

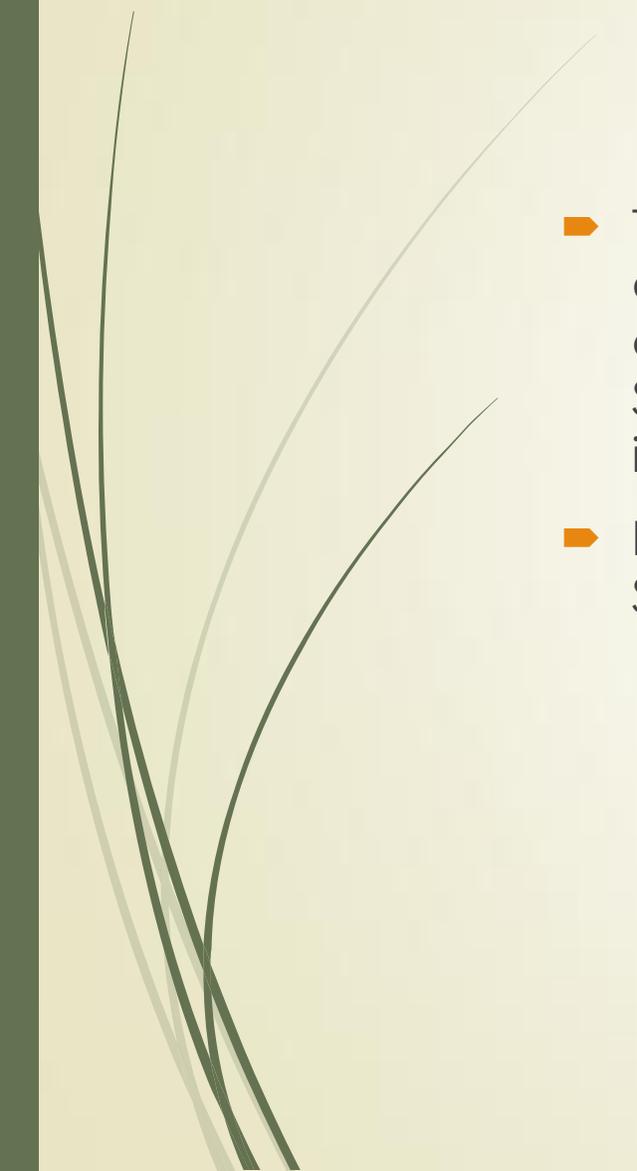


Gold King Mine Release Incident 2015

Participation and Observation in the Incident Command Post as a Planning
Section Chief



Disclaimer:

