

ESCAMBIA COUNTY FIRE-RESCUE

Standard Operating Guidelines

3105.005

Incident Management

Implemented: 11/26/05

Revised: 7/22/14



Patrick T Grace, Fire Chief

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PURPOSE:

Escambia County Fire-Rescue responds to a wide range of emergency incidents. In order to effectively manage personnel and resources and to provide for the safety and welfare of personnel, the department shall always operate within an established Incident Command System (ICS) at the incident scene.

OBJECTIVE:

To provide personnel with guidelines that identify correct methods for establishing and utilizing the ICS and all of its components.

SCOPE:

All Personnel

COMMAND PROCEDURES

- Fix the responsibility for command on a certain individual, or in a unified command structure, on a certain group of individuals, through a standard identification system, depending on the arrival sequence of members, companies, and command officers
- Ensure that a strong, direct, and visible command element will be established from the onset of the incident
- Establish an effective incident organization defining the activities and responsibilities assigned to the Incident Commander (IC) and the other individuals operating within the ICS
- Provide a system to process information to support incident management, planning, and decision making
- Provide a system for the orderly transfer of command to subsequent arriving officers

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMAND

The IC is responsible for the formulation of an incident strategy and completion of tactical objectives. The tactical objectives (listed in order of priority) are:

- Provide for the safety, accountability, and welfare of department personnel
- Remove endangered occupants and treat the injured
- Stabilize the incident and provide for life safety
- Conserve property

The ICS is used to facilitate the completion of the tactical objectives. The IC is the person who drives the command system towards that end. The IC is responsible for building a command structure that matches the organizational needs of the incident to achieve the completion of the tactical objectives.



FUNCTIONS OF COMMAND

The functions of command define standard activities that are performed by the IC to achieve the tactical objectives. The functions of command include:

- Assume and announce command and establish an effective operating position (command post)
- Rapidly evaluate the situation (size-up)
- Initiate, maintain, and control the communications process
- Identify the overall incident strategy, develop an incident action plan, and assign companies and personnel consistent with plans and standard operating guidelines
- Develop an effective incident command organization and staff it accordingly
- Review, evaluate, and revise the incident action plan as needed
- Provide for the continuity, transfer, and termination of command

The IC is responsible for all of these functions. As command is transferred, so is the responsibility for these functions. The first five (5) functions must be addressed immediately from the initial assumption of command.

ESTABLISHING COMMAND

If one or two companies respond to an incident, and the incident will most likely not escalate beyond the capabilities of these companies, it is not required to formally establish and announce implementation of the incident management system (i.e. on-scene report with the assumption of command). The first arriving unit or senior officer will, however, remain responsible for any needed command functions. Examples would include:

- Motor Vehicle Accidents
- Public Assistance
- Trash Fire
- Any EMS call requiring only one or two companies

The first fire department unit, or senior officer to arrive at an incident requiring three (3) or more companies, shall assume command of the incident. The initial IC shall remain in command until command is transferred, or the incident is stabilized and command is terminated.

The first arriving fire department unit formally establishes the ICS in their initial radio report. The radio report shall include:

- Designation of the unit arriving on the scene
- A brief description of the incident situation, (i.e. building size, occupancy, Hazmat release, multi-vehicle accident, etc.)
- Obvious conditions (smoke showing, working fire, hazmat spill, multiple patients, etc.)
- Brief description of action being taken
- Declaration of strategy (offensive, defensive, evacuate, etc.)

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- Any obvious safety concerns
- Assumption and identification of command
- Assume & announce accountability location

Examples:

For an offensive structure fire

"Engine 614 is on-scene of a large two story home with a working fire on the second floor. Engine 614 is laying a 5" supply line and stretching a 1 ¾" line to the second floor for attack. This is an offensive fire. Engine 614 establishing 7th St. Command. Accountability will be at Engine 614".

For a defensive structure fire

"Engine 411 is on-scene of a large warehouse fully involved with exposures on the "B" side. Engine 411 is laying a 5" supply line and attacking the fire with the deck gun and a 1 ¾" line to the exposure. This is a defensive fire. Engine 411 establishing Muscogee Rd. Command.

For a motor vehicle accident with extrication

"1601 is on-scene with a single-vehicle accident with rollover. We have major traffic hazards. 1601 establishing Gulf Beach Hwy. Command."

