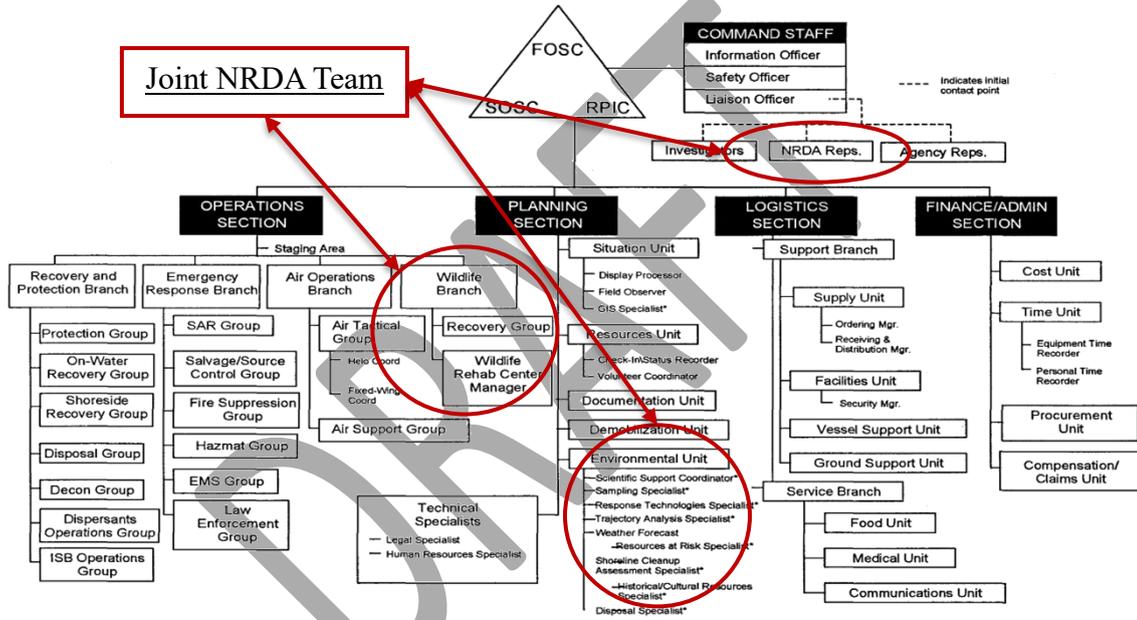


# Incident Command System (ICS) Job Aid for Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)



Assessment and Restoration Division (ARD), Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R)  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

## Overview

Through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process, NOAA works cooperatively with its many partners to protect and restore coastal, estuarine, and marine natural resources threatened or injured by oil spills, vessel groundings, and releases of hazardous substances. Following an incident, a NRDA may be initiated under legal and funding authorities independent of the response, and field assessment activities may be necessary to collect ephemeral data used for injury assessment. In order to ensure the best science is applied, improve data quality and management, enhance personnel safety, reduce operational conflicts, increase overall situational awareness, and reduce overall costs to the responsible party or parties, strong communication and coordination between the NRDA natural resource trustees (NRDA Trustees) and the response Incident Command (IC) is critical.

Establishing consistent NRDA-ICS communication and coordination is a high priority for NOAA, other Federal and State NRDA Trustees, and industry representatives. In recent years, stakeholders have been working to develop recommendations on how NRDA and spill response can interact consistently and effectively. NOAA's Assessment and Restoration Division (ARD) is involved in these efforts and plans to continue engagement on this topic with our many partners.

This draft job aid was developed by NOAA ARD to help Regional Resource Coordinators (RRCs), and other NRDA practitioners (co-Trustees, technical support, and responsible party (RP) NRDA representatives) understand common interaction points between Response and NRDA within the Incident Command System (ICS) in an effort to enable and improve communication and coordination in pre-planning exercises and during incident response.

## NRDA-ICS Framework

The National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP; 40 CFR §300) clearly states that the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) shall coordinate with the designated NRDA Trustees when there is injury to, destruction of, loss of, or threat to natural resources, including their ecosystems. The FOSC also is directed, when circumstances permit, to share the use of federal response resources with the NRDA Trustees, provided those activities do not interfere with response actions. Under the NCP the NRDA Trustees are obligated to inform the FOSC of their activities and share data from their NRDA activities that may support more effective operational decisions.

