**Subject: Incident Command Establishment and Structure**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this guideline is to implement the national model management system for coordinating the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications operating with a common organizational structure, designed to enable effective incident management.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all members who may respond to an emergency incident with the Fire Protection District.

**Procedure**

This Standard Operating Guideline does not fully cover all aspects of the Incident Command System (ICS). The goal is to create a guideline that enables the initial setup of an incident along with information for expanding the modular design of ICS for a larger incident if needed. The references for this guideline are at the end of the SOG so that all members can study them.

**Rules of Engagement**

1. Rapidly conduct a 360-degree situational size up of the incident.
2. What is the survival profile of any victims in the involved compartment
3. We WILL NOT risk our lives at all for a building or lives already lost.
4. We MAY risk our lives only a little, in a calculated manner, to save SAVABLE property.
5. We MAY risk our lives in a vigilant and measured manner, to save SAVABLE lives.
6. The Rules of Engagement apply throughout the incident and risk must be continually assessed.
7. Act upon reported unsafe practices and conditions that can harm firefighters. Stop, evaluate, and decide.
8. Maintain frequent two-way communications, obtain frequent progress reports, keep interior crews informed of changing conditions, and revise action plan as needed
9. Always have accurate firefighter accountability, rapid intervention crews in place, and have firefighter rehabilitation available at all working fires.

**Responsibilities of Command**

1. The Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for the completion of Incident Priorities.
2. Life Safety – responders and public
3. Incident Stabilization – minimize the effects by keeping incident from escalating and bringing it under control.
4. Property Conservation – property, infrastructure, evidence, economy, environment and provide for recovery.

*The IC must define the following to achieve the Incident Priorities*

1. Incident Objective – Statements of guidance and direction that are achievable, measurable, and necessary for the selection of the appropriate strategy and tactical directions of resources.
2. Strategy – General plan or direction selected to accomplish Incident Objectives.
3. Tactics – Deploying and directing resources on an incident to accomplish objectives designated by current incident strategy.

**Functions of Command**

1. Assume and announce Command and establish and effective operating position known as the Command Post (CP)
2. Rapidly evaluate the situation (size up) and/or briefing from the previous IC.
3. Initiate, maintain, and control the communications process.
4. Determine the Incident Objectives and strategies develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP), and assign resources based on strategies and tactics following SOGs.
5. Develop and effective ICS organization and initiate/maintain a tactical worksheet.
6. Coordinate activity for all Command and General Staff.
7. Review, evaluate, and revise as needed the IAP.
8. Provide for the continuity, transfer, and termination of Command.

**Establishing Command**

* The first fire district 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 or terminated.
* A single company incident may only require the company to go on the scene.
* For incidents involving the commitment of multiple companies the first company officer on the scene must establish command and initiate an incident command structure appropriate for the incident.

**Initial Radio Report**

The activation of the command process begins with the first arriving company officer’s initial radio report. The following should be in the radio report:

1. Company number (6514)
2. A brief description of the incident situation – S.H.O.P Size up
3. Problem Location
4. A brief description of the actions being taken
5. Any obvious safety concerns
6. Assumption, identification, and location of Command
7. Chosen Strategy
8. Resources needed

**Radio Designation and Communications Format**

The radio designation “Command” will be used along with the major cross street, or the specific occupancy name of the incident site (i.e. "Main Street Command", "Wal-Mart Command").

When communicating, units shall say the unit they are speaking to first then their own designation. (e.g. Jeffco from 6514). This is an attention getting device.

In order for the IC or any message sender to obtain confirmation that his message was received and understood the receiver should repeat back a brief and concise summary of the message/order.

**Command Strategy**

The first arriving company officer or member has several command options from which to choose when arriving at the incident. If the unit or member with no tactical capabilities initiates command the establishment of the command post should be a top priority. Typically, the initial IC will be a company officer and he will have the following options.

**Investigating**– Upon arrival, an incident may not have visible indicators of a significant event. The first arriving company officer will have to investigate while other responding companies continue to Level I am staging. The officer should take command and go with the company to investigate.