RADIO DESIGNATION

The radio designation "Command" will be used along with the geographical location of the incident or business name, (i.e. "7th Street Command", "K-Mart Command"). This designation will not change throughout the duration of the incident. The designation of "Command" will remain with the officer currently in command of the incident throughout the event, and will pass to any officer that relieves him/her.

COMMAND OPTIONS

The responsibility of the first arriving unit or member to assume command of the incident presents several options. If a chief officer or unit without tactical capabilities (i.e. staff vehicle, no equipment, etc.) initiates command, the establishment of a command post should be a top priority. At most incidents, the initial IC will be the company officer. The following command options define the company officer's direct involvement in tactical activities and the modes of command that may be utilized:

Nothing Showing--Investigative Mode:

These situations generally require investigation by the initial arriving company while other units remain in level one staging. The officer should go with the company to investigate while utilizing a portable radio to command the incident.



Fast Attack--Mobile Command Mode:

These situations require immediate action to obtain quick stabilization. They also require the company officer's assistance and direct involvement in addressing the emergency situation. In these instances, the company officer directly participates in addressing the emergency situation with the crew to provide the appropriate level of supervision. Examples of these situations include:

- Offensive fire attacks (especially in ignition and early growth stages)
- Critical life safety or confirmed rescue situations
- Any incident where the immediate safety and welfare of firefighters is a major concern
- Obvious working fire incidents that require further investigation by the company officer

Where fast intervention is critical, utilization of the portable radio will permit the company officer's involvement in the attack without neglecting command responsibilities. The fast-attack-mobile command mode should not last more than a few minutes and will end with one of the following:

- Situation is stabilized.
- Situation is not stabilized and the company officer must withdraw to the exterior and establish a command post. At some point, the company officer must decide whether or not to withdraw the remainder of the crew, based on the crew's capabilities and experience, safety issues, and the ability to communicate with the crew. If possible, no crew should remain in a hazardous area without radio communication capabilities.
- Command is transferred to the next arriving company officer or chief officer. When a chief officer is assuming command, the chief officer may opt to return the company officer to his/her crew, utilize the company officer as staff support, or assign him/her to another group or division.

Command Mode--Stationary Command Post

Certain incidents, by virtue of their size, complexity, or potential for rapid expansion, require immediate, strong, direct, overall command. In such cases, the company officer will initially assume an exterior, safe, and effective command position and maintain that position until relieved by a senior officer. However, this does not preclude the IC from making a quick visual assessment of all sides of the incident upon his/her arrival.

Tactical worksheets should be initiated and utilized to assist in managing these type of incidents.

If the company officer assumes a command mode, the following options are available with regards to the assignment of the remaining crew members:

- An acting officer may "move up" within the company and place the company into action with two or three members. The acting company officer must be provided with



a portable radio. The collective and individual capabilities and experience of the crew will regulate this action.

- The officer may assign the crew members to work under the supervision of another company officer. In such cases, the officer assuming command must communicate with the officer of the other company and indicate the assignment of those personnel.
- The officer may elect to assign the crew members to perform staff functions to assist command, such as information reconnaissance, filling out the tactical worksheet, etc.

A company officer assuming command has a choice of modes and degrees of personal involvement in the tactical activities, but continues to be fully responsible for the command functions. The initiative and judgment of the officer are of great importance. The modes identified are guidelines to assist the officer in planning appropriate actions. The actions initiated should conform with one of the above modes of operation.

ESTABLISHING A COMMAND POST

If the emergency will requires the response of 3 or more companies, or is complex in nature, the IC should establish a firm command post based upon the following:

- The incident command post should be established at a visible location near the incident; however, the type and location of the incident may dictate a different and remote location for the command post.
- The command post should be safe, secure, sheltered from the elements, and available for the duration of the incident
- A single incident command post is mandatory. One central location is needed so that monitoring and control of the incident can occur in an organized manner.
- Spot your vehicle in a visible location so you can see the maximum amount of the scene as possible while keeping out of the way of scene operations
- Communicate your location to your subordinates
- The IC must take firm command and communicate it to all officers and the Emergency Communications Center. Command must be formally transferred and/or assumed or confusion results
- Set up any communications equipment needed, and find a suitable surface on which to utilize the tactical worksheet
- Stay at your post, utilizing information relayed by personnel operating in remote locations.

