



**AmeriCorps Disaster Response:  
A Case Study of the Incident Command System  
in Missouri**



SCHOOL OF  
**PUBLIC AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**  
Indiana University

COVER PHOTO: OAKVILLE, MISSOURI/USA – DEC. 31, 2015: Flood water from the Meramec River overtakes Heintz Road near the intersection of Cambridge Meadows in the St. Louis community of Oakville.

©Tony Campbell; used under license from Shutterstock®

# AmeriCorps Disaster Response: A Case Study of the Incident Command System in Missouri



May 4, 2016

Submitted by:  
V600 Capstone Class

**Capstone Lead:** Monica Gregory

**Capstone Class:** Elise Boruvka, Avril Carter, Myeongsik Cho, Chris Converse, Stuart Jones, Jung Joon, Erin McMenamin, Sydney Morton, Chaoran Wu, and Alex Zakel



**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

# Table of Contents

<i>Section</i>	<i>Page</i>
Acronym Gude	3
Executive Summary	4
The Incident Command System (ICS)	5
ICS in the Corporation for National and Community Service	7
A-DRT Operations in Missouri	9
Assessing A-DRT Operations	10
ICS in Missouri	12
Research Findings and Implications	14
Limitations of Research	18
Recommendations	20
Conclusion	24
Acknowledgements	25
References	26
Appendix	28

## Acronym Guide

<b>A-DRT</b>	AmeriCorps Disaster Response Team
<b>AmeriCorps St. Louis ERT</b>	AmeriCorps St. Louis Emergency Response Team
<b>CCMI</b>	Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa
<b>CNCS</b>	Corporation for National and Community Service
<b>DSU</b>	Disaster Services Unit
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency
<b>ICP</b>	Incident Command Post
<b>ICS</b>	Incident Command System
<b>MA</b>	Mission Assignment
<b>MARC</b>	Multi-Agency Resource Center
<b>NCCC</b>	National Civilian Community Corps
<b>TCCC</b>	Hoopa Tribal Civilian Community Corps
<b>TxCC</b>	Texas Conservation Corps
<b>VOAD</b>	Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters
<b>VRC</b>	Volunteer Reception Center
<b>WCC</b>	Washington Conservation Corps

## Executive Summary

The Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) Spring 2016 Capstone class worked with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to study the AmeriCorps Disaster Response Teams' (A-DRTs) experiences under the Incident Command System (ICS) during recent deployments to the December 2015 flood in Missouri.

The Capstone class analyzed existing research on ICS to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the model. According to the research literature, the effectiveness of ICS depends on the context. One must consider the size or type of disaster and the social complexity of the public infrastructure responding to the disaster when evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of ICS. ICS strengths can include a standardized leadership structure within A-DRTs and between A-DRTs and external partners, and support of increased organization from the initial stages of a disaster until its conclusion. Potential challenges of the ICS model include inhibited resource mobilization, reduced multi-agency integration, inconsistent inter-agency implementation, and disagreements among agencies about who has the authority to modify the model.

To explore the implementation of ICS in the context of the 2015 Missouri flood, the Capstone class used structured interviews with AmeriCorps members and staff, semi-structured interviews with CNCS staff, field research, and published research in order to better understand ICS and the experiences of A-DRT members in Missouri. Additionally, the class recorded and analyzed the experiences of A-DRT members and leaders under ICS in order to identify successful practices and areas for improvement for future cohorts.

The Capstone class analyzed trends and themes discovered during interviews. The data suggest that ICS was effective during the Missouri disaster, especially for those members who were already familiar with it. However, a more standardized, comprehensive approach to training for future A-DRT cohorts will make ICS more broadly successful. Members and leaders agreed that the ICS model significantly improved the disaster response process. In order to improve upon the experience of ICS in Missouri and to use the system for larger disasters, improving collaboration, the work assignment process, and communication is important, since a larger scale will present challenges in each of these areas. Overall, members and leaders had a positive experience during their deployment: 100% of interviewees stated that they would do the Missouri deployment again. The member experience could be further enhanced by increased opportunities for relaxation, continuation of morale-boosting activities, and replication of the Missouri deployment's food and accommodation practices.

Overall, the implementation of ICS was successful in the context of the Missouri flood deployment. Research and analysis indicate the model increased efficiency and improved hierarchical communication during the disaster response. ICS also seems to have the potential to be widely adaptable and scaled to provide relief from disasters that vary in size, type, and intensity. To determine whether or not it is useful in other contexts, CNCS may want to consider performing stress tests to simulate the deployment of A-DRTs and manpower in response to different disaster types using ICS. Potential improvements of the model include better training operations, information sharing prior to and during deployment, and field coordination regarding assigned duties among crew leaders and members. The continuation of the model and future developments within its structural framework have the potential to benefit members who serve under ICS and, ultimately, the communities they are trying to help.

# The Incident Command System (ICS)

ICS is a standardized method of organization for incident management and response in disasters. The system contains standard leadership and management hierarchy procedures, as well as processes to support a wide range of incidents. It supports synchronized efforts among various agencies and teams, while respecting agency and jurisdictional authority. ICS enables rapid and efficient establishment of universal procedures for planning, as well as management of personnel, facilities, equipment, and communication within a common operational and organizational structure. Personnel are trained in a common operating language and procedures and are assigned according to pre-established standards agreed upon by involved authorities. The system is designed to support increased organization from the initial stages of a disaster until its conclusion.

An interagency group in California developed the system in the 1970s in response to a series of wild fires. Evidence from the wild fire disaster relief, as well as previous disaster recovery efforts, showed that failures could rarely be attributed to lack of effort or resources; instead, the problems stemmed mainly from lack of coordination of individuals and resources. Each organization involved in disaster relief had its own hierarchy, communication procedures and operating language. Uncertainty and conflicts existed among various governmental and nongovernmental aid organizations regarding authority and resource distribution. It was this need for more open and collaborative management systems that led to the development and widespread adoption of ICS. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), “the Incident Command System (ICS) is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure” (FEMA 2015).

As the system gained popularity, scholarly examination of it has increased. Lutz and Lindell (2008) found that the core purpose of ICS is inter-organizational coordination of societal efforts in organizing and implementing response to natural disasters. Bigley and Roberts (2001) identified three main factors that contributed to the success of the ICS model: the structuring mechanisms with role switching, authority shifting as needed, and system resetting as the response requires; the maintenance of standardized tools, rules, and routines; and the implementation of management methods leading to reliability. Cardwell and Cooney (2000) emphasized standardization as the key factor for the application of ICS within and across organizations or agencies.

According to Cole (2000), ICS has two main strengths: predetermined internal alignment and external alignment, or a standardized leadership structure within the disaster response teams and among them and external partners. First, due to the attributes of a predefined hierarchy, uniform terminology, defined organizational structure, and Incident Action Plans, even inexperienced individuals with only very basic training can easily learn the protocols of ICS. (The Incident Action Plan assigns groups and individuals to roles and functions in community, economic, and ecological restoration processes throughout local, state, and federal levels of the disaster hierarchy.) Second, despite additional complications and workload, external alignment with outside forces, such as organizations or groups of volunteers that do not use ICS, can provide agencies with greater flexibility, effectiveness, cross-jurisdictional and cross-functional working relationships, communications plans, and processes for transitioning command authority from one level of management to another. The ICS structure focuses on the vertical integration of federal administrators, liaisons to localities, and the ground-level disaster relief workers into a cohesive management communication system.