**Offensive Strategy** – Offensive Strategy means that operations are being conducted inside the hazard zone. Offensive situations require immediate actions to stabilize the incident. Use of a portable radio will permit the company officer’s involvement without neglecting command responsibilities or the rules of engagement. The IC shall assess the risk to responders and take actions to reduce these risks. If the IC chooses offensive mode, it means that an attack is worth the risk, and that sufficient resources are available to meet incident demands.

**Defensive Strategy** – 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 take an exterior, safe, and effective command. A tactical worksheet shall be initiated and used to assist in managing this type of incident. His crews shall be reassigned as needed. Defensive Strategy means that operations are conducted outside of the hazard zone - in safe locations. The risk versus gain to responders is too significant to make an interior fire attack. The probability of saving lives is highly unlikely. The risk to responders in attempting to save property outweighs the gains. Protecting the exposed buildings from further loss, and confining the fire to the involved structure(s) is considered defensive mode.

**Follow-Up Reports**

The initial radio report is usually performed from the front seat.

Follow-up reports make the initial radio report a little shorter and give the initial IC a little bit more time to size-up the situation. The follow-up report will likely by the last radio transmission the first-due IC gives before entering the hazard zone. This report gives the IC a “last chance” to give clear, concise information before they don full PPE and enter the hazard zone.

Follow-Up Reports should include the following information:

1. Result of a 360
2. Any changes to the initial IAP
3. Any immediate safety concerns
4. Unit Assignments

\*At any time the initial IC has the authority to strike additional alarms if the incoming resources does not match the needs of the IAP\*

**Transfer of Command**

Command is transferred to maintain or improve the quality of the Command organization. Command cannot be passed or transferred to an officer not on scene. When a Chief Officer arrives at the scene at the same time as the initial arriving company, Chief Officer should take command of the incident.

The officer assuming Command will communicate by radio or face-to-face with person being relieved. Face-to-face is the preferred method of transferring Command.

The person being relieved will brief the officer assuming Command, indicating at least the following.

1. Incident conditions
2. Where resources have been assigned or give the IAP/Tactical Worksheet
3. Progress toward completion of incident
4. Status and needs of assigned resources and safety considerations
5. Deployment and assignment of operating companies and personnel
6. Appraisal of need for additional resources

The response and arrival of additional ranking officers on the incident strengthens the overall command function. The arrival of a ranking officer does not mean that Command is automatically transferred. Transfer of command only occurs as described above.

**C.A.N. Reports**

C.A.N. stands for: **C**onditions, **A**ctions, **N**eeds

C.A.N. reports should provide initial and ongoing information that is critical to effective and safe decision making. C.A.N. reports should be brief, concise, and structured around the company’s assignment.

**Organizational Structure**

The size and complexity of the organizational structure of ICS is determined by the scope of the emergency and availability of resources. It is an organizational structure that develops in a modular form depending on size of the incident. The specific organizational structure for any given incident will be based upon management needs.

ICS should be considered the basic system to be used for any size incident. The IC will make the decision to expand the organization when the determination is made that the initial attack or reinforced attack will be insufficient.

**Organizational Hierarchy**

**Incident Commander (IC)** – the individual responsible for the management of all incident operations

**Officer** – A member of the Command Staff which includes Public Information Officer (PIO), Safety Officer, and Liaison Officer. They report directly to IC.

**Section Chief** – A member of the General Staff which includes Operations, Planning, Logistics, or Finance/Administration

**Director** – An individual responsible for command of a branch; an example would be Suppression Branch Director

**Supervisor** – An individual responsible for managing a Group (Specific Function or Task) or Division (Geographical area)

**Unit Leader** – An individual responsible for managing a particular activity within Operations, Planning, Logistics, or Finance

**Single Resource** – An individual, a piece of equipment and its personnel or a crew or team of individuals with an identified supervisor who can be used on an incident

**Command Organization**

The Command organization must develop at a pace that stays ahead of the tactical deployment of personnel and resources. Building a Command organization is the best support mechanism the IC can use to achieve a harmonious balance between managing personnel and incident needs.

The size of your organization will vary from based upon the size and complexity of the incident.

The basic configuration of Command includes three levels, Strategic, Tactical, and Task.

Strategic Level – This entails the overall direction and goals of the incident.

Tactical Level – Objectives that must be achieved to meet the strategic goals.

