

Union County Standard Operating Guidelines
Incident Command System

Incident Command System, SOG 2.02

Incident Command Procedures

1. Theory

The one function that will always be filled at every emergency incident, regardless of size, type, or jurisdiction that the incident occurs in, is the Incident commander (IC) position. The IC has the responsibility for overall management of the incident.

Incident command procedures are designed to accomplish the following:

- A. Fix responsibility of command with a designated member through a standardized identification system, based on arrival sequence and other variables.
- B. Insure that visible, direct, effective command be established as early as possible upon arrival at the incident scene.
- C. Establish an effective framework within which the activities and responsibilities assigned to the Incident Commander can be properly addressed.
- D. Provide a system for accomplishing the orderly transfer of command from the initial Incident Commander to later arriving officers.

2. Initial Command

It shall be mandatory that the officer or other fire department member arriving first on the scene of an emergency incident initiate the basic incident command function, establish a command post, and assume all related command responsibilities. This shall be performed regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. The initial Incident Commander shall retain these responsibilities until one of the following occurs:

- A. Command is passed to the next arriving officer (only once per incident).
- B. Command is officially transferred. (See Transfer of Command Procedures)
- C. The incident is terminated.

Passing command is not to be confused with Transferring command. Command is Passed only when the situation requires the immediate active participation of the first member or officer on the scene which prohibits them from establishing a fixed command position. When this occurs, the next arriving officer or member shall be notified and will assume command of the incident. **Command can be passed only once!**

Union County Standard Operating Guidelines
Incident Command System

3. Command Responsibilities

Within the broad structure of the basic incident command function, certain command options are available to the Incident Commander. These options or “command modes” will be explained in detail below. However, it must be understood that regardless of the command option chosen, the initial Incident Commander retains responsibility for all command functions until relieved of them according to the standardized methods detailed in this guideline.

The person assuming command is responsible for the following:

- A. Assuming an effective command location when the fixed command mode is chosen.
- B. Calling on the scene and transmitting the initial radio report and size-up as outlined in Section 5 of this chapter. If it is a “working incident”, assign a name to the incident itself. For example, a working incident at 125 E. 6th St. could be called “ 6th St. command”, or perhaps “ City Hall Command” for the occupancy. A “working incident” is defined as any emergency situation that requires more than one company to be tied up. A “working incident” can be a fire, haz-mat emergency, water rescue, emergency medical operation, etc.
- C. Assessing the incident priorities.
- D. Determining the incident’s strategic goals and tactical objectives.
- E. Developing and implementing the incident action plan.
- F. Developing an incident command structure appropriate for the incident.
- G. Assessing resource needs and orders, deploying needed resources.
- H. Coordinating overall emergency activities.
- I. Serving as ultimate incident safety officer; responsible for preventing fire fighter injuries and/or deaths.
- J. Coordinating activities of outside agencies.
- K. Authorizing information release to the media
- L. Returning companies to service.

4. Command Modes

The first arriving officer or fire department member must decide on an appropriate commitment for each assigned company, including his/her own. This decision will usually result in command being exercised according to the provisions of one of two (2) general modes. They are:

Fixed Command Mode

Mobile Command Mode

Union County Standard Operating Guidelines
Incident Command System

A. Fixed Command Mode

The fixed command mode is defined as a command structure that maintains a fixed command location which is usually outside of a structure and in which the Incident Commander devotes all of his/her energies to command. The fixed command mode is desirable and should be used unless conditions dictate otherwise.

NOTE: the location of the fixed Command Post should be easily identifiable. If the Incident Commander chooses to leave the interior of his/her vehicle, then he/she should be easily identifiable. Departments who elect to utilize vests for identification should consider using the colors as described in Appendix B.

B. Mobile Command Mode

Included are incidents requiring immediate action in order to stabilize the situation, and where due to manning and/or experience factors, the Company Officer feels that it is necessary for him/her to accompany his/her crew in their initial efforts. This may include situations where there is “nothing showing” and the Company Officer assuming command accompanies his/her crew in order to investigate the situation.

WHENEVER THE MOBILE COMMAND MODE IS CHOSEN, IT SHOULD BE CONCLUDED VERY RAPIDLY, WITH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING OUTCOMES:

- i. The situation is quickly stabilized by the initial offensive attack or the preliminary investigation reveals no problem requiring the Incident Commander’s active participation. In either case, the Company Officer should then return to a fixed command location and continue to discharge his/her command responsibilities.
- ii. The situation is not likely to be quickly stabilized, or initial investigations indicate possible long term involvement. The Company Officer should recognize these situations and assign command of his/her company to a company member or another Company Officer, return to a fixed command location and continue to function as the Incident Commander until relieved of this responsibility.
- iii. Command is Passed to the next arriving company or officer.

