition: patient, precise, not excitable under pressure. Administrative coordinators, executive assistants, and technical writers are often better at this role than maintenance supervisors. Do not default-assign it to a technical person just because they are available. The role is about information discipline, not technical depth.

ACTIVATION CHECKLIST — USE AT INCIDENT DECLARATION

The IC runs this checklist in the first 60 minutes:

- ☐ IC designation message sent (written, time-stamped, includes all five role assignments and contact numbers)
 - ☐ War room physical space opened (lights, whiteboards, printed role cards on wall)
 - ☐ Status board started (current state of the event, next 12 hours, resource tally at zero)
 - ☐ Safety Officer has walked the site and posted initial safety boundary
 - ☐ Ops Lead has confirmed the current state of the repair and named the crew
 - ☐ Logistics Lead has the vendor phone tree and parts inventory in hand
 - ☐ Comms Lead has the stakeholder list and the update schedule
 - ☐ Plant manager briefed; standing authorization amount confirmed
 - ☐ First end-of-day written summary scheduled for 7:30 p.m.
 - ☐ Debrief date and time pre-scheduled for 72 hours after expected closure
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DEACTIVATION MESSAGE — USE AT INCIDENT CLOSURE

When the event is closed:

"Incident [name] is closed as of [timestamp]. War room deactivated. Thank you to Safety [name], Ops [name and shift-split names], Logistics [name], Comms [name]. Debrief scheduled for [date/time/location] — all five roles plus plant manager required. Written summary and install list due within 7 days of debrief." — [IC name]

The deactivation message is as important as the activation message. It ends the structure cleanly and prevents the organization from drifting into a permanent war-room mentality on issues that no longer require it.

From Fix the System by Ivan Getov. Companion to Chapter 11: The War Room. getov.xyz/toolkit/fix-the-system/ch11/incident-command-role-cards. Free. No email required.