

Bethel Township Fire Department

GENERAL ORDER: 503	SECTION: Operations
SUBJECT: Size Up/Incident Command	AFFECTS: All Personnel
ADOPTED: 05/01/2016	SUPERSEDES: All Previous
REVISED: 09/20/2020	

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to provide a guideline for the operation at incidents or situations that may arise during the course of an operation. Each member is expected to know, understand, and operate according to this guideline as each situation arises.

RESPONSIBILITY:

- All personnel have the responsibility to adequately learn and follow this general order.
- All supervisors/officers are responsible for training all members and for ensuring proper compliance with this general order.
- All members shall show reasonable judgment in the use of this guideline.

Fire 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:

1. Assessing the incident priorities.
 - Life Safety
 - Incident stabilization
 - Property conservation
2. Determines the incident's strategic goals and tactical objectives.

3. Develops and implements an Incident Action Plan.
4. Developing an incident command structure appropriate for the incident.
5. Managing incident resources.
 - Implements the Accountability System.
6. Coordinating overall emergency activities.
7. Serving as ultimate incident safety officer, responsible for preventing firefighter injuries and/or deaths.
8. Coordinating activities of outside agencies.
9. Authorizing information release to the media.
10. PAR checks must be initiated by the Incident Commander. To initiate Miami County Dispatch must be notified to activate PAR checks.

Initial Fire 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. On "routine" incidents, the Incident Commander may also direct operations. It takes a conscious decision to establish a separate Operations Section.

[Note – If the first arriving officer has determined that his active involvement in the initial operations makes the assumption of command impractical, that officer has the option of "passing command" to the next arriving officer. This is done by announcing via radio that he is *passing command*. In order to ensure the establishment of the incident management system, command can only be passed one time.]

Command Post

The Command Post shall provide a central, stationary location. Many incidents may be mitigated by command working from a Command Post located in a vehicle. Due to size, complexity and/or long-term nature of incidents, a Command Post may have to be re-located to an offsite or larger area.

Modes of Operation

Investigation Mode – this situation will require further investigation by initial arriving company while other units remain in a staged mode. The Company Officer should go with the company to investigate while maintaining communications to command the incident.

Offensive attack Mode – situations that must be stabilized immediately and require the Company Officer's assistance and direct involvement. The Company Officer will not neglect command responsibilities knowing that this Mode will not last for more than a few minutes and will end with one of the following:

- The situation is stabilized.
- The situation is not yet stabilized and the Company Officer withdraws to the exterior to establish command at a fixed location.
- The situation is not yet stabilized and the Company Officer remains inside with the crew knowing that his/her presence can make a difference in the effectiveness of the crew.
- Command is transferred to another officer.

Defensive Mode – The decision to operate in a defensive strategy indicates that the offensive attack strategy, or the potential for one, has been abandoned for reasons of personnel safety and the involved structure has been conceded as lost. The defensive strategy consists of an exterior attack directed to first reduce fire extension and then bring the fire under control.

When changing an offensive strategy to a defensive strategy, the Incident Commander will make an announcement as emergency traffic and drivers should initiate a continuous blast of all apparatus air horns. Personnel will withdraw from the structure and maintain a safe distance from the building.

Fire officers will account for their crews and advise Incident Command on the status of their crew. A PAR (personnel accountability report) shall be obtained after any switch from offensive to defensive strategy. Interior lines will be withdrawn and repositioned when changing to a defensive strategy. Crews should retreat with their hose lines if safe to do so. If retreat is being delayed because of hose lines, and it's unsafe to stay in the building, hose lines should be abandoned. All exposures, both immediate and anticipated, must be identified and protected.

The first priority in defensive operations is personnel safety; the second is exposure protection; the third is fire extinguishment.

It is possible that while in one of the command modes of operation the IC will operate as:

1. FIXED COMMAND - Fixed Command 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, he/she should be easily identifiable.

2. MOBILE COMMAND - Included are incidents requiring immediate action in order to stabilize the situation, and where, due to staffing 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:

- 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. In either case, the Incident Commander should then return to a fixed command location and continue to discharge his/her command responsibilities.
- b) 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.
- c) Command is transferred to another officer.

Transfer of Fire Command

When command is being transferred to another officer, the Incident Commander being relieved will brief the officer assuming command. This briefing will be done on a face-to-face basis (when possible) and may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- 1. Incident priorities and strategic goals.
- 2. Tactical objectives that have been assigned and that need to be assigned.
- 3. Tactical objectives that have been achieved.