The ICS model seeks to streamline communications among stakeholders, including administrators, liaisons, and local disaster relief aid workers. The ICS-300 training manual suggests 14 features to increase the effectiveness of ICS, including how to structure the chain of command, decision-making processes, and

communications (FEMA 2013). Lutz and Lindell (2008) mention that in addition to adequate staffing, these features, front-line disaster response, and building relationships prior to the disaster can improve the overall working climate for the teams responding to the disaster. Further increases in effectiveness can be attained by inter-organizational training and shared experience, which enable cooperation between agencies and individuals working on disaster response tactics, disaster response plans, and community building.

Cole (2000), however, points to a variety of potential problems in the ICS model: inhibited resource mobilization, ineffectiveness in multi-agency integration, inconsistent implementation among various agencies, and disagreements among agencies about who has the authority to modify ICS. Moreover, according to Buck et al. (2006), some critics argue that important factors related to the actual disaster response can be overlooked by focusing too much time and resources on formal organizations, thereby excluding unorganized individuals or groups from disaster response activities. Wenger (1990) also identifies some limitations in the application of ICS as well. Due to its intrinsic characteristics of command and control, ICS tends to function properly only in quasi-military organizations, such as police departments. Because of the social complexity involved during times of disaster response, Buck et al. (2006) suggest that ICS be used by a community of professional responders who have technical proficiency and interpersonal trust.

In short, the effectiveness of ICS depends on the context. One must consider the size or type of disaster and the social complexity of the public infrastructure responding to the disaster when evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of ICS. Dynes (1970) classified the anticipated effectiveness of ICS by the type of disaster and the type of organization. According to this typology, ICS is likely to operate most effectively within existing emergency response organizations performing their normal tasks with trained staff (e.g., police departments, fire departments, or emergency medical services).

## ICS at the Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was established as a federal agency in 1993. Its mission is “to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.” A key component of that mission is to assist communities in preparation for and response to disasters. Throughout its history, CNCS has deployed resources to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its disaster response programs. In doing so, it has worked closely with FEMA, state and local emergency management offices, and the nongovernmental disaster aid sector to better serve communities responding to disasters and to more effectively and efficiently collaborate with other emergency crews and disaster response organizations.

The “disaster continuum” is CNCS’ delineation of phases in disaster preparation and response efforts. These include preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. Preparedness is proactive education and accessibility to resources during non-disaster times. Mitigation relates to public information outreach and environmental mitigation, such as controlled burning to prevent wild forest fires. Response includes volunteer base camp setup, operations, volunteer deployment management, and donations distribution and management. Recovery involves oversight of building restoration, needs assessments, management of open cases, and long-term recovery oversight (CNCS 2014). (Although FEMA has similar references to phases of disaster preparation and response, it calls its timeline of response the “recovery continuum,” which includes the phases of pre-disaster preparedness, short-term recovery, intermediate recovery, and long-term recovery [FEMA 2011]). Specific activities and duties depend on the state of a disaster in a particular locality.

While most of its efforts in the past have dealt with the immediate response following a disaster, CNCS has developed the Disaster Services Unit (DSU) to work with communities throughout all stages of the disaster continuum (CNCS 2014). The DSU is a small staff within CNCS headquarters that coordinates and provides support to AmeriCorps and Senior Corps during relief activities. The DSU coordinates disaster service activities across the agency and deploys recovery resources and national service manpower in response to a disaster.

Included among these resources are AmeriCorps Disaster Response Teams (A-DRTs). The intent of A-DRTs is to involve nationally deployable AmeriCorps programs that have a heightened focus on disaster relief services. A-DRTs customarily deploy in response to requests for aid from a state or local government following a major disaster, particularly if the government believes the disaster will overwhelm the local recovery infrastructure. Currently, CNCS includes 15 disaster response teams that have access to roughly 3,000 AmeriCorps members, specially trained to deploy at short notice and under harsh conditions. Their missions vary, but most commonly, the teams establish and manage Volunteer Reception Centers (VRCs), as well as provide leadership and expertise to volunteers and the local communities (DeGraff and Murphy 2014).

In the past, the training of A-DRT participants has been the responsibility of each A-DRT program. However, the DSU recently undertook efforts to unify and standardize the training in order to more efficiently and effectively implement program priorities. The DSU held a meeting in November 2015 for A-DRT leaders to collaborate and develop standardized training materials and modules for current and future A-DRT participants (J. Murphy, Capstone class conversation March 4, 2016). The goal of the meeting was to create a one-day, eight-hour curriculum addressing individual and public assistance, community outreach, and capacity building, as well as volunteer and donations management. In addition, the training would provide an introduction to AmeriCorps’ history, culture, operating procedures, and training standards. A-DRT leaders are currently developing the curriculum and training materials.

Since CNCS works with many organizations and volunteers of varying levels of skills, cooperation and partnership with them is necessary for effective and efficient disaster response and recovery. A-DRT leadership recognized a need to better communicate with emergency personnel and to more efficiently organize the disaster response participants, and agreed to adopt ICS training across all teams. This agreement was part of the discussion at the November meeting. Consequently, A-DRTs deployed to Missouri in 2015 became the first to implement ICS in a CNCS disaster relief effort.

## A-DRT Operations in Missouri

In late December 2015, Missouri experienced a record-setting flood. Thousands of people evacuated their homes and public services, including transportation services, stopped. The flood affected mainly the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Area. Along with other public and nonprofit agencies, the AmeriCorps St. Louis Emergency Response Team (St. Louis ERT), a leader in the A-DRT program, started response efforts on December 28<sup>th</sup>, running a critical sandbagging operation along the River des Peres. That day, the AmeriCorps members managed about 600 volunteers and piled more than 40,000 sandbags. The ERT members worked up to 14 hours a day to set up VRCs and to sandbag (AmeriCorps St. Louis 2016).

Missouri Governor Jay Nixon sent requests for aid to the federal government on behalf of state agencies and the City of St. Louis Emergency Operations Center. The White House approved a Major Disaster Declaration on December 29<sup>th</sup>. With a federal declaration, the State had the opportunity to request A-DRT support under a Mission Assignment (MA). (An MA is a work order issued from one federal agency to another.) In early January 2016, the State and FEMA requested 100 AmeriCorps members to support the response efforts. CNCS sent A-DRT members to St. Louis to commence a full-scale disaster response. These AmeriCorps members came from various programs, including the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI), Texas Conservation Corps (TxCC), AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), Hoopa Tribal Civilian Community Corps (TCCC), and Volunteer Iowa (Hibbeler 2016). Multiple teams cycled in and out of the area for 28-day shifts, allowing for a continuity of operational and organizational knowledge. It was here that CNCS implemented the ICS model for the first time.

