



WASHINGTON COUNTY VOLUNTEER FIRE & RESCUE ASSOCIATION STANDARDS MANUAL

Title: Incident Management System

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PREFACE

The purpose of the Incident Management System (IMS) is to provide for a systematic development of a complete functional command organization designed to allow for single or multi-agency use that increases the effectiveness of command and firefighter safety.

This model system was developed by the National Fire Service Incident Management System Consortium. It combines command strategy with organizational procedures and is designed to be used primarily for structure fire incidents using up to twenty-five (25) companies. Much of the organizational design is applicable to other types of emergency incidents. The model reflects the merger of certain elements of the California FIRESCOPE Incident Command System and the Phoenix Fire Ground Command System.

The key elements of the system are:

- The systematic development of a complete functional organization with the major functions being Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administrative.
- It is designed to allow for multi-agency adoption in Federal, State, and Local fire agencies. Therefore, organizational terminology used in the IMS is designed to be acceptable to all levels of government.
- Designed to be the basic everyday operating system for all incidents within each agency. Therefore, the transition to large and or multi-agency operations requires a minimum of adjustment for any of the agencies involved.
- The organization builds from the ground up, with the management of all major functions initially being the responsibility of one of just a few persons. Functional units are designed to handle the most important incident activities. As the incident grows in size and or complexity, functional unit management is assigned to additional individuals in order to maintain a reasonable level of control and efficiency.



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- Designed on the premise that the jurisdictional authority of the involved agencies will not be compromised. Each agency having legal responsibility within its jurisdiction is assumed to have full command authority within its jurisdiction at all times. Assisting agencies will normally function under the direction of the Incident Commander appointed by the jurisdiction within which the incident occurs.
 - Multi-jurisdictional incidents will normally be managed under a unified command structure involving a single incident command post and a single incident action plan – applicable to all agencies involved in the incident.
 - The system expands and contracts organizationally based upon the needs of the incident. Span of- control recommendations are followed closely; therefore, the organizational structure is never larger than required.

Although the focus of this document is structural fire suppression, the organization recognizes the importance to the fire service of coordinating incident response with responders of other disciplines such as EMS, law enforcement, and public works. To be effective, IMS must provide an integrated multi-discipline approach. The IMS model provides an overall structure that allows the successful integration of multiple disciplines, allowing application to the “all risk” nature of emergency incidents.

The Incident Management System should be guideline driven for the following reasons:

- Written guidelines can reflect either strict department policy or allow flexibility the management of incidents.
- Provides a standardized approach to managing any incident.
- Provides a predictable approach to incident management.
- May be applied routinely.
- Provides a training tool for firefighters' reference.
- Provides a baseline for critiques and review of incidents.
- Makes the Incident Commander's operations more effective.



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COMMAND PROCEDURES

PURPOSE

Fire Departments respond to a wide range of emergency incidents. This procedure identifies standard operating guidelines (SOG's) that can be employed in establishing command. The system provides for the effective management of personnel and resources for the safety and welfare of personnel. It also establishes procedures for the implementation of all components of IMS for fire operations.

Command procedures are designed to:

- Fix the responsibility for Command on a specific individual through a standard identification system, depending on the arrival sequence of members, companies, and chief officers.
- Ensure that a strong, direct, and visible command 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 to other individuals operating within IMS.
- 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 completion of the tactical priorities. The tactical priorities are:

1. Remove endangered occupants and treat the injured
2. Stabilize the incident and provide for life safety
3. Conserve property
4. Provide for the safety, accountability, and welfare of personnel. This priority is on-going throughout the incident.



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IMS is used to facilitate the completion of the tactical priorities. The IC is the person who drives IMS toward 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 priorities for the incident.

FUNCTIONS OF COMMAND

The functions of Command include:

1. Assume and announce Command and establish an effective operation position (Command Post).
2. Rapidly evaluate the situation (size-up).
3. Initiate, maintain, and control the communications process.
4. Identify the overall strategy, develop an incident action plan, and assign companies and personnel consistent with the incident action plan and SOG's.
5. Develop an effective incident management organization.
6. Provide tactical objectives.
7. Initiate and maintain a tactical worksheet.
8. Review, evaluate, and revise (as needed) the incident action plan.
9. 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

The first fire department member or company to arrive at the scene shall assume Command of the incident. The initial IC shall remain in Command until Command is transferred or the incident is stabilized and terminated.

The first company officer or member on the scene must initiate whatever parts of the IMS are needed to effectively manage the incident scene. The exact actions



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of that first company or member will vary depending on the type or scope of the incident.

1. A single-company incident (trash fire, single patient EMS incident, car fire, etc.) may only require that the company or unit acknowledge its arrival on the scene.
2. For incidents that require the commitment of multiple companies, the first member or company officer on the scene must establish and announce "Command" and initiate an incident management structure appropriate for the incident.