Should a higher-ranking officer decide to officially assume command of the incident, the officer shall locate the Command Post, and follow the transfer of command protocol.

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

Initial Fire Size-Up

The first arriving fire unit shall give a radio report and size-up **shall** be given over the FIRE/EMS 1 and state the TAC channel that will be utilized. Any additional size up shall be given on that TAC channel:

1. Identify transmission by giving company, identity 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: "Engine 6 on the scene, Lieutenant 1 in charge of SR 40 command."

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

2. To report the apparent extent of the emergency.

EXAMPLE: Nothing showing, working fire, 2nd alarm, etc.

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

3. 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.

4. Type of construction - ordinary construction, frame, brick, etc.
5. Occupancy - residence, apartment, nursing home, hotel, business, etc.
6. Action being taken - laying supply line, attacking with 1 3/4" line and tank, etc.
7. Apparatus in use - Engine 6, Medic 2, etc.
8. Additional assignment - extra company, 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 4 on the scene, Lieutenant 3 in charge of 40 command. We have a working vehicle fire.

"Engine 6 on the scene, Lieutenant 2 in charge, fixed Command in the parking lot across the street and will Church Street Command. We have a working fire in a second floor of a two-story frame residence. Crew will be making an interior attack."

"Engine 6 on the scene. Lieutenant 4 in charge. We have a trash fire at the rear of a garage at 718 Second St. We can handle it with Engine 6. Engine 6 will be Second St. Command - cancel rest of response."

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 message so stating will be transmitted to the fire alarm dispatcher.

Expanding the Fire Command Structure

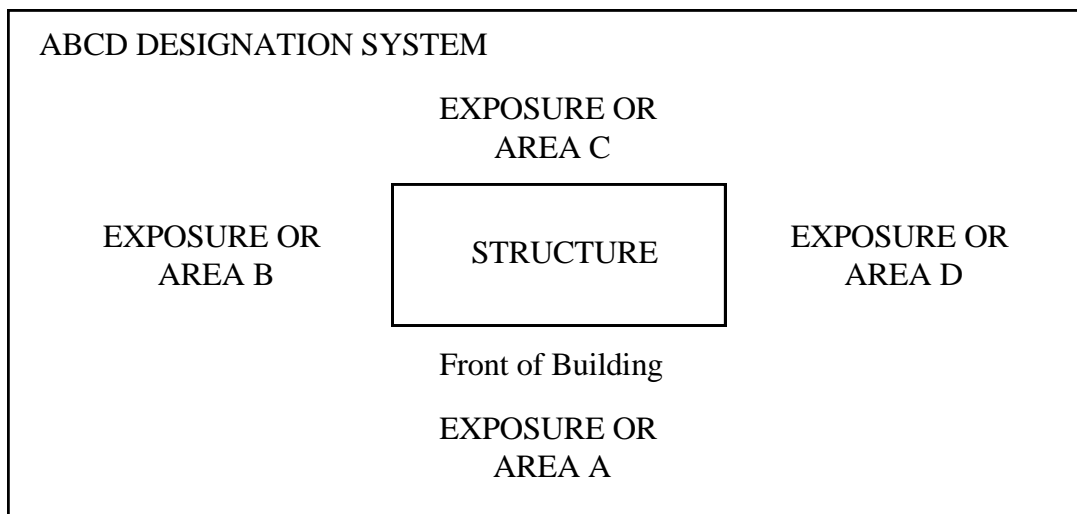
The command structure at any incident must correspond to the complexity of the situation. To effectively control an emergency, the incident should be divided into manageable units. In this section we will examine some of the options the Incident Commander can use to manage an incident.

While it is important to have a sufficiently large command structure at an incident, don't use more command than the situation requires. The command structure should not contribute to the complexity of the incident. Consider the command options available as a toolbox full of tools. Use only the ones you need to fix the problem.

Remember that any command position can be held by any member. It is the Incident Commander's responsibility to assign the appropriate person to command functions.

DIVIDING THE INCIDENT

To ensure uniformity, there needs to be a standard means of dividing an incident. The following designation system will be used whenever it is necessary to divide an incident.



There will be a letter designation for each exterior side of the incident area. Normally, the addressed or street side of the incident will be designated as Exposure "A" or the letter designations move clockwise around the incident. Exposures may also be identified with a similar system. The front of the building refers to the working side of the building as established by the Incident Commander. The "Area" term can be used to designate a large geographical situation such as a wildland fire.