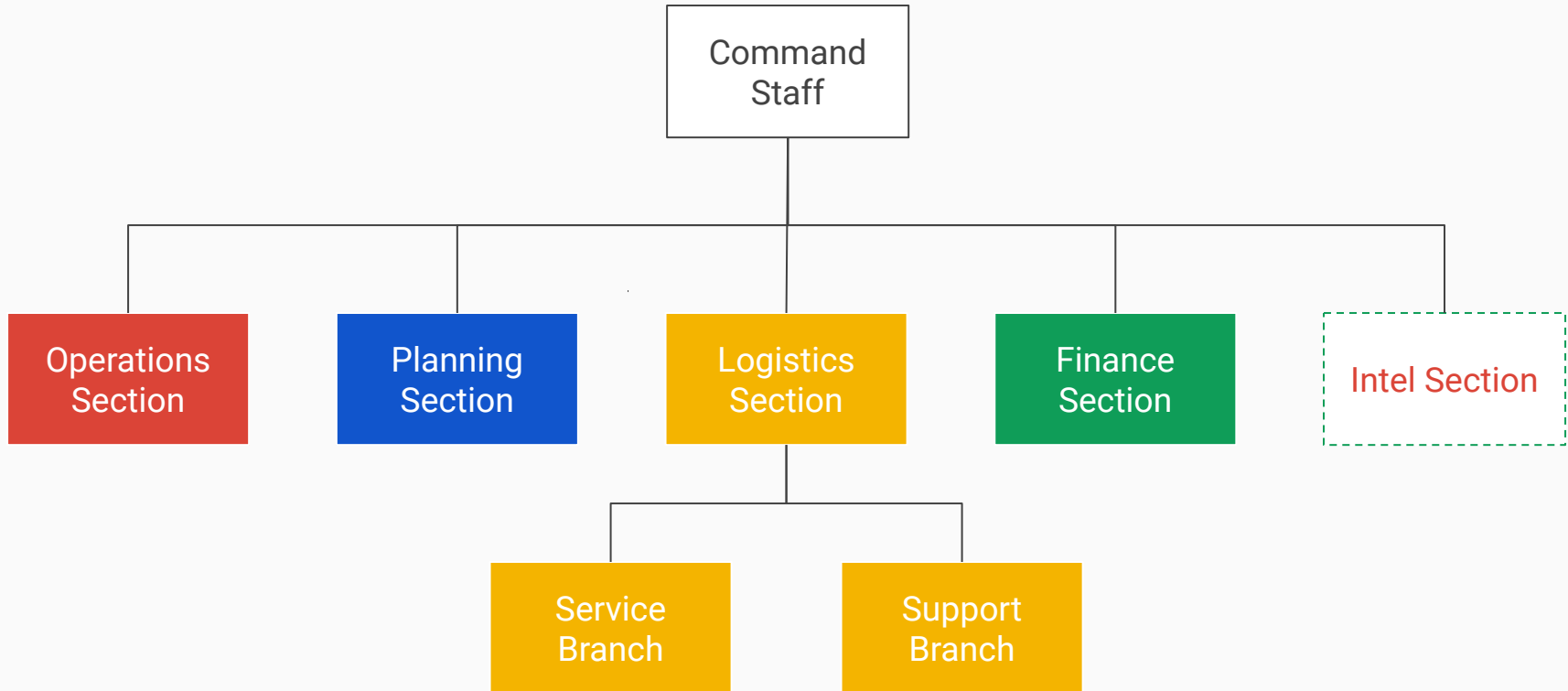# Operational identification

Questions I *hope* to answer:

- What is an **operational callsign**; what is a **tactical address**?

- Why do we need them?

- When do we use them?

- Who develops the list of these callsigns and addresses?