Brief Initial Report (BIR)

The first arriving fire department member or company officer activates the command process by giving an initial radio report. The radio report shall be brief, concise, and include the following:

- Designation of the company or unit number arriving on the scene
- Location of unit in relation to the overall incident (i.e. Side Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta)
- A brief description of the incident situation, i.e., type of building, number of stories, occupancy, multi-vehicle accident, haz-mat release, etc.
- Obvious conditions (fire showing, smoke showing, normal conditions, multiple patients, vehicle rollover, etc.)
- Brief description of action taken, i.e., laying supply line, initiating primary search, initiating offensive attack, investigating, etc.
- Declaration of the strategy to be used (offensive or defensive mode).
- Assumption, identification, and location of Command

Examples:



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“Nothing Evident”

Engine 31 is on the scene, with a two story dwelling, we have nothing evident on side Alpha, Engine 31 will be in the investigation mode, Chief 3 has Staley Drive Command on side Alpha.

“Offensive Structure Fire”

Engine 31 is on the scene with a two-story dwelling, we have smoke showing from the second floor on side Alpha. Engine 31 has laid-out from Whitney Lane and Staley Drive. Units will be operating in the offensive mode. Chief 3 has Staley Drive Command on side Alpha.

“Defensive Structure Fire”

Engine 31 is on the scene with a two-story dwelling under construction fully involved with exposures on side Delta. Engine 31 has laid a supply line from Whitney Lane and Staley Drive. Units will be operating in a defensive mode with master stream devices. Chief 3 has Staley Drive Command on side Alpha.

“EMS Incident”

Engine 31 is on the scene with a multi-vehicle accident with persons still in the vehicles. Chief 3 will have I-70 Command.

“Single Company Incident”

Engine 31 is on the scene with a dumpster fire and no exposures. Engine 31 can handle.

RADIO DESIGNATION

The radio designation “Command” will be used along with the geographical location of the incident. This designation will not change during the incident.



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RADIO COMMUNICATIONS FORMAT

The IMS has adopted the military protocol format for effective radio communications. The sender of a message shall state the intended receiver's radio designation first, then follows with the sender's designation. For example,

suppose that the IC needs to call the Ventilation Group during the course of an incident. The proper radio transmission would be:

“Ventilation Group from Command” or “Ventilation Group, Command”

Saying the receiver's designator first is an attention getting device. By getting the receiver's attention upfront in the message, the receiver is more likely to copy the message. Remember that the amount of radio traffic during responses is generally high and all of us listen for our own radio designation before “tuning in” to the radio.

In order for the IC (or any message sender) to obtain confirmation that his radio message / order was received, understood, and the receiver is taking correct action, the radio message must be repeated by the intended receiver. This repeat does not need to be a word-for-word repeat of the original message, but should be a brief and concise summary of the intent of the message or order from the sender. The format of the repeat should assure the IC that the message was received by the intended receiver, was correctly understood, and the receiver is taking correct action.

PROGRESS REPORTS

A Progress Report is essential to any ongoing incident in that it keeps all concerned parties abreast of a dynamic situation. It is designed to provide information which:

1. Allows Headquarters latitude in filling vacant stations
2. Updates Chief Officers
3. Updates the Information Officer
4. Permits continuous documentation of an ongoing incident.



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A Progress Report shall be required on any and all incidents that initially required a Brief Initial Report (BIR), except as noted. In general a Progress Report should follow shortly after the BIR. The first Progress Report shall be transmitted at approximately fifteen (15) minutes after the initial dispatch. The Dispatcher should “prompt” the Incident Commander if no Progress Report is received within that time frame. Thereafter, Progress Reports shall be transmitted at intervals

deemed appropriate by the Incident Commander. A Progress Report shall be transmitted after each transfer of Command. However, in no case should an interval exceed thirty (30) minutes without a Progress Report for the Incident Commander. The Progress Report shall consist of the following information:

1. Description of the current situation
2. Description of current tactical objectives
3. Status of resource needs
4. Length of time holding units from the 1st unit to the last unit.

Example:

Headquarters from Battalion 5, Chief 31 will be assuming Command. At present all units are being held. Companies are making progress on a working fire in a 2-story wood frame dwelling. We are conducting a primary search and making an interior attack with 2 handlines. Units will be out for over an hour and we remain in the offensive mode.

When units are responding to a medical emergency in a structure under normal conditions, no Progress Report is necessary. However, should the incident escalate to bigger proportions such as multiple casualties, Progress Reports would become appropriate.

COMMAND OPTIONS

The first-arriving Company Officer or member has several command options to choose from when arriving at the incident, depending on the situation. If a Chief Officer, Duty Officer, member, or unit without tactical capabilities (i.e. staff car, no or limited equipment, etc.) initiates Command; the establishment of a Command



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Post should be top priority. However, at most incidents, the initial IC will be a Company Officer on a piece of fire apparatus. The following command options define the Company Officer's direct involvement in tactical activities and the modes of command that may be used. It is important to remember that regardless of which command option is implemented and the level of involvement of the Company Officer; he is still fully responsible for the Command functions.

