
	Standard Operating Guideline	
	Section:	1100 – Incident Command
	Subsection:	1101 – Command Procedures
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Signature of Approval:		

Purpose:

The Pleasant View Fire Department responds to a wide range of emergency incidents in multiple jurisdictions. In order to effectively manage personnel and resources and to provide for the safety and welfare of personnel, we will always operate within the Incident Command System at the incident scene. This procedure identifies the Standard Operating Guidelines to be employed in establishing Command and all the components of the Incident Command System.

Scope:

This guideline applies to all volunteer and career employees of the Pleasant View Metropolitan District Fire Department.

Definitions:

- D/G: Division or Group
- IAP: Incident Action Plan
- IRR: Initial Radio Report (size up)

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1) Assume, Confirm and the Positioning of Command

Major Goal: To quickly establish and confirm a single IC, and to place that IC in the most effective command position as long as the hazard zone exists.

The Assumption of Command must be a natural, automatic and regular occurring organizational event. This section is designed to create a standard process for the initial command assumption to occur and then place/upgrade that IC in the most effective command position.

1.1 - Establishing Command

Command shall be formally declared on all incidents, as well as any applicable non-emergency operations. The reason is simply, practice makes perfect.

The first Unit or member to arrive to the scene will assume command of the incident by transmitting a standard Initial Radio Report (IRR), ([See Communications 4.6](#)).

The confirmation of Command occurs when the Dispatch Center uses the Order Model to repeat the IRR back to all responding units, confirming that the initial arriving Unit is in Command of the Incident.

Assuming command causes the first-arriving Unit or member (the IC) to size up the incident, determine the incident's strategy and formulate an incident action plan (IAP). All of this is executed and shared with all the incident participants when the IC transmits an IRR.

When the incident begins with an in-place IC, all later-arriving units will be assigned based on the IC's IAP. This puts all the incident players on the same page. Everyone knows what the problem is and what action is being taken to solve it.

The absence of an effective IC is the most common reason for ragged incident beginnings and unsafe endings. Effective and coordinated action is the result of beginning (and ongoing) incident operations with an in-place and in-charge IC.

Once command has been established, all routine communication between the dispatch center and the incident will be directed through Command.

The initial Incident Commander shall remain in Command until Command is transferred or the incident is stabilized and Command is terminated.

A formal IC must be in place, performing the functions of command, whenever a hazard zone exists.

1.2 - Naming Command - Radio Designation

The radio designation "**COMMAND**" will be used along with the major cross road, or the specific occupancy name of the incident site (i.e. "Colfax Command", "Days Inn Command"). This designation will not change throughout the duration of the incident.

The designation of "Command" will remain with the IC throughout the duration of the entire incident.

One tactical radio frequency can host several EMS incidents at once, but for incidents that are declared working, the assigned tactical radio channel should be cleared of other incidents, or, if there is credible call information, the call should be assigned on its own separate tactical

radio channel upon dispatch if available. This will avoid having multiple "Commands" operating on 1 (one) tactical channel.

1.3 - Command Positioning

The IC's position will greatly affect their ability to control the incident scene. Typically, the Company Officer of the first arriving Engine Company will become the initial IC for the incident, IC #1.

There are three command positions that a Company Officer can place themselves in, depending on the situation. These three command positions are:

- Investigating Command position
- Fast-Attacking Command position – Inside the hazard zone
- "Command" position - Stationary, inside of a Command Post (CP).

1.3.1- Investigative Command Position (Nothing Showing)

This is a mobile IC on a portable radio, moving around and evaluating conditions while trying to identify the incident problem. The company officer should remain with their company to investigate while utilizing a portable radio to command the incident.

When the initial IC reports "nothing showing" or an equivalent report, any additional units to the incident shall continue into the scene and report to Level 1 staging, ([See Staging, Section 5.7](#)).