- What are the recommended practices
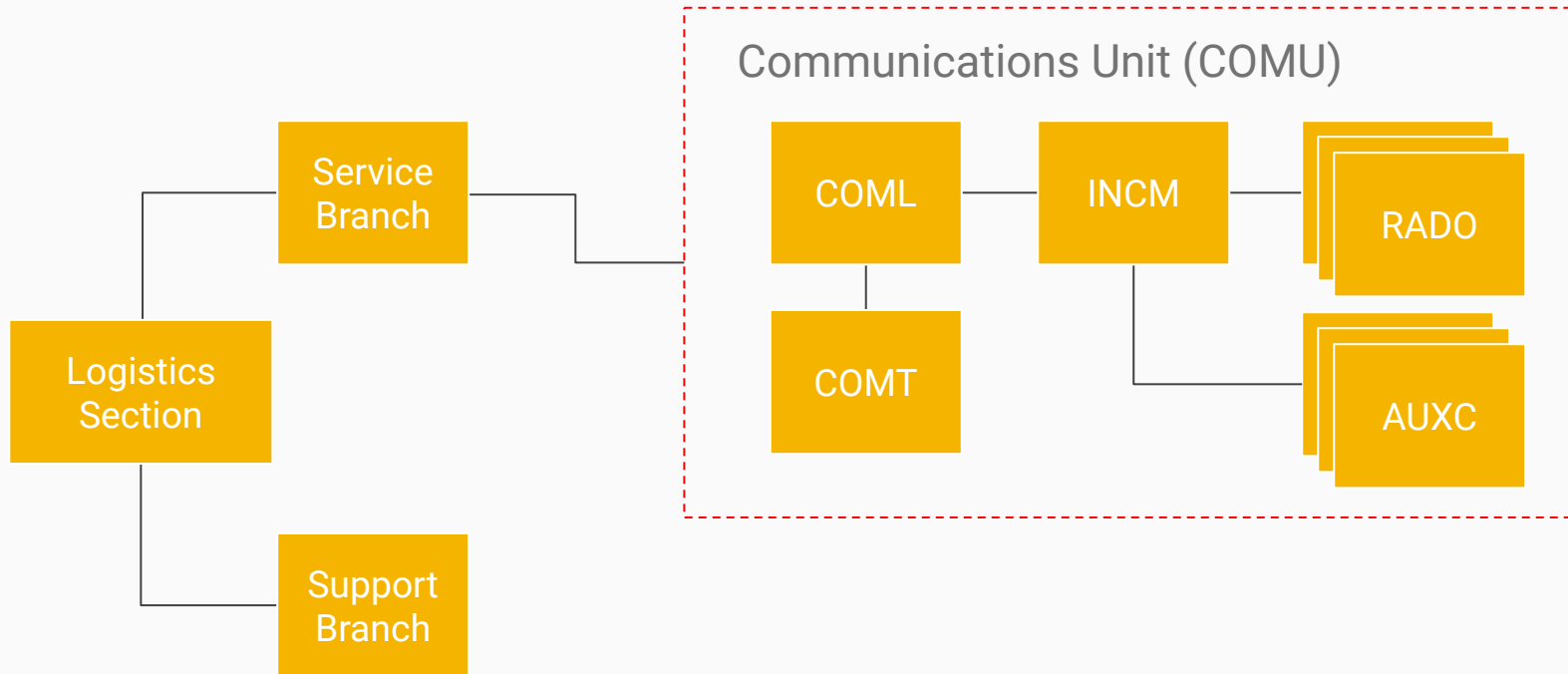
- How do we use tactical addresses?

The Incident Command System and where ARES fits in

For big picture context

NIMS/ICS command structure

Deeper down the command structure

Communications Unit (COMU)

Service Branch — COML — INCM — RADO

Logistics Section

COMT

AUXC

Support Branch

FCC callsigns - a technical detail

FCC callsigns are a technical detail

We use FCC callsigns to:

- Primary: identify transmission source
- Secondary: hail a specific, unassigned RADO/AUXC

So, who's concerned with FCC callsign use?

- RADOs and AUXCs
- The FCC

No-one else in the incident command structure cares

FCC callsigns have operational issues

FCC callsigns:

- Are hard to associate with a **location** or **resource type**
    - Is W7ABC or KX7CD the Public Health winlink op?
    - Who's working comms at the fairgrounds?
    - I need to call staging for division Alpha - who did we send there?

- Can be difficult to memorize - especially GMRS callsigns
    - Don't underestimate the effects of operational stress on recall

Thought: We can solve this with a club callsign!

Everyone uses the club callsign - KX7HAM

- We'll assign a separate SSID for each operating location
- Done!

Think about this for a moment.

Did we fix anything or did we make things worse?

Operational identifiers

How the command structure refers to resources

The EOC and/or incident command refers to various **resources** by a combination of **location**, **function** and/or **name** (rarely **type**)

For example:

- Staging area bravo
- Air Ops Director
- Oak Street shelter
- Plans, Logs
- Engine 321

- Public works
- CERT Team - Division alpha
- EOC IC
- Fire station 456
- Strike team zulu

We must do the same: a better impedance match!

Why use operational identifiers?

- **Meaningful** and **contextual** naming
    - Refer to any site or function naturally
    - ICS promotes the use of plain language (seriously!)
- Operational **efficiency**
- **Seamless shift changes**
    - No lists of FCC callsigns have to be mapped to sites/functions
    - Intra-operational period resource redeployment is easy

Technical details, like FCC station ID, left to those at the lowest possible level in the command structure

When to use operational identifiers

Used for directed subunit or countywide emcomm, during:

- **Exercises**
  - e.g. - bimonthly subunit or biannual county exercises
- **Events**
  - e.g. - Concerts in the Park, 4th July parade, Teddy bear parade
- **Incidents**

i.e. - whenever we operate in an emcomm situation

Operational identifier types

We'll be using two types of operational identifier:

- Operational callsigns - for voice
- Tactical addresses - for Winlink

Operational callsigns

Used for voice communications only

- May be established:
  - Preemptively
  - On the fly (ad hoc)
- FCC identification is needed for licenced services under Parts 95 and 97

Tactical addresses

Used for **Winlink** communications **only**

- Never used on voice channels
- **Established preemptively**
- Winlink Express takes care of FCC identification

Setting up operational identifiers preemptively

Anticipate and **prepare** for major incidents

Work with your served agency's representative to identify potential threats, operating sites and positions.

