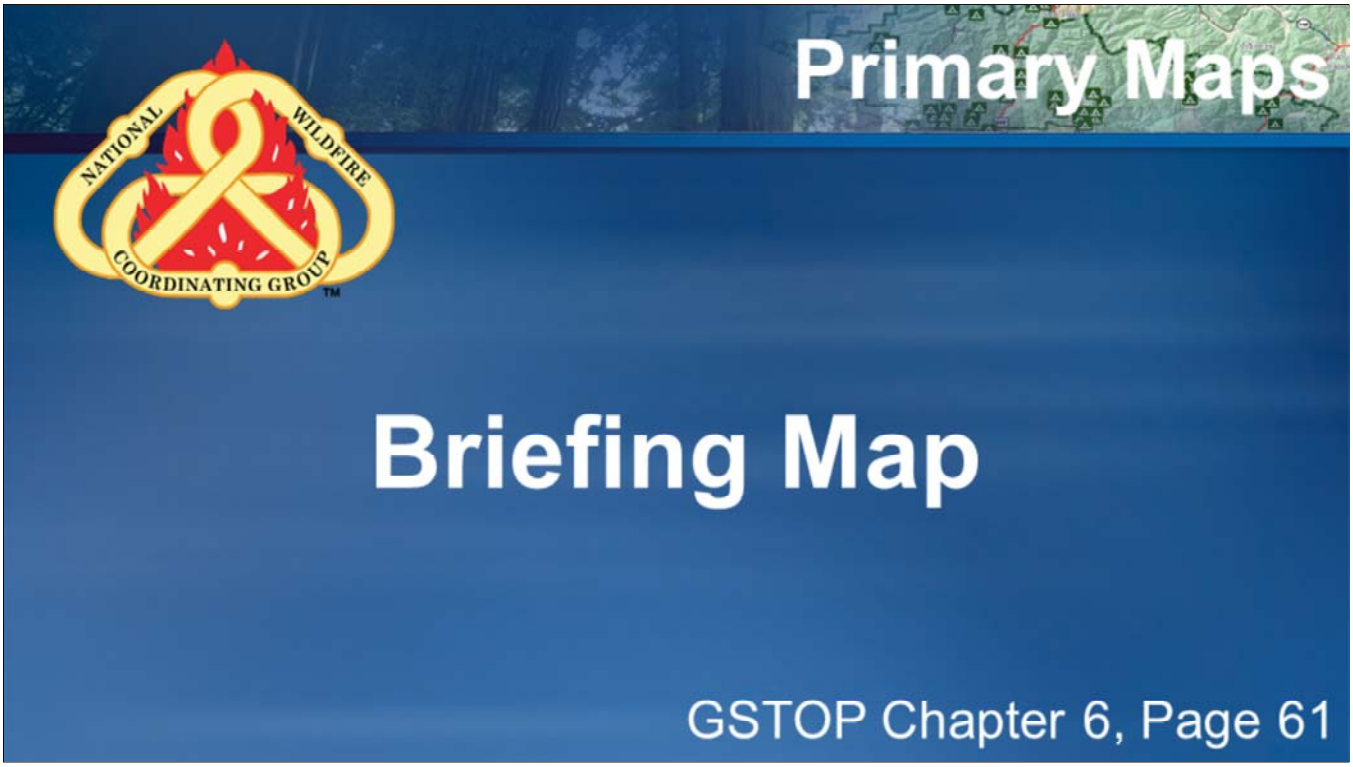
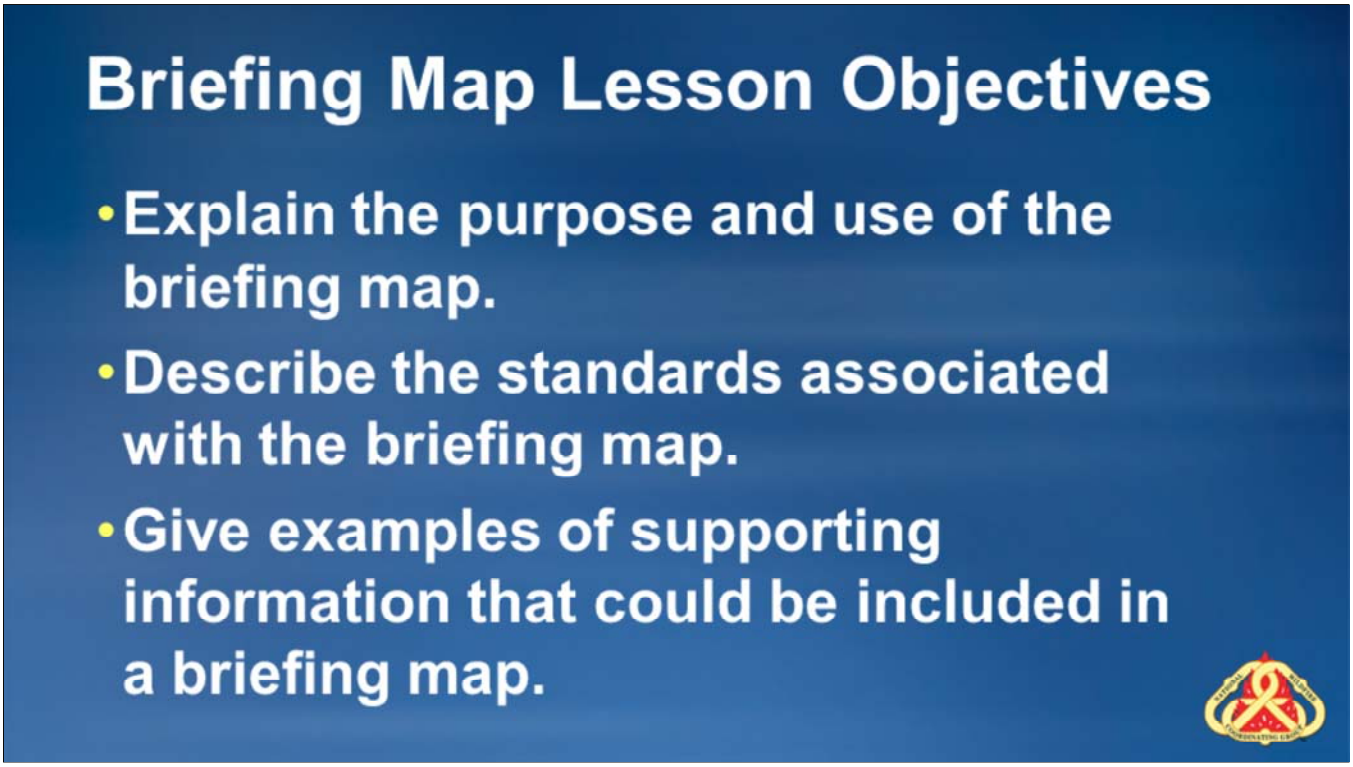


