Western Cape holds incident command system summit

Speakers at the ICS summit

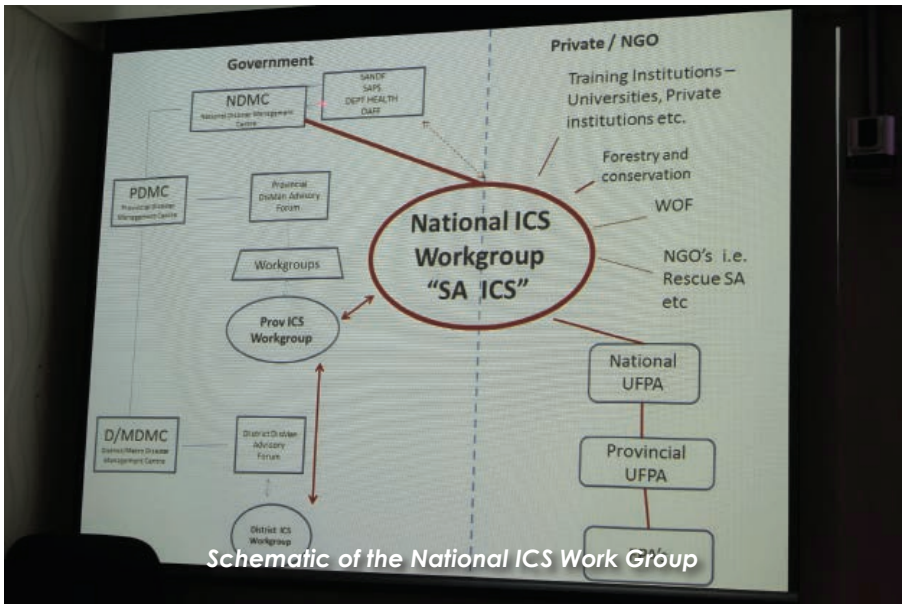
South Africa's Western Cape Disaster Management (WCDM) held a Provincial Incident Command System (ICS) Summit in Cape Town as part of its objective to further the aims of the ICS in the province. WCDM sees the roll-out of the all hazard incident command system in the Western Cape as crucial to ensure inter agency operations. The event was well attended and all major agencies participated.

Reinard Geldenhuys, head, Disaster Management and Fire Services, Overberg District Municipality, welcomed all and briefly gave an overview of the summit after which Ken Terry, head of the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), presented the opening address. In his frank manner, Terry reminded of recent incidents that occurred where incident command was lacking. The events of the rescue operations at the recent collapse in Soweto and the major wildfire near Harrismith were used as case in point. "The management of incidents is paramount," said Terry.

Terry added that the NDMC had appointed a task team, Colin Deiner and Jurgens Dyssel, to oversee the standardisation of IC on a national level. He added that the good work done in the Western Cape regarding IC must filter through to the rest of the country. "We need to be more pragmatic," said Terry. "Too much is theoretical. We need to implement it. We sit here as a collective but when something goes wrong, there are too many thrones. We need to work together," added Terry. He concluded by reminding all of the basic fitness level of management and staff in disaster management and said that fitness will take you further during a disaster.

Tim Murphy, US Forest Services, gave a brief history and overview of the incident command system. The Incident Command System (ICS) was developed in the mid-1970s following a series of catastrophic fires in California's urban interface and involved multiple jurisdictions. Property damage ran into the millions and many people died or were injured. The personnel assigned to determine the causes of this disaster studied the case histories and discovered that incident failures could rarely be attributed to lack of resources or failure of tactics. The US Government put all parties in a room and said "Don't come out until a solution to prevent the chaotic response has been found," conveyed Murphy. The outcome was FIRESCOPE, which is an abbreviation for 'Fire fighting REsources of Southern California Organised for Potential Emergencies' and has the US Military/ Navy system as a foundation. Although the system worked in California, major wildfires in occurred in 1984 after which all US wildland agencies adopted ICS. In 2000 more major wildfires occurred with more than 12 000 fire fighters on the fire line. Forest Services resources were depleted and the US Military were called in. The fires were too great and resources and crews were brought in from Canada, Australia and New Zealand, all using various forms of IC. These countries forces were in charge of US forces. The result was that these countries all adopted similar IC systems.