AmeriCorps members engaged in numerous areas of the disaster relief operation. The teams restored heat and power to homes. They also performed physical labor such as mucking, gutting and mold suppression so that more people could stay in their homes instead of relocating. In the aftermath of the disaster, more than 270 homes received mucking and gutting treatments, with more than 4,470 cubic yards of debris removed.

In total, AmeriCorps members individually assisted more than 500 homes (Hibbeler 2016). The teams also built shelters and coordinated with agencies to get displaced residents into hotels. Other activities included call center operations, supporting Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) operations, and volunteer management (Butterfield 2016).

By the end of March 2016, the vast majority of ground-level A-DRT responders under ICS had withdrawn from the command center in Missouri. Although the bulk of the disaster response lasted only three months, it addressed many of the immediate and critical issues facing members of the St. Louis community. In doing so, it enabled local organizations to address the long process of disaster recovery, fulfilling the observation that every disaster response “begins locally.”

# Assessing A-DRT Operations

The SPEA Capstone class examined the implementation of ICS during the 2015 Missouri flood. Specifically, the class set out to assess the Corps Member experience with ICS and ultimately, whether the structure enabled a better response to the disaster. The next section outlines the Capstone class's three primary areas of research and the topics that align with each one. Following that is a description of the methods the Capstone class used, which included semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations in the field, as well as structured interviews with members and leaders associated with CNCS and A-DRT.

## ***Research Areas***

The first area of research focused on how efficiently ICS operated in Missouri. This topic guided the background research on ICS and A-DRTs. To learn about the model, the Capstone class used materials sent by CNCS on A-DRTs and ICS and on how A-DRTs implemented ICS in Missouri. The class aimed to discover whether or not the ICS model made deployment operations by multiple A-DRTs from different geographic locations more efficient.

The second area of research focused on the experiences of A-DRT members and supervisors in the field under ICS in Missouri. The Capstone class investigated how trained the A-DRT members were, how base camp operations functioned, and areas in which A-DRT members felt the ICS model worked well and where the model could be improved. Through multiple research methods, the class identified successful practices so that CNCS could better understand the benefits and challenges under ICS as well as potential improvements for future deployments.

The third area of research focused on the future opportunities for and applications of ICS. The Capstone class examined management practices under ICS, including a point of particular interest to CNCS: whether this type of system can be effectively scaled down to communication among a smaller number of partners or scaled up to include more local and nongovernmental ones. The class also identified gaps in knowledge or implementation that CNCS could address in the future.

## ***Research Methods***

The Capstone class gathered and analyzed qualitative information from 144 AmeriCorps members, CNCS staff, and Corps leadership who were deployed during the Missouri disaster in early 2016. During a site visit in February, the field team conducted semi-structured interviews, shadowed crew members, and participated in briefings where they heard members' and leaders' reports on their daily activities and experiences with the deployment and the ICS. (Andrea Robles, of the CNCS Office of Research and Evaluation, was also present and participated in the interviews.) Afterwards, the Capstone class also successfully contacted 10 disaster response participants via telephone. It then published the interview questions online via Google Forms and sent the survey to all listed A-DRT and Corps participants; this yielded an additional 9 responses.

Of the 19 individuals surveyed via telephone and the online survey, the Capstone class received responses from 11 individuals who held leadership positions and 8 individuals in non-leadership positions. The class received responses from the following Corps: Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), Hoopa Tribal Civilian Community Corps (Hoopa TCCC), AmeriCorps St. Louis

Emergency Response Team (ERT), Volunteer Iowa (Volunteer Iowa), and Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI)\*.

Overall, through the February site visit and the follow-up telephone and online surveys, the class received information from roughly 30% of the A-DRT members deployed during the Missouri disaster.

Four teams, each consisting of two class members, conducted phone interviews with Corps members and leaders in March 2016. The teams selected interviewees at random from a master list of A-DRT participants deployed during the Missouri disaster. (The randomized selection process aimed to minimize potential biases in the selection of interviewees.) Additionally, the Capstone class noted whether interviewees were members or leaders, as well as with which Corps they served during their deployment in Missouri. In order to ensure that all interviewees had as close to the same interview experience as possible, class members contacted and conducted all interviews using the same template (see Appendix).

To reach additional A-DRT participants, the SPEA Capstone class created an online survey via Google Forms, using the same questions asked during the phone interviews to minimize bias between online and phone respondents. A link to the online survey, open for nine days, went to all Corps members and leaders involved in the Missouri deployment who had not previously provided a response.

The Capstone class saved the raw qualitative information in note form and grouped it into overarching themes for each research area. This method allowed a comparison of experiences among and across members and leaders in the field. By identifying recurring themes, the Capstone class determined successful practices and common challenges under ICS, which drove its recommendations. This analysis led to a much clearer picture of the overall effectiveness of ICS during the Missouri flood.



*Deputy Commander, AC members, and Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs Capstone students, Wyman Center, Eureka, Missouri.*

---

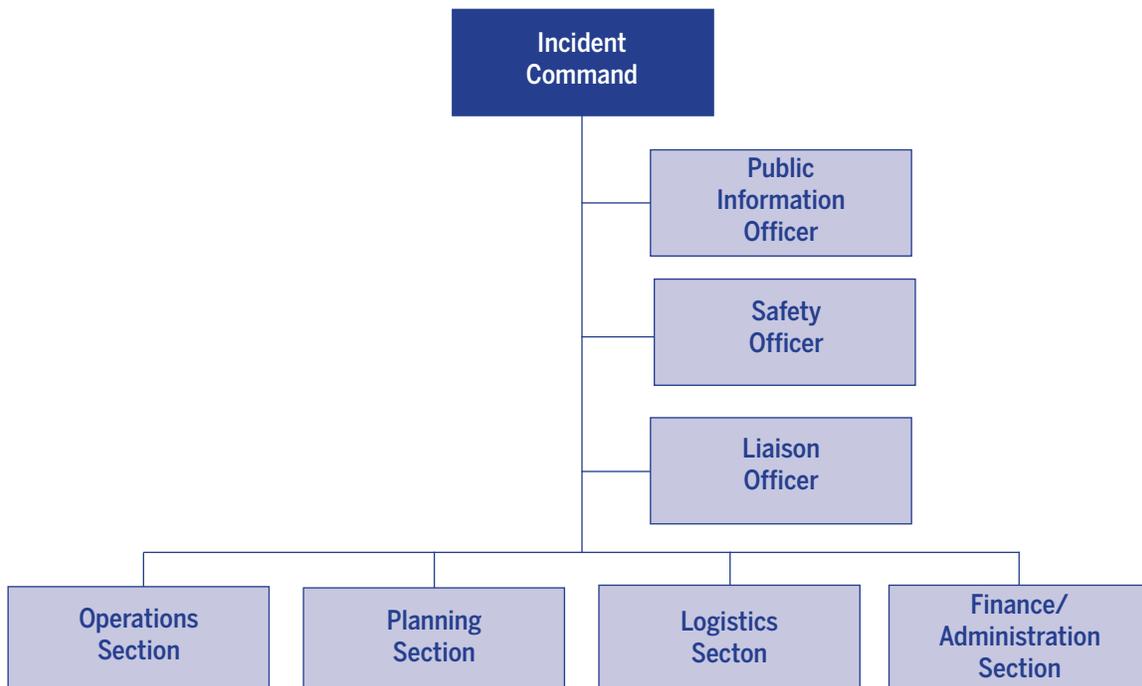
\*Of the members who held leadership positions, three were from the WCC, two each from the Hoopa TCCC, ERT, Volunteer Iowa, and CCMI, and none from the NCCC. Of the members who held non-leadership positions, three each were from NCCC and Hoopa TCCC, two from WCC, and none from ERT, Volunteer Iowa, and CCMI.