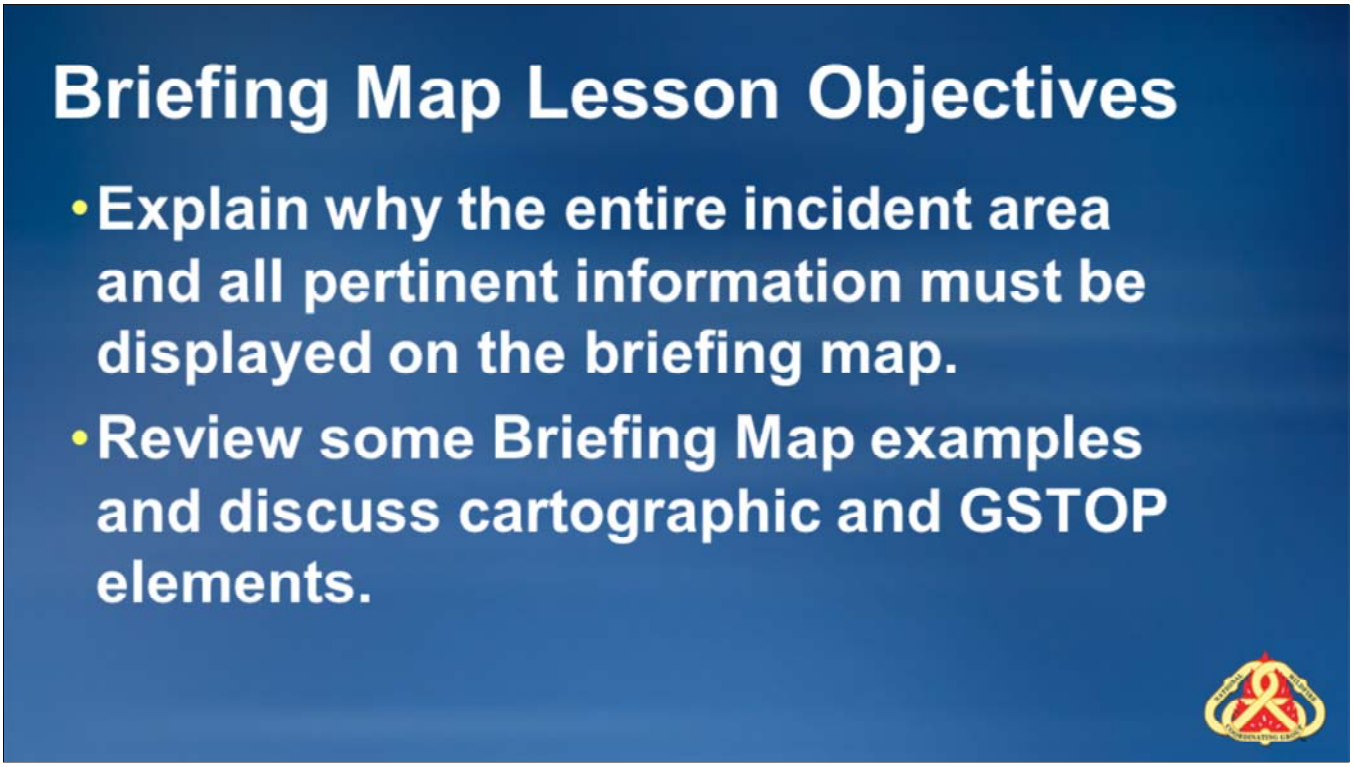
The Briefing map is displayed in the briefing area, and is used during operational period briefings. It is one of the five standard map products created by the situation unit on an incident.

The Briefing is a simplified, large format map of the incident area, and is used to discuss work assignments and other incident details.



At the end of this Lesson each student will be able to:

- Explain the purpose and use of the briefing map.
- Describe the standards associated with the briefing map.
- Give examples of supporting information that could be included in a briefing map

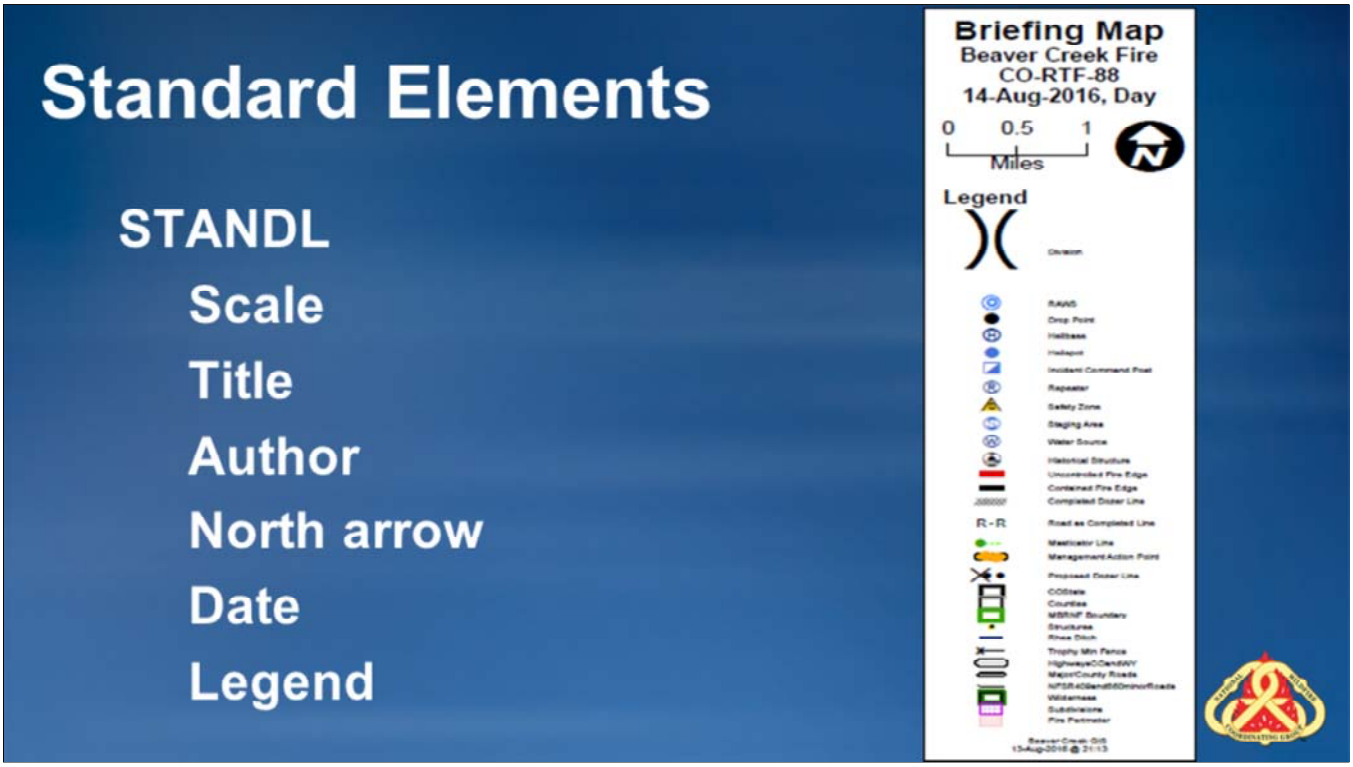


- Explain why the entire incident area and all pertinent information must be displayed on the briefing map.

- Review some Briefing Map examples, and discuss cartographic and GSTOP elements.

This is a picture from a morning briefing using an incident briefing map.

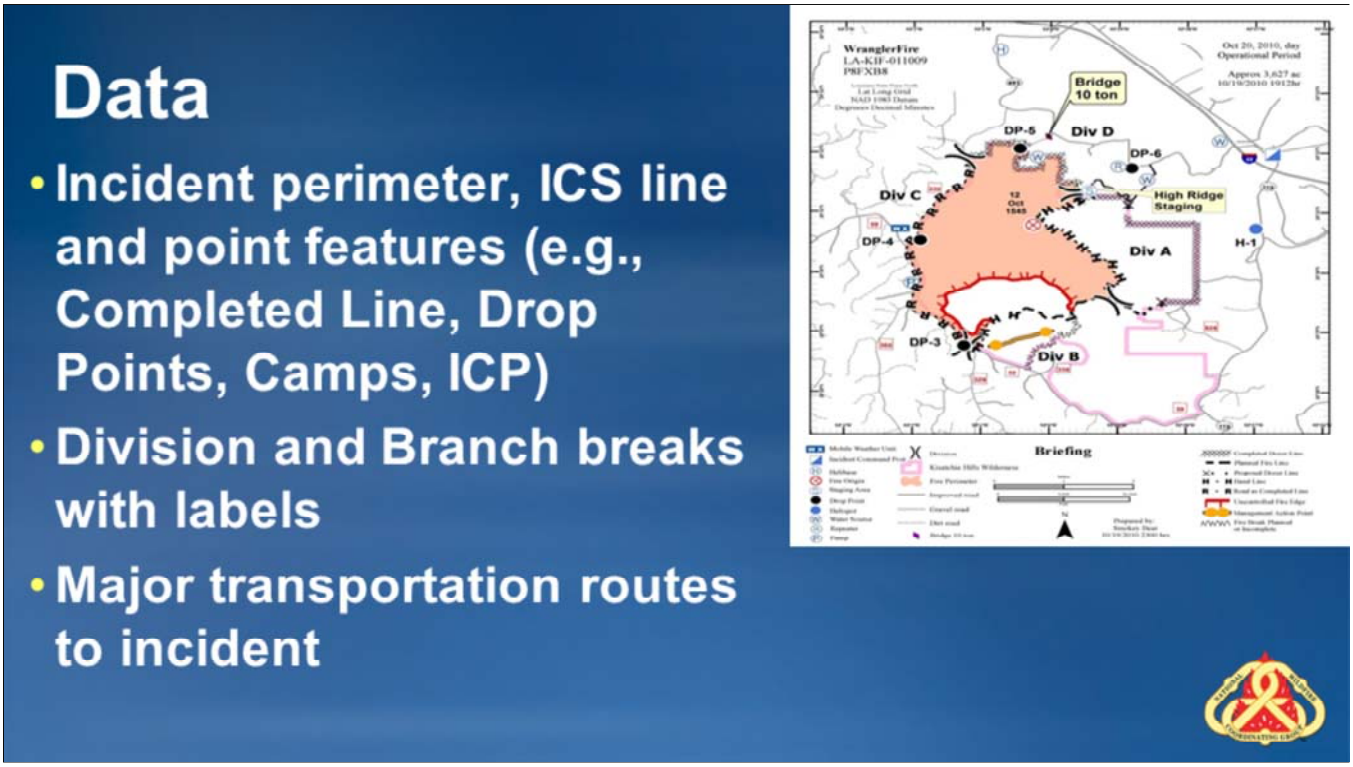
The Operations Section Chief is pointing at map features using his IAP map.



