
Section: 4.1 Incident Command

Effective Date: 01/01/2008

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Approved by: Chief M. Pott 04/17/2014

SCOPE

This guideline applies to all South Metro Fire Department personnel responsible for emergency response. This procedure in conjunction with all other related guidelines regarding operational procedures will define Incident Command, transfer of command, the command structure and functions, and the command post.

PURPOSE

To establish the Incident Command procedures, provide for the safety of all incident personnel, and guide the effective functioning of fire companies operating at emergency and non-emergency incidents.

To comply with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and to allow South Metro Fire Department to manage incidents within our own jurisdiction as well as effectively communicate and interact with multi-jurisdictional responders at mutual-aid responses, federal responses, and during Unified Command and Area Command incidents.

PROCEDUREIncident Command

The first arriving unit shall assume Command and remain in command until relieved by transfer of Command procedures by a ranking officer, or passing Command in accordance with guidelines. If no transfer of Command takes place, the initial Incident Commander will be in Command for the duration of the incident.

Command is responsible for four basic incident priorities:

1. Provide for the safety and welfare of all responding personnel.
2. Removal and treatment of any endangered occupants.
3. Incident stabilization
4. Property conservation

Command is responsible for the following functions as dictated by the incident:

1. Assume and confirm Command and take an effective position
2. Rapidly evaluate the situation (size-up) take appropriate action and continually re-evaluate the situation and incident actions.
3. Initiate, maintain, and control the communications process.
4. Develop incident organization.
5. Identify the overall strategy, and develop an action plan.
6. Request and assign additional resources as needed.
7. Return resources to service and terminate Command after incident is controlled.

Initial Report

Command shall transmit a brief initial radio report including:

1. Unit identification at scene, address or location, confirming assumption of Command or passing of Command.
2. Building or scene description including occupancy, size and construction type, and special considerations, etc.
3. Obvious fire/hazard conditions.

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4. Action taken/operational mode.
5. Any obvious safety concerns
6. Declaration of strategy, offensive/defensive.
7. Orders to next due company.

Passing Command

In certain situations it may be advantageous for the first arriving officer to “pass Command” to the next arriving officer. This is indicated when the initial commitment of the first arriving company requires a full crew and the next officer is arriving on the scene or close to arriving. **The first arriving officer retains responsibility for Command until the next officer arrives and acknowledges the transfer of Command.**

Transfer of Command

The first arriving unit at the incident shall assume and retain Command until relieved by a ranking officer within the following guidelines.

The transfer of Command will be regulated by the following procedures:

1. The officer assuming Command will communicate with the person being relieved by radio or, preferably, face-to-face upon arrival at the incident.
2. The person being relieved will brief the officer assuming Command by indicating the following:
 - a. General situation status.
 - Fire/Hazard location, extent, conditions.
 - Effectiveness of control efforts
 - Safety considerations
 - b. Deployment and assignment of operating companies.
 - c. Appraisal of needs for additional resources at that time.
3. The transfer of Command shall be completed when the relieving officer announces via the radio the transfer of Command to alert all incident personnel. This announcement should be broadcast on both the dispatch talkgroup and the fireground talkgroup.
4. This formal exchange of information is not necessary when the relieving officer arrives at essentially the same time or shortly after the first unit who took Command. The relieving officer must still announce via the radio that they have assumed Command.

OPERATIONAL MODES:

1. Nothing Showing/Investigation Mode:
Situations generally require investigation by first arriving company. Normally, the company officer should go with the company to check the situation while utilizing a portable radio to maintain Command.
2. Fast Attack Mode:
When it is obvious that a fast attack on the fire will either facilitate a rescue or knock down a small fire before it has a chance to grow, the first-arriving Company Officer may decide to go with the crew to attack the fire and/or to make a rescue.

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This mode should not last more than a short period of time and will end with one of the following:

- a. The situation is quickly stabilized.
- b. Command is passed to the next arriving company officer.
- c. A command officer arrives and Command is transferred.
- d. The situation is not quickly stabilized. The officer must assume a normal Command position.

3. Command Mode:

Situations that require immediate Command presence and rapid decision-making by virtue of the size or complexity of the incident. These are the situations that require the first arriving officer to assume Command and identify a Command Post outside the immediate hazard area.

These modes identified are not strict rules, rather guidelines to assist the officer in planning appropriate actions based on their training and experience.

Strategies

1. Offensive strategy - An aggressive attack or effort to bring about rapid control of a problem.
2. Defensive Strategy - An effort to confine a situation.

Command Structure

It is the responsibility of Command to develop an organizational structure using guidelines to effectively manage incident operations. The development of the organizational structure should begin with the implementation of the initial tactical control measures and may continue through a number of phases depending on the size and complexity of the incident. The objective must be to develop the Command structure at a pace which stays ahead of, or at least even with the tactical deployment of companies.

LOCATION DESIGNATORS:

South Metro Fire Department will use the following terminology when communicating physical descriptions, locations and tactical objectives.

Sides

Sides of buildings will be described as A, B, C and D. The A-side of the building will typically be the address or front side of the building. The remaining sides will be lettered clockwise from the A-side. Command may decide to deviate from this standard if the building is of a configuration that does not conform to normal address placement or if circumstances require it. Command will determine the A-side of the building and communicate the information to all units working on the scene. Command will attempt to set up the command post on the A-side of a building or will give some sort of geographical reference for units on the scene.

Floors

Floors of the building will be numbered and referred to as floors or "divisions" (division 1, division 2, etc.). Division-1 will be considered the ground level floor. *Special attention will be given to situations that will arise with exits at different grades such as a walk-out basement. Command should announce that the building has offset exits and take appropriate safety precautions to make sure companies understand the situation.*

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If a floor must be subdivided into quadrants it will be numbered starting on the left quadrant of side-A and numbered clockwise. This may be done to track search areas or for other tactical reasons.

Basements will be known as “basement” or “basement division.” Multiple floors in a basement will count down from floor one (basement-1, basement-2, etc.).

Attic spaces will be referred to as “attic” or “attic division.”

Command Post

The Command Post should be situated in a conspicuous location inside a vehicle or piece of fire apparatus. The location should offer a good view of the incident and surrounding area. When possible, it should be located in front of the incident, ideally with a view of two sides of the building, and should not interfere with apparatus movement. Once the Command Post is established, Command should announce the location to incident personnel.