# ICS in Missouri

By all accounts, the implementation of ICS in Missouri was largely consistent with the guidelines for the program. Upon initial arrival, previously-deployed members led the new teams around the base camp to familiarize them with the layout of the site, as well as to introduce the ICS leadership. Following this, members attended a situation briefing and received position assignments within the ICS structure. The following day, members went out on assignments, which typically lasted eight to ten hours. Members were not always paired with the teams they had arrived with or even with members of their own Corps.

The Incident Command Post (ICP), led by the Incident Commander at the Missouri site, had several active teams, including Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Public Information (see diagram below). Corps members frequently rotated through multiple positions, both within and between response (or “strike”) teams and the ICP leadership. For example, the safety officer of a particular strike team may have previously served as a team leader and general strike team member. The members divided into crews of five to six people which went into the field and performed work such as operating call centers or mucking and gutting houses. In keeping with the ICS span of control guidelines, each crew included a team leader and safety officer. Crews operating in the field received assignments from the ICP and reported progress or complications. Members cycled through roles every 72 hours, allowing them to gain experience and skills that would help them in future deployments.

Several members of the Capstone directly observed the implementation of ICS during a field visit in early February. Each day at breakfast, the heads of the ICP teams gave a short briefing to the members, including updates on the overall plans for the day, social events after work, and general advice. Teams then traveled to their sites and began work. In the field, team leaders did the same work as general members. However, before beginning an assignment, the team leader and safety officer would assess the situation in order to



*Simplified model of incident command system management structure*

ensure the safety of crew members. In the event that work was finished or the team was unable to continue, teams would contact the ICP and move to another site.

The staggered schedule of the various Corps allowed for the informal dissemination of successful practices during the deployment. For example, two crew members developed a standardized procedure for decontamination of equipment that was adopted by the rest of the teams. The staggered schedule also allowed for a general continuity of knowledge among members of the participating A-DRTs.

Due to the hectic pace for those team members in the initial disaster response, the execution of duties was different in several crucial aspects. The operational period was shortened from seventy-two to twenty-four hours as A-DRT members worked to gain control over the situation, particularly the initial surge of volunteers. Much of this early period was spent coordinating with volunteers, incoming CNCS members, and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs), as well as establishing the physical infrastructure for the base camp.



*Command post and lodging for A-DRT Teams, Wyman Center, Eureka, Missouri.*

# Research Findings and Implications

After completing telephone interviews and closing the online survey, the Capstone class matched key findings to the three areas of research and assessed their potential implications for the use of ICS by A-DRTs.

## ***1. ICS Implementation in Missouri***

The first research area involved how ICS operated in Missouri. The Capstone class found that a majority of Corps members and leaders appreciated the ICS structure, particularly those who understood the model outside the context of Missouri. Leaders tended to have more information about ICS than did members. Members and leaders who had served on previous deployments or in other capacities under ICS appreciated the structure more than those who were serving on their first deployment.

Overall, members reported a high level of satisfaction with their initial 48 hours of deployment. Members who had been on previous disaster deployments compared the experience favorably with the initial periods in past responses and typically reported less confusion during the initial 48-hour period. Similarly, members who arrived in Missouri with prior knowledge of the disaster, or who came into the ICP after the ICS framework had been put into place, reported significantly less chaotic experiences.

Among the five interview respondents who experienced disorganization in the first 48 hours of deployment, four of them had never been deployed before. All had one year or less of affiliation with their programs. As such, the confusion they experienced may have been due to their lack of experience and the fact that they were unfamiliar with the deployment process, rather than disorganization in the process of deployment. There was a consensus among leaders and members that knowledge of ICS prior to deployment minimized stress and chaos within the first 48 hours of deployment.

ICS was particularly useful for leaders in disseminating information and delegating tasks to their staffs. One leader stated that the ICS structure allowed him to delegate general tasks to a staff of five to seven leaders who would, in turn, assign their crew members to specific tasks. This relieved leaders of a heavy workload; for example, rather than assigning 70 people to specific tasks, leaders could delegate to a smaller group of Corps members. In short, without the use of ICS in Missouri, leaders and members may not have coordinated their efforts as easily and efficiently.

## ***2. A-DRT Members' Experiences***

The second research area considered how A-DRT members and supervisors experienced their deployment, which could potentially affect their willingness to participate in future deployments. The ICS structure appears to have had positive psychological effects since members appreciated knowing their schedules ahead of time. Having set schedules allowed members to plan their work and relaxation, giving a sense of certainty in a chaotic environment, which members reported as calming.

A-DRT members valued opportunities to de-stress, including having scheduled days off every week, allowing them to recuperate and relax after often intense work. In addition, having their own space to relax and having meals prepared produced very positive responses. De-stressing opportunities and individual spaces helped with the overall morale of the members during the deployment.

In addition to having scheduled days off, members, particularly leaders, appreciated group activities in order to better learn about the people with whom they were working. These types of ties helped build stronger linkages between A-DRTs, effectively improving interactions when on site. Without allotting time for social interactions, the collaboration between members might have been less effective (Oh et al., 2014). To alleviate stress, more experienced members tended to use social or group events and activities with others, whereas less experienced members tended to spend more time alone.

The majority of people interviewed reported that the quantity and quality of food met their standards and was another important component of high morale and well-being. During the course of the disaster response, one to two members were assigned the responsibility to cook for the rest of the A-DRT team, rather than having individual members cook for themselves. This cooking system reduced the burden on individuals to shop and cook after a long day of work. A few individuals suggested more consideration of dietary restrictions.

Both members and leaders identified several challenges to their well-being while on deployment. At times, they reported difficulty in balancing job performance with the need to take care of themselves personally. In addition, the long hours, stress, physical impacts, and sleep deprivation that come with a disaster environment were difficult for many.

Interviews also showed that a majority of ICS leaders felt they had acquired new professional skills as a result of their Missouri deployment, such as in conflict resolution, verbal communication, and volunteer management. Depending on their particular assignments, members and leaders also reported learning a variety of other skills, such as mucking, general construction, Microsoft Excel, and website design and software development.

