



# Coffee Break Training - Emergency Medical Services

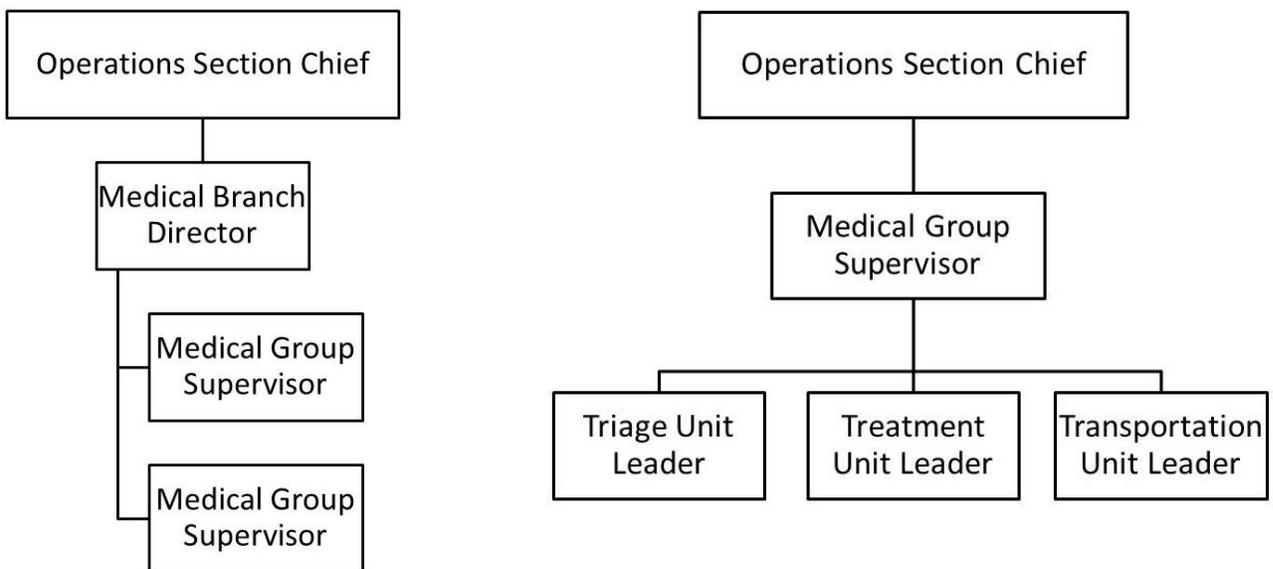
## Medical Components of the Incident Command System: Medical Branch Versus Medical Group

No. EMS-2014-4 July 30, 2014

**Learning Objective:** The student will be able to understand the difference between the use of a Medical Branch and a Medical Group.

In the National Incident Management System, the Incident Command System (ICS) is an organizational structure that allows responders to match the complexities and demands of each incident while allowing all responders to know their roles and work together across jurisdictional and agency boundaries.

The Medical Branch Director and the Medical Group Supervisor have similar roles and responsibilities when one or the other is designated. When both are designated, Medical Group Supervisors report to the Medical Branch Director. The two possible organizational structures are shown below.



Why the two different titles? When is either designated? It all goes back to incident complexity and the expandable organizational chart of ICS. During a less complex incident, where only one set of triage, treatment and transportation functions is expected to be established, a Medical Group Supervisor can effectively manage the span of control required. During a more complex incident, where multiple sets of Triage Units and Treatment Units are expected to be established, each set of units should report to a Medical Group. The Medical Group Leaders, in turn, will report to a single Medical Branch Director. These options allow for maintaining appropriate span of control while adapting the ICS organization to the incident complexity.

In upcoming Coffee Break Trainings, we will further define the roles and responsibilities of the Medical Branch Director and the Medical Group Supervisor. For additional information regarding ICS responsibilities, the U.S. Fire Administration/National Fire Academy Field Operations Guide can be accessed at <http://feti.lsu.edu/municipal/NFA/TRADE/materials/TRADE%20CD%20XVI//WebHelp/index.htm>.