Investigation Mode

Upon arrival, an incident may not have visible indicators of a significant event. These situations generally require investigation by the first-arriving company, with other responding companies remaining in staging. The officer of the first-in company should assume Command and go with the company to investigate, using a portable radio to command the incident.

Limited Command Mode

Situations that require immediate action to stabilize and require the Company Officer's assistance and direct involvement in the attack. In these situations, the Company Officer goes with the crew to provide the appropriate level of supervision. Examples of these situations include:

- Offensive fire attacks in marginal or incipient situations.
- Critical life safety situation (rescue) that must be achieved in compressed time.
- Any incident where the safety and welfare of firefighters are a major concern.
- Obvious working 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 Limited Command mode should not last more that a few minutes and will end with one of the following:



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Situation stabilization

Situation is not stabilized and the Company Officer must withdraw to the exterior and establish a command post. At some time 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. No crew should remain in a hazardous area without radio communications capabilities.

Command is transferred to another Officer. When a Chief Officer is assuming command, the Chief Officer may opt to return the Company Officer to his/her crew, or assign him/her to a subordinate position.

Command Mode

Certain incidents, by virtue of their size, complexity, or potential for rapid extension, 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 Higher Ranking Officer. A tactical worksheet should be initiated and utilized to assist in managing these types of incidents. If the Company Officer selects the Command Mode, the following options are available regarding the assignment of the remaining crewmembers.

- The officer may place the company into action with the remaining members. One of the crewmembers will serve as the acting company officer and should be provided with a portable radio. The collective and individual capabilities and experience of the crew will regulate this action. Interior crews must consist of at least two persons.
- 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 other Company Officer
- The officer may elect to assign the crewmembers to perform staff functions to assist command.



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Limited Command

In certain situations, it may be advantageous for a first-arriving Company Officer to assume Limited Command until the arrival of the next company. This is indicated when the initial commitment of the first-arriving Company requires a full crew (i.e.: an immediate rescue situation).

“Passing Command” to a unit that is not on the scene creates a gap in the command process and compromises incident management. To prevent this

“gap”, COMMAND SHALL NOT BE PASSED TO AN OFFICER WHO IS NOT ON THE SCENE. It is preferable to have the initial arriving Company Officer continue to operate in the Limited Command mode until command can be passed to an on-scene Officer.

When a Chief Officer or Duty Officer arrives at the scene at the same time as the initial arriving company, the Chief Officer or Duty Officer should assume Command of the incident.

Should a situation occur where a later arriving Company, Chief Officer, or Duty Officer cannot locate or communicate with Command (after several radio attempts), they will assume and announce their assumption of Command and initiate whatever actions are necessary to confirm the safety of the missing crew.

TRANSFER OF COMMAND

Command is transferred to improve the quality of the command organization. The following guidelines outline the transfer of command:

A. Purpose

Transfer of Command refers to the act of one individual relieving another individual of authority, responsibility, and accountability as it pertains to the execution of the function of Command. The progressive change-of-command principle shall be utilized.



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1. Should an incident commander be a non-officer, they shall be relieved as soon as practical by the 1st arriving officer.
 2. The 1st officer to assume Command shall retain Command until formally relieved by a higher ranking officer.

Transfer of Command Procedure

1. At all times possible, transfer of Command shall be done face to face. When a face-to-face transfer cannot be accomplished, the incoming senior individual may assume Command immediately, but **MUST** make every effort to gain the necessary information as soon as possible.
2. The individual preparing to assume Command shall, at an appropriate moment, request a status report from the Incident Commander.
3. The Incident Commander shall brief the incoming individual as to:
 - a) The current situation
 - b) Any injuries, loss of life, etc.
 - c) All current control efforts and the status of those efforts.
 - d) The anticipated course of the incident.
 - e) The location of on-scene resources.
 - f) Any other information pertinent to the incident.
4. When the incoming individual is fully prepared to assume Command, he or she shall then formally relieve the current Incident Commander and reassign that individual as necessary. All transfers of Command shall be transmitted over the radio.
5. In order of preference, Command should be transferred by:
 - a) Face to face
 - b) Radio
 - c) Assumed by an Officer where the original Commander cannot be found.
6. Assumption of Command is discretionary for the Fire Chief
7. The Incident Commander will typically be the ranking Officer of the first due Engine Company. However, the abilities and capabilities of those Officers present should be evaluated and the more capable Officer on-scene should be considered for the Incident Commander role, regardless of whose first due it is.



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GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The response and arrival of additional ranking officers on the incident scene strengthens the overall Command function. As the incident escalates, the Incident Commander should use these additional Officers as needed.

The arrival of a ranking or more senior officer on the incident scene does not mean that Command has been transferred to that Officer. Command is only transferred when the transfer of command process has been completed.

Chief Officers should report directly to the Command Post for assignment by the Incident Commander.