### ***3. ICS Management Practices and Scalability***

The final research area focused on the scalability and management practices of ICS. The majority of members interviewed had had only limited experience with ICS prior to the Missouri flood. However, most reported that the system worked well, citing good communication and a “shared vocabulary” as notable attributes that allowed the system to be implemented largely smoothly among a sizable group of people of differing skill levels and backgrounds. Members with experience with ICS in smaller-scale disaster relief efforts, such as wild fires, did not report any significant difference in how it operated in Missouri, indicating that ICS was implemented as effectively in the larger group as in the smaller ones previously. This indicates that ICS can be scaled to work in more extensive and complex disaster responses.

Almost unanimously, A-DRT members reported satisfaction with the mixing of members from various Corps, stating that they appreciated the opportunity to meet and bond with other Corps members. One interview respondent reported that he would work to ensure that the bonds created during the Missouri disaster relief effort would continue even after members left the AmeriCorps program. Overall, the experience of working and relaxing together helped to foster communication and trust among various Corps members. As Lutz and Lindell (2008) and Buck et al. (2006) point out, the efficacy of ICS depends greatly on the presence or absence of these bonds of trust. As more AmeriCorps members come into contact with one another through work on A-DRTs, these bonds are likely to strengthen, improving the implementation of ICS in the future disasters.

A majority of members and leaders valued the opportunity to change their roles during the deployment in Missouri. Members appreciated having designated leaders who could serve as regular channels for information and questions. Having members from different Corps on the same team allowed them to

make new and valuable connections that may help with future deployments and inter-corps interaction. The majority of members valued working with and meeting people from different regions of the country. Members also reported that morning debriefing sessions helped organize teams and answer questions about the ICS structure.

The nature of training for A-DRTs provoked different reactions among members. Several volunteers who had received training emphasized that the idiosyncratic nature of A-DRT work meant that members needed to learn many skills on the job anyway. However, one member stated that a shared baseline, even of theoretical knowledge of ICS, would have been useful in inducting AmeriCorps members into the A-DRT effort.

Not every Corps participating in the Missouri effort did disaster simulation training, nor did every individual complete the same range of ICS coursework. Only 31% of respondents to the phone and online questionnaires recalled watching the FEMA training video before being deployed to Missouri. The FEMA training video illustrates the ICS model and is a highly recommended part of A-DRT training.

The outlook on training varied according to individual preference and amount of previous disaster response experience. More experienced individuals saw less value in training requirements and tools like the FEMA video. However, members who had done fewer or no previous deployments greatly valued the trainings and would have liked additional training opportunities. In addition, the extensiveness of training received was heavily dependent on the Corps with which members were affiliated. Several respondents suggested a more standardized training regimen across all Corps.

Members stated that volunteer management training, more advanced training in ICS, and a range of stress-management workshops would be helpful. Members also expressed a desire for more leadership skill-building workshops and training on presentation skills and team management to make the ICS model more effective. Many respondents expressed a need for training specific to different types of disasters, such as training that provided an understanding of the general differences between how to respond to floods and how to respond to tornadoes.

One consistent area of difficulty, both for experienced and new members, was the unevenness of knowledge among the members of various Corps. This unevenness extended from technical knowledge, such as about mucking and gutting, to understanding ICS itself. Newer members often had to learn “on the job,” potentially leading to slowdowns and complications in assignments. Inexperienced or undertrained members who were placed in leadership positions sometimes performed poorly, to the detriment of team action and cohesion.

Much of the transfer of skills and knowledge, such as the standardization of decontamination procedures for gear, took place on an informal basis. In this regard, the staggered rotations were invaluable in ensuring a continuity of knowledge. Nonetheless, for the best implementation of ICS, Cardwell and Cooney (2000) emphasize the importance of standardized skill-sets at the outset.

Members and leaders also experienced challenges over the course of their deployment with regard to implementing ICS. More experienced members spoke of the challenge of working with members of other Corps with varying knowledge, both of ICS and of relevant hard skills. Members also experienced challenges in learning how to do tasks from individuals who had themselves only recently been trained. In addition, there was no easily accessible information on the skill-sets of various members with the result that leadership positions were assigned in part by informal assessment. Due to the chaotic nature

of the environment, particularly in the initial stages of set-up, some members experienced difficulties in coordinating among and within teams.

While A-DRT members praised ICS for improving communication among teams in comparison to other deployments, the need for further improvements was routinely cited. Some members claimed that the most important change would be in vertical communication, with one A-DRT leader stating that it was important for members to feel comfortable in communicating with superiors other than their immediate supervisor. Others believed that communication among teams left something to be desired. Although specific instances of problems were not cited, a team leader, speaking on a different subject, opined about the potential hazards of teams leaving a site incomplete with the result that the next team had to “go in blind.” In interviews, respondents expressed the need for a status report, or any other available information about the locality or specific disaster, to enable them to better prepare mentally and professionally while en route to the site.

While members and leaders had a variety of suggestions for improving the experience for future cohorts, all interview respondents said they would do their deployment again. Every one of them valued helping communities after a disaster.

## Limitations of Research

Given time and resource constraints, the phone interviews and online survey had a low response rate (19 out of 144). The Capstone class, attempted to increase the sample size, but obtained less responses than their target of 25 to 30. Given time and resource constraints, the Capstone class was unable to increase the final sample size.

An initial attempt to reach out to A-DRT members for phone interviews yielded a relatively low response rate. The Capstone class recreated the questionnaire in Google Forms so that A-DRT members could respond at their own convenience. This approach produced a higher response rate.

But, as a result, the data may have been biased in a variety of ways. Leaders made up a higher proportion of telephone respondents, while members made up a higher proportion of respondents to the Google Form. Since leaders had a better grasp of the ICS model, the data could be skewed toward a more positive outlook on ICS implementation during the Missouri deployment. Survey methods seemed to have an impact on the interviewees' responses. For example, nearly half of those who participated in the online interview reported to have gained hard skills during their deployment experience, compared to only one-fifth of those who were interviewed by phone. In addition, two of the people who were interviewed online said they gained no skills, while no people interviewed by phone gave that answer. Additionally, one-third of the online survey respondents expressed disappointment towards the leadership team while only one in ten responses from the phone call interviews did.



*Stuart Jones, Erin McMenam, and Capstone class briefing CNCS on A-DRT assessment*

Though it would have liked to speak with more Corps members and leaders, the qualitative information gathered from the phone interviews and online surveys was very rich. It complemented and was consistent with information obtained from members of several of the Corps during the site-visit to St. Louis.

An additional limitation in this study is a lack of information about the cost of implementing ICS in Missouri. (The Capstone class did not have access to budget figures.) As a result, the financial implications of implementing and scaling ICS are not addressed in this assessment. Further research should be undertaken to determine the cost-effectiveness of ICS.

## Recommendations

The Capstone class recommends improving training to ensure more effective implementation of ICS in the future. In addition, it recommends improving collaboration, work assignment processes, and information-sharing mechanisms before implementing ICS at larger-scale disasters. Finally, the Capstone class recommends improving the overall member experience during deployments in several tangible ways, based on what worked in Missouri.

