

Incident Based Automation, IBA, System
Business Process Modeling, Interview
Finance Section Chief, Type 1
December 14, 2006

Interview Notes by Craig Tanner, Senior Enterprise Architect

NOTE: See interviewer questions at bottom based on interview write-up. Answer to be provided for finalization of interview notes.

Question: What are the primary duties of the Finance Section Chief?

Answer:

Supervising the Finance/Administration Section. The Finance Section Chief reports to the Incident Commander and is a member of the General Staff.

Question: How are you first notified about an incident and what are your initial actions?

Answer:

1. Usually receive a call from dispatch that type 1 resources have been requested
2. The Finance Section Chief usually has to contact all of the Finance Section team members by phone to notify them.
 - a. Cost
 - b. Time
 - c. Proc
 - d. Comp-Claims
 - e. Other, optionally for equipment and time records
3. Each of the primary finance section resources has appropriate "kit" material (reference documents, blank forms, office supplies) with them to take to the incident to operate for the first 48 hours -- just in case they have a delay in getting the system (I-Suite) set up.
4. Contact the Incident Business Advisor (IBA) for initial information, e.g., FEMA, about things that effect Finance.
5. If transitioning in, Finance Section Chief must collect information from outgoing Finance Section Chief, outgoing Incident Commander or other personnel responsible for incident prior to her arrival.

Question: What are your actions when first arriving onsite?

Answer:

1. Initial information gathering starts right away. Finance team members must start gathering information about financial transactions that may have already taken place prior to their arrival.

2. If transitioning in: the Finance Section staff must shadow the outgoing staff for the first 24 hours to determine the status of all records kept thus far and to locate documents, priorities, etc.
3. If first in: Set up – sometimes they have to wait for an office trailer to arrive and then for the computer network to be set up. Most of the time they are up and running within hours.
4. Mandatory attendance for Finance Section Chief at the in-briefing with other section chiefs and the commanding officer. Responsible for overall finance package which is a legal document. Also helps to determine the timeframes for required briefings and meetings.
5. Issued laptop
 - a. Finance unit log
 - b. Record results of meetings

Question: What are the primary steady state functions performed at an incident by the Finance Section Chief?

Answer:

1. The Finance Section Chief monitors the accounting and reporting of time and costs for equipment. All equipment accounting must be entered in a timely fashion. Delays will have an impact on the Accrual Report. Also, resources can be required to wait and accrue additional time during demobilization to complete the Obligation documents.
 - a. Crew Time Reports, CTR – The primary reporting mechanism for time utilization by people. These can be used by individuals as well as crews. This is the source document for everything they generate on an incident and is a carbonized form.
 - b. Accrual Reporting – The U.S. Forest Service requires that a report be sent within a certain amount of time to see how much cost and obligations are being applied to a fire—this report is due within 24 hours.
 - c. Obligation documents – These are the cost (obligation) amounts that are turned in by team leads.
 - i. Without these reports being done in a timely manner, the impact on agencies is in not being able to report on cost obligations.
 - ii. Resources cannot demobilize without the obligations being recorded.
 - iii. Federal Regulations/Laws are in place so that the Federal Treasury will know how much money they will need to have ready in order to pay for the obligations. They must be able to prepare for the payment of these obligations and the reporting by the Finance Section is critical to this process.
2. The Finance Section Chief resolves issues from unit leaders
 - a. Land Use Agreements - The Finance Section Chief negotiates with land owner for camp and all resources. Land Use Agreement provides authority and includes responsibility for rehabilitating, replacing water, etc.
 - i. Procurement Unit Lead provides provides Contracting Warrant

- ii. Negotiating may require going to agency for additional funding
 - iii. Service Level Agreements can be in place via prior agreement or can be enacted as a new agreement during an incident. Land Use Agreements is an example of this where private property is used for the incident base, ponds and lakes are used for water.
 - b. The Finance Section Chief contacts other section chiefs (normally Operations) regarding individuals or crews not turning in time
 - c. Comp Claims – Injury/Illness/Claims documents – the finance section chief looks for trends and works with the safety officer in reviewing claims. The finance section owns comp claims because it involves monetary claims.
 - d. Assisting in the creation of the Incident Action Plan. The Finance Section Chief informs the IC of the finance perspective and participates in the creation and review of the IAP.
 - i. cost analysis data about incident operations
 - ii. Planning for future costs, cost controls and limitations
 - iii. procurement of additional resources
3. Preparation and maintenance of the Finance Package. The Finance Package is literally a box containing all financial records that the host agency and others want turned in to them at the conclusion of the incident.
- a. Standard Format
 - b. Much of the information provided by finance and input into I-Suite is used for producing hardcopy reports. ISuite generates:
 - i. Cost summary
 - ii. Usage
 - iii. Time reports
 - c. Information from the Finance Package becomes part of the Incident Action Plan (IAP)
 - d. Examples of these documents include:
 - i. Daily Cost Summary
 - ii. Incident Cost Totals
 - iii. Copies of use invoices for equipment
 - iv. LS – 288 Time report for all resources
 - v. Backup documentation (e.g., from Forest Service, BLM, Fish and Wildlife, State government)
 - vi. Comp Claims
 - e. Accounting for use of equipment time
 - i. Outlines in Contract
 - ii. The Finance Section Chief informs Operations Chief about restrictions.
 - 1. The source of triggering events, for example, might be the shift ticket or a contractor informing finance.
 - 2. The Finance Section Chief contacts Claims about damages

Question: In summary, what are the monitoring and control activities of the Finance Section during the Incident?

1. Monitoring of financial information related to
 - a) Claims
 - b) Injuries
 - c) Commissary
 - d) Procurement
 - e) Pay
 - f) Work/rest guidelines.

Recommendations and Issues:

1. Additional information fields are required in I-Suite to save manually writing justification information on forms. The time reporting situations where a resource has worked for more than 16 hours within 24 hours requires a justification for why and it must be signed by the supervisor of that resource. I-Suite Excess Hours Report doesn't allow this justification information to be printed on the hardcopy log even though it has been entered electronically. The problem is that the justifications must be transcribed from ISuite and re-written by hand on the hardcopy report.
2. Ditto the above for the equipment log.
3. Data interfaces that will allow I-Suite to generate electronic time report transfers directly to resource's home agency and claims to state agencies.
 - a. Will reduce reentry of this information by the home agency because they now have to do this from the hard copy given to the resource upon their demobilization from the incident.
 - b. Electronic transfer of comp claims to state governments where each state government has unique requirements for processing claims.
4. More live camera feeds of the fire or near-real-time satellite images
5. Wireless network capability to relieve the overhead for installing and disposal of wire lines.

Questions:

1. What are the primary forms used by the Finance Section Chief?
2. Are all costs and expenses reported on the "Accrual Report"? Is the deadline 24 – 72 hours from the time of incurring the cost or from the time Finance receives the receipt?