TRANSFER OF COMMAND

Command is transferred to improve the quality of the command organization. When command is transferred, it should trigger upgrades in the command structure. The arrival of a ranking officer on the incident scene does not mean that command has been automatically transferred to that officer. Command is only transferred when the following transfer of command process has been completed:

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- The first fire department member arriving on the scene will automatically assume command. This will normally be a District Chief, Battalion Chief, or company officer, but could be any fire department member
- If an equal or higher ranking officer has not already assumed command, the first arriving company officer will assume command after the transfer of command procedures have been completed
- The first arriving chief officer should assume command of the incident following transfer of command procedures.
- In those cases where a chief officer arrives on-scene at the same time as the initial arriving company, the chief officer should assume initial command of the incident
- After a chief officer has assumed command, all additional chief officers shall report to the command post and will be assigned a role within the command structure designated by the IC
- Assumption of command is discretionary for the County Deputy Chief and County Fire Chief, and they may elect to assume the position of senior advisor
- The person being relieved of command will be assigned to the best advantage by the officer assuming command.

The officer assuming command will communicate with the person being relieved by radio or face-to-face, with face-to-face being the preferred method to transfer command. Except in extreme circumstances, the person being relieved shall brief the officer assuming command.

The brief will at least address the following:

- Incident conditions (fire location and extent, hazmat spill or release, number of patients, etc.)
- Review incident action plan
- Identify completion of tactical objectives
- Safety considerations
- Deployment and assignments of operating companies and personnel
- Identify the need for any additional resources
- Review the tactical worksheet with the officer assuming command

Transferring command to a unit that is not on-scene creates a gap in the command process and compromises incident management. To prevent this, command shall not be transferred to a unit or officer that is not on-scene. In these cases, the initial IC will continue to operate in the investigative or fast-attack mode until command can be transferred to an arriving unit. Should a situation occur where several radio attempts are made, and a later arriving company or chief officer cannot locate or communicate with command, they will assume and announce their assumption of command and initiate whatever actions are necessary to confirm the safety of the missing crew.

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A ranking officer may elect to have a subordinate continue the role of IC. In cases where an individual is effectively commanding an incident, and satisfactory progress is being made to bring the incident under control, it may be desirable for that person to continue in an active command role. The ranking officer must determine that the IC is completely aware of the position and function of operating companies and the general status of the situation. In these cases, the arriving ranking officer may assume a supportive role in the overall command function. The ranking officer will assume responsibility for the incident by virtue of being involved in the command process.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The response and arrival of additional ranking officers on the incident scene strengthens the overall command function. As the incident escalates, the IC should use these chief officers to fill Section, Division, and Branch positions as needed. This will strengthen the command structure.

Additional officers can be assigned to accountability and/or command staff positions as needed.

When the first arriving unit is a chief officer, efforts should be automatically directed towards establishing a command post and fulfilling the command functions.

Company and chief officers should eliminate all unnecessary radio traffic while responding, unless such communications are required to ensure that command functions are initiated and completed. This requires the initial IC to give a clear on-scene report and continue to give updated progress reports as needed.

Chief officers and staff personnel should report directly to the command post to notify the IC of their availability to assume incident duties. These personnel should park their vehicles in a location that does not restrict access to the scene and report to the command post for assignment.

The IC is responsible for managing the incident. The fire department empowers the IC with the authority to turn his/her decisions into actions. Therefore, when acting as an IC, those personnel become the officer-in-charge of the incident. If a higher ranking officer wants to affect a change in the management of an incident, he/she must first be on the scene of the incident, then utilize the transfer of command procedure.

In immediate and extreme firefighter safety situations, anyone can cause a change in the current incident management strategy or tactics by notifying command and initiating corrective action.



COMMAND TEAM

The incident scene often creates a dynamic and intense environment. As an incident grows beyond the capabilities of initial responders, the IC can become overloaded and overwhelmed with information management, assigning companies, filling out and updating the tactical worksheet, planning, forecasting, calling for additional resources, talking on the radio, and fulfilling all the other functions of command. The immediate need of an IC at this point would be a support officer. If the IC is having difficulty setting up the functions of command, he/she should utilize the next arriving chief officer as a support officer.