Standard map elements are included in the Briefing map.

The focus of the map is to support presentation of operational activities.

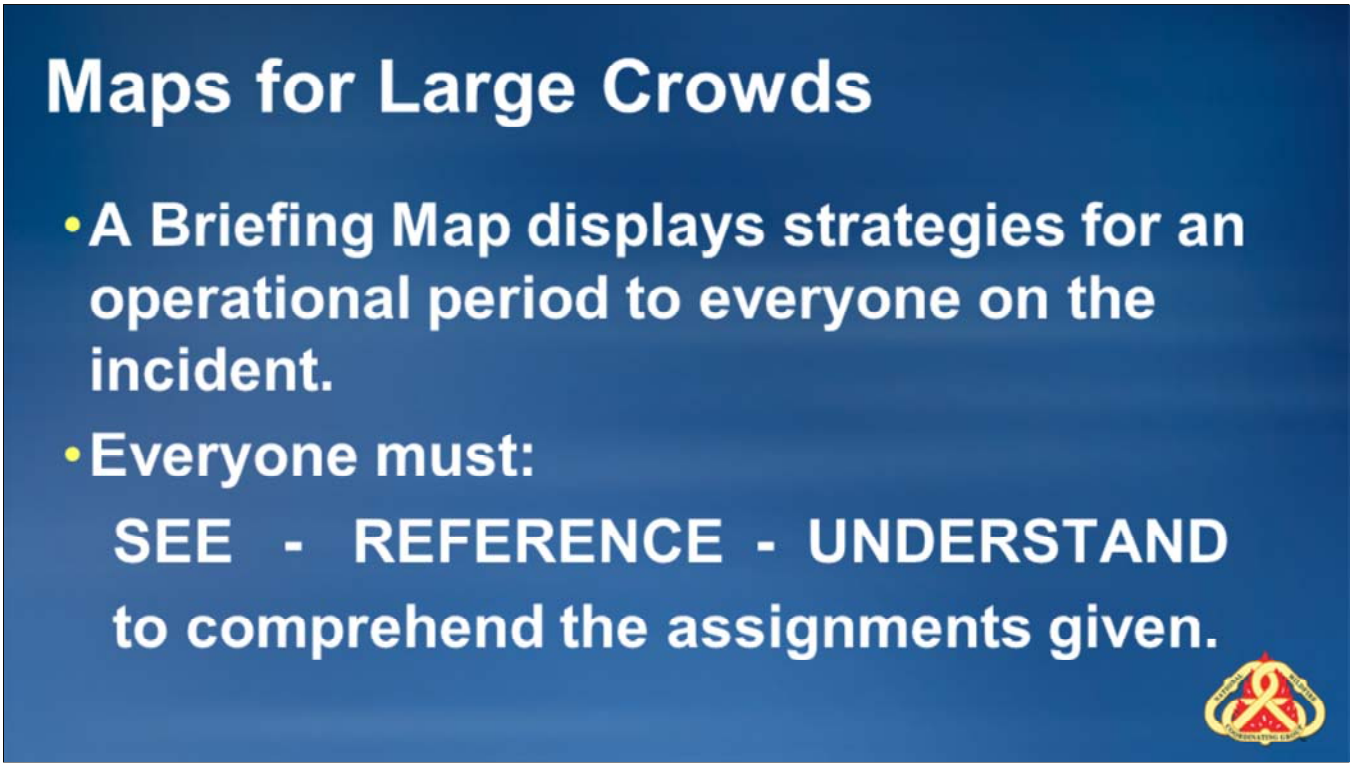
The title and legend boxes need to be available for reference, but shown as a small feature away from the incident perimeter.



The data displayed on the briefing map will vary depending on the incident and incident team, however; a briefing map typically includes incident data like the fire perimeter and fire lines, assignment breaks and labels, and incident point locations and labels.

A briefing map may also include base information such as roads and transportations routes, topography or topographic maps. Your Situation Unit Leader and Planning Section Chief will communicate to you which additional base data layers need to appear on the briefing map.

In some instances, map features that are particularly important to fire operations or health & safety may be highlighted on the briefing map. Notice the call outs for the 10 ton bridge and High Ridge Staging shown on the Wrangler Fire briefing map example.

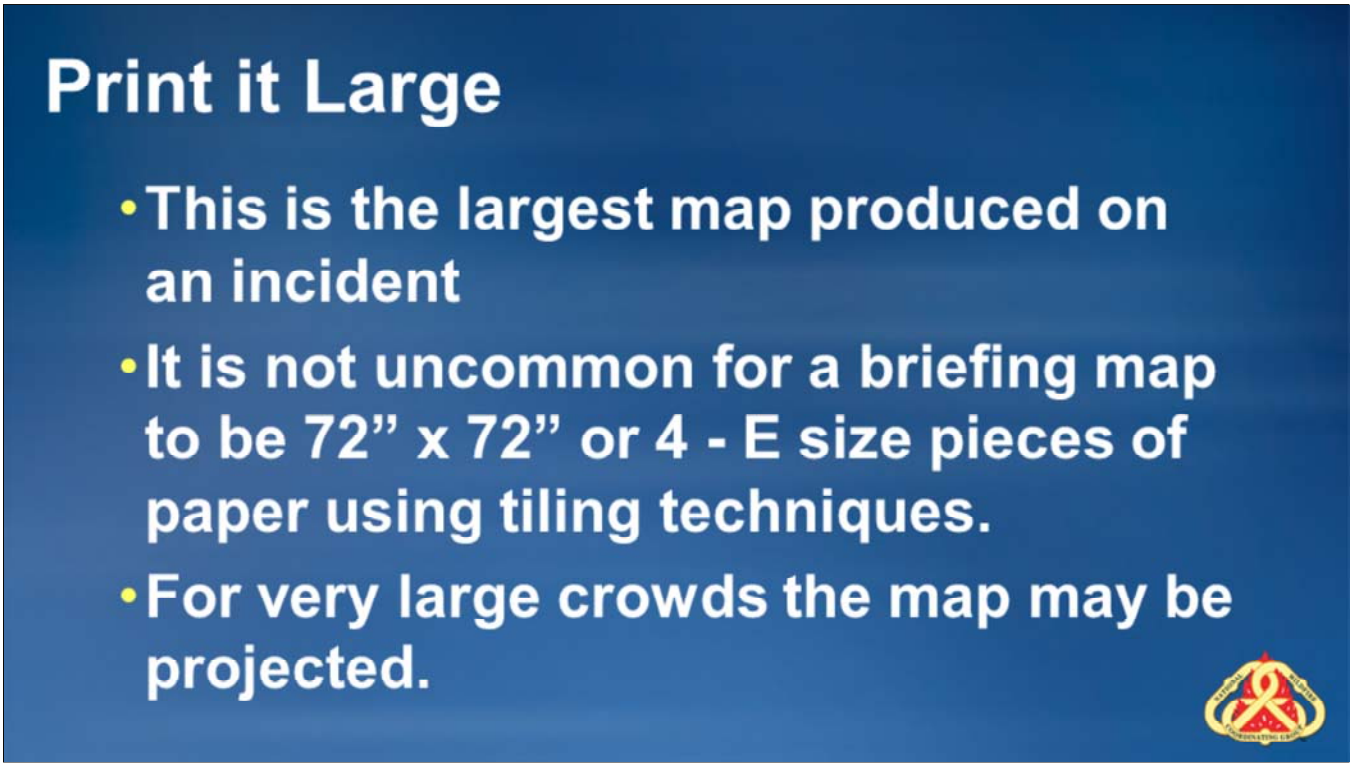


At a briefing, the Team presents the management strategies for an operational period to everyone on the incident.