### ***ICS Training Recommendations***

ICS was effective during the Missouri disaster, especially for those members who were already familiar with it. A more standardized, comprehensive approach to training for future A-DRT cohorts will make ICS more broadly successful.

#### *Recommendation 1: Standardize Training across Corps*

Not all Corps require the same training or ICS coursework. During the Missouri deployment, members with previous disaster-response experience and from particular Corps had a greater understanding of ICS. They disseminated information and informally trained less-experienced members. While informal training benefits those who receive quality mentorship in the field, non-standardized training can also present challenges.

Standardizing the ICS training requirements and curriculum across all Corps would improve members' ability to effectively communicate, collaborate, and respond to disasters. Given the chaotic nature of disasters, coordination is already a challenge. While various Corps and members will inevitably have differing levels of skill and experience, a baseline of ICS understanding would allow all members to speak the same language, which would, in turn, make communication and collaboration easier. Since time is limited during a disaster response, it is important that all members arrive with the same foundation in ICS to avoid having to train members in ICS in the field. In addition, because of the short-term commitments AmeriCorps members make, the turnover rate for A-DRT participants is high. As a result, to ensure members are properly trained, Corps should expect to provide annual training on ICS and disaster response.

Increased training in ICS would ensure a better understanding of the system across all Corps. The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) members were perceived to be the strongest in their understanding of the system during the Missouri deployment. The WCC training requirements could serve as a benchmark for the quality and depth of coursework and training needed for every Corps.

#### *Recommendation 2: Adopt a Comprehensive Approach to Training*

A wider array of leadership skill-building and stress-management training opportunities would help members in carrying out ICS more effectively. Members valued the opportunity to rotate across various positions and take on leadership roles, a structure that is made possible by the ICS model. However, given the chaotic nature of disasters, inexperienced members taking on leadership roles can present challenges. Providing more leadership-related skill-building workshops and trainings prior to deployments would support members in taking on their varied roles. Members cited interest in additional trainings on presentation skills, conflict resolution, and effective communication.

Cultivating more effective leadership would improve the experience not only of leaders, but also of crew members in general. In addition to improving the member experience, leadership development can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster response and leadership transitions. Furthermore, with additional training, members and leaders would better understand the concept and implementation of ICS.

Members also expressed interest in additional stress-management and personal development opportunities. They cited effective stress-management techniques as fundamental to successful on-the-job performance in a disaster. Therefore, continuing and expanding the range of self-help and stress-management training given Corps members would benefit disaster response, the ability of leaders to perform, the culture of deployments, and the well-being of members.

### ***ICS Scalability Recommendations***

Members and leaders agreed that the ICS model significantly improved the disaster response process. In order to build on the experience of ICS in Missouri and to use the system for larger disasters, improving collaboration, the work assignment process, and communication is important, since a larger scale will present challenges in each of these areas.

#### *Recommendation 3: Facilitate Collaboration*

In addition to social events, members cited the intentional mixing of people from different Corps during shifts and on teams as effective ways to build social networks. By working with different people every few days, members had the opportunity to build personal relationships, which allowed them to better communicate and collaborate with their colleagues during the deployment. In future (and larger) deployments, effective communication and coordination may be more difficult due to the increased number of members involved and wider range of their backgrounds. Therefore, providing members more opportunity to build relationships would be especially important to improve the efficiency of the ICS model.

#### *Recommendation 4: Formalize Work Assignments*

Leaders who learned about individual members' interests and skills during informal interactions had a better idea of where to assign members. In a larger-sized disaster, it may be more difficult for leaders to meet every member and informally keep track of their preferences. The number of members in need of assignments will also increase because of the size of the disaster response, thus increasing the amount of time leaders need to spend making assignments. A more streamlined and formalized approach would help leaders in making quick and more effective decisions on work assignments.

A formalized way of gathering information on individual members' interests and abilities, such as having an electronic record of each member's background, skills, and preferences that leaders can reference, would be helpful in making assignments. Since skills change, updating this file periodically based on the performance and experience of every member would be useful. Any information Corps have on members' abilities based on strength assessments, trainings completed, or certifications received could also be included in the file. Having a profile on every A-DRT participant would allow leaders to make more effective decisions about where to place members and improve the experience of members. While there is apt to be a cost associated with this type of system, perhaps CNCS could consider minimizing the expense by requiring members to maintain and update their own profiles. A Facebook-like tool could be managed by members, instantly updated, and easily accessible to members and leaders.

### *Recommendation 5: Share Information Prior to Arrival*

Members expressed interest in having more information before they arrive at the deployment site. Knowing the status of the disaster generally, how much progress has been made thus far, what the goals are in the coming days, what to expect in terms of devastation, resources, and volunteer presence, and what key community groups are involved would support members in emotionally and professionally preparing themselves en route to the disaster.

It may be impractical to expect a state-of-the-disaster report for first-responders or those who respond within the first two weeks. However, after the second week, formal reporting on the progress of the disaster response and sharing that information with new members would be feasible. A short document, updated on a bi-weekly basis by the present ICS leadership team with bullet points and photos, would help to reduce the anxiety of responders and support them in preparing for what they will encounter on the ground. On-site members could send the document to Corps leaders each time it is updated and the leader could disseminate the report to all members selected for deployment. This process would reduce information asymmetry and better prepare members emotionally for their upcoming assignments.

This recommendation would require a time commitment from the ICS leadership team. Other costs would likely be minimal, since leaders could use Microsoft Word or Google Docs to create the document and email to distribute it.

### ***Member Experience Recommendations***

Overall, members and leaders had a positive experience during their deployment: 100% of interviewees stated that they would do the Missouri deployment again. The member experience could be further enhanced by increased opportunities for relaxation, continuation of morale-boosting activities, and replication of the Missouri deployment's food and accommodation practices.

### *Recommendation 6: Designate Time and Space for Relaxing*

Members felt that they were encouraged to care for their personal well-being and to take time for relaxation. However, they struggled to find time and space to do so during deployments. The majority of members requested additional time and space to be alone. While members valued the opportunity to exercise, read, listen to music, or reflect, some would have preferred to have a specific time allotted for personal relaxation. Creating adequate space for members to remove themselves from the chaos of deployments would assist members in taking care of themselves. As stated previously, members noted a strong correlation between personal well-being and on-the-job performance.

### *Recommendation 7: Continue Morale-Boosting Activities*

Members valued social gatherings and morale-boosting activities. These activities had a positive impact on the deployment experience, personal well-being and the ability to relax, as well as on-the-job collaboration and communication. Group activities and social events, such as game nights on-site or baseball games in nearby communities, built social connections between Corps members and enhanced working relationships. Members reported being better able to communicate with their colleagues in the field because of the relationships built during these events. Additionally, leaders were able to place individuals in appropriate positions due to knowledge gained during these events. Morale-boosting activities, such as visiting therapy dogs, also had a great impact on members' perceptions of their quality of life. Community-based activities allowed members to feel more connected to the people they were serving, thus adding additional motivation to perform well on the job.