11 September 2001 had US Forces experiencing pandemonium during very chaotic incidents. Ambulances couldn't communicate with police; the police had no communication with the fire departments and each had its own form of ICS. The presidential directorate mandated ▶



Schematic of the National ICS Work Group

- the implementation of the National Incident Command System (NIMS). The full implementation of NIMS allowed all levels of government throughout the US to work efficiently and effectively together.

Murphy explained how ICS was introduced to South Africa in 2003 by Working of Fire and the FFA Group and said phase two was to build capacity for disaster management in southern Africa by using NIMS. The expansion of NIMS into the all hazard community including disaster management, law enforcement, search and rescue, emergency medical, NGOs and utility companies was imperative. The institutionalising of ICS in the university system was followed the 'Train the Trainer' program in South Africa. The expansion of NIMS to other countries in Southern Africa, potentially Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia is next.

Murphy complimented the City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service on demanding that all their officers receive ICS training.

Jurgens Dyssel, NDMC, discussed the legal and constitutional framework that underlines ICS in South Africa. Dyssel said the key component of ICS is about working together to achieve an optimal result. He added that unlike other major countries in the world such as the United States of America, British Columbia, Australia and the United Kingdom, that have adopted a national incident management system, no national standard system currently exists, outright in law, in South Africa for the integrated and coordinated management of multi-agency response operations. "The primary problem that causes general resistance amongst agencies involved in initial emergency response that require the services of allied response agencies, is the fear that the application of incident command methodology will allow one agency to exercise command over another agency or impinge on their authority," stated Dyssel. He gave an overview of the various legal frameworks relating to ICS, quoting Chapter 3 (Section 40 and 41) of the Constitution, which states that "Three spheres that are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated; All spheres must, secure the well-being of the people; respect the powers and functions of the spheres of government; don't assume a power or exercise their powers in a way that encroach on the powers of another sphere; cooperate with one another; coordinate their actions and adhere to agreed procedures." Dyssel also quoted the Disaster Management Act, 57 of 2002 and the policy guidelines of the NDMC, The Public Service Regulations and various other formal documents including SANS 10264 - 1, 2, 3, SANS 10090 and ARP 22399:2008 (ed1) ie societal security, guideline for incident preparedness and operational continuity management.

Dyssel also alluded to the formation of the National Joint Operational Centre (NATJOC) and joint operations system of Government (JOINTS) in 1997 and discussed its successes to date. He explained the NDMC disaster information flow logic and the six levels of command as per the research done and proposed by the late Pat Reid. "An ICS forum was established to formalise the required legislative means and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to support a multi-sector ICS system for South Africa," concluded Dyssel.

Professor Dewald van Niekerk, director: African Centre for Disaster Studies at North West University discussed the academic and accreditation processes of ICS in South Africa and confirmed the needed elements of training, education and research. He also promoted the need to South Africanise ICS, adding that the skills should be portable. "Incident command is not agency specific but rather task driven," said Van Niekerk. He echoed the need for standardisation and recognition and said that sector partners need to get involved. Van Niekerk reviewed a simulation done at Sasko, where the exercise went well as far as IC was concerned but changed as another facility was added to the scenario. Van Niekerk also flighted the importance 'training the trainers' the ICS working group.

Ian Schnetler, chief fire officer, City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service, discussed the roll out of ICS in the City of Cape Town, explaining why they are the 'big dogs'. "Theory and practical has to go together," reiterated Schnetler. He gave an overview of the City of Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service's history, its service delivery areas, vision, mission, staffing levels, incident response volumes the reasoning behind the implementation of ICS in the city. Schnetler added, "The risks areas situated within the city's borders gave impetus to the need for ICS to be introduced, not only to manage the wildfires during summer but to provide for a system of effectively managing all risks within our city." He also reviewed the current training program and said that the fire training academy was tasked to draw up a training program to introduce ICS into the service, ensuring the program ascertained a level of competency before the forthcoming summer season. Etienne van Bergen, Willie Olivier and Mark Bosch were assigned to draw up and implement the program, which included senior and middle management, with position specific

training to some lower levels. "You need the senior management and the guys on the floor to understand the system," added Schnetler. "All future training will include ICS and the upcoming summer fire season will serve as a pilot project. The community needs to receive the best service, irrelevant of which agency supplies it," concluded Schnetler.