In order to meet NRDA's science and data management needs, the NRDA Representative (NRDA Rep) should coordinate with the Unified Command (UC) through the Liaison Officer (LOFR). If the LOFR is not present, or during larger incidents, the NRDA Trustees should officially request direct NRDA Trustee interaction within multiple operational units of the ICS (see Figures 2 and 3). There are eight common interaction points in the ICS for NRDA and the responsibilities of the person occupying that role in ICS are described in the following section. The General Message Form (ICS 213) is the official request for permission to establish direct communication routes in the ICS for the NRDA Rep. During smaller incidents, the Scientific Support Coordinator (SSC) may facilitate science needs and data sharing between the response and NRDA. The FOSC designates the SSC as the principal advisor for scientific issues, communication with the scientific community, and coordination of requests for assistance from state and federal agencies regarding scientific studies and, at the request of the FOSC, the SSC may also facilitate the FOSC's work with NRDA by working with the NRDA Rep.

The ICS system is inherently flexible and it is important for the NRDA Trustees to remain flexible during ICS interactions, while respecting the incident command system and its communication protocols. It is also important for all stakeholders to recognize that NRDA is one of many priorities during an incident and that although the NRDA process is separate from incident response in purpose, authority, funding, staffing, and resources, the two processes are complementary and the benefits of coordination are realized when sustained and appropriate interactions occur

throughout an incident response, resulting in overall cost savings, faster restoration of the natural resources that were impacted by the incident, and ultimately more rapid resolution of incident-related impact on behalf of the public. Advanced coordination, communication, and training through drills and Area Contingency Planning (ACP) meetings is recommended to facilitate coordination during an incident.

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## **Eight Important NRDA-ICS Interaction Points**

The USCG IMH (2014) and the NCP identify eight common interaction points in the ICS where NRDA and Response functions overlap:

1. Liaison Officer
2. Public Information Officer
3. Safety Officer
4. Environmental Unit Leader
5. Situation Unit Leader
6. Wildlife Branch Director
7. Logistics Section Chief
8. NRDA Representative

Primary and selected responsibilities of the person occupying the eight ICS roles are described in the following pages. References to pages in the USCG IMH (2014) are provided.

In addition to these eight common interaction points, NRDA may also need to coordinate with Air and Vessel Operations, when warranted.

<b>ICS Role</b>	<b>Selected Responsibilities</b>	<b>Primary Responsibilities</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Liaison Officer (LOFR) <i>(Command Staff)</i> <i>(pages 6-4 to 6-7)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Communication with agencies supporting the incident</li> <li>➤ Coordinate response resource needs for NRDA activities</li> <li>➤ Brief UC on stakeholder issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Serve as the primary point of contact for Agency Representatives and stakeholders</li> <li>➤ Establish and coordinate interagency contacts</li> </ul>	The LOFR is the primary conduit of information flow from the UC to agencies supporting the response and stakeholders with major interests in the response. The LOFR is NRDA's official communication route into the response and the LOFR is the only one who can approve alternate communication pathways.
Public Information Officer (PIO) <i>(Command Staff)</i> <i>(pages 6-3 to 6-4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop media strategy and implement with the UC</li> <li>➤ Establish a Joint Information Center (JIC)</li> <li>➤ Provide talking points to UC for briefings</li> <li>➤ Brief UC about potential adverse political, social, and economic impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop and release information about the incident to the media, the public, incident personnel, and other agencies and organizations</li> </ul>	Agencies have different policies and procedures about handling public information, but whenever possible, releases of public information by the NRDA Trustees should be coordinated with the PIO and/or the JIC.
Safety Officer (SOFR) <i>(Command Staff)</i> <i>(pages 6-8 to 6-11)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop the Site Safety and Health Plan</li> <li>➤ Addresses incidents, accidents, or injuries and reports to UC</li> <li>➤ Assists Logistics Section Chief (LSC) with incident communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop and recommend measures to ensure personnel safety and occupational health of response workers and the public, and to assess, anticipate, recognize, and control hazardous and unsafe conditions and situations</li> </ul>	The NRDA Trustees are required to follow the Site Safety and Health Plan and comply with all safety requirements.