The map complements the instructions and assignments provided in the briefing.

Everyone participating must be able to **see**, **reference**, and **understand** the map to comprehend the assignments given.

There were more than 400 people at this morning briefing.



The size of the paper printed will vary relative to the number of people attending the briefing and the distance at which the map will be viewed.

What is the spatial configuration of the incident?

For example, is the incident a long narrow east / west running fire, or is it a round shape?

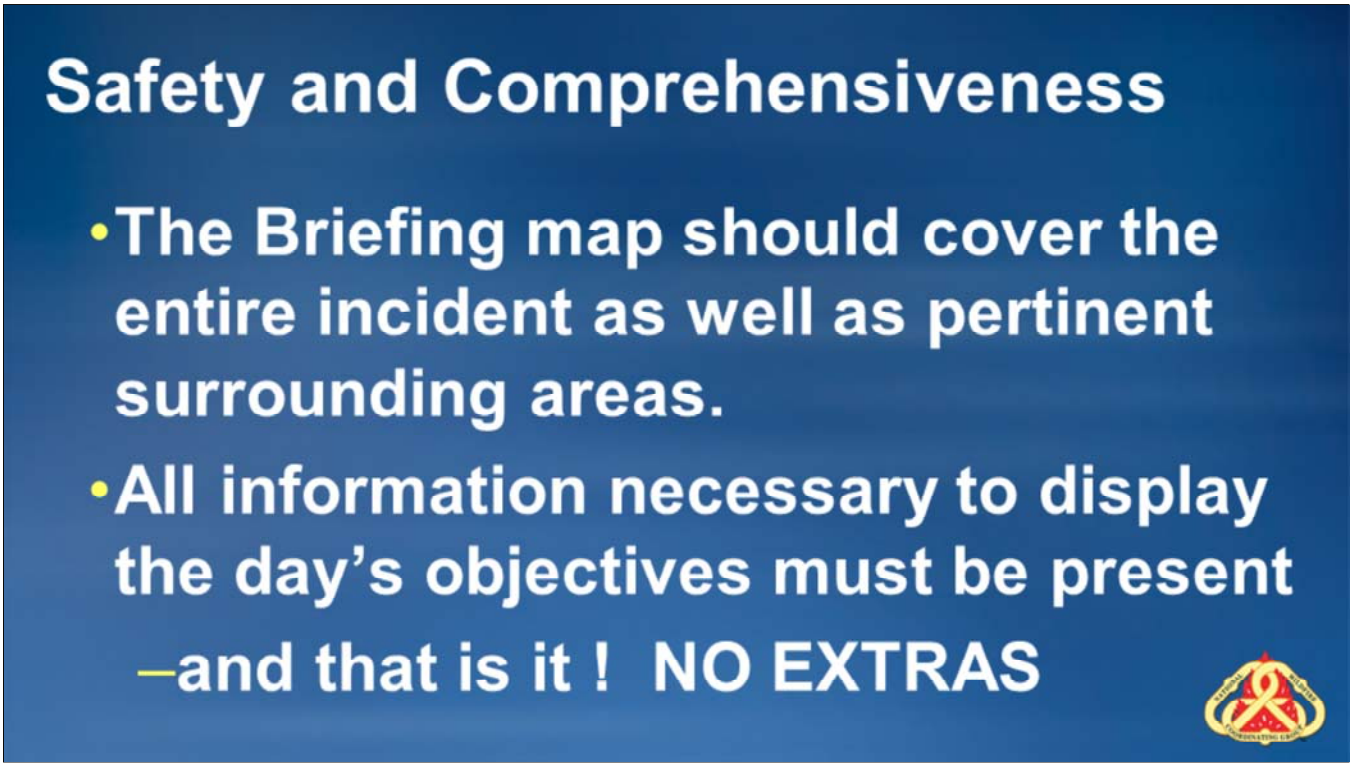
The map size should reflect the information portrayed. Work with the SITL on this consideration.

To be printed in a format large enough for all to see, the map may have to be printed in tiled sections.

Briefing maps are often projected when a large audience is present. This is often the case on Type 1 incidents.

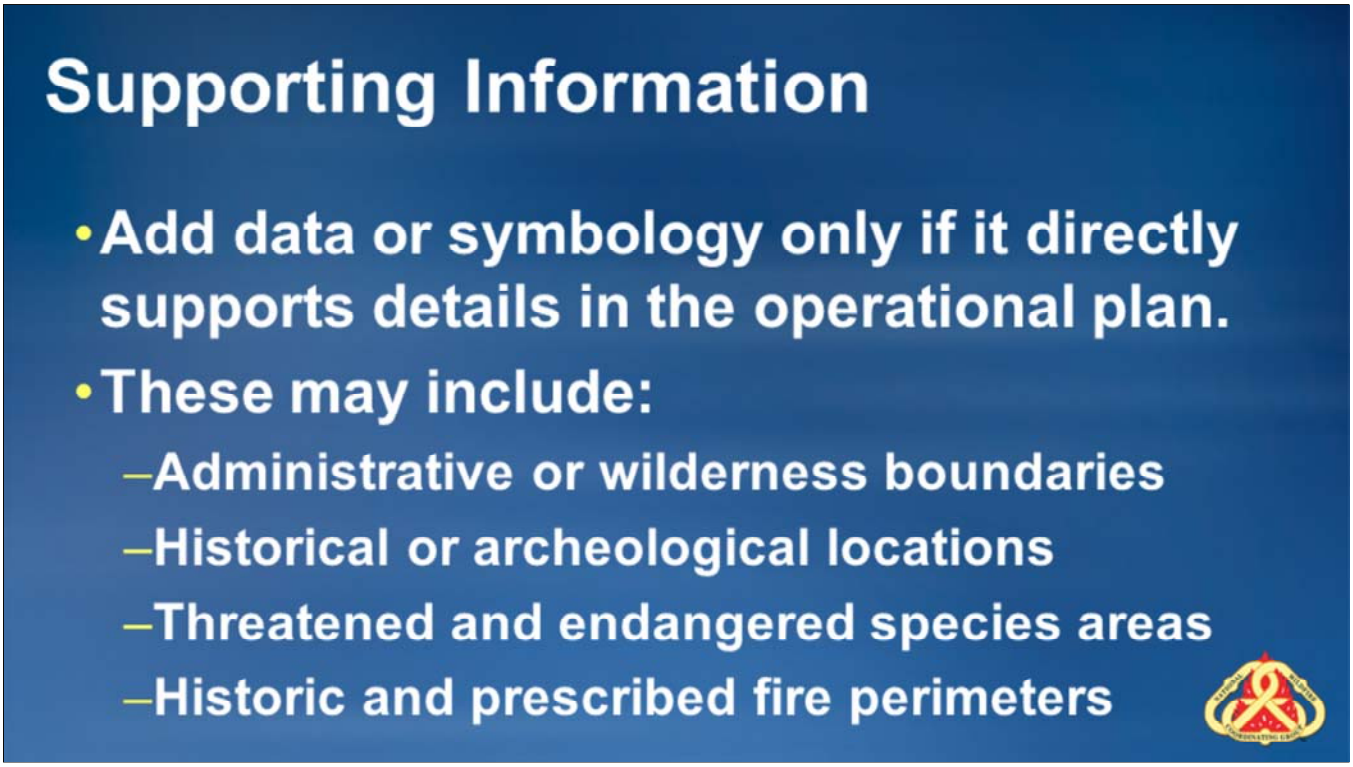
This Operations Section Chief is using a laser pointer to point out work assignments on the Briefing map.