NOTE: the “Passing of Command” can occur only once during any given incident, and may be initiated only by the

Union County Standard Operating Guidelines

Incident Command System

first arriving officer or fire department member, and should be confined to “Mobile Command Mode” operations.

In addition, it must be understood that this command option is not to be used as a means of circumventing established incident command procedures or otherwise shirking required command responsibilities.

When the first arriving member determines the need to “pass” command, the initial radio report will include an announcement that command should be assumed by the next arriving company.

5. Establishing Command and Initial Size-up

The person establishing command should use the standard procedures outlined below. If the person assuming command is not an officer, or is not normally assigned to a company, then this transmission should be adjusted accordingly. When command is established, an initial radio report and size-up should be given:

- A. Identify transmission by giving company, name of Incident Commander, the location of the Command Post (if other than the front of the occupancy/incident), and the name assigned to the incident.

Example: “Ladder 271 on the scene, Captain Doe in charge of Maple Street Command.”

Until command is transferred or passed, the original Incident Commander will remain in charge of the incident.

- B. The apparent extent of the emergency –

Example: “Situation contained, working fire, second alarm, etc.”

NOTE: If the first arriving member gives no information as to smoke showing or working fire, etc., it will be assumed by incoming companies that nothing is showing.

IF THE INCIDENT COMMANDER DETERMINES THAT A WORKING FIRE IS IN PROGRESS, THE INITIAL RADIO REPORT SHALL INCLUDE;

- C. General size of structure – one story, two story, multi-story, high-rise, etc.

NOTE: If the location of the incident or complex is well known, the name will suffice.

Union County Standard Operating Guidelines
Incident Command System

- D. Type of construction – ordinary construction, frame, brick etc.
- E. Occupancy – residence, apartment, convalescent, hotel, business, etc.
- F. Action being taken – laying supply line, attacking with 1 ¾ line and tank, etc.
- G. Apparatus in use – Engine 601, Rescue 602, etc.
- H. Additional assignment – extra company, stand-by alarm, second alarm, etc.

NOTE: Decide early if there is a necessity to call for additional assistance. Additional help should be standing by at the scene, prepared to go into action if there is a possibility the incident may exceed the capabilities of the companies working on the incident.

The following examples illustrate the initial establishment of Command:

“Engine 210 on the scene, Lt. Doe in charge of XYZ command. We have an auto completely involved on the second level of a 3 story concrete block parking garage, using pre-connect and tank. Ladder 271 assisting. All other companies stand-by at the entrance.”

“Engine 271 on the scene, Lt. Doe in charge, the command post is in the parking lot across the street and will be Main Street command. We have a working fire in a second floor bedroom of a two-story frame residence. Attacking with 1 ¾ and tank.”

“Engine 281 on the scene, Lt. Smith in charge. We have a trash fire at the rear of a frame garage, situation contained tying up Engine 281.”

“Engine 271 on the scene. We have a working fire in a two-story frame residence. I will be engaging in fire attack. Passing command to the next arriving company.”

Other company officers on the scene should be advised of existing situations, initial decisions made, and plan of operation.

When only one company responds to an emergency such as an auto fire or trash fire, the company officer shall transmit a brief initial radio report upon arrival. As soon as it has been determined that no additional help will be required, a “situation contained” will be transmitted to the fire alarm dispatcher.

Union County Standard Operating Guidelines
Incident Command System

6. Transfer of Command

When circumstances allow, the Incident Commander being relieved will brief the officer assuming command. This brief may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- A. Incident priorities and strategic goals.
- B. Tactical objectives that have been assigned and that need to be assigned.
- C. Tactical objectives that have been achieved.

Should any higher ranking officer decide to officially assume command of the incident, the officer shall locate the Command Post, if established, and follow the transfer of command guideline whenever possible.

After the transfer of command has actually taken place, the officer assuming command shall announce such transfer over the radio, stating the name and rank of the new Incident Commander.

Example: Marysville Fire this is Main Street Command. Chief Jones is now in charge of the Main Street incident.

At this time, the officer assuming command will assign the former Incident Commander to a new duty. This new assignment may be to assume a command or general staff function, to rejoin and take command of his/her company, or any other assignment deemed necessary by the new Incident Commander.

NOTE: If preceded to the scene by the companies of another department, the officer responding from the department having jurisdiction shall report to the Incident Commander. Regardless of rank, this officer is legally responsible for the incident and shall have the option of assuming command, or allowing the original Incident Commander to remain in –charge of the incident.