1.3.2 - Fast Attacking Command Position (Working Command)

Many times, the strength of our local system is the fast-attacking IC, who directly supervises the use of quick force at the beginning of the event. That action is reinforced and upgraded by response chiefs who come in behind the initial fast attacking IC to quickly establish a stationary, exterior command post that supports and expands on the fast-attacking IC's initial actions. The fast-attacking command position provides the front-end command structure for that capability.

The Fast Attacking Command position is defined as: IC #1 enters the hazard zone (when in the offensive strategy) in full PPE, with a portable radio, supervising and assisting their crew in the attack. The advantages of a Fast Attacking IC:

- Enhances crew safety and accountability
- Gives the IC another set of critical factors to evaluate and base unit assignments on (interior conditions)
- Usually solves the problem quickly

The disadvantages of a Fast Attacking IC:

- Combining action and command is tough to do
- Difficult communication position (full PPE in a hazard zone)
- Limited field of vision
- Reduces strategic span of control

The entire response team coming in behind a fast attacking IC must realize that the initial IC is in an attack position, not a command position. We trade off this position

disadvantage because many times this initial front end “hit” is enough to stabilize the incidents problems.

When the front-end assault doesn't stabilize the situation, the fast-attacking IC is not in the best position to continue command; they are in the worst position. The Fast Attacking Command position should end in one of three (3) ways:

1. Situation is quickly stabilized.
2. Command is transferred from the Fast Attacking Company Officer IC (#1) to a subsequent arriving Command Officer (IC #2).
3. If the situation is not stabilized and there is a delay in the arrival of a command officer, the Fast Attacking Company Officer IC must move to an exterior (stationary) command position and operate in the Command position.

When this happens, the Company Officer has the following crew options:

- Move up one of your crew members to Company Officer. Minimum 2 person Company in a hazard zone
- Assign your crew member(s) to another Company in the hazard zone. This must be acknowledged by both the original and the receiving officer and by their inclusion in the accountability system.
- Have crew exit with the IC and perform IC support roles
- No crew will remain in a hazard zone without radio communications

1.3.4 - Command Position - Company Officer

The Command Position is defined as: a command position that is stationary, remote, outside of the hazard zone and inside of a vehicle (Command Post – CP).
The most effective command position is inside a CP, not inside a burning building.

Certain incidents, by virtue of their size, complexity, or potential for rapid expansion, demand early, strong, stationary command from the outset of the incident. In these cases, the first arriving Company Officer (IC #1) will assume command and, from the beginning of the event, stay out of the hazard zone in a stationary exterior CP (most of these situations present as larger, defensive fires). A tactical worksheet shall be initiated and utilized to assist in managing these types of incidents.

If the Company Officer assumes a Command position from the onset of the Incident, the following options are available to assign of the remaining crew members on the IC's Unit.

- A. "Move up" an acting officer within the Company. This is determined by the individual and collective capabilities and experience of the crew.
- B. Assign the crew members to perform staff functions to assist the IC. Staff functions include recon/reporting, communications assistance; help with tactical worksheet tracking etc.
- C. Assign company personnel to another Company. This must be acknowledged by both the original and the receiving officer and by their inclusion in the accountability system.

"Passing Command" to a unit that is not on the scene creates a gap in the Command process and compromises incident management and safety. To prevent this command and control gap, command shall not be transferred to any officer who is not physically located on the scene.

When a Chief Officer arrives at the scene first or at the same time as the initial arriving Company, the Chief Officer should assume Command of the incident.

1.3.5 - Command Position – Chief Officer

A stationary Command Post (CP) allows the IC to begin packaging command for the on-going operation and escalation of that incident. Physically locating the IC in the Command position puts the IC in the strongest possible position to carry out the functions of command, accomplish the incident's tactical objectives, and ensure the safety of all members working on the fireground.