The map is being projected from an “E” size .pdf.



The Briefing map must include information to complement the explanation of the operational periods objectives.

The map elements must be simple to provide enough detail for reference, but not so much detail that the presenter or audience is confused by symbology. For instance, the inclusion of drop points and helispots may divert attention from topography and division breaks. Work with your SITL to determine which incident features should or shouldn't be emphasized on the briefing map.



Add data or symbology only if it directly supports details in the operational plan.

Examples to support this concept:

- Strategic objectives may be different in wilderness areas, and tactical applications for containment may be different within wilderness. For instance, dozer line is rarely allowed within wilderness areas.

- There may be hazardous materials sites on or near the incident, such as historic mining sites. These locations should be shown on every map.

- Tactics may also be modified in threatened and endangered species areas. Fire operations may be totally excluded from these areas, allowing them to burn naturally. Or, pump drafting or helicopter dipping sites may be limited to protect fish species.

- Historic and prescribed fire perimeters are often shown on maps because these areas can often be used as natural barriers for fire spread.

Use of Base Data

- Including base data such as topographic shaded relief, or contours is subjective;
  - discuss the issue with the SITL

Different Teams have different opinions about the background of a briefing map.

Some like the background completely blank, as the expectation is that it will complement the IAP map.

Others will want a large replica of the IAP map in full color. Remember to remove data layers and symbology not required in the briefing map.

Work with the Situation Unit Leader on the Team to create the most appropriate Briefing map.

To achieve the desired effect of a simple, uncluttered map that can be easily read from a distance, consider bold lines and large symbols.

Symbology, such as branch and division breaks, may have to be enlarged or moved to be visible.

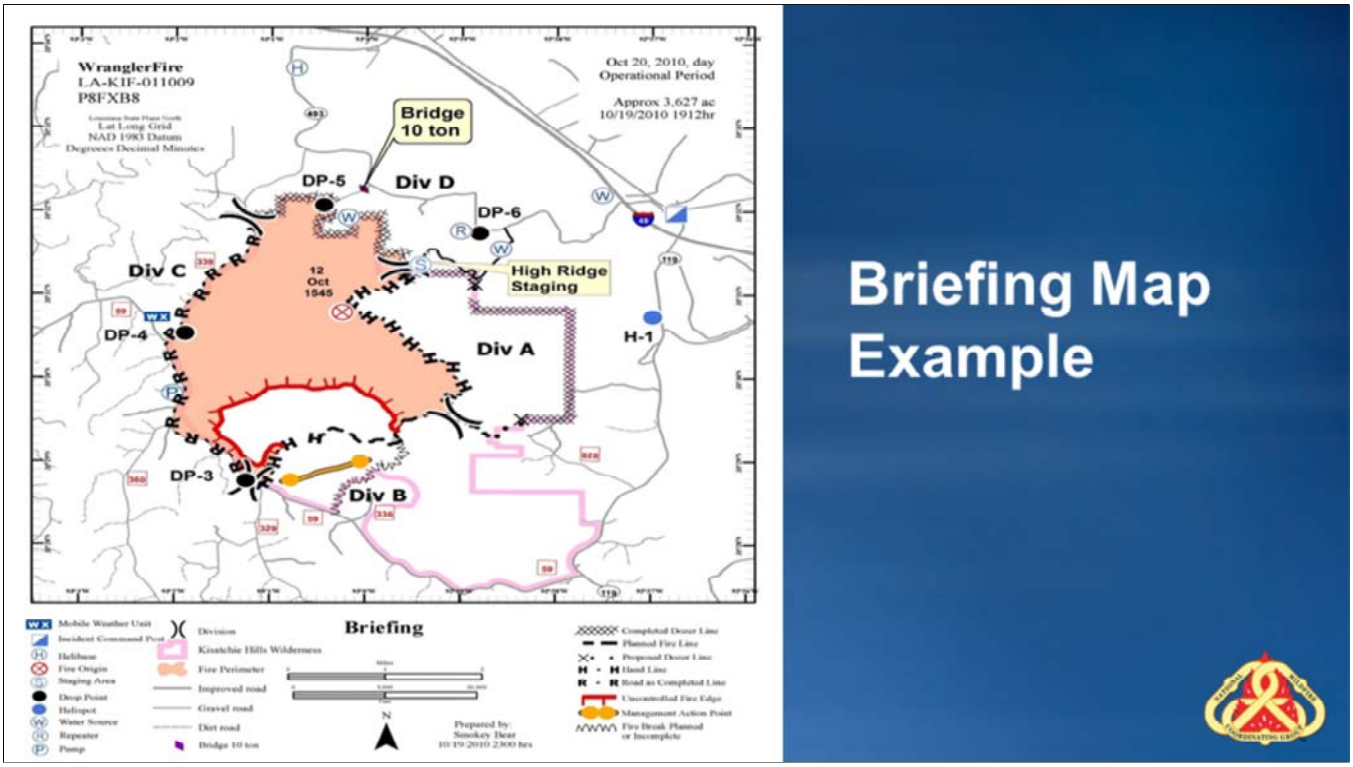
The lines for fire perimeter may have to be changed to a larger weight to appear correctly at a distance.

Shade in the fire perimeter polygon to enhance visibility. A pale transparent pink is often used.

Remember to title it

- A Briefing map should include all the standard cartographic elements
  - STANDL
  - These items are secondary to the spatial information presented and should not be printed as big and bold.

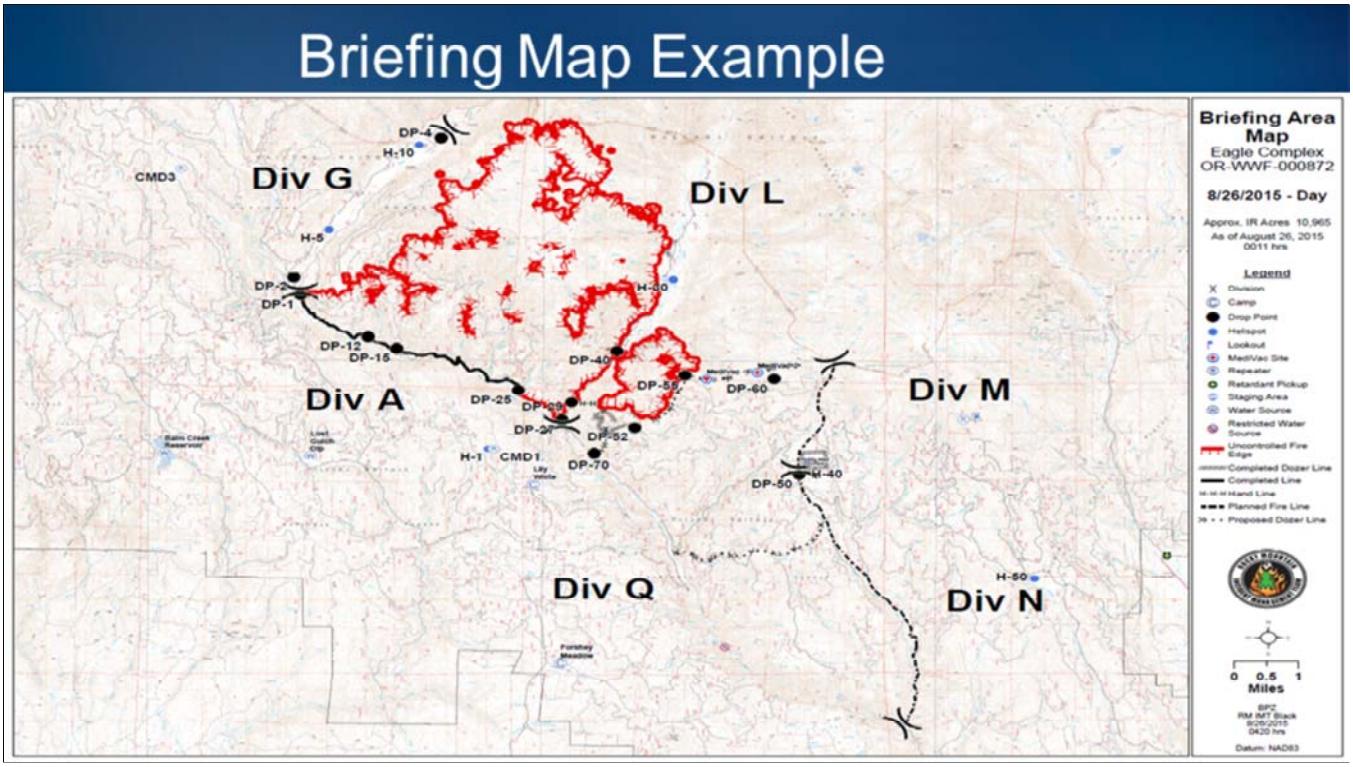
Title, date, time, scale bar, north arrow, authorship, legend and incident acreage are all essential elements on a briefing map, but remember they are secondary to the spatial information being presented.