<b>ICS Role</b>	<b>Selected Responsibilities</b>	<b>Primary Responsibilities</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Environmental Unit Leader (ENVL)  <i>(Planning Section)</i>  <i>(pages 8-11 to 8-13)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Determine extent, fate, and effects of contaminants</li> <li>➤ Consult with NRDA Trustees on wildlife protection strategies</li> <li>➤ Monitor the environmental consequences of response actions</li> <li>➤ Develop plan for collecting, transporting, and analyzing samples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Responsible for environmental matters associated with the response</li> <li>➤ Prepare environmental data for the Situation Unit</li> <li>➤ Coordinate actions with the NOAA SSC</li> <li>➤ Coordinate environmental issues, potentially including NRDA science and information needs</li> </ul>	NOAA SSC will work closely with the Environmental Unit but does not typically fill the ENVL position. NRDA science and data needs often are routed through the ENVL. The NRDA Trustee may work on environmental issues in Response and NRDA processes simultaneously within the Environmental Unit.
Situation Unit Leader (SITL)  <i>(Planning Section)</i>  <i>(pages 8-4 to 8-6)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Prepare, post, or disseminate resource and situational information</li> <li>➤ Provide charts, maps, and overlay imagery</li> <li>➤ Develop, maintain, and display master charts and master maps of the incident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Serve as the primary information node for information management</li> <li>➤ Collect, process, organize, and disseminate incident information</li> </ul>	The NRDA Trustee(s) may obtain important updates on incident-related information from the Situation Unit. They also may report significant response-related findings from their field work to the NRDA Trustee(s), NOAA SSC, and SITL.

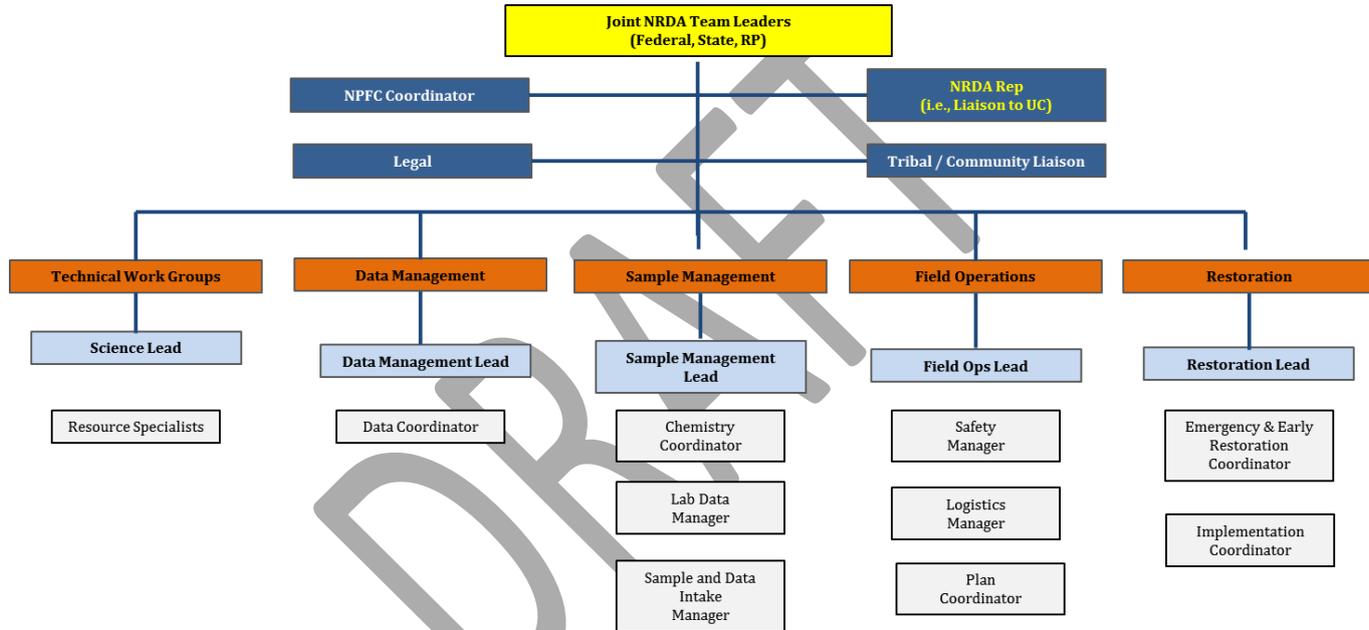
<b>ICS Role</b>	<b>Selected Responsibilities</b>	<b>Primary Responsibilities</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p>Wildlife Branch Director (WLBD)</p> <p><i>(Operations Section)</i></p> <p><i>(pages 20-20 to 20-21)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Coordinate aerial and ground reconnaissance of wildlife</li> <li>➤ Advise on wildlife protection strategies and tactics</li> <li>➤ Assist with managing wildlife care groups and training needs of wildlife recovery volunteers</li> <li>➤ Coordinate with the NRDA wildlife Trustee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Minimize wildlife injuries during spill response</li> </ul>	<p>NRDA Trustee(s) typically work on bird or mammal issues in Response and NRDA processes simultaneously within the Wildlife Branch.</p>
<p>Logistics Section Chief (LSC)</p> <p><i>(Logistics Section)</i></p> <p><i>(pages 10-3 to 10-4)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Determine and supply immediate and long-term incident resource and facility needs</li> <li>➤ Advise UC and other Section Chiefs on resource availability to support incident needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide facilities, services, people, and material in support of the incident</li> </ul>	<p>The NOAA SSC may help coordinate logistics needs for assessments with the LSC and UC, provided those needs and subsequent activities do not interfere with the response.</p>