Responding Command Officers should do the following, if/when possible, while en route to the scene to set themselves up for success and to make the command-transfer process as seamless as possible:

- Initiate filling out a tactical worksheet with the dispatched assignment (if not driving)
- Reference any pre-plan info, access aerial views and hydrant locations [MCT] (if not driving)
- [Listen critically](#) to all radio traffic
- Log assigned companies onto the tactical worksheet (if not driving)

If a chief officer is the initial-arriving unit to the same structure fire, they will operate in the Command position. Chief Officers can only operate in the command position when they are the IC.

1.4 - Transferring Command

To a major extent, command effectiveness is directly connected to regular command positioning; the entire command system revolves around the rapid establishment of a stationary, remote IC, operating in a standard CP.

By setting up and staying in a CP, the IC is in the ideal position to maintain on-line control; remain continuously available to communicate; and monitor and evaluate responders' changing welfare and survival needs while they are operating within the hazard zone.

The 1st arriving Chief Officer will respond directly to the scene. If an active hazard zone still exists, or if there is still tactical benchmarks to coordinate, command should be upgraded into the Command position. When arriving to the scene, IC #2 must transfer command in the following manner:

1. Size-Up - Verify that all operating positions match the current incident conditions
2. Transmit that your unit is On-Scene ("Chief 41 On-Scene")
3. Contact IC #1 and announce that you'll be transferring command: "taking it from out here"
4. Verify the position & function of all hazard zone resources with IC#1
5. Contact and Confirm the command transfer with Dispatch, announce the current strategy, and make a resource determination

Command transfers should be short and sweet. When IC #1 (usually a fast-attacking IC) transmits a concise, clear initial radio report, unit assignments and condition reports, it ensures that IC #2 (usually a command officer working out of an SUV) will have quality information to quickly facilitate the command transfer.

The arrival of a ranking Officer on the incident scene does not mean that Command has been automatically transferred to that Officer. Command is only transferred when the outlined

Transfer of Command process has been completed. We should make every effort to use chief officers at Incident Commanders, to allow company officers to function on a tactical level.

1.5 - Package Command for ongoing operation and escalation

The following bullet points put an effective IC in charge of the incident.

- Strong standard command
- Divisions/Groups
- SOGs
- Clear communications
- Standard strategy/action planning

Once in the Command position, the IC can now use the “standard” pieces of the incident management system to control incident operations. This comes down to the IC always being in a position where they can control where the workers are while matching their actions to the current incident conditions.

When the IC assumes a standard Command position inside a vehicle, the CP becomes the IC’s “field office.” Based on the size and design of the command vehicle (typically a response chief’s SUV), it will give the IC the following advantages:

- A stationary, remote and quiet place to listen, analyze and make decisions
- A superior communication position (better radios, no PPE, quiet)
- More radio channels available
- A place to write and record
- Protection from the elements
- Better Intel equipment (MCTs, reference materials)

Here are some of the disadvantages to working in an SUV CP:

- Sometimes you have a poor view of the hazard area
- It’s very hard to manage more than one radio channel
- A Support Officer is needed for a true, Strategic advantage
- Not much room for more than 2 people to effectively operate in
- People keep banging on your door

1.6 - In Transit

“In Transit” is defined as: the time it takes for a company to reach their assigned work area after receiving an order. It often varies due to:

- Distance between staging and the incident
- Size of the incident perimeter
- Amount of equipment the company needs to assemble

The IC or D/G officer will lose direct accountability of these companies while they’re In Transit. It is the responsibility of the company officer to monitor the tactical radio channel while In Transit. For long in transit times (over 5 minutes or more) the company officer should provide a radio announcement to the IC that the company is intact and entering the hazard zone.

2) Situation Evaluation

Major Goal: to develop a regular approach to size-up using standard information-management forms that identify the incident's major critical factors.

The information-management phase, known as *size-up*, involves the systematic, yet rapid and deliberate consideration of all the incident's critical incident factors. This standard size-up approach must begin at the very start of every incident operation. This ensures that we will develop a rational incident strategy and corresponding action plan based on the current conditions.