This briefing map from a small Louisiana fire in 2010 provides all the required GSTOP elements.

The legend at the bottom of the map is unusually large because the map was provided as an 11 x 17 inch handout, as well as an “E” size display.

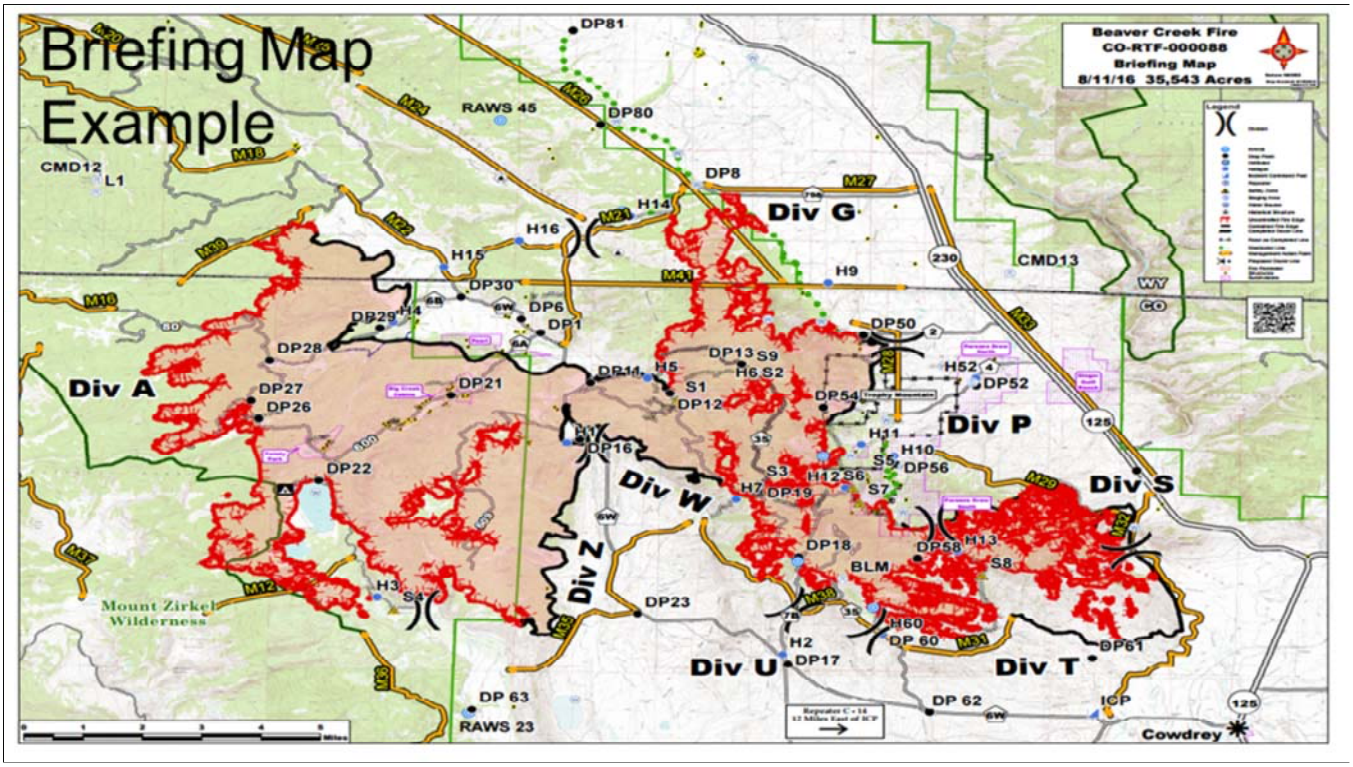
Note that the entire fire area is shown, including transportation routes, a WFDSS management action point, and a bridge weight limit notation.



This briefing map from the Eagle Complex fire in Oregon was created to be viewed by a large audiences and uses topographic maps as base.

The map was printed horizontally across two tiles that were taped together before being displayed in the briefing area. In its final printed form, the map was approximately 6 feet tall and 9 feet wide.

Notice the division letter designators, and some of the breaks, are shown away from the fire perimeter. This was done in anticipation of fire growth and/or management actions away from the current perimeter.

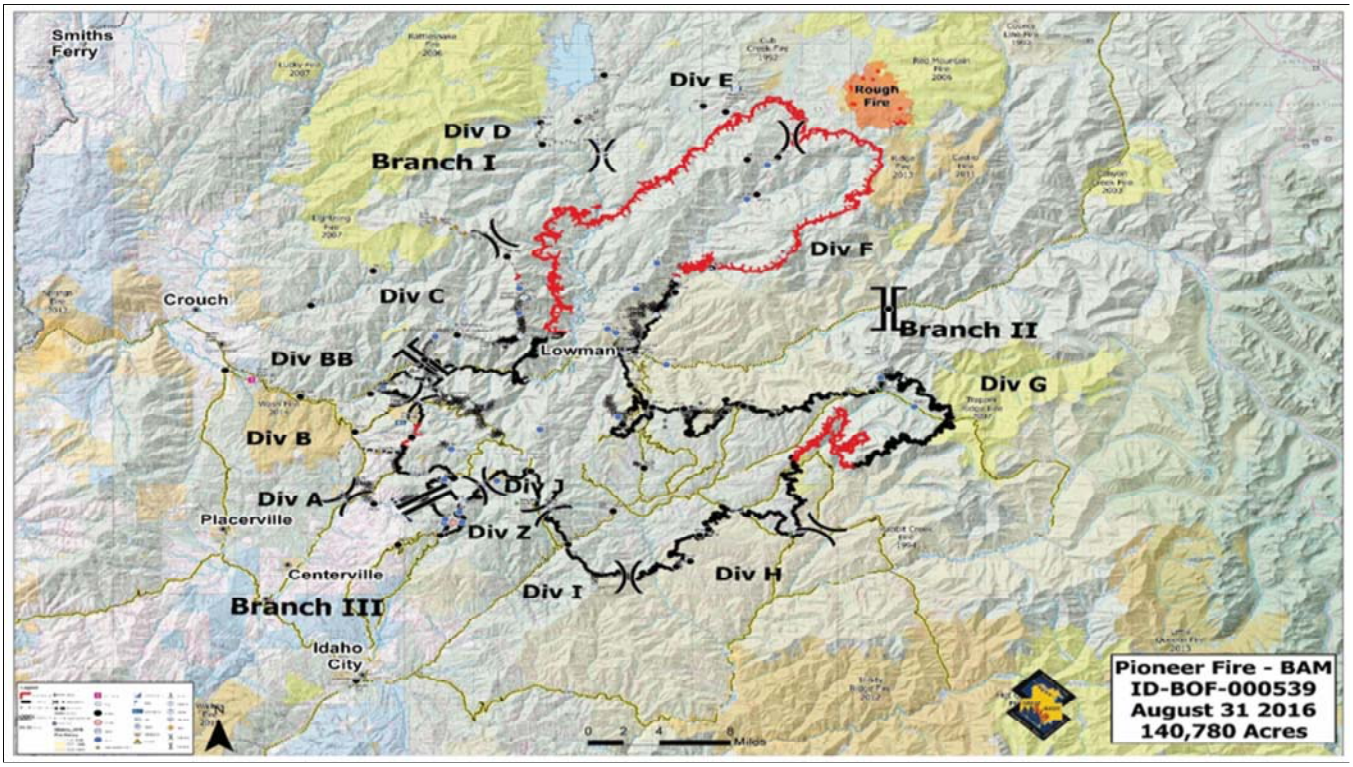


This briefing map from the 2016 Beaver Creek fire in northern Colorado provides a large amount of detail.