- Sites: where a RADO might be located during an incident when comms are down
- Positions: roles that may need radio support
  - e.g. EOC incident commander, Public Works director, etc.

Setting up operational identifiers preemptively

What is your subunit's **public** interface?

- How will the county interface (i.e. hail) with you?
  - e.g.: '**Lake Oswego EOC**, this is **Clackamas County EOC**'
- How about other third parties?
  - Utilities?
  - Tree removal crews?

What identifiers are **specific** to your **subunit's local** comms?

- Use our common template for Winlink tactical addresses

Operational callsigns

Preemptive operational callsigns

Prepare a **short** list of operational callsigns for potential worksites such as:

- City EOC
- Secondary EOC
- Fire Department
- Police/Sheriff
- Public Works

- Fire stations
- Senior citizens' centre
- Staging areas
- Evacuation centres
- Medical facilities *

Consider mobile and divisional operational callsigns

- OC Rover 1
- Canby north/south

Keep the working set small, but no smaller than needbe

Operational callsigns for ad hoc events

- Quickly planning comms for an incident or event where callsigns exist only for that incident/event

- RADOs might use **ad hoc deployment-based** identifiers

Scenario: need another RADO

The Central City subunit has been asked to provide comms for their Halloween parade.

During parade, IC requires an **additional** RADO deployed to 6th Ave and Main St to monitor candy being thrown by participants.

RADO arrives at operating location and identifies using intersection name, for example:

Net control, this is Sixth and Main

Mixing preemptive and ad hoc operational callsigns

Use preemptive operational callsigns when they apply

e.g. Central City's EOC is partially activated for the Halloween parade. An EOC RADO will use his/her preemptive operational call:

Sixth and Main, this is **Central City EOC**

Unlicenced radio services

Groups we work with may use:

- **FRS** - common with CERT teams and neighbourhood associations
- **MURS** - less common
- **CB** - prevalent in rural areas

Operational callsigns still apply

Note that Public Works departments have been known to use FRS, MURS and licenced services too

Winlink tactical addresses

Plan: Develop a list of tactical addresses

Work with your **served agency administrator**

Prepare a **short** list of tactical addresses for sites your subunit could potentially operate from

For example:

- City EOC
- Secondary EOC
- Fire Department
- Police/Sheriff
- Public Works

- Fire stations
- Senior citizens' centre
- Predesignated staging areas
- Predesignated evac/shelters
- Medical facilities *

Plan: Do you need roving Winlink operators?

Are your operators likely to act as remote observers?
For example:
- Field situation reports?
- Basic assessment of critical infrastructure?
- Firewatch?

Don't underestimate the value of photographs

If so, consider adding a few roving tactical addresses:
- Configure address to reflect general area
  - e.g.: LOR-DIVxx

Example: Lake Oswego

Public interface to/from Clackamas County EOC:

- LOP-EOC - Same address for primary and secondary EOC

Private interface within Lake Oswego:

LOS-CH	City Hall
LOS-PUBWRK	Public Works
LOS-WATER	Water Works
LOS-LOGS	Logistics traffic
LOS-STA2nn	Fire stations
LOS-ACC	Adult community centre
LOS-COMU	Communications unit (back channel)
LOR-DIVxx	Rover within a city division

...

Winlink system rules for tactical addresses

Must be **added** to the Winlink system **before** they can be used

- **EITHER**: 3 to 12 alphabetic characters
- **OR**:
    - At least 3 alphabetic characters, plus
    - A single hyphen, plus
    - Alphanumeric characters
    - No more than 12 characters total (including hyphen)

Valid: **CLACEOC, MKS-EOC, OCS-PUBWRK, WLS-STA52**

Invalid: **LO-STA214, CLACPW1, OCP-DOG-CH, BVRCRK_STA10**

Tactical addresses and passwords

Tactical addresses do not require a password

Recommendations:

- Use (memorable) passwords!
- Divide your tactical addresses into **two** sets:
    - Restricted use - use one password for all of these
    - General team use - one password for all of these but different to restricted use tactical addresses

Tactical addresses and passwords

Plan for **succession**:

- Record the addresses and passwords and lodge with your agency administrator

Operators leaving your subunit:

- Consider a password change

Recommended address syntax

CCX-Desc, where:

- **CC**: Two characters for jurisdiction
- **X**: One character for role
  - P - Position
  - S - Site
  - R - Rover
- **-**: Hyphen
- **Desc**: Description. Up to 8 characters
  - Can be easily associated with position or site, for example:
    - EOCIC - Emergency Operations Incident Command
    - PUBWRK - Public Works

Using Winlink tactical addresses

No room for error

Prior to using tactical addresses:

- Must **Add** tactical address to the Winlink system
  - It must not exist already - no way of knowing
  - Syntactically correct

To send from and receive to messages a tactical address:

- Must **Enable** the address
- **Disable** it at the end of your shift - NO EXCUSES

To send to and receive from messages a tactical address

- Do nothing

Winlink tactical address demo

Working with tactical addresses in Winlink Express

This demo covers these functions with tactical addresses:

- Adding a new on to the Winlink system
- Enabling
- Disabling
- Sending messages using one