

Policy: **Incident Command Procedures**

Purpose: To establish a policy for the necessary implementation of the incident command system. The effective functioning of Fire Department units and personnel operating at incidents requires clear decisive action on the part of an Incident Commander. This procedure identifies the standard operating guidelines to be employed in establishing Command and operating a Command Post. It also fixes responsibility for the command function and its associated duties on one individual at any time during the operations.

Scope: This policy applies to all Northern Piatt Fire Department personnel.

The Incident Commander is responsible for the command functions at all times. As the identity of the Incident Commander changes, through transfers of command, this responsibility shifts with the title. The term "Command" in this procedure refers jointly to both the person and the function.

Command Procedures are designed to accomplish the following:

- Fix the responsibility for Command on a certain individual through a standard identification system depending on the arrival sequence of members, companies and officers.
- Insure that strong, direct and visible Command will be established as early as possible in the operation.
- Establish an effective framework outlining the activities and responsibilities assigned to Command.
- Provide a system for the orderly transfer of Command to subsequent arriving officers.

Command is responsible for four basic fireground objectives:

- Provide for the safety and welfare of firefighting personnel.
- Remove endangered occupants and treat the injured.
- Stop the fire.
- Conserve property after fire control is achieved.

Command is responsible for the following functions as required by the circumstances of the situation.

- Assume and confirm Command and take an effective position.
- Rapidly evaluate the situation (size-up).
- Initiate, maintain and control the communications process.
- Identify the overall strategy, develop an attack plan and assign units.
- Develop an effective fireground organization.
- Provide continuing Command within the framework of standard operating procedures.
- Coordinate the transfer of Command, as required.
- Request and assign additional resources as required.
- Return companies to service and terminate Command.

All of these functions are responsibilities of Command, whether or not Command is transferred from one individual to another. The first five (5) functions must be addressed immediately from the initial assumption of Command.

Establishing Command

The first Officer or Acting Officer to arrive on the scene of multiple unit responses **SHALL** assume Command and remain in command until Command is transferred or until the incident is terminated.

Exception: See PASSING COMMAND

Initial Report

The person assuming Command shall transmit a brief initial radio report including:

- Unit identification on the scene, confirming assumption of Command and location.
- Building description (occupancy, construction and height).
- Obvious fire conditions.

- Action taken (brief description).
- Any obvious safety concerns.

Radio Designation

The radio designation "Northern Piatt Command" will be used when communicating with Piatt County Dispatch. The radio designation "COMMAND" may be used when communicating with units operating on the incident. This designation will not change through the duration of the incident. If there are multiple incidents at the same time the location will be attached such as "Main Street Command".

Command Options

In cases when the initial arriving officer is a command officer, efforts should automatically be directed towards establishing a Command Post and fulfilling the listed Command functions.

The establishment of a Command Post in a vehicle equipped for this purpose is a priority at all working incidents. The location of Command in a vehicle that provides appropriate workspace, lighting, communications equipment, materials, reference items and limited isolation from distractions will make Command more effective.

When a company officer or acting officer initially assumes Command, that officer must decide on an appropriate commitment for his/her company that will usually fall into one of three general modes.

- Nothing Showing Mode: These situations generally require investigation by the first arriving unit while holding staged companies at a distance. Normally the officer should go with the company to check while utilizing a portable radio to command the incident.
- Fast Attack Mode: Situations that require immediate action to stabilize the situation, such as interior fires in residences, apartments or small commercial occupancies. These situations require that the officer quickly decide how to commit his/her company. Where a fast interior attack is critical, utilization of the portable radio will permit the necessary involvement in the attack without neglecting Command responsibilities. THIS MODE SHOULD NOT LAST MORE THAN A FEW MOMENTS and will end with one of the following:
 - Situation is stabilized
 - Command is passed to next arriving officer
 - A command officer arrives and Command is transferred.

The initial arriving officer will give an initial on scene radio report and advise that Command will be passed. The initial arriving officer retains responsibility for Command until the next unit arrives and acknowledges the transfer. The next arriving officer will confirm that they will assume Command.

Transfer of Command

The first Fire Department unit to arrive on the scene shall assume and retain command until relieved by a ranking officer within the following guidelines:

- The first arriving officer will automatically assume Command except as noted below.
- The first arriving command officer will assume Command if requested or the situation warrants it.
- In cases of complex tactical situations that have not been declared under control, the Command Officer will automatically assume Command, after transfer of command procedures have been completed. Assumption of Command in other situations is discretionary.
- Assumption of Command is discretionary for the Fire Chief or Assistant Fire Chief. He/she is requested to do so by "Command".

Within the chain of command indicated, the actual transfer of command will be regulated by the following procedures:

- The officer assuming Command will communicate with the person being relieved face-to-face on arrival or by radio if face-to-face is not practical.
- The person being relieved will brief the officer assuming Command indicating the following:
 - General situation status
 - 1). Fire location, extent, conditions.
 - 2). Effectiveness of control efforts.
 - 3). Safety considerations.
 - Deployment and assignments of operating companies.
 - Appraisal of needs for additional resources at that time.