2.1 - Matching standard conditions to standard actions

Standard conditions are identified as the incident's Critical Factors. We must identify the incident's critical factors before taking any action. Our initial size-up produces the information that becomes the basis for the incident strategy and the corresponding incident action plan (IAP). Investing a small amount of time evaluating the critical factors is extremely important to both beginning and on-going command and operational success, as well as firefighter safety.

The current, accurate and relevant information the IC obtains at the front end of the event will generally provide the informational foundation for effective initial and on-going action. This systematic evaluation process continually produces standard, safe, well-managed incident outcomes.

2.2 - Information management

Information management presents complex challenges during most working incident operations. Information must be quickly received, processed, interpreted and acted upon. In some cases, certain factors can be observed from the command post, while others can only be determined from different locations inside and outside of the structure/incident area.

Obtaining critical information requires the IC to develop, refine and practice a standard system of incident-intelligence management that is applied to actual on-line incident operations.

The IC uses a combination of the following four basic information forms to help manage and process information on the emergency scene:

- Previous experience
- Visual information
- Reported Info/Reconnaissance
- Pre-incident planning and familiarity

2.2.1 - Previous experience

Previous experiences and lessons learned are major incident-management resources and offer a practical way to evaluate where the incident is now and anticipate where it is heading. If we have seen the actual conditions in the past and developed an action plan to meet and match those conditions, we can anticipate the outcome of those actions if we were to apply them again (been there, done that).

A major decision-making capability involves quickly accessing the memory files that, over time, get loaded into a responder's brain when they encounter actual incident situations. A seasoned IC will relate past experiences to present conditions in order to evaluate where the incident is and anticipate which way the incident is headed.

2.2.2 - Visual observation

Visual observation and inspection are one of the most important ways we gain information. This information form requires a critical, perceptive eye and is the most common way the IC gathers information during initial and ongoing incident evaluation.

While en route, the IC should observe the weather conditions (wind speed and direction) and the horizon for any smoke or fire conditions.

As the IC approaches the scene, they should take a route that shows 3 sides of the structure, or when possible, completely circle the incident (later arriving Command Officers). A drive-around can reveal a great deal of information, such as the layout of the incident area; access or obstruction issues; the extent and severity of the incident problem(s); potential structural failures; or rescue situations.

An important note on visual information as a size-up tool: Whatever the IC sees from the command post trumps what all others see and report (e.g. interior reports of “We’re getting it!” when the IC can see a 10-foot fireball coming from the roofline).

2.2.3 - Recon information

Information the IC can’t gather visually from their fast-action or command-post position is typically acquired from personnel assigned to standard geographic and functional positions. Information can come from D/Gs dealing with specific problems and locations who then transmit their information reports to the IC. It also can come from other sources, such as owners/occupants, technical representatives, other agencies, law enforcement or media video feeds.

When the IC assigns companies and D/Gs to key operating positions, they must report back regarding the conditions in their assigned areas. With this information, the IC builds a strategic picture of what is happening around the entire incident site. The IC uses this “big picture” to keep the strategy and attack plans current and to keep all hazard-zone workers connected.

The IC is responsible for understanding the overall situation, incident resources, and organizational and operational statuses. D/G officers concentrate on information that supports tactical operations, integration and coordination. Companies must deal with the details required for direct task-level effectiveness. Simply, the level of required information (details) gets cut into smaller pieces as it moves toward the task level.

2.2.4 - Pre-planning information

Pre-incident planning arms the IC and the response team with facts and details almost impossible to acquire during an actual event. This is because pre-incident planning is conducted in ideal situations, during the daytime under non-emergency conditions. By physically visiting these tactically significant occupancies during these information-gathering visits, we increase the awareness and knowledge of responders who might have to operate at (and in) these locations under critical conditions.

