

# AIIMS

## Awareness

A Plain-English Study Guide

*Understanding the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System*

### ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This is an independent, plain-English awareness guide produced by Take 5 Academy to help you understand the core ideas of AIIMS — the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System — and prepare for the Take 5 Academy AIIMS Awareness assessment.

AIIMS is Australia's national incident-management doctrine, developed and maintained by **AFAC** (the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council). This guide is **not** an official AIIMS publication and is not endorsed by AFAC. For the official AIIMS manual and accredited training, go to the source: **[afac.com.au](https://afac.com.au)**.

# 1 · What AIIMS Is — and Where It Came From

*AIIMS is the way Australia manages incidents. Whether it's a single truck rollover or a state-wide bushfire, AIIMS gives everyone who responds one common structure, one common language, and one common set of rules — so a firefighter, a council officer and a volunteer can all slot into the same machine and pull in the same direction.*

**What the letters mean.** AIIMS stands for the **Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System**. "Inter-service" is the heart of it: the whole point is that different services work together, not in silos.

**Where it came from.** AIIMS was first developed in **1983**, in the aftermath of the **Ash Wednesday bushfires**, by what was then the Forests Commission Victoria. Those fires showed in the most painful way what happens when agencies turn up with different systems and no shared chain of command. AIIMS was the answer to that.

**Who owns it.** The custodian of AIIMS is **AFAC** — the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council. AFAC maintains the doctrine and runs the official training.

**Who uses it.** Not just firefighters. AIIMS is used right across **fire and emergency services, government agencies, not-for-profit organisations and industry** — any group that might have to manage or respond to an incident. That's exactly why it matters to people on a worksite, not only people in a fire truck.

## 2 · The Five Principles

*Five simple principles hold the whole system together. Learn these five and you understand how AIIMS thinks.*

### Management by Objectives

Everyone works toward **one clear set of objectives**. The objectives say what we're trying to achieve; the people on the ground work out how. No matter how many agencies turn up, there is only ever **one** set of incident objectives — never one per agency. Everybody pulls the same rope.

### Functional Management

The response is organised by the **job that needs doing** (the function), not by which uniform you wear or who you normally work for. You're grouped by what you're there to do, which keeps roles clear when strangers from different agencies have to work side by side.

### Span of Control

A supervisor should only manage a **workable number of people** — in incident management, that's usually **three to seven**. Push past that and things start getting dropped. When a team gets too big, you split it and add another layer of supervision.

### Flexibility

AIIMS **scales up and down** to match the incident. For a small job you might only stand up one or two functions. For a major emergency you can staff all of them, fully. Same system, stretched or shrunk to fit — that's what makes it work for a shed fire and a cyclone alike.

### Unity of Command

Every person reports to **one supervisor, and only one**. No mixed messages, no two bosses, no confusion about who's in charge of you. In a fast, stressful, dangerous environment, that single clear line is what keeps people safe.

**COMMON TRAP**

"Chain of Delegation" is not one of the five principles. The five are Management by Objectives, Functional Management, Span of Control, Flexibility, and Unity of Command. If you see "Chain of Delegation" in the assessment — it's a distractor.

## 3 - The Eight Functions

If the principles are how AIIMS thinks, the functions are the **jobs** it splits an incident into. There are **eight**. On a small incident only the first one or two might be active; on a big one, all eight are staffed — that's Flexibility in action.

<b>Control</b>	Overall command. Provides strategic leadership and runs the whole response. There is one Control.
<b>Operations</b>	The pointy end. Manages all the <b>tactical</b> work on the ground — reducing the hazard and protecting life and property.
<b>Planning</b>	Works out the plan and produces the <b>Incident Action Plan</b> (see next section).
<b>Intelligence</b>	Collects, evaluates and shares <b>information</b> — weather, hazard behaviour, resource status — so decisions are made on facts.
<b>Public Information</b>	Handles communication with the <b>public and the media</b> , keeping the messaging consistent and accurate.
<b>Logistics</b>	Gets the <b>people, gear and supplies</b> the operation needs, when it needs them.
<b>Finance</b>	Tracks the <b>money</b> — costs, payments and resource accounting.
<b>Investigation</b>	Looks into the <b>cause</b> of the incident.

Remember the trigger: a small incident might run on just **Control and Operations**. A major one uses all **eight**. The structure expands to meet the incident — never the other way around.

## 4 - The Incident Action Plan (IAP)

The **Incident Action Plan** is produced by the **Planning** function. It sets out the incident **objectives, strategies and tactics** for a defined **operational period** (think: the plan for this shift). It's the single playbook everyone on the response is working from — which is how a hundred people in different roles still end up working toward the same one set of objectives.

## 5 · Key Terms — Quick Reference

<b>AIIMS</b>	Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System — Australia's national incident-management doctrine.
<b>AFAC</b>	Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council — the custodian of AIIMS.
<b>Control</b>	Overall strategic command of the incident.
<b>Operations</b>	Manages tactical activity on the ground.
<b>Planning</b>	Develops the plan; produces the Incident Action Plan.
<b>Intelligence</b>	Collects, evaluates and disseminates information for decisions.
<b>Public Information</b>	Manages communication with public and media.
<b>Logistics</b>	Sources people, equipment and supplies.
<b>IAP</b>	Incident Action Plan — objectives, strategies and tactics for one operational period.
<b>Unity of Command</b>	Every person reports to one — and only one — supervisor.
<b>Span of Control</b>	A supervisor manages a workable number of people (≈ 3–7).
<b>Management by Objectives</b>	One shared set of incident objectives for everyone.
<b>Functional Management</b>	Organise by the job to be done, not by agency.
<b>Flexibility</b>	The structure scales up and down to fit the incident.

## 6 · Ready? Sit the Assessment

When you can explain the five principles, name the eight functions, and say what an IAP is in your own words — you're ready. The Take 5 Academy AIIMS Awareness assessment is **15 questions**; score **80% or above** to pass and claim your certificate.

**Take the assessment at [take5media.com.au/aiims-assessment.html](https://take5media.com.au/aiims-assessment.html)**

For the official AIIMS manual and accredited training, visit AFAC at [afac.com.au](https://afac.com.au). This guide is an independent plain-English companion produced by Take 5 Academy and is not affiliated with or endorsed by AFAC.