ICS Role	Selected Responsibilities	Primary Responsibilities	Notes
NRDA Representative(s) <sup>1</sup> (NRDA Rep) <i>(Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Representative)</i>  <i>(pages 20-9 to 20-10)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Obtain timely information on the spill and injuries to natural resources</li> <li>➤ Attend appropriate meetings to facilitate communication between the Joint NRDA Team and UC</li> <li>➤ Support the UC's information needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Official Representative of the Joint NRDA team to the ICS</li> <li>➤ Coordinate NRDA needs and activities of the Joint NRDA Team via the LOFR</li> <li>➤ Facilitate excellent communication between ICS and NRDA</li> </ul>	The NRDA Rep(s) coordinate with the ICS through the LOFR. The NRDA Trustees may need to work formally with other positions in the ICS, but the NRDA Rep should obtain permission from the LOFR to do so. The NOAA SSC also is available to resolve any problems or address areas of overlap between NRDA and Response.

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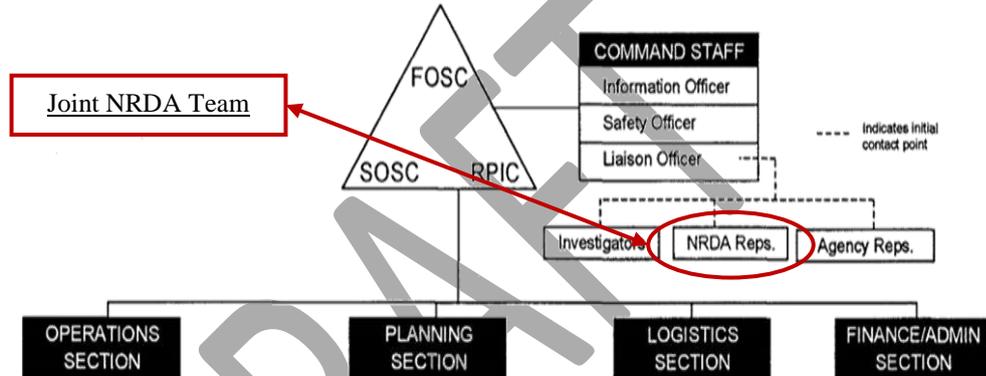
<sup>1</sup> The IMH states on page 20-9: *NRDA Rep(s) are responsible for coordinating NRDA needs and activities of the Joint NRDA Trustee team. NRDA activities generally do not occur within the structure, processes, and control of the ICS; however, many NRDA activities overlap with the environmental assessment performed for the spill response, particularly in the early phases of a spill response. Therefore, NRDA Rep(s) should remain coordinated with the spill response organization via the LOFR, and may need to work directly with the IC/UC, Planning and Operations Sections, and SSC to resolve any issues and prevent duplicative efforts.*