Responsibilities of the Support Officer

- Define, evaluate, and recommend changes to the strategic and tactical plan
- Provide direction relating to tactical priorities, critical fireground factors, and safety
- Evaluate the need for additional resources
- Assist in assigning command organization responsibilities
- Assist with the tactical worksheet for control and accountability
- Evaluate the fireground organization and span of control
- Other duties as necessary

Senior Advisor

The senior advisor will normally be the County Deputy Chief or County Fire Chief. However, this position may ultimately be filled by the highest ranking officer at the command post. The officers serving as command and support focus on the completion of the tactical priorities, the strategic and tactical plan and the other components of the incident. The senior advisor's focus is to evaluate the entire incident and its impact from a broad perspective and provide direction, guidance and advice to the command and/or support officer as felt necessary.

Responsibilities of the Senior Advisor

- Review and evaluate the strategic and tactical plan, and initiate any needed changes
- Provide on-going review of the overall incident, its requirements, and community impact
- Review the command organizational structure and recommend change or expansion to meet incident needs
- May act as senior liaison with other agencies and officials, property owners, and/or tenants
- Other duties as necessary

In order to maintain continuity and overall effectiveness, the senior advisor and support officer must be at the command post with the IC. When a support officer and senior advisor are supporting the IC at the command post, there are three people performing the functions



of command. They are working as a team to enhance the command process and make the functions of command more effective.

The officer assigned to communicate directly to companies, divisions, or groups will use the radio designation "Command", and he/she should be the only member of the command team communicating on the fireground radio channel.

COMMAND STRUCTURE

It is the responsibility of command to develop an organizational structure, using current standard operating guidelines and directives, to effectively manage the incident scene. The development of the organizational structure should begin with deployment of the first arriving fire department unit and continue through a number of phases, depending on the size and complexity of the incident.

The command organization must develop at a pace that stays ahead of the tactical deployment of personnel and resources. In order for the IC to manage the incident, he/she must first be able to direct, control, and track the position and function of all operating companies. Building a sufficient command organization is the best support mechanism the IC can utilize to achieve the proper balance between managing personnel and incident needs. Therefore, large scale and complex incidents require a large command organization, while small scale and simple incidents only require a small command organization.

The command organization operates at 3 different levels. These levels are:

- Strategic Level - Overall direction of the incident.
- Tactical Level - Objectives assigned to branches, divisions, and groups
- Task Level - Task objectives assigned to Companies.

Strategic Level

This level involves the overall command and management of the incident. The command team is responsible for the strategic level of the command structure. The strategic plan defines where and when resources will be assigned to the incident in order to control the situation. This plan is the basis for developing a command organization, assigning all resources, and establishing tactical objectives by priority.

Tactical Level

Directs activities toward specific objectives. Tactical level officers include branch, division, and group supervisors, who are in charge of grouped resources. Tactical level officers are responsible for specific geographic areas or functions, and supervising assigned personnel. A branch, division, or group assignment comes with the authority to make decisions and assignments, within the boundaries of the overall plan and safety conditions. The accumulated achievements of tactical objectives should accomplish the goal of the overall strategic plan.



Task Level

This level refers to those activities normally accomplished by individual companies or specific personnel. The task level is where the work is actually done. Task level activities are routinely supervised by company officers. The accumulated achievements of task level activities should accomplish tactical objectives.

Examples:

The most basic command structure combines all three levels of the command structure. The company officer on a single engine response to a dumpster fire determines the strategy and tactics, and supervises the crew doing the task.

For incidents that only involve a small number of companies, only two levels of the command structure are required. The role of command combines the strategic and tactical levels, and companies operate at the task level, reporting directly to command.

Complex emergency situations often exceed the capability of one officer to effectively manage the entire operation. The IC may combine companies to work in divisions or groups. Divisions and groups reduce the span of control to more manageable smaller sized units. Divisions and groups allow the IC to communicate principally with division and group officers, rather than multiple, individual company officers, thus providing an effective command structure and incident scene organization.

COMMAND TERMINOLOGY

It is critical that all personnel operating at an emergency utilize common terminology when referencing the different locations at an incident scene. This is especially true when the IC is issuing orders or receiving information from other units at an incident.

Unless indicated by command, the main entrance side of buildings will be known as "Side A", followed in a clockwise fashion around the structure by "Side B", "Side C" (rear), and "Side D". Corners of buildings shall be known as "A/B Corner", "B/C Corner", "C/D Corner", and "D/A Corner".