Even though the task-level workers operating at an incident aren’t in the position to review the actual plan during an event, they retain the familiarity gained during the preplanning process. An IC working in the command position is generally in the best position to look at, manipulate and manage the plans, and they can relay pertinent information to the decentralized operating D/Gs and companies.

3) Strategy and Incident Action Planning

3.1 - Determine the overall incident Strategy

An IC properly managing the incident's strategy has the **#1 – GREATEST** overall impact on responder safety.

Overall operational strategy is divided into only two categories: Offensive or Defensive.

- Offensive operations are conducted inside a hazard zone
- Defensive operations are conducted outside of the hazard zone - in safe locations

The two separate strategies create a simple, *understandable* plan that describes in primitive terms how close the emergency responders will get to the incident's hazards.

The incident's overall strategic decision is based on the incident's critical factors weighed against the RMP.

IC's must avoid taking unnecessary risks to save property when our members are the only life safety threat in the hazard zone.

Do NOT combine Offensive & Defensive operations in the same fire area.

3.2 - Confirm ongoing Strategy as part of the Elapsed-Time Notifications (ETN)

When an offensive Working Fire or Haz Mat incident is declared, it should prompt dispatch to begin Elapsed Time Notifications (an IC can also request ETN's whenever they feel it is necessary or not begun automatically by dispatch).

Dispatch will announce over the tactical frequency an elapsed time notification every fifteen (15) minutes until the incident is placed under control, or until command requests to discontinue or restructure the ETN's.

The IC must verbally acknowledge each 15 minute notification by re-announcing the incident's strategy over the assigned tactical radio frequency until the incident is placed under control, or until command requests to discontinue or restructure the notifications.

3.3 - Offensive Incident Action Planning

When an incident's critical factors and the risk-management plan indicate the offensive strategy, firefighting forces will enter the structure (hazard zone) to attempt to control the incident hazards. An offensive IAP is based on the standard offensive tactical priorities.

Offensive Strategy Tactical Priorities and their corresponding completion benchmarks:

- Water on Fire – “Water on Fire”
- Fire Control (F/C) – “Under Control”
- Life Safety – Primary and Secondary “All Clear(s)” (A/C)
- Property Conservation – “Loss Stopped” (L/S)
- Customer Stabilization – Short term

The offensive tactical priorities establish the major operational activities required for a complete, integrated effort, and they identify the three major functions we must complete to establish the overall incident response.

3.4 - Defensive Incident Action Planning

A defensive situation is where the incident problem has evolved to the point that lives and property are no longer savable, and offensive tactics are no longer effective or safe. The entire defensive strategy is based on protecting firefighters.

Firefighter safety is the No. 1 defensive priority. No firefighter should be injured on a defensive fire.

Defensive Strategy Tactical Priorities and their corresponding completion benchmarks:

- Define the Hazard Zone
- Establish Cut-offs – Forward progress stopped
- Search exposures - Primary and Secondary “All Clears” – A/C’s
- Protect exposures - “Fire Control” - Loss Stopped

Defensive operations represent a standard organizational response to situations that cannot be controlled with offensive tactics. When conditions go beyond the safety systems required for interior operations, the IC must conduct defensive operations from outside of the hazard area. The IC must write off lost property and decide where the cut-off will take place (if there are exposures).

If defensive operations are conducted from the onset of the incident, Command must notify Alarm/Dispatch that there will not be a primary search completed for the involved structure(s).

During defensive campaign operations, the IC will coordinate the rotation of crews through Dispatch & Deployment.

Basic Defensive IAP

- Identify critical fireground factors
- Quick determination on additional resource
- Evaluate fire spread/write-off lost property
- Search exposures
- Protect exposures
- Prioritize fire streams, provide big, well placed streams, pumped water
- Surround and drown

3.5 - Transitioning from an Offensive strategy to a Defensive strategy

When the offensive strategy is chosen on our initial arrival, most of the time, a well-placed initial attack solves the incident's problem. But there are many times (for many reasons) that our initial, and sometimes re-enforced attack efforts, do not solve the incidents problems and conditions continue to deteriorate to the point where the critical factors indicate switching from an offensive to a defensive strategy.

