

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

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Purpose: *To provide for a common terminology, the Jefferson County Fire Chiefs Association has adopted the Jefferson County Incident Command System. This procedure also provides for the safety of personnel operating at emergency incidents through improved command, improves the use of resources and tactical effectiveness, meets the OSHA/EPA regulations requiring the use of an Incident Command System for hazardous materials incidents and meets NFPA Standard 1500 requirement for the use of an Incident Command System for operations at all emergency incidents.*

Procedure:

1. The following is the Jefferson County Emergency Services Incident Command Standard Operating Procedure, with minor modification.
2. Whenever a major incident occurs within the Okolona Fire District, this procedure shall be used.
3. This Procedure is also to be NIMS (National Incident Management System compliant).

COMMUNICATIONS:

1. All communicates shall be clear text.
2. Radio communications shall be sender to receiver using the following mode:
 - A. Request to initiate communications and determine that the intended receiver is listening.
 - B. Transmit the message or order concisely in clear text.
 - C. Receive feedback from the receiver to ensure that the message was received and understood.
 - D. Confirm that the message or order was understood; if not, correct and clarify the message.

Example:

*Oxmoor IC: Oxmoor Command to Engine 1
Engine 1: Engine 1, to ahead Oxmoor Command
Oxmoor IC: Protect exposure, side Charlie
Engine 1: Engine 1 OK, protect exposure on side Charlie
Oxmoor IC: Affirmative
Oxmoor IC: Oxmoor Command to Truck 1
Truck 1: Truck 1, go ahead Oxmoor Command
Oxmoor IC: Establish a vertical vent, access from side Bravo
Truck 1: Truck 1 OK, vertical vent, access from side Charlie
Oxmoor IC: Negative, vertical vent, access from side B-Bravo
Truck 1: Truck 1 OK, vertical vent, access from side Bravo
Oxmoor IC: Affirmative*

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ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND:

1. Command shall be established at all incidents.
2. The person in charge of the first arriving fire department vehicle is the default Incident Commander.
3. When multiple resources will be committed to the incident, command shall be formally established by transmitting a brief initial report containing the following information to the Dispatch Center:
 - A. Identity of the company transmitting the report.
 - B. Actual location of the incident.
 - C. Brief description of the incident and report conditions.
 - D. Designation of the individual assuming command and incident name.
4. Incidents are given a specific name to reduce confusion when multiple incidents share the same radio frequency and/or dispatcher.

Example:

Unit 2636: Unit 2636 to Radio

Radio: Go ahead 2636

Unit 2636: Unit 2636 is at 100 Mall Road, fire showing from floor 1 side Alpha of a 2-story dwelling, 2636-W is Mall Command.

SELECTION OF COMMAND MODE:

1. Command is responsible for overall management of the incident and includes certain staff functions required to support the command function. The command function within the ICS may be conducted in two general ways:
 - A. Single Command:
 - i. When an incident occurs within one jurisdiction, a single Incident Commander will manage the incident. The Incident Commander prepares Incident Objectives, which provide the basis for subsequent action planning. The Incident Commander approves the final action plan and approves all requests for ordering and releasing primary resources. The IC may have a deputy. The deputy shall have the same qualifications as the Incident Commander, be a relief, or perform certain specific assigned tasks.
 - ii. In an incident within a single jurisdiction, where the nature of the incident is primarily a responsibility of one agency (e.g. fire), the deputy may be from the same agency. In a multi-jurisdictional incident or one which threatens to be multi-jurisdictional, the deputy role may be filled by an individual designated by the adjacent agency. More than one deputy could be involved. Another way of organizing to meet multi-jurisdictional circumstances is described under Unified Command.

