

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:

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

2. Initial Command

a. 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:

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

b. 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!**

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3. Command Responsibilities

The person assuming command is responsible for the following:

- Assuming an effective command location when the fixed command mode is chosen.
- Calling on the scene and transmitting the initial radio report and size-up as outlined in Section 5 of this chapter.
- Assessing the incident priorities.
- Determining the incident's strategic goals and tactical objectives.
- Developing and implementing the incident action plan.
- Developing an incident command structure appropriate for the incident.
- Assessing resource needs and orders, deploying needed resources.
- Coordinating overall emergency activities.
- Serving as the ultimate incident safety officer; responsible for preventing fire fighter injuries and/or deaths.
- Coordinating activities of outside agencies.
- Authorizing information release to the media
- 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
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.
- 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.

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

- a. The situation is quickly stabilized by the initial offensive attack or the preliminary investigation reveals no problem requiring the Incident Commander's active participation.

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- b. The situation is not likely to be quickly stabilized, or initial investigations indicate possible long term involvement. In either case, the Company Officer should then return to a fixed command location and continue to discharge his/her command responsibilities.
- c. Command is Passed to the next arriving company or officer.
- d. NOTE: the “Passing of Command” can occur only once during any given incident, and should be confined to “Mobile Command Mode” operations. 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

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.
- b. The apparent extent of the emergency –

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.

- 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.

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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.

- i. Other company officers on the scene should be advised of existing situations, initial decisions made, and plan of operation.
 - j. 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.
6. Transfer of Command
- a. The Incident Commander being relieved will brief the officer assuming command. This brief may include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Incident priorities and strategic goals.
 - Tactical objectives that have been assigned and that need to be assigned.
 - Tactical objectives that have been achieved.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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. At this time, the officer assuming command will assign the former Incident Commander to a new duty.
 - d. 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.