IC's must be very pessimistic in these types of situations, especially if the structure has a primary "All Clear". Command must change strategies before the building is disassembling itself due to structural damage. When this happens, Command is very late in the strategy shift and on the receiving end of the building's decision governing the new strategy. The IC must be the single person to make the defensive decision, NOT the building coming apart.

The announcement of a change to a defensive strategy will be made as follows:

- Clear Dispatch – Ask for Emergency Tones/Traffic (Abandonment only)
- Emergency Tones transmitted (Abandonment Only)
- Announce to all hazard zone units:
- Shifting to the Defensive Strategy
- All Unit's "Withdrawal" or "Abandon" the structure
- All Units report PAR's upon exit
- Dispatch acknowledged change to defensive strategy and all Units are accounted for

"Withdrawal from the Structure" will be defined as: an orderly withdrawal where interior lines and equipment will be withdrawn and repositioned when changing to a defensive strategy.

"Abandoned the Structure" will be defined as: an emergency retreat where all hoselines and heavy equipment will be left in place and all members in the hazard zone will exit the structure as quickly and as safely as possible. When an Abandon order is issued, the Engineer of the first arriving unit shall give the air horn evacuation signal of 3 air horn blasts 3 times, (total of 9).

A PAR (Personnel Accountability Report) shall be obtained for all units exiting the hazard zone after any switch from an offensive to a defensive strategy.

Commands greatest priority once a strategic shift has been initiated is the safe exit of all units located in the hazard zone. Level 1 Staged units and other units working outside of the hazard zone shall maintain radio silence until all PAR's have been tallied (unless they have emergency or high priority traffic).

Company officers will account for their crews and advise their D/G Officer or Command on the status of their crew upon exiting.

D/G Officers will notify Command of the status of the individual crews assigned to their D/G upon their exit.

4) Communications

4.1 – Radio Designations

1. Single resources such as Engines and Trucks shall keep the unit number for designation.
2. Single unit number (Engine 41) shall remain Engine 41 even if assigned to a task. For example, if Truck 41 is assigned to vent the roof, the designation will be Truck 41, not ventilation or vent group
3. If multiple single resources are assigned to a specific geographical area or task, the IC may elect to create a division or group and assign a division or group officer.

4.2 - Mix & Match Forms of Communications: Face-to-Face/Radio/Computers/SOGs

Face to face communication is the most effective form of communication. It should be the preferred form of communication on the task and tactical levels of the incident site. Face to face communications should be used whenever possible in the following circumstances:

- Company officers communicating with their crew members.
- Company officers communicating with other company officers in their work area.
- Tactical level bosses communicating with units assigned to their geographic location.

The entire purpose of placing an IC in a command post is to create the best possible communication environment. In the CP, the IC can more effectively monitor and control radio communications.

All members working on the fireground will avoid distracting the IC with face to face communications. Command must be the person to initiate this form of communication and it should only be performed when the incident hazards have been controlled.

Radio communications are the way that the tactical and task levels connect with the IC working on the strategic level. While radio communication, in and of itself, does not put water on the fire, in most cases, the overall outcome of the incident is directly connected to the quality of the radio communications among the participants.

Because everyone cannot talk on the radio at once, other forms of communications must be used to reduce the overall amount of radio traffic on the hazard zone tactical channel.

4.3 - Gear communications toward completing the Tactical Benchmarks

Communications should focus on the completion of the tactical priorities and firefighter safety. This will help keep communications short, to the point and effective. It also leaves airtime free for important tactical messages that affect everybody working in the hazard zone.