The Incident Commander has the overall responsibility for managing an incident. Simply stated, the Incident Commander has complete authority and responsibility for the Incident. If a higher-ranking officer wants to affect a change in the management of an incident, they must first be on the scene of the incident, and then utilize the transfer of command procedure. Anyone can affect change in incident management in extreme situations relating to safety by notifying the Incident Commander and initiating corrective action.

The practice of "Passing Command" is not a recommended practice. Passing Command to an officer not on the scene can create a gap in the Command process and compromise incident management and firefighter safety. The application of "Passing Command" has historically been applied to critical fast attack situations between first and second due companies. The need for the "Passing of Command" has been significantly reduced with the use of the Limited Command Mode function. Command should never be passed/transferred to an officer not on scene.

INCIDENT ACTION PLAN

Incident Action Plans are critical to the rapid, effective control of emergency operations. An incident action plan is a well-thought-out organized course of events developed to address all phases of incident control within a specified



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time. The incident action plan must be completed in a time frame that allows the least amount of negative action to continue.

Written incident action plans may not be necessary for short-term, routine operations. Large scale or complex incidents, however, require the creation and maintenance of a written plan for each operational period.

The incident action plan should contain strategic goals, tactical objectives, priorities, resource needs, and crew assignments. It should also establish anticipated outcomes, timelines for progress, and considerations for unanticipated events.

COMMAND STRUCTURE

It will be the responsibility of the Incident Commander to develop an organizational structure as soon as possible after arrival and implementation of initial tactical control measures. The size and complexity of the organizational structure, obviously, will be determined by the scope of the emergency.

The Task Level of Command

The task 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.

Example:

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.



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Routine Incident Command Organization

The basic structure for a “routine” incident involving a small number of companies requires only two levels of the command structure. The role of Command combines the strategic and tactical levels. Companies report directly to Command and operate at the task level.

The Tactical Level of Command

The Tactical Level includes directing operational activities towards specific objectives.

Tactical level officers include Branch, Division, and Group Officers who are in charge of grouped resources. Tactical level officers are responsible for specific geographic areas or functions, and supervising assigned personnel. A tactical

level 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 strategy as outlined in the Incident Action Plan.

As an incident escalates the Incident Commander should group companies to work in divisions or groups. A division is the organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area.

Establishment of Divisions

For the purpose of coordinating operations, the following procedure shall be used when geographically dividing an emergency incident.

Structures:

1. The exterior wall of any structure shall be designated as Divisions and shall be identified in order by going clockwise beginning with Division “Alpha”. Followed by “Bravo, Charlie, and Delta”.



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2. Division "Alpha" shall be defined as that side containing the Street Address or the Front of the building.
 3. Exposures shall be identified by the side of the involved structure to which it is exposed. Ex: The exposure facing Division Charlie of an involved structure would be identified as Exposure Charlie.
 4. The interior floor area of a structure shall be known as a Division and shall be identified by its floor number. Ex: The 5th floor of a structure would be identified as Division 5.
 5. Unusual areas such as multiple sub-basements, mezzanines, etc. Shall be designated as Divisions. These unusual areas shall be identified by their common name. Basements will be designated as Sub-Divisions. Ex: "Mezzanine Division", "Loft Division", "Sub-Division 1".
 6. Personnel assigned to supervise a geographic area shall be designated as, and identified by, that geographic area. Ex: The supervisor of the 5th floor of a structure would be identified as Division 5. The supervisor of the interior of a single story structure would be identified as Division 1. Groups operating within a Division shall notify the Division supervisor of their location and when they are moving to another area of operation.

Open Areas:

1. Geographic areas necessary to maintain command and control should be established using natural dividing lines such as roads, creeks, railroad beds, etc. whenever possible.
2. These established areas shall be designated as "Divisions" and shall be identified alphabetically. A brush fire divided into three separate areas of control would be designated "Divisions Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie".
3. Personnel assigned to supervise geographic areas shall be designated as, and identified by, that geographic area.

Multi-Story Incident

In multi-story occupancies, divisions will be indicated by floor number (Division 6 indicates the 6th floor).



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Groups

Groups are assigned Functional Responsibilities at an incident. Examples are Salvage Group, Search and Rescue Group, and Ventilation Group.

GROUPS HAVE A FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN THE ENTIRE INCIDENT. THE VENTILATION GROUP WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR VENTILATION OF THE ENTIRE BUILDING.

Basic Operational Approach to Divisions and Groups

The use of Divisions or Groups in the Command organization provides a standard system to divide the incident scene into smaller subordinate management units or areas.

Complex emergency situations often exceed the capability of one officer to effectively manage the entire operation. Divisions and Groups reduce the span of

control to more manageable smaller sized units. Divisions and Groups allow the Incident Commander to communicate principally with these organizational levels, rather than multiple, individual Company Officers providing for an effective command structure and organization. Generally, Division or Group responsibilities should be assigned early in the incident, typically to the fire company assigned to a geographic area or function.

This early establishment of Divisions or Groups provides an effective Incident Command and organization framework on which the operation can be built and expanded.

