

The Importance of Incident Command Vests for Large and Small teams

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EINPresswire.com/ -- When responding to a scene of an incident or disaster, fast identification and recognition of safety officers can be life-saving.

[Incident Command Vests](#) (ICVs) play an integral role in helping identify emergency response team members and communicating which jobs and responsibilities they have for large organizations with a vast hierarchy of emergency team members and roles. However, there are economical solutions for smaller organizations as well.



Incident Command Vests

Learn about ICVs, who wears them, and why they are essential in emergencies.

What Are Incident Command Vests?

An Incident Command Vest (ICV) is a type of reflective safety vest primarily worn by emergency response teams (ERTs) or incident response teams (IRTs).

Although the most common type of ICV-wearing teams includes personnel from local government or emergency services, such as law enforcement, firefighters, or EMTs, non-government, private businesses, and schools may also operate ERTs or IRTs, and these teams also need ICVs.

For example, members of a community emergency response team (CERT), a school emergency response team, or a private business's internal emergency response team may all use ICVs.

Features of ICVs

The primary purpose of an Incident Command Vest is to rapidly identify emergency response personnel according to their respective roles in the Incident Command System or another

hierarchy system.

An ICV features many of the same elements as standard safety vests: they are typically constructed of high-durability synthetic fibers, such as polyester, and feature bright colors and light-reflective surfaces.

Most ICVs feature large transparent plastic holders on the back for inserting identification elements. They allow an ERT to assign placards to different roles according to their incident command system.

For more practicality, most incident command vests also feature additional pockets, such as outer breast pockets, which the wearer can use to carry additional identification placards.

ANSI Certified vs. Non-ANSI

As with standard safety vests, ICVs may either be ANSI-certified or non-ANSI.

ANSI-certified vests are products adhering to the [ANSI/ISEA 107 standard](#) for visibility in outdoor environments. Certified vests are rated according to two categorization systems: Classes and Types.

ANSI-107 Classes determine the minimum surface area of reflective material and range from Class 1 (least reflective) to Class 3 (most reflective).

ANSI-107 Types indicate the intended work environment and wearer's proximity to high-speed traffic.

- Type O (Off-road) means the ICV is primarily designed for use in off-road environments or areas with low amounts of traffic, where the average vehicle speed is low.
- Type R (Roadway) indicates an ICV with enough reflective material for safe usage on or near public roadways with medium traffic speed.
- Type P (Public safety) indicates an ICV with sufficient reflective material for safe use in environments with high-speed traffic, at night, or where personnel may not be able to pay attention to incoming traffic at all times.

Non-ANSI ICVs are a cost-effective option that can provide adequate levels of light reflection in most environments (e.g., buildings, warehouses, school campuses, factories, etc.) without the need to adhere to outdoor visibility standards.

A non-ANSI vest is no less safe than a certified vest; it is simply not certified by the ANSI for use in outdoor settings with nearby traffic.

Who Needs to Wear an ICV?

Although any organization with an emergency response team can issue ICVs to its members, they are most effective when organizations adhere to the ICS standard developed by FEMA under the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Color-Coding System

One common application in larger organizations is to assign one ICV color per section. For instance, the Incident Commander and other top-level members of an ICS-100 team may receive red vests, while other sections may have their own colors.

For the majority of simpler and smaller organization structures, like private businesses or schools, a single [red ICV](#) with pockets for role placards is often adequate.

Identification Placards

Identification placards on ICVs can be either directly printed on the back of the vests or use a modular system, using either a clear plastic holder or a hook-and-loop surface to accept detachable placards.

Each placard should be unique, maybe color-coded, and display the exact role of the wearer within the response team's incident command system (e.g., a red ICV with a color-coded placard for "Operations Chief" and another color placard for "First Aid Support"). Different colored vests may be needed for larger organizations where it is important to identify many different ERT roles.

Why Are ICVs Essential?

Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) are the first on the scene of an incident, disaster, or another crisis event. Fast and clear communication is crucial during emergency response tasks. ERTs must assess the situation, evaluate safety concerns, potential risk points, and threat factors, and coordinate appropriate responses and measures while ensuring the safety of all other individuals on the scene.

One of the essential elements of emergency response communication is to ensure the fast and positive identification of all qualified personnel. Although active communication (e.g., verbal commands) is crucial, passive communication can also contribute to successfully managing an emergency.

One of the most basic forms of passive communication is identifying symbols, colors, and signage. A fleet of Incident Command Vests, with unique placards, represents an effective

passive communication method, for smaller organizations or teams with limited roles. Color-coded vests may be needed when many roles need to be distinguished. In both scenarios, easily readable placards describing each team member's role, are also helpful.

Outfitting an Incident Command Team

Look for a supplier with a wide selection of work safety equipment, including ANSI-certified reflective vests, ICVs, and other high-visibility apparel. An economical red ICV with a clear back placard pocket is a popular solution for smaller teams at schools, municipalities, and local communities, where the role hierarchy is limited.

Andrew Scherz

360 USA

+1 714-717-0702

sales@360usaproducts.com

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