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- iii. The IC must determine if initial command activity will be conducted from a fixed position, or if it will be conducted simultaneously with tactical operations of the first arriving company. Command from a fixed position is preferred, particularly when an incident is complex or rapidly escalating.
- iv. The initial IC must answer the following questions:
 - a. Will the initial tactical operations of the first arriving company having significant impact on the eventual outcome of the incident?
 - b. Will the personal efforts of the Company Commander in the performance of tactical activity have significant impact on the ability of the Company to achieve their assigned tactical objectives?
 - c. If the answer to these two questions is no, command from a fixed position should be established.
- v. If there is a need for immediate tactical activity, and company staffing necessitates that the Company Commander be an integral part of company tactical operations, command in the offensive mode should be initiated.
- vi. Command in the offensive mode should only be performed until command can be transferred.

UNIFIED COMMAND:

- 1. The incident is totally contained within a single jurisdiction, but more than one department or agency shares management responsibility due to the nature of the incident or the kind(s) of resources required. For example, a passenger bus crashes on the interstate. Fire, medical, and law enforcement all have immediate but diverse objectives.
- 2. The incident is multi-jurisdictional in nature. An example is a major HAZMAT incident near jurisdictional boundaries.
- 3. The primary differences between the single and unified command structures are:
 - A. In a single command structure, a single Incident Commander is solely responsible (within the confines of this 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 the planning required to effect operational control will be the responsibility of a single individual (Operations Chief) who will report directly to the Incident Commander.

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- B. In a unified command structure, the individuals designated by their jurisdictions (or by departments with a single jurisdiction) must jointly determine objectives, strategy and priorities. As in a single command structure, the Operations Chief will have responsibility for implementation of the plan. Which jurisdiction (or department) will act in the function of Operations should be decided by mutual agreement of the unified command. The Operations Chief may be chosen on the basis of greatest jurisdictional involvement, number of resources, existing statutory authority, or by mutual respect for an individual's qualifications.

For example the Operations Chief at a HAZMAT incident may start as a member of the fire service. As the incident progresses, Operations may become the responsibility of the HAZMAT TEAM/AGENCY that is to work in the hot area. As the incident is contained, Operations may shift to Department of Natural Resources for clean-up.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INCIDENT COMMANDER:

1. *Assessment of Incident Priorities:* Incident priorities provide a framework for command decision making. Tactical activity may address more than one incident priority simultaneously.
 - A. Life Safety (always first priority)
 - B. Incident Stabilization (second priority)
 - C. Property Conservation (third priority)
2. *Perform Size-up:* The IC must perform an initial assessment of the situation, incident potential, and resource status. This assessment must address the following three questions:
 - A. What have I got? (Situation)
 - B. Where is it going? (Potential)
 - C. What do I need to control it? (Resources)
 - D. Size up is not static and must be continued throughout the duration of the incident.
3. *Select the Strategic Mode:* A critical decision having an impact on the safety of personnel and the effectiveness of tactical operations is the selection of strategic mode. Operations may be conducted in either an Offensive or Defensive mode. The decision is based on the answers to the following two questions:
 - A. Is it safe to conduct offensive operations?
 - B. Is resource capability (present and projected) adequate for offensive operations to control the incident?
4. *Define Strategic Goals:* Strategic goals define 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. Strategic goals are generally focused in the following areas:
 - A. Protection or removal of exposed person(s).
 - B. Confinement and extinguishment of the fire or control of the hazard.
 - C. Minimize loss to involved or exposed property.

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5. *Establish Tactical Objectives:* Tactical objectives are the specific operations that must be accomplished to achieve strategic goals. Tactical objectives must be both specific and measurable, defining:
- Assignment of resources.
 - Nature of the tactical activity.
 - Location in which the tactical activity must be performed.
 - If the tactical action must be performed in sequence or coordinated with any other tactical action.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN:

- Implementation of the incident action plan requires that the IC establish an appropriate organizational structure to manage the required resources and communicate the tactical objectives. The incident action plan may be communicated by Standard Operating Procedure, assigning tactical objectives, or by assigning task activity.
- Tactical Standard Operating Procedures may define common components of the incident action plan such as water supply, standard apparatus placement, and the methods used for basic tactical evolutions.
- Orders from the IC may specify tactical objectives assigned to subordinate positions within the ICS structure or to a specific resource.