The number of Divisions or Groups that can be effectively managed by the Incident Commander varies. The normal span of control is 3 to 7. In fast moving, complex operations, a span of control of no more than 5 is indicated. In slower moving incidents, the Incident Commander may effectively manage more Divisions or Groups.



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When effective Divisions or Groups have been established, the Incident Commander can concentrate on overall strategy and resource assignment, allowing the Divisions or Groups to manage their assigned units. The Incident Commander determines strategy and assigns tactical objectives and resources to the Divisions or Groups. Each Division or Group Officer is responsible for the tactical deployment of the resources at their disposal, in order to complete the tactical objectives assigned by the Incident Commander. The Division or Group Officers are responsible for communicating needs and progress to Command.

Division and Group Guidelines

It will be the ongoing responsibility of Command to assign Divisions or Groups as required for effective emergency operations; this assignment will relate to both geographic and functional Divisions and Groups.

Command shall advise each Division or Group of specific tactical objectives. The overall strategy and plan should also be provided (time permitting) so the Division and Group know how their assignment fits into the overall plan.

The number of companies assigned to a Division or Group will depend upon conditions and the event dynamics.

Command will maintain an awareness of the number of companies operating within a Division or Group and the capability of that Division or Group to effectively direct operations. If a Division or Group cannot control the resources within the Division/Group, they should notify the Incident Commander so that responsibilities can be split or other corrective action taken. In most cases three (3) to seven (7) companies represent the maximum span-of-control.

The incident scene should be subdivided in a manner that makes sense. This should be accomplished by assigning divisions to geographic locations (i.e., Roof Division, Division Alpha, etc.) and assigning functional responsibilities to groups (i.e., Ventilation Group, Salvage Group, etc.).



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Division or Groups will use the Division or Group designation in radio communications (i.e., Ventilation Group, Salvage Group, etc.).

Divisions or Groups will be commanded by Chief Officers, Company Officers, or any other Fire Department Member designated by Command.

Regular transfer of Command procedures will be followed in transferring Division or Group responsibility.

In some cases, a Division or Group Officer may be assigned to an area/function initially to evaluate and report conditions and advise Command of needed tasks and resources.

The assigned officer will proceed to the Division or Group, evaluate and report conditions to the Incident Commander, and assume responsibility for directing resources and operations within his/her assigned area of responsibility.

The Division or Group Officer must be in a position to directly supervise and monitor operations. This will require the Division or Group Officer to be equipped with the appropriate protective clothing and equipment for their area of responsibility.

Division or Group Officers will be responsible for and in control of all assigned functions within their Division or Group. This requires each Division or Group Officer to:

- A. Complete objectives assigned by Command.
- B. Account for all assigned personnel.
- C. Ensure that operations are conducted safely.
- D. Monitor work process
- E. Redirect activities, as necessary.
- F. Coordinate actions with related activities and adjacent Divisions or Groups.
- G. Monitor welfare of assigned personnel.
- H. Request additional resources as needed.
- I. Provide Command with essential and frequent progress reports.
- J. Re-allocate resources within the Division or Group.



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The Division or Group Officer should be readily identifiable and maintain a visible position, as much as possible.

The primary function of Company Officers working within a Division or Group is to direct the operations of their individual crews in performing assigned tasks. Company Officers will advise their Division or Group Officer of work progress, preferably face-to-face. All requests for additional resources or assistance within a Division or Group must be directed to the Division or Group Officer. Division or Group Officers will communicate with Command.

Each Division or Group Officer will keep Command informed of conditions and progress through regular progress reports. The Division or Group Officer must prioritize reports to essential information only to reduce the amount of radio traffic.

Command must be advised immediately of significant changes, particularly those involving the ability or inability to complete an objective, hazardous conditions, accidents, structural collapse, firefighter injury, etc.

When a company is assigned from Staging to an operating Division or Group, the company will be told to what Division or Group and to which Officer they will be reporting. The Division or Group Officer will be informed which particular companies or units have been assigned by the Incident Commander. It is then the responsibility of the Division or Group Officer to contact the assigned company and to transmit any instructions relative to the specific action requested.

Division or Group Officers will monitor the condition of the assigned crews. Relief crews will be requested in a manner to safeguard the welfare of personnel and maintain progress.

Division or Group Officers will insure an orderly and thorough reassignment of crews to Rehab. Crews must report to Rehab intact to facilitate accountability.



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The Strategic Level of Command

The strategic level involves the overall command of the incident. The Incident Commander is responsible for the strategic level of the command structure. The action plan should cover all strategic responsibilities, all tactical objectives, and all support activities needed during the entire operational period. The Action Plan defines where and when resources will be assigned to the incident to control the situation. This plan is the basis for developing a command organization, assigning all resources and establishing tactical objectives. The strategic level responsibilities include:

- A. Determining the appropriate strategy
- B. Establish overall incident objectives
- C. Setting priorities
- D. Develop an Incident Action Plan
- E. Obtaining and assigning resources
- F. Predicting outcomes and planning
- G. Assigning specific objectives to tactical level units

As a small incident escalates into a major incident, additional organizational support will be required. The Incident Commander can become quickly

overwhelmed and overloaded with information management, assigning companies, filling out and updating the tactical worksheets, planning, forecasting, requesting additional resources, talking on the radio, and fulfilling other Command functions. As additional Officers arrive on the scene, the Command organization may be expanded through the involvement of additional Officers to fill General Staff Positions within the Command structure such as Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance, Safety, Public Information, Liaison, Branch Officers, etc.