When the IC properly assigns Engine 41 to: *“Lay a supply line to the Alpha side, stretch an attack line to the interior of the Delta 1 exposure for a primary search and check for fire extension. I’m going to make you Delta”*, it becomes the basis for Engine 41 to structure their CAN report back to command. *“Delta to Command, we have a primary all-clear in Delta 1, we have opened up the*

ceilings and have a working attic fire. We are applying water and opening up more ceilings. We'll need another company to assist in Delta 1 with fire control in the attic space".

4.4 - Upgrade the fast attacking command position as quickly as possible

Most of the time, the operation will start out with the first arriving company officer on an Engine company. Initial arriving, fast attacking IC's (IC #1) have a narrow window of being able to produce clear and concise radio communications before putting themselves in the worst communications position possible, in full PPE operating in a hazard zone.

Therefore, it is very important to use the very beginning of the event to transmit a complete Initial Radio Report (IRR) and Follow-Up Report before entering the hazard zone, when IC #1 is in their best communication position. These two reports tell other responding units exactly what's going on at the incident, what the first unit is doing about it, and where they will be located on the incident site.

These two initial reports also allow a fast attacking IC to then engage the problem and command the incident using a portable radio. IC #1 from that point on the operation is in a position to quickly assign the next 2-3 apparatus to critical areas around the scene, but they are not in position to process lots of information or manage a large amount of resource. The entire response team must understand the communications position IC #1 is in, and support the IC by properly following all hazard zone SOG's.

In rapidly expanding incidents, command must be transferred (or moved out of the hazard zone) to a later-arriving response chief who will operate inside of a stationary, remote command post.

4.5 - Listen Critically: Understand Communications Difficulties from Tough Operating Positions

We put an IC in a strategic command post (outside the hazard zone, inside a vehicle designed to be a command post) so they have an ideal position to send and receive information. Companies operating in the hazard zone are in the worst positions for effective communications.

Many hazard-zone distractions can cause communications problems. The IC needs to understand this when communicating with operating companies. Companies also must understand that their portable radios provide the only communications link to the outside world. The command system depends upon coherent communications between the IC and the operating units.

All hazard zone transmissions shall be carried out on one (1) tactical radio frequency.

Some incidents may require the use of multiple radio frequencies in order to support operations outside of the hazard zone (Level 1 & 2 staging, Rehab, Safety, Planning, Logistics, etc). Each additional channel activated for the incident must have a dedicated person assigned to manage that channel at all times. The IC must only be responsible for the operation of one (1) tactical radio frequency while an active hazard zone exists.

4.6 - Begin & control communications upon arrival with a standard Initial Radio Report

The initial IC begins the command, control and communication process with an IRR. This report provides dispatch, as well as everyone else responding to the scene, with a size-up of conditions seen from the initial command position.

The IRR is not an affidavit of absolute accuracy; it's just a quick snapshot of the incident that provides a "word picture" of what the IC can see from their command position when they first arrive on-scene.

The IRR must include the following reporting elements:

1. Announce your arrival on the scene
2. Building/area description
3. Describe the problem
4. Action being taken – Initial I.A.P.
5. Declaration of the Strategy
6. Resource Determination
7. Assuming and Naming of Command

1). Announce arrival on scene: This accomplishes several things:

- It ensures that you deliver the IRR on the correct channel. If you go on scene on the wrong channel, dispatch should immediately direct you to the correct tactical channel.
- It notifies all other responders you are about to deliver an IRR and assume command
- It automatically activates Level 1 Staging to go into effect.

2). Building/area description: Will be described in 3 different categories:

- Size
- Height
- Occupancy type

Size: the size of the structure should be defined by the overall area of a structure under roof. We should base our size description on how it relates to the areas we can cover with a 200 ft preconnect and the maximum depths that we can safely achieve inside the structure. Size will fall into 4 different categories:

- Small - A 200 ft line can access 100% of the potential fire area.
- Medium – A 200 ft line can access 75% of the potential fire area.
- Large – A 200 ft line can access 50% of the potential fire area.
- Very Large or Big Box- A 200 ft line can access less than 25% of the potential fire area.