Example:

Outer Loop IC: Outer Loop Command to Unit 9034

Unit 9034: Unit 9034, go ahead Outer Loop Command

Outer Loop IC: Start fire attack on floor 1 as soon as Unit 8057 established the vertical vent.

Unit 9034: Unit 9034 OK, fire attack floor 1 after Unit 8057 vents vertically.

STANDARD GEOGRAPHIC DESIGNATION SYSTEM:

- Each exterior side of a structure shall be given by letter designation. The side of the structure facing the street (address side) shall be designated Side A (use phonetic Alpha), unless the Incident Commander designates a different side as being side 1. The remaining sides shall be designated B (Bravo), C (Charlie) and D (Delta) in a clockwise manner.
- The interior of a structure shall be designated by floor (1,2,3, etc.). The basement, attic, and roof shall be designated by name.
- On structures with odd configuration, poor street orientation, or when other special considerations are needed, the Incident Commander shall designate the location of Side Alpha over the radio.

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ICS ORGANIZATION FOR LARGER INCIDENTS:

1. An ICS organizational structure should be based on the management needs of the incident and should be developed on a proactive basis. Incident resources and management of needs must be projected adequately ahead to allow for the reflex time of responding resources.
2. The Incident Commander and other supervisory personnel should anticipate span-of-control problems. Subordinate management positions should be staffed to maintain an acceptable span of control and workload. This may necessitate requesting additional command officer to fill these overhead positions.
3. Whenever Planning, Logistical, or Finance functional responsibilities become a significant workload for the Incident Commander, the appropriate sections should be staffed. This will prevent overextension of the Incident Commander's span of control.

TRANSFER OF COMMAND:

1. Command may be transferred from the initial Incident Commander (often a Company Commander) to a later arriving or senior Command Officer. Transfer of command shall take place on a face-to-face basis whenever possible to facilitate effective communication and feedback. If face-to-face communication is not possible, transfer of command by radio may be conducted.
2. If command has been established by a firefighter, command shall be transferred to the first arriving Officer. Command shall be transferred to the first arriving command officer at the officer's discretion (the command officer may choose to allow the Company Commander to continue as Incident Commander). Transfer of command to a higher ranking command officer is also discretionary. When a command officer allows a lower ranking officer to retain command, this does not remove the responsibility for the incident with the higher ranking individual.
3. Transfer of command shall include communication of the following information:
 - A. The status of the current situation.
 - B. Resources committed to the incident and responding, as well as the present incident organizational structure.
 - C. An assessment of effectiveness of the current tactical operations.
 - D. Following transfer of command, the Incident Commander may return the previous Incident Commander to his or her Company (if a Company Commander) or specify assignment to a subordinate management position within the ICS organizational structure.
 - E. If transfer of command is to cross jurisdictional boundaries, the transfer should include all of the specific steps listed above. In addition, the dispatch office(s) of the respective jurisdictions, and the agencies on scene or in staging should also be notified of the transfer of command.

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ICS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR INITIAL OPERATIONS:

1. Divisions and Groups:
 - A. When multiple resources are assigned to the same function incident-wide (such as ventilation or search and rescue), a Group shall be established to provide coordination and control of tactical operations.
 - B. When multiple resources are assigned to perform tactical functions in a specific geographic area (such as on a specified floor or side of a structure), a Division shall be established to provide coordination and control of tactical operations.
 - C. Designations of Divisions and Groups
 - i. When division boundaries are established on the exterior of a structure or in non-structural incidents (such as wild land fires), a letter designation (A,B,C,D, etc.) shall be used. In addition to establishing the division designation, specific boundaries must be defined. This is particularly important in nonstructural incidents.
 - ii. When Division boundaries are defined by level in a structural incident, a number of descriptive designations shall be used (1,2,3, basement). If a Division is given responsibility for the entire structure, it shall be designated as the Interior Division.
 - iii. In radio communication with a division the letter or number designation shall follow "Division" (Division A, Division 3). If a descriptive designation is given it shall be preceded by "Division" in radio communications (Interior Division, etc).
2. Staging:
 - A. When the Incident Commander has not defined an assignment for on scene or responding resources, Staging shall be established.
 - B. When an incident is escalating or has not yet been stabilized, sufficient resources to meet potential incident development should be available in Staging until the incident has been stabilized.
 - C. The Incident Commander or Operations shall establish Staging by defining its location and communicating this information to radio. The dispatcher shall inform all responding resources of the location of Staging.
 - D. If responsibility is not specifically assigned, the commander of the first company to arrive in Staging shall assume the function of Staging Area Manager.
 - E. Resources in Staging shall retain integrity (remain with their company) and be available for immediate assignment and deployment.
 - F. The Staging Area Manager shall keep the Incident Commander or Operations advised of resource availability in Staging whenever resource status changes.
 - G. The Incident Commander or Operations shall request on-scene resources through the Staging Area Manager and shall specify where and to whom those resources shall report.
 - H. In radio communications with Staging, the incident name shall precede the designation "Staging".