Section and Unit level positions within the Incident Management System will be activated only when the corresponding functions are required by the incident.



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Branches

Branches may be established on an incident to serve several purposes. However, they are not always essential to the organization of the Operations Section. In general, branches may be established for the following reasons:

When the number of Divisions or Groups exceed the recommended span-of-control for the Operations Section Chief, the Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief should designate a Multi- Branch structure, and allocate the Divisions or Groups within those branches. In the following example the Operations Section Chief has one Group and four Divisions reporting with two additional Divisions and one Group being added. At this point, a two-Branch organization should be formed due to span-of-control.

Two Branch Organizations

Branches should operate in their area of responsibility and preferably on different radio channels. Communications between Branch Officers and Command will be on a separate channel. The radio designation for Branches should reflect the objective of the Branch (i.e., Fire Branch, Medical Branch, HazMat Branch).

ESTABLISHING SECTIONS

Operations

The Operations Section is responsible for the direct management of all incident tactical activities, the tactical priorities, and the safety and welfare of the personnel working in the Operations Section. The Operations Section Chief uses the appropriate radio channel to communicate strategic and specific objectives to the Branches and/or Divisions and Groups.

The Operations Section is most often implemented as a span-of-control mechanism. When the numbers of Branches, Divisions, or Groups exceed the capability of the Incident Commander to effectively manage – the Incident Commander may staff or assign an Operations Section to reduce their span-of-



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control. Thus transferring direct management of all tactical activities to the Operations Section Chief. The Incident Commander is then able to focus his/her attention on management of the entire incident rather than concentrating on tactical activities.

Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Manage incident tactical activities
2. Coordinate activities with the Incident Commander
3. Implement the Incident Action Plan
4. Assign resources to tactical level areas based on tactical objectives
5. Build an effective organizational structure through the use of Branches and Divisions/Groups
6. Provide tactical objectives for tactical level officers
7. Control Staging Operations
8. Provide for life safety
9. Determine needs and request additional resources through Command
10. Consult with and inform other Sections and the Incident Commander as needed.

The Operations Section Chief is responsible for the direct management of all incident tactical activities and should have direct involvement in the preparation of the Action Plan for the period of responsibility.

EXPANDED ORGANIZATION

Staging

Staging Areas are locations designated within the incident area, which are used to temporarily locate resources that are available for assignment. In this expanded organizational structure, Staging reports to the Operations Section Chief. The Operations Section Chief may establish, move and discontinue the use of Staging Areas. All resources within the designated Staging Areas are under the direct control of the Operations Section Chief and should be



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immediately available. Staging will request logistical support (ex: food, fuel, sanitation) from the Logistics Section.

The purpose of staging is to provide a standard system of resource placement prior to tactical assignments. Failure to utilize such a system results in added confusion on the incident scene with units determining their own tactical assignments. Incident Commanders will lose track of their resources. This results in poorly applied resources such as; priorities being overlooked, the inability to oversee personnel safety, and a general lack of accountability. The following policy addresses two (2) staging requirements; Level I – the initial response involving multiple units and, Level II – the response of multiple units beyond the initial response.

Level I Staging – Utilized by all responding units and including a full 1st alarm assignment regardless of the type of incident.

1. Level I staging shall automatically be followed unless specific orders to the contrary are received
2. for the 3rd and 4th due Engine Companies. Units should take up positions to support earlier arriving companies. In lieu of orders to the contrary, units shall proceed to a convenient location (at a hydrant if available) approximately one (1) block from the scene. Upon arrival at this location unit officers shall transmit (unit ID) is staged as (ID the location). This message will inform the Incident Commander that the unit is ready for assignment.
3. No unit shall commit itself to any operation without having received orders or approval from Command.
4. Unit officers shall not request assignments from staging. Should a staged unit feel that the BIR indicated a need for their unit and no orders have been received, they shall repeat the transmission “Unit xxx is stage at (ID the location).” If the 2nd transmission is not acknowledged, the unit officer shall report directly to the Incident Commander by walking to the Command Post.

Level II Staging – Utilized by all responding units beyond the 1st Alarm assignment.



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A. Level II staging shall utilize an area suitable to park, organize, and coordinate the anticipated response of additional resources.