Sides will also be used to identify exposures. Example: "Exposure B", "Exposure B/C".

If more than one exposure is located on a side, the exposure letter shall be followed by a number, which increases in a clockwise fashion. For example, the second exposure on Side B is "Exposure B-2".

The term Division is that organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area and usually has multiple resources assigned. When a structure is more than 1 story in height, each floor shall be identified as a division. For example, the third floor would be "Division 3". At large complexes, or widespread incidents, an example may be "D Division" or "East Division".

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The term Group identifies resources assembled together to perform a special function not necessarily within a single geographic division. For example, at the scene of a warehouse fire, two ladder companies may be combined to form the “Ventilation Group”

RADIO CHANNELS

At large or complex incidents where multiple units are responding, the IC should move all tactical radio traffic off of the main dispatch channel as soon as possible. The IC should ensure the Emergency Communications Center is aware of what channel units will be using.

For widespread incidents, or incidents where many components of the ICS are being utilized, the IC may have to assign several different channels to working units, and be able to monitor all of them.

COMMAND ORGANIZATION POSITIONS

The ICS is designed so that it expands and contracts to meet the needs of the IC, and addresses all aspects of the emergency scene. In order to facilitate the management of an incident, the IC may assign personnel to the following positions as needed.

Command Staff

Information Officer – The information officer is responsible for developing and releasing information about the incident to the news media, to incident personnel, and to other appropriate agencies and organizations. Only one information officer will be assigned for each incident, including incidents operating under unified command and multi-jurisdictional incidents. However, the information officer may have assistants as necessary. The county government Public Information Officer may be requested to fill this position.

Liaison Officer – Incidents that are multi-jurisdictional, or have several agencies involved, may require the establishment of the liaison officer position on the command staff. Only one liaison officer will be assigned for each incident, including incidents operating under unified command and multi-jurisdictional incidents. However, the liaison officer may have assistants as necessary. The liaison officer is the contact personnel assigned to the incident by assisting or cooperating agencies. These are personnel other than those on direct tactical assignments or those involved in unified command.

Safety Officer – The safety officer’s function is to develop and recommend measures for assuring personnel safety, and to assess and/or anticipate hazardous and unsafe conditions. Only one safety officer will be assigned for each incident, including incidents operating under unified command and multi-jurisdictional incidents. However, the safety officer may have assistants as necessary. The safety assistants may have specific responsibilities such as air operations, hazardous materials, or be assigned to certain divisions or groups.

**General Staff**

Operations Section Chief – The operations section chief, a member of the general staff, is responsible for the management of all operations directly applicable to the primary mission. The operations chief activates and supervises organization elements in accordance with the incident action plan and directs its execution.

Planning Section Chief – The planning section chief, a member of the general staff, is responsible for the collection, evaluation, dissemination, and use of information about the development of the incident and status of resources.

Logistics Section Chief - The logistics section chief, a member of the general staff, is responsible for providing facilities, services, and material in support of the incident. The logistics chief participates in development and implementation of the incident action plan and activates and supervises the branches and units within the logistics section.

Finance/Administration Section Chief – The finance/administration chief is responsible for all financial, administrative, and cost analysis aspects of the incident, and activates and supervises the units within the finance/administration section.

Branch Director – When activated, branch directors are under the direction of section chiefs, and are responsible for the implementation of the portion of the incident action plan appropriate to the branches. Examples might include the fire suppression branch of the operations section, or the service branch of the logistics section.

Division/Group Supervisor – This position reports to the assigned section chief or branch director. The supervisor is responsible for the implementation of the assigned portion of the incident action plan, assignment of resources within the division/group, and reporting on the progress of control operations and status of resources within the division/group. Examples might include the North Division of the operations section, or the ventilation group of the fire suppression branch.

Strike Team/Task Force Leaders – This position reports to a division or group supervisor and is responsible for performing tactical assignments given to the strike team or task force. The leader reports work progress, resources status, and other important information to a division or group supervisor, and maintains work records on assigned personnel.

Staging Area Manager – This position is responsible for managing all activities within a staging area. The staging manager usually reports to the operations section chief.



INCIDENT COMMAND FLOW CHART