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3. Safety:

- A. The individual given the Safety Officer's assignment must monitor and assess the safety hazards and unsafe situations to develop measures for ensuring personnel safety.
- B. The Safety Officer position is implemented to manage the safety of all personnel and to relieve the Incident Commander of direct involvement in this responsibility. The Safety Officer also keeps the Incident Commander informed of present problems and potential hazards. He or she should not only identify problems, but should suggest solutions to minimize the risks. The Incident Commander will use the information provided by the Safety Officer during development of the incident action plan.
- C. The Safety Officer has the authority to bypass the chain of command when it is necessary to immediately correct unsafe acts, such as removing all personnel from areas of imminent danger. The Incident Commander must always be informed of these corrective actions.
- D. For a Safety Officer to be truly effective, he or she must have knowledge of fire behavior and building construction.

4. Liaison Officer:

- A. A Liaison Officer is the point of contact for assisting or coordinating agencies. This function is assigned since the Incident Commander may become overloaded by questions from the number of assisting agencies that some incidents attract.
- B. One of the most important responsibilities of the Liaison Officer is to coordinate the management of assisting or coordinating agencies. This is essential to avoid the duplication of efforts. It allows each agency to perform what it does best. Liaison management provides lines of authority, responsibility, and communication, and increase the control necessary to provide for the safety of personnel from all involved agencies.
- C. The Liaison Officer acts as a diplomat in cases of any agency's lack of familiarity with ICS, particularly useful when agencies lack the joint training necessary to understand their involvement in the incident. It eliminates the desire for agencies to set up separate command posts.
- D. Occasionally it becomes necessary to give strong direction to help agencies understand where and how they fit into the system. This may mean "telling instead of requesting".
- E. The agency representatives with whom the Liaison Officer interacts need to have decision making authority since the time delay of going through "channels" to get answers may have a negative effect on the needed coordination.
- F. The Liaison Officer needs to have a specifically identified place for agencies to report in, to work, and to communication with each other.

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5. Public Information Officer:

- A. The Public Information Officer is responsible for interface with the media and other appropriate agencies. This function is implemented to relieve the Incident Commander of needing to work with the media, taking him or her away from command responsibilities. The media needs are real and must be met. They need accurate and consistent information. When the Incident Commander cannot effectively contend with both the incident and the media, the Public Information Officer's position should be implemented.
- B. A press area may need to be established. It should be away from the Command Post and all incident activities. Media representatives need to be made aware of this location and the importance for them to report to the press area.
- C. The Public Information Officer acts as a central clearing point for the dissemination of information, reducing the risk of receiving conflicting information from multiple sources.
- D. The Public Information Officer must coordinate all releases of significant information with the Incident Commander. He or she will decide on sensitive topics such as the cause of the incident, victim's names, and any other information that should not be (and does not have to be) released immediately to the press.
- E. At some time in the incident, arrangements should be made for the press to have the opportunity to talk to the Incident Commander. The Incident Commander may have to transfer command of the incident for a few minutes while he or she meets with the press.
- F. For incidents involving additional agencies having their own Public Information Officers, it is critical for all Public Information Officers to coordinate the messages that will be released so as to avoid conflicting and confusing information.