1. Command, upon requesting additional resources, may inform Headquarters of the designated location of the Level II staging area. If an area is not designated, the first due and arriving Engine Company shall locate an area and inform Command of its location.
2. The 1st unit officer arriving at the Level II staging area, and without orders to the contrary, shall assume "Staging Officer". Truck, Squad or other specialized unit officers should not be used as the Staging Officer.
3. Communications to and from the incident scene and the Level II staging area shall be directly between Command or Operations and the Staging Area Officer. Requests for assignment of units from staging shall be directed from Command or Operations to the Staging Area Officer. No unit shall take any action except as directed by the Staging Area Officer.

B. Duties of the Staging Area Officer

1. Identify location by use of warning lights. All other units shall turn off emergency lights.
2. Log in all responding resources and notify Command or Operations of available resources.
3. Park apparatus in such a manner as to avoid congestion and facilitate movement.
4. Dispatch resources as directed by Command or Operations.
5. Maintain the level of resources in staging deemed necessary by Command
6. Coordinate with police to insure access and security of staging area.

Planning

The Planning Section is responsible for gathering, assimilating, analyzing, and processing information needed for effective decision-making. Information management is a full time task at large and complex incidents. The Planning Section serves as the Incident Commander's "clearing house" for information. This allows the Incident Commanders staff to provide information instead of



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having to deal with dozens of information sources. Critical information should be immediately forwarded to Command or whoever needs it. Information should also be used to make long-range plans. The Planning Section Chief 's goal is to plan ahead of current events and to identify the need for resources before they are needed.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Evaluate current strategy and plan with the Incident Commander
2. Maintain resource status and Personnel accountability.
3. Refine and recommend any needed changes to plan with Operations input.
4. Evaluate incident organization and span-of-control.
5. Forecast possible outcome(s).
6. Evaluate future resource requirements
7. Utilize technical assistance as needed
8. Evaluate tactical priorities, specific critical factors, and safety
9. Gather, update, improve, and manage situation status with a standard approach.
10. Maintain incident records.

Logistics

The Logistics Section is the support mechanism for the organization. Logistics provide services and support systems to all the organizational components involved in the incident including facilities, transportation, supplies, equipment maintenance, fueling, feeding, communications, medical services, and responder rehab.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Provide for medical aid for incident personnel and manage responder rehab.
2. Coordinate immediate critical incident stress debriefing function.



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3. Provide and manage any needed supplies or equipment.
 4. Provide fuel and needed repairs for equipment.
 5. Obtain specialized equipment or expertise as directed by Command.
 6. Provide food and associated supplies.
 7. Secure need for fixed or portable facilities.
 8. Provide any other logistics needs as requested by Command.

Finance/Administration

The Finance/Administrative Section is established on incidents when the agency(s) who are involved have a specific need for finance services. Not all agencies will require the establishment of a separate Finance/Administrative Section.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Procurement of services and/or supplies from sources within and outside of the Fire Department as requested by Command.
2. Documenting all financial costs of the incident.
3. Documenting for possible cost recovery for services and or supplies.
4. Document for compensation and claims for injury.

Incident Commander

Once the Operations Section is in place and functioning, the Incident Commander's focus should be on the strategic issues, overall strategic planning and other components of the incident. This focus is to look at the "big picture" and the impact of the incident from a broad perspective. The Incident Commander should provide direction, advice and guidance to the Command and General Staff in directing the tactical aspects of the incident.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Review and evaluate the plan, and initiate any needed changes.
2. Provide on-going review of the overall incident.
3. Select priorities.



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4. Provide direction to the Command and General Staff Officers.
 5. Review the organizational structure and initiate change or expansion to meet incident needs.
 6. Provide Command and General Staff functions as necessary.
 7. Establish liaison with other internal agencies, outside agencies, property owners, or tenants.

Command Staff

Command Staff positions are established to assume responsibility for key activities that are not a part of the line organization. Three specific staff positions are identified.

1. Public Information Officer (PIO)
2. Safety Officer
3. Liaison Officer

Additional positions might be required based on the size and nature of the incident.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

The PIO function is to develop accurate and complete information regarding incident cause, size, current situation, and resources committed and other matters of general interest. The PIO will normally be the point of contact for the media and other governmental agencies, which desire information directly from the incident. In either a single or unified command structure, only one PIO would be designated. Assistants may be assigned from other agencies or departments involved.

Safety Officer

The Safety Officer's function at the incident is to assess hazardous and unsafe situations and develop measures for insuring personnel safety. The Safety Officer has emergency authority to stop and or prevent unsafe acts. In a unified command structure, a single Safety Officer would be designated. Assistants may



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be required and may be assigned from other agencies or departments making up the unified command.

Liaison Officer

The Liaison Officer's function is to be a point of contact for representative from other agencies. In a single command structure, the representatives from assisting agencies would coordinate through the Liaison Officer. Under a unified command structure, representatives from agencies not involved in the unified command would coordinate through the Liaison Officer.

TYPES OF COMMAND

Command is responsible for overall management of the incident. Command also includes certain staff functions. The command function within the IMS may be conducted in two general ways.