Task level – Specific jobs assigned to companies that lead toward meeting tactical level requirements.

**Command Structure Initial Setup and Expanding to Sections and Branches**

The basic structure for a “routine” incident involving a small number of companies requires only two levels of the Command structure. In this situation the IC directly handles strategic and tactical levels. The companies outside of the initial setup of Command report to the IC and operate at the task level.

Divisions or Groups are tactical level management components that assemble companies for a common purpose.

A Division is an organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area.

Groups are an organizational level responsible for a specific functional assignment.

Span of control is the number of individuals or groups that one person can effectively supervise.

The preferred number range 3-7 with ideal number being no more than 5.

The purpose of Groups or Divisions within ICS is to reduce the span of control of the IC and enable effective management of the incident.

When assigning tasks to Divisions or Groups the IC will advise each supervisor of their tactical assignment, radio designation, and identity of resources assigned to them.

It is important to note than Divisions and Groups are organizationally equal. One does not work for the other.

As a small incident escalates into a major incident, the span of control may become stretched as more divisions or groups are added.

Sections and Branches may be added as the span of control is exceeded. Typically, an Operations Section (OPS) is added and this may lead to two Branches being formed to limit span of control.

It is also acceptable to create an Operations Section without Branches as long as span of control is within 3-7 Divisions or Groups. The Operations Chief will coordinate with the IC to determine what setup will work better.

Branches are normally formed under Operations or Logistics Sections. Branches should operate in areas of responsibilities a separate radio channel and have a radio designation of their function. Divisions or Groups under the Branch Director should direct their radio traffic to the Branch Director and not to IC or OPS. It is likely more effective that Branch Directors be located in tactical positions rather than at the command post.

Operations Section is responsible for direct management of all tactical activities and the safety and welfare of the personnel working in the OPS section. Other typical responsibilities include coordinate activities with IC, assist in development of IAP, building and effective organizational structure through the use of Branches, Divisions and/or Groups, and control staging.

The Operations Chief is typically located at the CP. Separation of the Operations Chief from the IC may risk significant complications in incident management. Staging falls under the purview of Ops Chief.

Assigning a Staging officer and Staging area early in an incident is critical to getting resources as needed to the incident. The Staging Officer will report directly to the OPS Chief but may request logistical support from the Logistics Section as needed.

The IC’s role is focus more on the big picture and impact of the incident from a broad perspective. Developing the IAP, establishing priorities, staffing Command and General staff positions as needed, and constantly assessing the organizations structure as just some of the responsibilities of the IC after the OPS section is up and running.

There are three specific Command Staff positions identified in ICS. They all report directly to the IC.

Public Information Officer (PIO) – function is to relay accurate and complete information regarding incident size, cause, current situation and other matters of general interest. The PIO is also the point of contact with the media.

Safety Officer – functions to assess hazardous and unsafe situations and develop measures for assuring personnel safety. The Safety Officer has emergency authority to alter, suspend, or terminate unsafe acts. The Safety Officer may be assigned Assistant Safety Officers to support the safety function.

Liaison Officer – functions as a point of contact for representatives from assisting or cooperating agencies.

The Planning Section is responsible for gathering, assimilating, analyzing and processing information need for effective decision making. The responsibilities of the Planning Chief include evaluating current strategy, incident organization, span of control and IAP. Forecasting possible outcomes, developing contingency plans, evaluating future resources requirements, maintaining incident records, and planning for demobilization are some of the other responsibilities of the Planning Chief.

The Logistics Section is responsible for providing support and services to the organization. The Logistics Chief is responsible for providing medical to responders, provide and manage supplies and equipment, communications, fuel, repairs to vehicles, secure fixed and portable facilities.

Finance and Administration Section is established when agencies involved at an incident have a specific need for financial services. This section chief is responsible for tracking incident costs, documenting claims of injury and analyzing and advising IC on legal issues on incidents.

By the order of: ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Fire Chief

Date: 2/1/2014

**References:**

 NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program, 2008 edition

 NFPA 1561, Standard on Emergency Scene Incident Management, 2008 edition

 “Fire Ground Command”, Brunacini, Alan

**Resources**

 <http://www.lifesafetyinitiatives.com/>

 National Fallen Firefighters Foundation