## Joint NRDA Team Structure (e.g., Medium Spill)



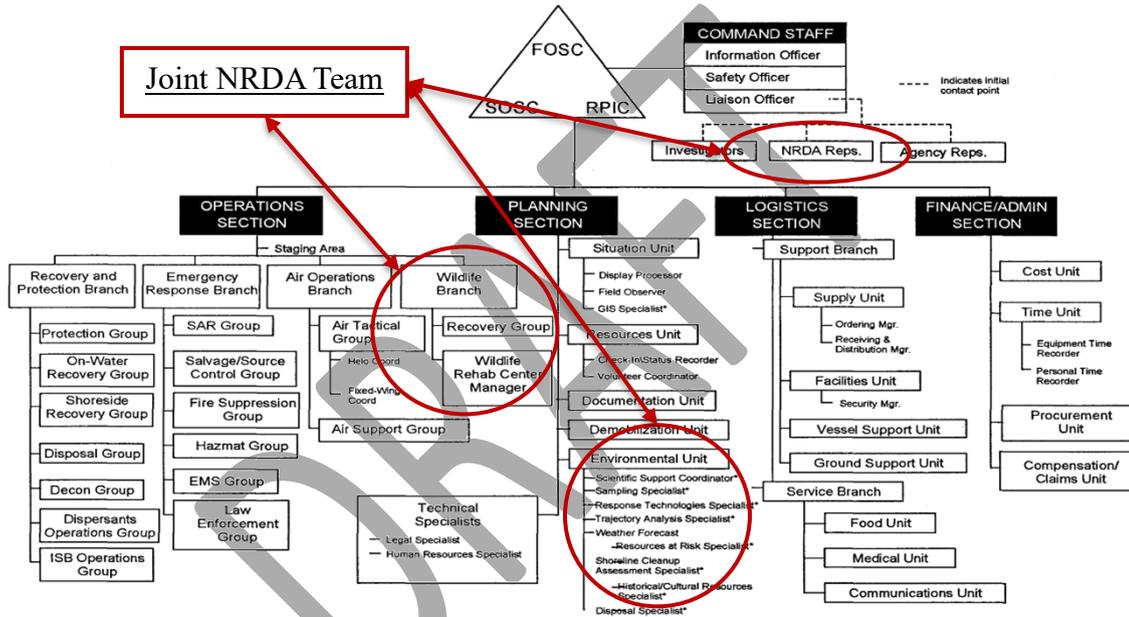
**Figure 1:** The Joint NRDA Team structure for a medium sized incident. Joint NRDA teams exist in parallel with the ICS during an incident response and their complexity vary according to NRDA needs. The NRDA Rep serves as the liaison to the UC. *Note: This Structure is not intended to be prescriptive.*

## Simplified Incident Command Post Structure



**Figure 2:** Incident command post structure for a small incident. For all incidents, the primary point of contact for the Joint NRDA Team is through the LOFR via the designated NRDA Rep. Additional points of contact may become necessary as the command post structure expands to meet the needs of the response. *Note: This Structure is not intended to be prescriptive.*

# Complex Incident Command Post Structure



**Figure 3:** Incident command post structure for large incident. The NRDA Rep should make initial contact through the LOFR. The Joint NRDA Team will work closely and exchange pertinent information with the Wildlife Branch and Environmental Unit as secondary points of contact. The Joint NRDA Team may also interact with the Situation Unit and Officers at the Command level.

## Summary

- (1) The best science and data management in NRDA are the result of close coordination by NRDA Trustees with multiple ICS positions or units and coordinated by working with a NRDA Rep. NOAA ARD recommends a NRDA Rep is considered for every incident for which a NRDA is being considered, to convey NRDA needs and activities to UC.
- (2) After an incident occurs, NRDA co-Trustees should determine whether to only establish a NRDA Rep to work with the LOFR, SSCs and Response structure, or also officially request direct NRDA interaction by NRDA co-Trustees with multiple operational units of the ICS.
- (3) On almost all coastal incidents, the NRDA Rep should interact early and often with the NOAA SSC as the FOSC's principal advisor for scientific issues, communication with the scientific community, and coordination of requests for assistance from Tribal, state and federal agencies regarding scientific studies.
- (4) Having multiple co-Trustee NRDA personnel embedded in various ICS units allows for efficient and direct information exchange between Response and NRDA, especially during larger incidents.
- (5) During smaller incidents, the SSC may facilitate science needs and data sharing between the response and NRDA.
- (6) NRDA activities and coordination with the ICS should be included in drill scenarios as often as necessary to build smooth working relationships between the two groups and to assess in detail how a NRDA Rep can best coordinate NRDA co-Trustee responsibilities across multiple positions and levels of the ICS.

## References

National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (40 CFR 300). Accessible from:

<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=&SID=f8e462b779cf8b8072687d0a7e67da45&mc=true&n=pt40.30.300&r=PART&ty=HTML>

U.S. Coast Guard Incident Management Handbook. (2014). Accessible from:

<http://www.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=Q-DEPT&category=new-im-handbook>

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