The large legend defines a detailed list of symbology used on the Briefing map. Incident size and complexity drive the requirements for each map type.

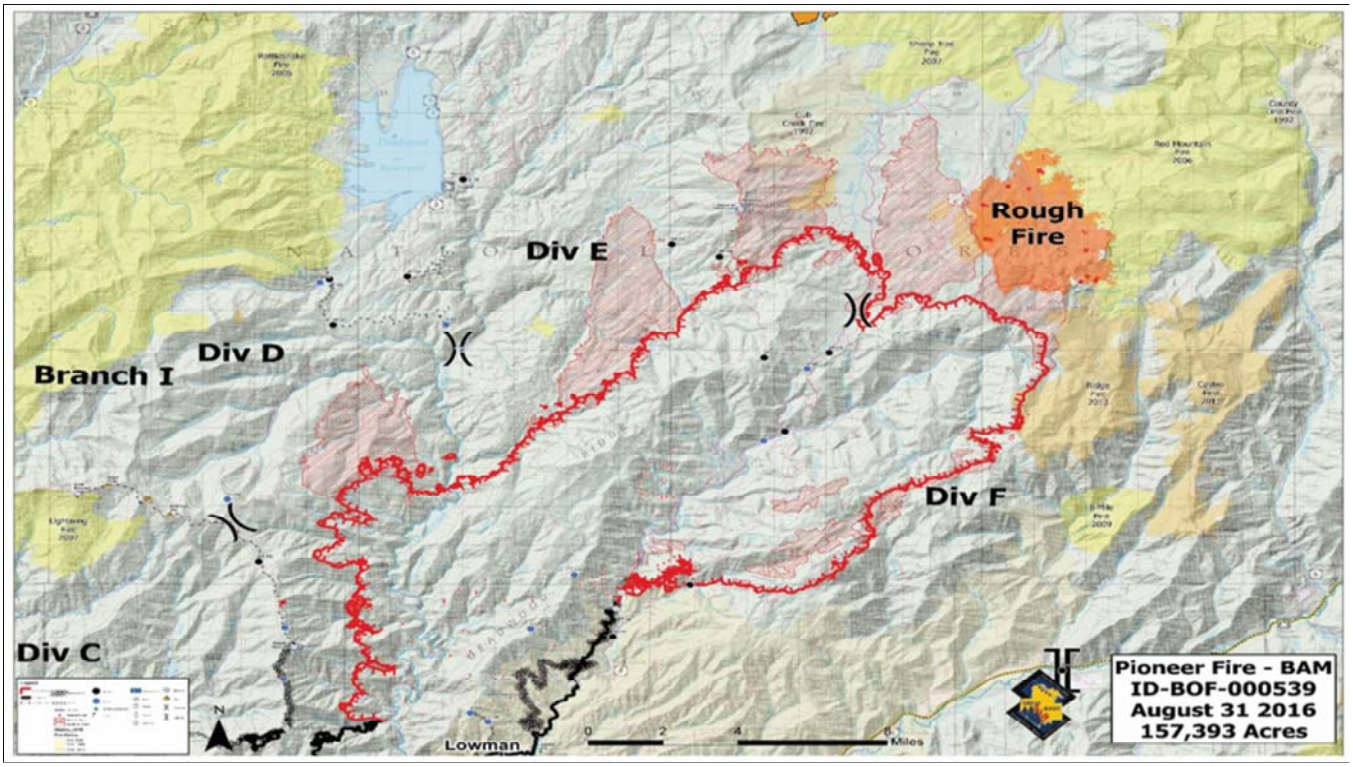
The yellow lines are Management Action Points from the Wildland Fire Decision Support System. They are an important discussion point for some briefings, since fire proximity to these points will trigger adjustments to strategy and tactics.

Highways, roads, perimeter line types, division breaks and other features found on other map products are all displayed.



This briefing map from the Pioneer fire provides a good overview of this large fire.

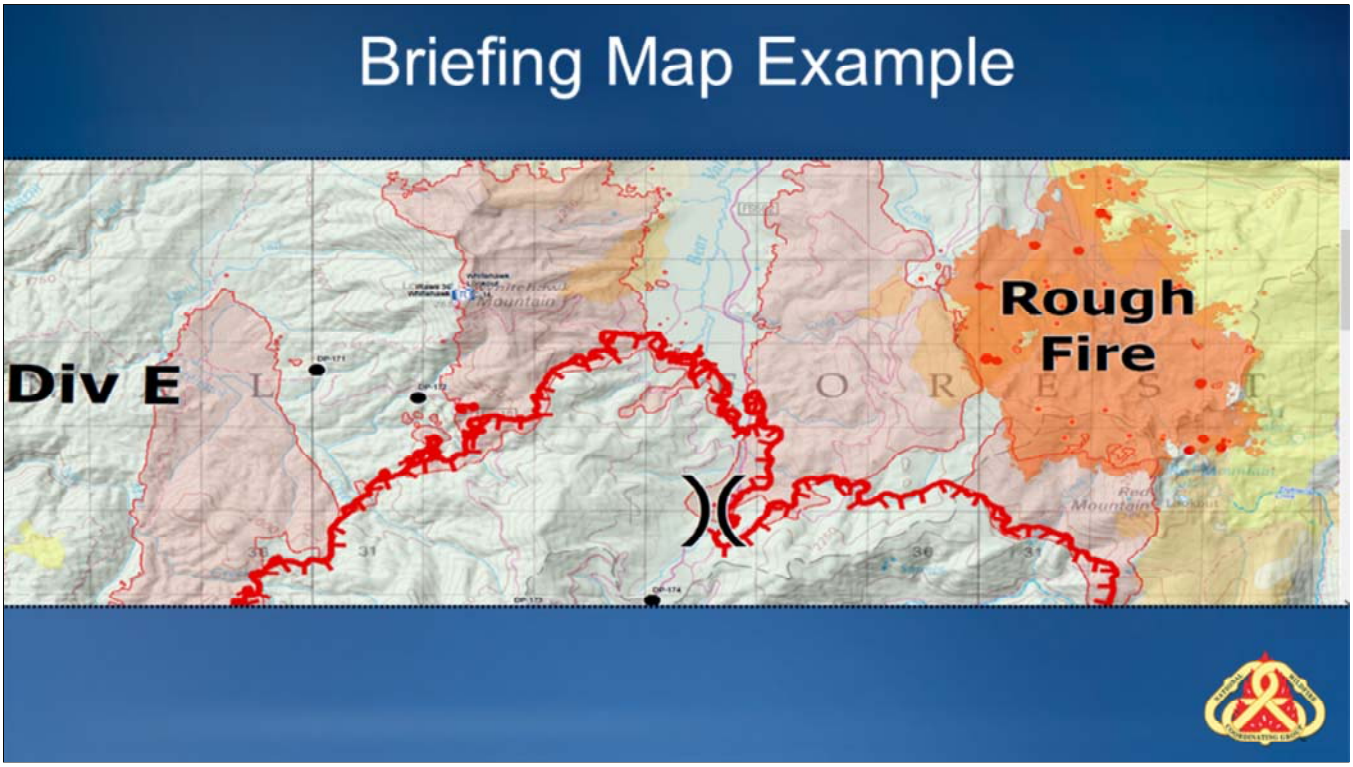
Notice the legend, scale and title boxes are all located at the map's margins, so they do not interfere with the map data the presenter will refer to during the briefing.



Because the Pioneer fire was so large, the briefing map was split in two, with north and south portions of the fire displayed using a projector on a 12 x 16 foot outdoor screen.