1. Single Command
2. Unified Command

Single Command – Incident Commander

Within a jurisdiction where an incident occurs and when there is no overlap of jurisdictional boundaries involved, a single Incident Commander will be designated by the jurisdictional agency to have overall management responsibility for the incident. The Incident Commander will prepare incident objectives that in turn will be the foundation upon which subsequent action planning will be based. The Incident Commander will approve the final action plan and all requests for the ordering and releasing of primary resources.



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Unified Command

A unified command structure is called for under the following conditions:

The incident is totally contained within a single jurisdiction. More than one department or agency shares management responsibility due to the nature of the incident or the kinds of resources required, i.e., a passenger airliner crashes within a national forest. Fire, medical, and law enforcement all have immediate but diverse objectives. The primary differences between a single and unified command structure are:

In a single command structure, a single Incident Commander is solely responsible, within the confines of their authority, to establish objectives and overall management strategy associated with the incident. The Incident Commander is directly responsible for follow-through, to ensure that all functional area actions are directed toward accomplishment of the strategy. The implementation of planning required to effect operational control will be the responsibility of a single individual (Operations Section Chief) who will report directly to the Incident Commander.

In a unified command structure, the individuals designated by their jurisdictions, or by departments within a single jurisdiction, must jointly determine objectives, strategy and priorities. As in a single command structure, the Operations Section Chief will have responsibility for implementation of the plan. The determination of which agency or department the Operations Section Chief represents must be made by mutual agreement of the unified command. It may be done on the basis

of greatest jurisdictional involvement, number of resources involved, by existing statutory authority, or by mutual knowledge of the individual's qualification.



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GLOSSARY OF IMS TERMS

Branch	An organizational level having functional/geographic responsibility for major segments of incident operations. The Branch Level is organizationally between Section and Division/Group Levels.
Clear Text	The use of plain English language in radio communications transmissions. No agency specific codes are used when using Clear Text.
Command	The act of directing, ordering, and or controlling resources by virtue of explicit legal, agency, or delegated authority.
Command Post (CP)	The location from which primary command functions are executed.
Command Staff	The Command Staff consists of the Information Officer, Safety Officer, and Liaison Officer, who report directly to the Incident Commander.
Company	A ground vehicle providing specified equipment capability and personnel (Engine Company, Truck Company, Rescue Company, etc.).
Company Officer	The individual responsible for command of a Company. This designation is not specific to any particular fire department rank.
Division	That organization level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area. The Division Level is organizational between Single Resources and the Branch Level.
Engine Company	A ground vehicle providing specified levels of pumping, water, hose capacity and personnel.



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Finance Administrative Unit	Responsible for all costs and financial actions of the incident. Includes time, procurement, compensation/claims, and costs.
General Staff	The group of incident management personnel comprised of the Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, and Finance/Administrative Section Chief.
Group	The organizational level responsible for a specified functional assignment at an incident (ventilation, salvage, water supply, fire attack, etc.).
Incident Action Plan	The strategic goals, tactical objectives, and support requirements for the incident. All incidents require an action plan. For simple incidents the action plan is not usually in written form. Large or complex incidents will require that the action plan be documented in writing.
Incident Commander (IC)	The individual responsible for the management of all incident operations.
Incident Management System (IMS)	A system with a common organizational structure with responsibility for the management of assigned resources to effectively accomplish stated goals at an incident.
Information Officer	The person responsible for providing information to the media or other appropriate agencies requiring information directly from the incident scene. Member of the Command Staff.
Initial Attack	Resources initially committed to an incident.



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Liaison Officer	The person serving as the point of contact for assisting or agencies. Member of the Command Staff.
Logistics Section	Responsible for providing facilities, service, and materials for the incident. Includes the Rehab Unit and Medical services.
Operations Section	Responsible for all tactical operations at the incident. Includes up to five (5) Branches, twenty-five (25) Divisions/Groups and one hundred twenty-five (125) Single resources.
Planning Section	Responsible for collection, evaluation, dissemination, and use of information about the development of the incident and the status of resources. Includes resource status, documentation, and technical specialists.
Rescue Company	A ground vehicle providing specified rescue equipment, capability, and personnel.
Safety Officer	Responsible for monitoring and assessing safety hazards, unsafe situations, and developing measures for ensuring personnel safety. Member of the Command Staff.
Section	That organization level having functional responsibility for primary segments of incident operations, such as: Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance. The Section Level is organizationally between the Branch and Incident Commander Levels.



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Staging Area	That physical location where incident personnel and equipment are assigned on an immediately available status. The Staging Area is supervised by the Staging Officer.
Strategic Goals	The overall plan that will be used to control the incident. Strategic goals are broad in nature and are achieved by the completion of tactical objectives.
Tactical Objectives	The specific operations that must be accomplished to achieve strategic goals. Tactical objectives must be both specific and measurable.
Truck Company	A ground vehicle providing an aerial ladder or other aerial device, specified portable ladders, other specified equipment, and personnel.

¹ WCVRA Respiratory Protection