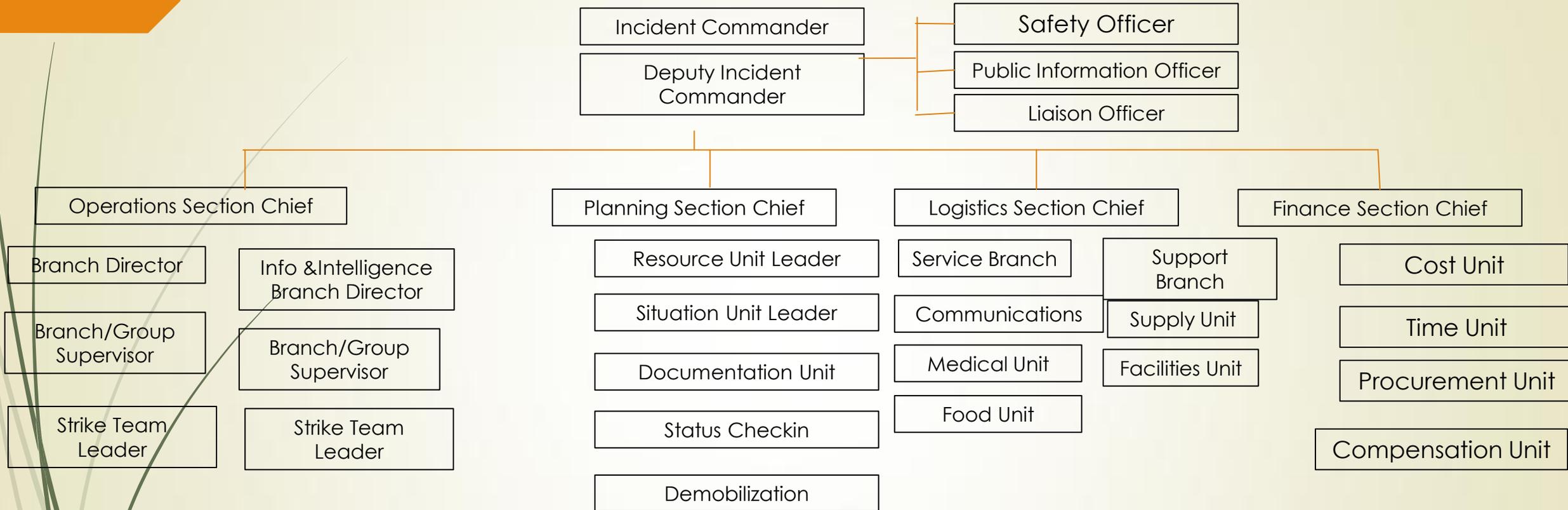
- ▶ The comments, experiences, rants and suggestions you are about to hear are from my own personal experience and may not represent the same comments, experiences, rants or suggestions from any other member of the Southwest Incident Management team or any other person or entity involved in the Gold King Mine Incident.
 - ▶ I am sharing the perspective of my position during the event, as a Planning Section Chief trainee from the Southwest Incident Management Team.
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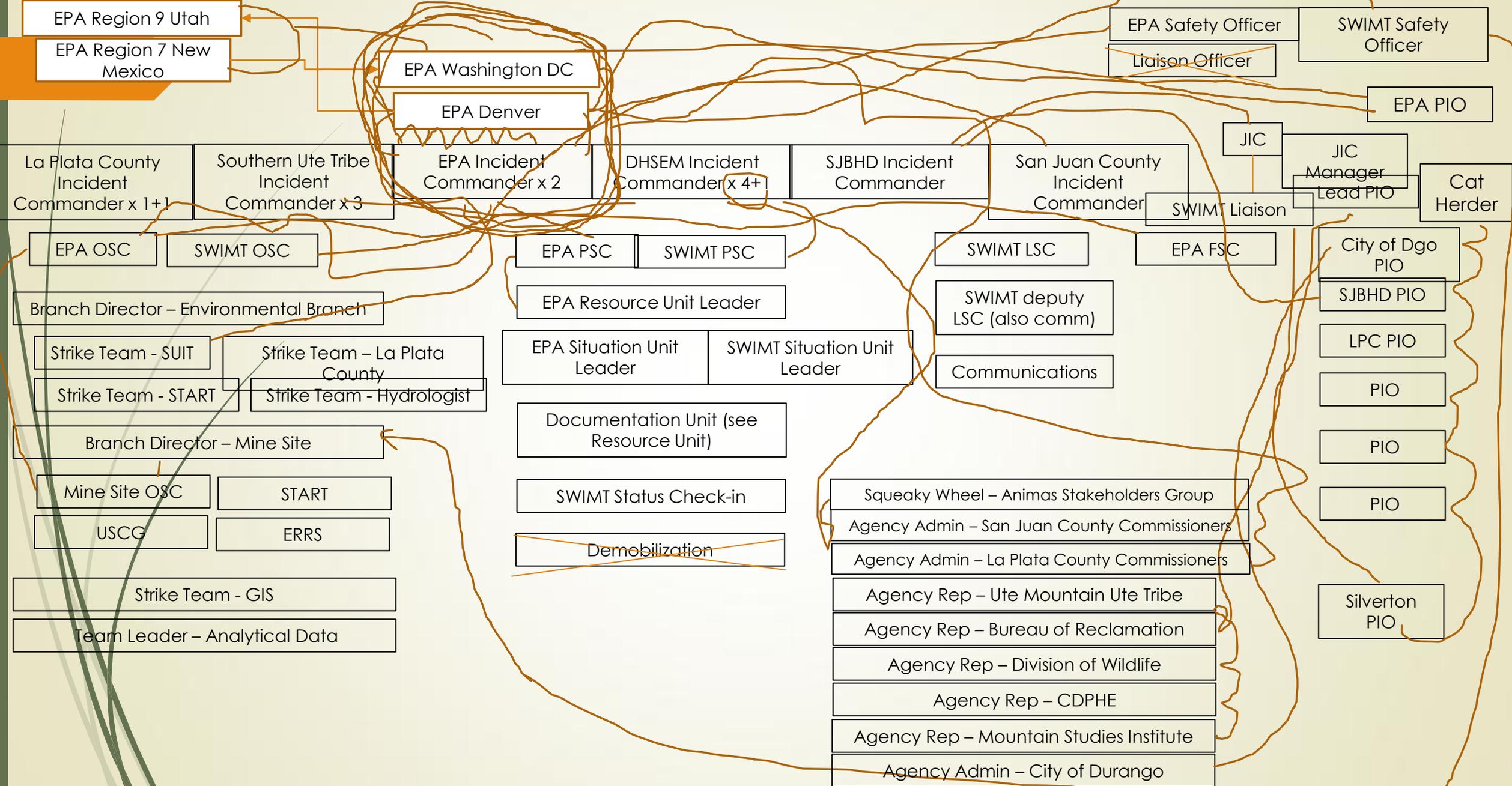
My background:

- ▶ Seven years – working for Montezuma County Public Health Department.
- ▶ Five years – Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Coordinator, based at Montezuma County Public Health Department.
- ▶ Member of Southwest Incident Management Team for three years.
- ▶ Resource Unit Leader, Situation Unit Leader, Planning Section Chief trainee. Task books are filled out and ready for review and sign off.
- ▶ Prior deployments to Evans' floods, West Fork fire (shadow), CEMA conference (2 years), several local events, numerous large-scale exercises.

Basic ICS Organization



Gold King Mine Incident ICS Organization (as best as we could figure out)





My timeline

- ▶ Incident occurred on Tuesday, August 4
 - ▶ I was called up on August 12
 - ▶ First day of work August 13 (Day 9 of the event)
 - ▶ Worked August 13-22 with one day off.
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Organization – Unified Command (sort of)

- ▶ Incident Commanders:
 - ▶ La Plata County – two people
 - ▶ EPA – one person, but switched out during my deployment
 - ▶ State of Colorado – four Field Managers (rotating), one DHSEM head
 - ▶ San Juan Basin Health Department
 - ▶ Southern Ute Tribe – three people rotating
- ▶ No one spokesperson among them
- ▶ Many (most) of them might have been better as Agency Representatives
- ▶ A neutral IC was needed.

Challenges in the General ICS Structure

- ▶ No Unity of Command – reporting to one person.
- ▶ No complexity analysis done immediately
- ▶ EOC not opened
- ▶ Objectives
 - ▶ Not necessarily assigned to specific people
 - ▶ Eighteen objectives and sub-objectives to start
 - ▶ Not updated for over a week
- ▶ No limitations and constraints
- ▶ Open items not addressed
- ▶ Operational period started at 24 hours, then went to 72 hours
- ▶ EPA rules disallowing any information to go out without permission
- ▶ No Logistics Section Chief at start
- ▶ No Liaison
- ▶ No demobilization plan



Planning Section Challenges

- ▶ First deployment for many EPA people
- ▶ No field experience in ICS
- ▶ No lead PSC. Position was “shared”
- ▶ Planning Section positions were understaffed
- ▶ No 209 - Incident Status summary
- ▶ No 215 – Operational Planning Sheet
- ▶ No 213RR – Resource ordering sheet
- ▶ No 214 – Unit log
- ▶ No explanation for extended operational periods. “It’s just the way we do it”
- ▶ EPA policies prohibited my replacement for 3 days.



Takeaways

- ▶ FOLLOW THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM!!!!
- ▶ Order help early
- ▶ Do a complexity analysis early and often
- ▶ Bring in an Incident Commander with no emotional or political ties.
- ▶ Choose your Unified Command staff wisely.
- ▶ Avoid the “revolving door”
- ▶ Staff G&GS position with experienced staff, and staff deep.
- ▶ Manage by objectives
- ▶ Manage the incident. Don't let the incident manage you!



Questions?

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