

# ICARS Quick Reference Guide (April /2004)

For more detail see the ICARS User Guide

## HELP

I-Suite Website: <http://isuite.nwcg.gov>

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I-Suite Partners and what they track are:

**ITS**—Incident Time System – Personnel and equipment time

**IRSS**—Incident Resource Status System – Resources

**ICARS**—Incident Cost Accounting & Reporting System – Costs

**IAP**—Incident Action Plan

## INITIAL SETUP (STAND-ALONE ICARS)

1. To create a database for your incident, use the I-Suite Administrators Guide.
2. Find the ICARS icon and double click on it. In the open box that appears you will need to enter the server and database names that you attached in step 1 above.
3. Go to EDIT ->CREATE INCIDENT to create an Incident in the Incident Table.
4. Go to the EDIT ->RESOURCES and begin entering resources in the Resource table
5. Click on display daily and look at the auto created cost information in the daily table. ICARS will create daily costs for most resources based on information in the Kind and Rates tables. Begin adjusting estimates and replacing with actual costs, as appropriate.

## INITIAL SETUP (ICARS IN I-SUITE)

1. Network your computer with partner computers in I-Suite mode (See the Computer Technical Specialist)
2. Open ICARS.
3. In the open box that appears you will need to enter the server and database names that your CTSP has set up.
4. Go to the Resources table and begin entering resources in coordination with I-Suite partners, paying particular attention to resources that are not entered through the check-in process.
5. Follow item 5 for the stand-alone (above). The main difference between these is that in I-Suite there is an interface with the Incident Time System. This interface will overwrite estimates in the daily table with actual hours and costs from ITS.

## TRANSITIONS BETWEEN TEAMS

### 1. Departing Cost Unit Leader shall:

- A. Leave as much documentation as possible on assumptions you have made and information you have gathered.

- B. Always backup your data as described in the I-Suite Administrators Guide. (If I-Suite is being used, this will be handled by the CTS).

- C. Directly interface with the new CUL whenever possible to pass along this information.

### 2. Arriving Cost Unit Leader shall:

- A. Gather all documentation and a copy of the I-Suite database. Make sure that the database is a compatible version to the I-Suite software you are using.
- B. Copy the database file to your hard drive, or server PC.
- C. Start ICARS and from the server & database selection screen, select the correct server & database. Your CTSP will assist you in finding the file location. If there is no CTSP, you will need to reference the I-Suite Administrators Guide for direction on attaching databases.
- D. Open the Resource and Daily tables to familiarize yourself with the contents of the database. Review the assumptions given for costs gathered, if available. Otherwise attempt to determine the basis for costs gathered, so you can make sure you are handling those costs correctly for future days.

## KEYS TO USING ICARS IN A NETWORKED I-SUITE ENVIRONMENT

1. Update the personnel and equipment costs in the daily table by clicking on the Refresh/Create Daily/ITS Update button in the Resource screen. The Cost Level field in the daily table will contain an "E" for original estimate, a "U" for user updated and an "A" for actual costs from ITS.
2. Clearly establish working guidelines with other I-Suite partners such as who will update data, and how backups will occur. Ensure that you all agree to not delete records in the resource table for any reason without checking with the other partners.
3. Resource table entries will be entered at check-in by the resource unit. Typically this will include a line for every resource, including personnel, pickups, etc. [which you may be used to entering in a consolidated manner].
4. You will need to pay attention to all resources on the fire, and ensure that they are all shown in the database. Some of the resources & costs not typically entered through check-in, which will need to be entered by the CUL, are:
  - a. Aircraft;
  - b. National Contract Showers & Caterer;
  - c. Supplies;
  - d. Building/site rental fees; and
  - e. Utilities like Water, Electricity, Phones
5. Strike teams of engines and crews may be entered through IRSS. In ICARS you will see a strike team parent record with no costs and each of the strike team elements (crews or engines) with costs for that element.

## KEY DATA ENTRY TABLES

**Incident** – Describes the incident. The ‘Name’ you enter here is the name that will appear atop all of your reports. Accurately enter the two digit state identifier.

**Resources** – List of resources assigned.

**Daily** – Cost information by date by resource.

**Divisions** – Create and use divisions for cost sharing or to track a cost center. The division table is used exclusively by ICARS so you can set up Divisions that meet your cost tracking needs however you want. For example, division assignments can be actual Divisions like A, B, C or derived divisions like S for support and Z for aircraft.

## KEY LOOKUP TABLES

**Kind** – Resources by NWCG mnemonic code, including report groupings & daily table defaults.

**Rates** – Standard estimated rates for most resources.

**Home Unit** – NWCG Mnemonic for the specific unit a resource is from. The only use in ICARS is to track local resources on an incident. To do this, edit the local field in the table.

**Agency** – This table has two uses. The first is to identify the Agency or entity, which “owns” the resource. The second is to identify the agency that has the fiscal responsibility to pay the resource through contract or agreement (e.g., a PVT agency resource may be contracted and paid for by the state or federal).

**Obligation** – For use in grouping costs to obligation categories.

## CUSTOMIZING LOOKUP TABLES

When you customize lookup tables, those changes are made to this database only. If you copy this database those changes will follow. However if you open another database those changes will not be there.

Be very careful when editing the Kind table, as changes will affect how resources are grouped for display in all reports and charts. Please reference the ICARS users guide prior to editing lookup tables. If you add Kinds you must notify users of IRSS so they can complete the IRSS fields for the record you added.

## STANDARDS & TRICKS FOR ENTERING DATA

### Resource Table

1. Use consistent naming conventions. (i.e.: Hand crew-Prineville and Hand crew-Eldorado or Prineville Hotshots and Eldorado Hotshots)
2. The Request # is required. If you don’t know it then field but always use it. It will help to identify missing or duplicate records.