- The person being relieved should review the Tactical Work Sheet with the command officer. This sheet provides the most effective framework for Command transfer as it outlines the location and status of resources in a standard form that should be well known to all members.
- Command officers should eliminate all unnecessary radio traffic while responding unless such communications are required to insure that Command functions are initiated and completed. This requires the person initially in command to give a clear on-the-scene report and continue to give updated progress reports as needed.

The arrival of a ranking officer on the fireground does not necessarily mean Command has been transferred to that officer. Command is transferred only when the outlined communication functions have been completed.

The response and arrival of ranking officers on the fireground strengthens the overall command function. All officers will exercise their Command prerogative in a supportive manner that will insure a smooth transition and the effective on-going function of Command.

The officer assuming Command will utilize the person relieved of Command to his/her best advantage.

In cases where an individual is effectively commanding a tactical situation, and is completely aware of the location and function of operating companies and the general status of the situation, it may be desirable for that person to continue in an active command role. In these cases, the arriving command officer may assume a supportive role in the overall command function. Command will be considered to be transferred within this context by virtue of the command officer being involved in the command process.

Command Structure

It is the responsibility of Command to develop an organizational structure, using standard operating procedures to effectively manage fireground 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 particular situation. The objective must be to develop the command organization at a pace that stays ahead of or even with the tactical deployment of units.

The basic configuration of a Command structure includes three levels:

- STRATEGIC LEVEL - overall incident command
- TACTICAL LEVEL - direction of sectors and functions
- TASK LEVEL - company activities

The Strategic Level involves the overall command of the incident and includes establishing major objectives, setting priorities, allocating resources, predicting outcomes, determining the appropriate mode of operations (offensive or defensive) and assigning specific objectives to Tactical Level units.

The Tactical Level includes intermediate level officers directing activities toward specific objectives. Tactical Level officers include sector officers, in charge of grouped resources operating in assigned areas or providing special functions at the scene of an incident. The accumulated achievement of tactical objectives should accomplish strategic level objectives.

The Task Level refers to those activities normally accomplished by individual companies or specific personnel. Task Level activities are routinely supervised by company officers. The accumulated achievement of Task Level activities should accomplish tactical objectives.

The most basic structure for a routine incident involving a small number of companies involves only two levels. The role of Command combines the Strategic and Tactical levels. Companies report directly to Command and operate at the Task level.

In more complex situations, Command should group companies to work in Sectors. The Sector Officers operate at the Tactical Level, directing the work of several companies or performing specialized functions as requested by Command. Command continues to operate at the Strategic Level, determining and directing the overall strategy to deal with the incident.

Command Post Organization

The responsibilities assigned to Command often require the involvement of more than one individual to manage Command functions. The officer in Command of a working incident is routinely assisted by other Officers and/or other assigned personnel in managing information at the Command Post, gathering information by reconnaissance, assisting with communications and providing liaison.

The Command Post organization may be expanded through the involvement of command officers and other Officers from responding Departments to provide Incident Planning

and/or Technical Support at the Command Post. The roles of the individuals performing these functions may vary, depending on the situation.

As the fireground organization grows in complexity, the Incident Commander may implement an additional intermediate level within the Command Post. The Control Level involves Operations Officers who provide direct supervision over Sector Officers and handle radio communications for the Incident Commander. This allows the Incident Commander to be removed from the immediate pressures of radio traffic and to focus on the strategic aspects of the overall situation and management of the organization.

STRATEGIC LEVEL	Incident Commander
CONTROL LEVEL	Operations Officers
TACTICAL LEVEL	Sector Officers
TASK LEVEL	Companies

Operations Officers function internally within the Command Post and assume responsibility for major segments of the fireground organization. Each segment of the organization should operate on a separate radio channel assigned to a specific Operations Officer.

OPERATIONS OFFICERS USE THE RADIO DESIGNATION "COMMAND" ON THEIR ASSIGNED CHANNELS.

Operations Officers should be physically located at the Command Post and communicate with the Incident Commander on a face--to-face basis. (If it is necessary to have an Operations Officer function in a remote location, a separate Command Channel should be designated to communicate directly with the Incident Commander.)

The function of Operations Officer is frequently initiated when a ranking officer assumes responsibility for overall Incident Command and elects to have the relieved officer continue to communicate on the assigned Tactical Channel. The relieved officer becomes the Operations Officer communicating as "Command."

Additional Operations Officers may be assigned to subdivide responsibilities within the Command Post. The Incident Commander may assign any available individuals to function as Operations Officers.

OPERATIONS OFFICER ASSIGNMENTS

Each Operations Officer is responsible for the direction of a group of sectors and functions. These should normally be grouped according to their similarities and related

natures to provide the most effective organization. All of the elements grouped under a particular Operations Officer utilize the same radio channel.

Examples:

FIRE OPERATIONS

All sectors involved in direct fire suppression actions and/or working within the fireground perimeter.

SUPPORT OPERATIONS

Staging, Rehab, Support Sector and Water Supply

COMMAND POST FUNCTIONS

Sectors and functions normally operate in direct (face-to-face) contact with the Incident Commander are considered Command Post functions. These normally include:

Strategic Planning
Technical Support
Liaison Officers
Public Information
Safety

These personnel may have occasion to communicate on any radio channel, depending on their involvement with a particular segment of the organization at that time.

The Incident Commander may assign alternate or additional Operations Officers according to the needs of a specific incident.

By the Order of : _____
Fire Chief

Date: _____