Fire perimeters from historic fires are shown, since the strategic plan incorporates them as barriers to fire spread.

Using Adobe tools to zoom in, this ”E” size .pdf map can display fine detail, down to creek names and contour lines.



In this zoomed in portion of the Pioneer fire, you can see much more detail.

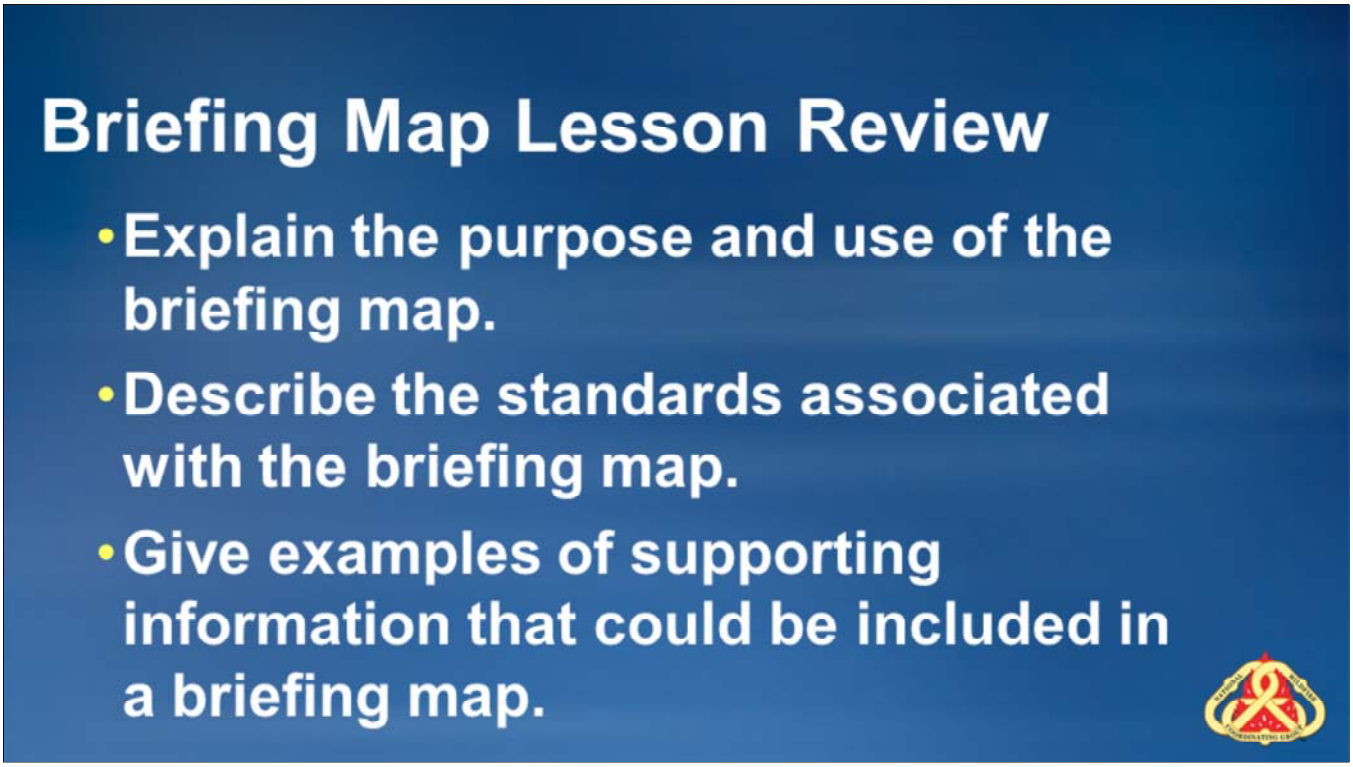
Creek names, the location of a lookout, and an incident weather station can all be read.

The three pink shaded areas north of the uncontained perimeter symbology is the infrared imagery layer from a nighttime flight. Adding this information before the morning briefing allows the Operations Section Chief to make any needed adjustments to strategic planning, and update firefighters with today's operational plan for this location.

Notice the 2016 Rough fire perimeter also shows areas of heat detected by the infrared imagery.

In this lesson, we learned about the briefing map and how it needs to be ***clean, simple, and large*** so that it is easily discernable from afar.

Now let's review.



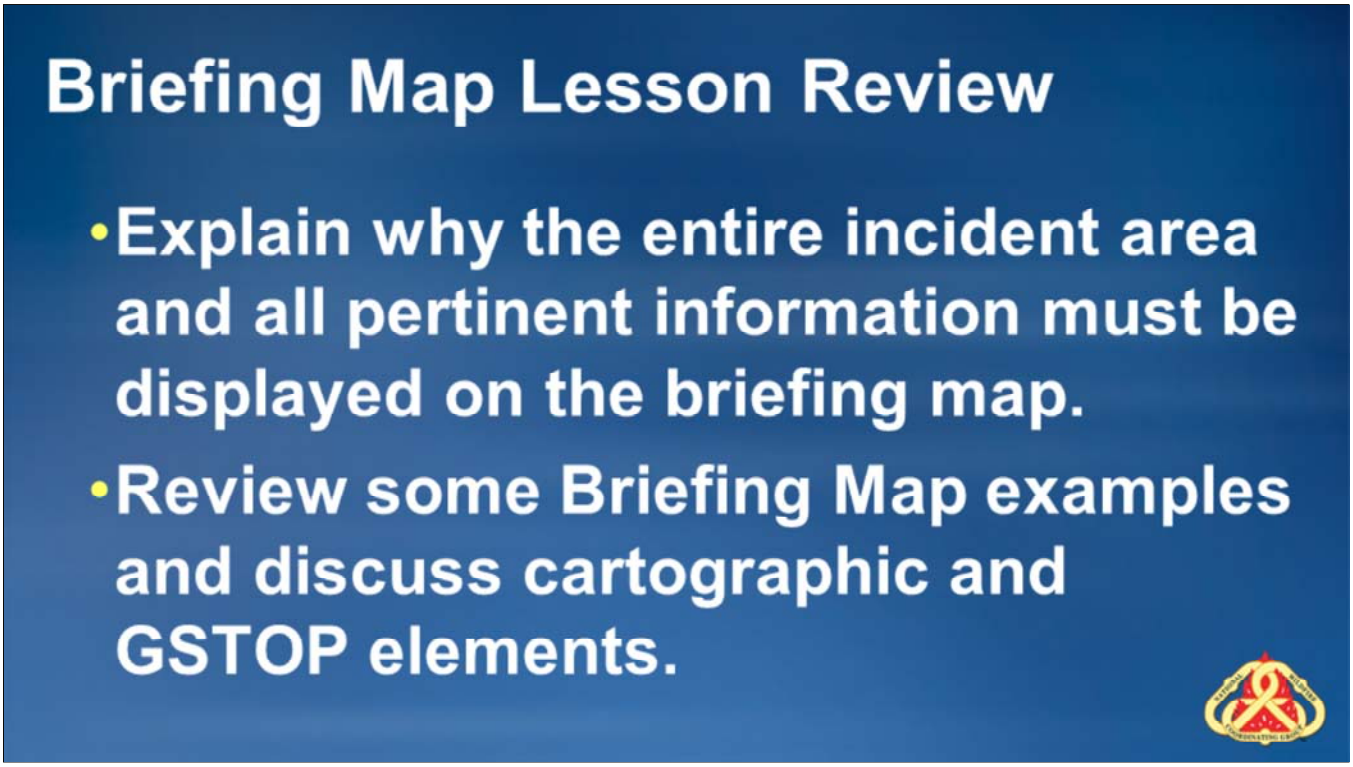
At the end of this lesson each student will be able:

- Explain the purpose and use of the briefing map. Remember…

The Briefing map is displayed in the briefing area, and is used during operational period briefings. It is a simplified, large format map of the incident area, and is used to discuss work assignments and other incident details.

- Describe the standards associated with the briefing map.

- Give examples of supporting information that could be included in a briefing map.



- Explain why the entire incident area and all pertinent information must be displayed on the briefing map.

- Review some Briefing Map examples and discuss cartographic and GSTOP elements.