3. If a resource has traveled before the check in date, you can account for this by entering an assign date earlier than the check in date.
4. Check in & Release Dates prior to the incident start date will not be allowed.

### Daily Table

1. Each resource will generate a standard rate type, Units, Quantity and Unit Cost. Initially accept these standards but update them once you have your database built. Quantity=# of resources. Units and Unit Cost are defined by the Rate Type (i.e.: if Rate Type=HR then Units=# of hours worked and Unit Cost=Hourly Rate).
2. Rate Type & Units—Unless the resource is paid at a daily rate use the hourly rate type and the actual # of hours.
3. Actual vs. Estimate. The use of your data will drive the accuracy of your data. For example, in cost sharing situations, actual costs should be entered whenever possible. In short-term incidents or incidents involving only federal lands, use of mostly estimates may be acceptable.
4. Enter cache supplies at \$25 per person per day if a cache van is on site. Additional estimates must be made for local purchases.
5. Estimate caterer costs at \$45 per person based on total people in camp, prior to receiving actual invoices.
6. ICARS will assume 8 hours of work time from ITS postings for R&R, travel home and COP.

### Other Tips

1. Data that you enter is automatically saved.
2. ICARS includes a rates table with standard rates. These rates can be updated or a specific Rate Area can be set up to override the default rates.
3. Be sure your database is backed up regularly, especially during initial data entry.
4. Since the numbers in ICARS are estimates, when submitting costs daily to the situation unit leader, it is recommended that you round numbers up. For example report \$4,068,000 as \$4.1 million.

## RESOURCE TABLE SCREEN FUNCTIONS

**Exit** – Exit the table.

**Add** – Opens empty data entry form.

**Copy** – Opens a data entry form with resource records of the highlighted record.

**Delete** – Deletes the highlighted record

**Lock** – Lock records in the daily record showing.

**Unlock** – Unlock records in the daily record showing.

**Create Daily** – Creates daily records for all resources.

**Refresh** – Synchronize the database with I-Suite.

**Apply ITS** – Update Daily records with costs/hours from ITS.

**Sort/Filter** – Sort/Filter entire table.

**Print Grids** – Print the screen as displayed.

**Display Daily** – Toggle on/off daily table display.

**Flow Down** – Toggle on/off the flow down in the daily table.

**Sum** – toggle on/off display of the total cost for the highlighted line.

**Filter-Incident** – Display table by incident.

**Filter-Resources** – Display table by resource category.

**Filter-Not Released** – Display to show only active resources.

**Progress** – Shows the progress of filter processing.

**Search** – Search a column for a specific entry.

**Rate Area** – Identify specific area rates to override the defaults.

## OBLIGATIONS

Obligations can now be tracked and reported through ICARS. A separate obligation field in the Resources table will be auto filled with values from the Obligation table. These values are based on the Request #, Agency, Kind, Incident State, Contracting Agency and AD identifier. A new obligation module is present on the menu, to extract certain obligation categories into obligation reports. Where Forest Service resources are involved these reports should be run daily and sent to the appropriate administrative unit as directed.

## REPORTS

Found on the main menu under **Reports**. The most typically run reports are the Daily and Weekly Summaries under Incident reports. There are a variety of other reports by Division, Contracting Agency, Agency, Obligation, Home Unit, Cost Share, Acres/NVC, Aircraft, and Resource Cost. A new reporting section for cost analysis and cost accountability can be found under the other reports tab. To use the reports select the available report and all the reporting options for that report will show up. A quick synopsis of the reports options:

**Weekly Summary & Weekly Summary-Multi Incident** – A report with the days across the top and cost categories on the side.

**Daily Summary and Daily Summary-Multi Incident** – A summary with the current days costs and cost to date across the top. Cost Categories are on the side.

**Weekly Detail and Weekly Detail-O/H Personnel** – The same format as the Weekly Summary, except shows down to the detail of each resource.

**Cumulative Cost Detail & Cumulative Cost Detail-O/H Personnel** – Lists each resource with all detail. This will print all Resource and daily detail.

**Category Total** – Across the top are the categories (ie: agencies, divisions, etc). On the side are the cost categories.

**Analysis-Exception** – Display information about resources that may have incorrect postings.

**Analysis-Accountability** – Displays common ratios and support cost for use as comparative benchmarks.

For all reports you have the option of selecting all or some categories and specifying date ranges.

## GRAPHS

Found on the main menu under **Graphs**. The most typically run graphs are the Total Cost (pie) and costs by date (Area or stacked bar). There are also graphs for aircraft and divisions. There is a menu bar at the top of each graph for customization and an online help module. Using the Systems tab on the menu, you can save your customizations as a template for future use.

## COST SHARING

Many Federal, State and other agencies have used ICARS to track cost for Cost sharing purposes. The basis of the cost sharing will vary, but is usually based on the assignment of divisions to resources. There is a cost sharing module in ICARS which provides the ability to track and report costs by resource by division. It is not recommended that cost sharing be attempted without proper training. When using ICARS for cost sharing, the accuracy of costs usually becomes a much more critical factor.

## FEMA

Often ICARS is used to track cost for FEMA reimbursement. As with cost sharing this usually requires a higher level of accuracy in cost tracking. It may also require costs to be broken down by specific cost centers. The division field and reports can be used for tracking the FEMA costs center, in lieu of tracking the actual division where the resource worked.

## PROJECTIONS

For use in projecting overall future costs, based on a single or multiple assumptions. Support costs projections, in this module are calculated by determining a support cost per direct person (total support costs/total direct personnel) and projecting based on the total # of direct persons in your projection. If more detailed projections are desired using different support assumptions like retaining a camp vs. using motels, a spreadsheet would be a more appropriate option.