### *Recommendation 8: Replicate Missouri's Food and Accommodation Practices*

The food and accommodations in Missouri had a significantly positive impact on quality of life and individual well-being during the deployment. Members cited the cleanliness of bathrooms, accessibility to ample hot water and heat, and comfortable sleeping quarters as positive attributes. These standards should be replicated in future deployments as far as possible.

Additionally, the majority of members and leaders commented on the effectiveness of the cooking system in Missouri. Centralizing the cooking system with one designated lead cook and additional food preparation staff was helpful in reducing stress on members, who would otherwise have had to cook for themselves after a long day in the field. Replicating the cooking system used in Missouri will improve well-being and reduce stress during future deployments.

This may have monetary costs, but it is important for CNCS to compare the cost of food during the Missouri deployment with budget parameters. CNCS should also balance the expense of better quality food with the benefits to members in their quality of life and productivity.

## Conclusion

Overall, the implementation of ICS was successful in the context of the Missouri flood deployment. Research and analysis indicate the model increased efficiency and improved hierarchal communication during the disaster response. ICS also seems to have the potential to be widely adaptable and scaled to provide relief from disasters that vary in size, type, and intensity. To determine whether or not it is useful in other contexts, CNCS may want to consider performing stress tests to simulate the deployment of A-DRTs and manpower in response to different disaster types using ICS. Potential improvements of the model include better training operations, information sharing prior to and during deployment, and field coordination regarding assigned duties among crew leaders and members.

The incorporation of ICS yielded positive results for both members and leaders of participating A-DRTs. It enabled inter-organization collaboration which optimized the performance of those working within the model. The continuation of the model and future developments within its structural framework have the potential to benefit members who serve under ICS and, ultimately, the communities they are trying to help.

## Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful to Dr. Andrea Robles, Research Analyst for CNCS, for her dedication to helping our class obtain essential information, as well as for her guidance throughout our work on this project.

We also want to thank Jen Murphy, Program Officer for the Disaster Services Unit at CNCS; Mary Hyde, Director of Research and Evaluation at CNCS; and Kelly DeGraff, senior advisor at CNCS, for sharing their knowledge and time with us.

Our Capstone class would like to express our appreciation to Drs. Leslie Lenkowsky and Matthew Baggetta, Indiana University professors, for their direction during the course of our semester-long project with CNCS.

Last but not least, we wish to thank the Corps members we met and spoke with on the St. Louis deployment, particularly Luke Wigle, and all of the members at the ICP.

## References

- AmeriCorps St. Louis. (2016). "Missouri Winter Flooding 2016." Retrieved from <http://www.americorps-stl.org/our-teams/emergency-response-team/disaster-deployment-archive/missouri-winter-flooding-2016/>.
- Buck, Dick A., Joseph E. Trainor, and Benigno E. Aguirre. (2006). "A Critical Evaluation of the Incident Command System and NIMS." *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*, 3(3).
- Bigley, Gregory A. and Karlene H. Roberts. (2001). "The Incident Command System: High-Reliability Organizing for Complex and Volatile Task Environments." *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(6): 1281-1299.
- Butterfield, Karen. (2016, January 21). "AmeriCorps Helping Flood Victims Find Place to Stay." *The Missourian*. Retrieved from [http://www.emissourian.com/local\\_news/washington/americorps-helping-flood-victims-find-place-to-stay/article\\_56f75bab-87de-5198-843e-bdfdb8229b5a.html](http://www.emissourian.com/local_news/washington/americorps-helping-flood-victims-find-place-to-stay/article_56f75bab-87de-5198-843e-bdfdb8229b5a.html).
- Cardwell, Michael D. and Patrick T. Cooney. (2000). "Nationwide Application of the Incident Command System: Standardization Is the Key." *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 69.10: 10-16.
- Cole, Dana. (2000). *The Incident Command System: A 25-Year Evaluation by California Practitioners*. National Fire Academy.
- Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). (2014). "Disaster Response Framework." Retrieved from <http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CNCS%20DSU%20Disaster%20Response%20Framework.pdf>.
- DeGraff, Kelly and Jen Murphy. (2014). "At a Glance: National Service Assets in Times of Disaster." Corporation for National and Community Service. Retrieved from [http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/At\\_a\\_Glance\\_National\\_Service\\_Assets\\_in\\_Disaster.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/At_a_Glance_National_Service_Assets_in_Disaster.pdf).
- Dynes, Russell Rowe. (1970). *Organized Behavior in Disaster*. Lexington, MA: Heath Lexington.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (2011). "National Disaster Recovery Framework: Strengthening Disaster Recovery for the Nation." Retrieved from <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/recoveryframework/ndrf.pdf>.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (2013). "ICS-300: Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents." Retrieved from [http://www.in.gov/dhs/files/ICS\\_300\\_SM.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dhs/files/ICS_300_SM.pdf).
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (2015, March 9). "Incident Command System Resources." Retrieved from <https://www.fema.gov/incident-command-system-resources>.
- Hibbeler, C. (2016, March 8). AmeriCorps Deployments Assist Missouri Flood Recovery Efforts. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Retrieved from <http://interact.stltoday.com/pr/business/PR030816083125138>.

Lutz, Leslie D. and Michael K. Lindell. (2008). "Incident Command System as a Response Model within Emergency Operation Centers during Hurricane Rita." *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 16(3): 122-134.

Oh, Hongseok, Myung-Ho Chung, and Giuseppe Labianca. (2004). "Group Social Capital and Group Effectiveness: The Role of Informal Socializing Ties." *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(6): 860-875.

Wenger, Dennis, Enrico L. Quarantelli, and Russell R. Dynes. (1990). "Is the Incident Command System a Plan for all Seasons and Emergency Situations?" *Hazard Monthly*, 10(3): 8-12.

# Appendix

## Interview Questions for A-DRT members

**SPEA Capstone, Spring 2016**  
**CNCS, Missouri, AmeriCorps Disaster Response Team (A-DRT) Interview Questions**  
**(Version 3.17.16)**

*Note: Interviews should last about 40 minutes unless the respondent wishes to speak for a longer period of time. Most respondents will be working so we need to be respectful of their time.*

### **INSTRUCTIONS TO THE INTERVIEWER**

*Before the interview begins:*

1. Be familiar with the questions – take time to read through the questions so the interview flows as smoothly as possible.
2. Determine who will take notes and who will interview. The note-taker should be prepared to take notes as soon as the interview begins. Typing in the responses would be best.
3. Make sure you know the participant's name and what program they participated in. You should write that information at the top of the question sheet before the interview begins.
4. Fill out the table for questions 2.5 – 2.8 before the interview begins. If the participant had another role or position within their team that was not specified on the Excel master sheet, add that to the table during the interview.

