Command and Control of an Incident — study guide

When an emergency happens, equipment alone does not save the ship — organisation and command do. This guide covers the team structure, the drills, the communication rules and what turns a good response into a safe one.[1]

Preparation and drills

Emergency response team members must know where emergency equipment is located, what personal protective equipment is required, where to muster and the quickest route there, and the specific alarms and sounds on board. Fire drills should be carried out **monthly**.

Teams and roles

- **Emergency Team** — carrying out rescues, firefighting, boundary control and evacuations.
- **Engine Room Team** — maintaining power supplies and ensuring the main engine is available for manoeuvring.
- **Support Team** — ensuring additional equipment (such as hoses or air cylinders for breathing apparatus) is readily available, and readying the lifeboats if required.

What makes a response work

During an emergency, access to equipment in good working order is not sufficient by itself. The safety of the ship and crew also depends on strong leadership, organisation, appropriate training and good procedures.

Radio communication

When communicating via radio, identify your location, keep information precise and to the point, speak in a normal tone, and always sign off to end the call. Clear, disciplined communication is what lets the teams work as one.

Key facts to remember

- Know: equipment locations, required PPE, muster point and quickest route, and the ship's alarms.
- Fire drills: monthly.
- Teams: Emergency (rescue/firefighting/boundary/evacuation), Engine Room (power, main engine availability), Support (equipment, lifeboats).
- Equipment is not enough — you need leadership, organisation, training and procedures.
- Radio: identify location, be precise, normal tone, sign off.

Sources

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1. SOLAS Chapter III, Regulation 19 — Emergency training and drills; with the ISM Code (SOLAS Chapter IX) on shipboard emergency preparedness.