Colin Deiner, chief director, Western Cape Disaster Management, discussed ICS in the South African all risk environment and said that South Africa had a splintered and disparate response capacity. Deiner reviewed the legal framework said that following the Marikana incident on 16 August 2012, the head of NDMC recommended the implementation of National Incident Command System. "The draft document was accepted by the National Disaster Management Advisory Forum in 2014," stated Deiner. The National Incident Command System is based on nine principles:

1. Modular scalable structure
2. Common terminology
3. Integrated communications
4. Unity of command
5. Unified command
6. Integrated action plans (IAPs)
7. Span of control
8. Incident facilities (ICPs, JOCs, etc)
9. Comprehensive resource management

Deiner furthermore detailed the National Hazardous Materials Response Task Force and Squad Concept that was established in preparation for the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the placement of the response units. "Specialised components of SAPS and the National Department of Health, in conjunction with the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), the NDMC and national, provincial and local emergency services are trained and equipped to manage incidents such as the intentional or accidental release of nuclear biological chemical (NBC) agents. Chemical, biological, radiological/nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) response teams are crews of specially trained personnel who will respond to emergency situations involving the accidental or deliberate release of hazardous chemicals, biological agents, radiological/nuclear agents or explosive/incendiary agents with the purpose of controlling and mitigating the effects of such incidents," added Deiner. He described the difference between the squad and task force teams, their roles and functions and the typical structure of a CBRNE team. In his discussion on urban search and rescue (USAR), Deiner said, "USAR became massively professional after September 11, just like ICS. He added that USAR is governed by the National Urban Search and Rescue Framework and that South Africa is a signatory to the United Nations (UN) resolution, International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG). Deiner explained the USAR mobilisation procedure and discussed a multi group response organisation structure.

Certificates of appreciation awarded to Lauren Chitty, Ian Schnetler, Reinard Geldenhuys, Fred Favard, Willie Olivier, Tim Murphy, Michelle Kleynhans and Steve Devine

"My recommendations for the way forward are that the NDMC should lead the implementation of a national ICS and that this becomes a priority in the next five year planning. Also that the Western Cape should promulgate regulation making ICS mandatory and that all-hazards ICS training is prioritised," concluded Deiner.

Etienne du Toit, deputy director, Fire Brigade Services, Western Cape Government and Stephen Symons (on behalf of Patrick Ryan) of Patrick Ryan Images, presented the ICS Toolkit and the delegates had the opportunity of providing input in the design, typography and layout of the toolkit. Symons explained the approach to the design of the document and said that the document will be used when under pressure so it would be ring-bound and colour-coded for ease of reference. Standard Pantone colours were used and the pages can be enlarged or reduced, resulting in a fluid document. It included T-cards, which can be filed; the current T-card system being redesigned. Symons and Du Toit also shared examples of the posters. Du Toit said, "This is a work in progress. The document will be circulated for comment."

The Summit provided the opportunity of handing over certificates of appreciation to those who had spearheaded ICS training and was presented to Lauren Chitty, Ian Schnetler, Reinard Geldenhuys, Fred Favard, Willie Olivier, Tim Murphy, Michelle Kleynhans and Steve Devine.

Reinard Geldenhuys reviewed the summit and pin-pointed some pertinent issues in the way forward including the South African ICS Working Team to be evolved to an ALL RISK team, its strategic placement, sub workgroup of the National Disaster Management Advisory Forum (NDMAF), the rollout of ICS 100 and 200 in the Western Cape and the handover to districts; also the focus on ICS 300 and 400 and the formalisation of district and provincial IMTs. Other issues include the 'Coastal Provinces All Hazard Cooperative Agreement', assistance with training in neighbouring provinces, assistance with IMT response shadowing opportunities and assistance into Africa.

Geldenhuys thanked all presenters, the Western Cape Government for hosting the event and Lourensford Estate. Colin Deiner was elected as chairman of the newly-formed National ICS Work Group.