*After the interview:*

1. Once the interview is finished, the note-taker and interviewer should review the notes and clarify or add anything that might have been missed.
2. Send our thank you note to the respondent. You should use the following template:

Dear [participant's name here],

Thank you for taking time to speak with us today. If you have any questions or concerns at this time, please don't hesitate to contact our Capstone team leader, Monica Gregory, at [mojagreg@indiana.edu](mailto:mojagreg@indiana.edu) or the CNCS lead on this project, Dr. Andrea Robles, Research Analyst, Office of Research and Evaluation at [ARobles@cns.gov](mailto:ARobles@cns.gov).

Again, thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences with us!

All the best,  
[Your names here]

### **INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT**

Hi [interviewee]. Thanks so much for agreeing to speak with us today.

Interviewer introduction(s): We have two of us on the phone and we just want to introduce ourselves. My name is [Interviewer 1], and my name is [Interviewer 2]. We are both finishing our Masters in Public Affairs at Indiana University, and we are taking this Capstone class as one of our final requirements

The purpose of our Capstone class is to work on a research-based project to help inform a client about a particular program or policy and make recommendations on improvements to that program or policy. Our Capstone is made up entirely of graduate students, and our goal is to gather experiences from the various teams deployed to Missouri over the past couple of months.

We had an opportunity to work with the Office of Research and Evaluation and the Disaster Services Unit at CNCS. They are very interested in our learning more about how the ICS model worked in the MO deployment. CNCS wants to better understand the general experiences the team had both with the ICS model and the deployment in general so that they can learn what worked or what can be improved for future deployments. That is why we would like to speak with you today.

We obtained permission from the Disaster Services Unit at CNCS – more specifically we obtained permission from Kelly DeGraff and Jen Murphy – to conduct some follow up interviews with individuals who deployed in January and February to MO. We randomly selected names from a master list of A-DRT members and staff, and your name was one of the names chosen.

Just to reiterate, this interview will take approximately 30 minutes and your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to or not to participate, there will be no effects or consequences either way. Furthermore, you can opt to skip any question for any reason. Just let us know as we proceed through the interview. Your name will be kept confidential. No one outside our Capstone team will know whether you chose to or not to participate. In our final write up we will not attribute any statement or experience to any individual but will use pseudonyms or write in generalities.

We will use material we have collected and the information we learn from the interviews to write up a report and give a briefing to CNCS and A-DRT leadership so they can better understand the team's experiences and how to make improvements to the training and the deployment experience in the future.

Do you have any questions so far?

Can we have your verbal approval to interview you?

IF YES: Ok – great (see question 1)

IF NO: Ok – no problem. Thank you for your time and good luck with your work!

## **I. CLARIFYING BACKGROUND QUESTIONS**

Before we begin asking you about your experiences with the deployment, we just want to ask a few clarifying questions.

1.1. Affiliation and Current Role

1.a. You are affiliated with [CHOOSE ONE:

[St. Louis –ERT, Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), OR Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI), OR Texas Conservation Corps (TxCC), OR AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps

(NCCC), OR Hoopa Tribal Civilian Community Corps (TCCC), OR Volunteer Iowa], right? [get this information from our master Excel sheet]

1.b. What is your affiliation with your program? Are you an AmeriCorps member or CNCS staff? [If they are neither, ask them their affiliation.]

1.c. How long have you been [a member OR working] with [CHOOSE ONE: St. Louis –ERT, Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), OR Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI), OR Texas Conservation Corps (TxCC), OR AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), OR Hoopa Tribal Civilian Community Corps (TCCC), OR Volunteer Iowa].

1.2 Deployments

1.2.a. Was this your first deployment? YES or NO

1.2.b. How long was your deployment in MO?

1.2.c. [If they responded YES to 1.2.a] How many deployments have you done previously?

1.2.d. When did you do your deployments?

1.2.e. Where were the deployments?

**II. EXPERIENCES WITH MISSOURI DEPLOYMENT**

2.1. Why did you decide to join AmeriCorps?

2.2. Why or how did you decide to join [CHOOSE ONE: St. Louis – ERT, Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), OR Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI), OR Texas Conservation Corps (TxCC), OR AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), OR Hoopa Tribal Civilian Community Corps (TCCC), OR Volunteer Iowa]?

2.3. What were your experiences during the first 48 hours of your deployment?

2.4. We have that you served as [insert role(s) here from Excel master sheet]. Did you serve in additional roles that we missed?

Questions	Position/Role 1	Position/Role 2	Position/Role 3
2.5 What did an average day look like in [insert name of role here]?	2.5.a	2.5.b	2.5.c
2.6 What skills did you feel you gained with [insert name of role here]?	2.6.a.	2.6.b	2.6.c
2.7 What were some of the challenges of your role as [insert name of role here]?	2.7.a	2.7.b	2.7.c
2.8 Were there skills or knowledge you wish you would have had to perform you work as [insert name of role here]?	2.8.a	2.8.b	2.8.c

2.9.a [*If member changed roles or positions in MO*]: How did you feel about changing positions or roles during the deployment?

2.9.b. How could the process of changing positions or roles be improved?

2.10.a How were the food and accommodations?

2.10.b What did you enjoy most about food and accommodations?

2.10.c How could they be improved?

2.11.a We have heard that deployments like this are very stressful. How did you alleviate stress when you were not working?

2.11.b What did you find to be the best ways to alleviate stress?

2.12.a Knowing that any deployment is hard work and can be psychologically stressful, what did you find to be the most difficult part of this work?

2.12.b How could stress be relieved in future deployments?

### **III. ICS MODEL**

3.1. [*If deployed before*]: What were the major differences between this deployment and past deployments?

3.2. What did you find most effective about the ICS model?

3.3. What were the most difficult parts of working under the ICS model?

3.4. How were you supported by leaders or staff members through this model?

### **IV. COLLABORATION**

4.1. What was your experience working with the groups from other A-DRT programs?

4.2. Did you collaborate with other groups or organizations during the deployment? Can you describe who they were and how you collaborated with them?

4.3. How could your collaboration with other groups or organizations be improved in the future?

### **V. TRAINING**

5.1. What type of training did you receive to prepare you to be part of A-DRT and for the MO deployment?

5.1.a. Did you watch the FEMA ICS training video before your deployment? YES or NO

5.1.b [IF YES] How helpful was that in preparing you to understand the ICS model and the MO deployment?

5.1.c [IF NO] How challenging was that in terms of preparing you to understand the ICS structure and the MO deployment?

5.2. What aspects of your training were the most beneficial?

5.3. What other training would you recommend that A-DRT members receive both before their deployment and during their deployment?

## **VI. ENDING QUESTIONS**

6.1. Overall, what were the best parts of your deployment?

6.2. Overall, what about the experience of this deployment did you feel could be improved for future deployment ?

6.3. Besides the skills you described you learned in your positions, did you gain any other skills while on deployment?

6.4. If you could do it over again, would you? Why or why not?

Do you have any questions for us?

Thank you so much for your time and all of your thoughtful responses! If you think of anything else you would like to add, please feel free to e-mail us or call us. We will follow up with an email that includes our contact information as well as the contact information for the CNCS lead on this project.

Thanks again, and have a great day!