Height: Identifying the height of a structure is very important to all responders. Every floor (or story) that is added to a structure makes it a more complex problem and tactically challenging for all the incident players.

Use the number of stories above grade to describe the height of a structure.

Use the number of Sub-levels (basements, parking garages, etc.) to describe the depth below grade of a structure.

Occupancy type: will many times drive our IAP. Identifying it on the IRR paints a picture to all other responders of the type of situation they're responding into. Here are some basic, common occupancy types:

Single family residence	Multi-unit residential	Apartments	
Townhomes			
Row houses	Restaurant/Bar	Public assembly	
Commercial			
Big Box	High rise	Institutional	Strip Mall

Describing Multi-unit residential: Apartments, town houses and row houses all fall into this category. Each of these occupancy types has a distinct set of characteristics that will affect the tactics that we use when operating on multi-unit residential. Therefore it is critical for the first arriver to properly identify which category the occupancy type fits into.

Apartments must be separated into 1 of 2 categories on the initial report:

- A stand-alone apartment building
- Apartment complex

Apartment complexes gives us a much greater tactical challenge with arrangement as it relates to access, exposures, water supply, handline lengths, ladder/truck access, possible standpipe issues, master stream application, etc.

Complexes must be identified in the very beginning of the event and there must be a standard response to this information:

- No other unit should enter large complexes until the exact location of the problem is located and identified to units level 1 staged.
- Placing pumper's in key tactical positions early on in the incident is critical as it relates to handline lengths and water application.
- Horizontal standpipes should be used to maximize the number of handlines off of 1 forward pumper.

Apartments have a single floor arrangement. This means that the interior of each apartment is on a single floor and does not have access to the upper or lower floors. Access must be made on the floor the problem is on.

Most apartment buildings share a common attic space. This becomes a high priority check of item for the IC and rest of the team and coordinating a working attic fire can become very difficult with large apartment buildings.

Interior and/or exterior stairway access must be identified. Interior, common hallways pose additional tactical challenges and these features must be identified and transmitted very early on in the incident.

Town houses and row houses are described as having 2 or more floors, each unit is attached to other similar units via party walls, and some units can share common attic spaces. The only way to access the upper floors of these units is to enter the involved unit on the 1st floor and use the interior staircase of that unit to access the upper floor(s) with the problem.

Well know occupancy types should be by called their most common identified name. These include:

- Schools
- Mills Mall
- Best Buy
- Home Depot, etc....

3). Describing the problem: For the fire service, this usually means we are describing “Fire Conditions”. The following are the only 5 terms that are to be used when describing fire conditions:

- Nothing Showing
- Light Smoke Showing
- Smoke Showing
- Working Fire
- Defensive Fire Conditions

The term “Working Fire” indicates a situation that will at least require the commitment of all responding companies. This report advises dispatch that the companies will be engaged in tactical activities and will be held at the scene for an extended period of time. Dispatch will automatically dispatch support units and will monitor radio traffic to anticipate the needs of Command. The IC must also ask dispatch for a callback text page to be sent out.

The Location of the problem must also be identified on the IRR. This includes reporting:

- What floor the problem is located on
- For longer buildings (apartments, strip malls, etc.) middle or what end (Bravo or Delta)
- For larger structures – What side of the structure is problem located on

Describing what the problem is and where it is located paints a very good picture to everybody on what the scene looks like and where the subsequent arriving units will probably fit into the IC’s IAP.

Geographic Landmarks:

See Section [5.5 - Geographic Landmarks](#)

4). Initial Incident Action Plan (IAP): Incident action plans describe our operational plan for completing the tactical priorities. IAPs should be short and to the point. The initial IAP should include the following:

- The tasks of the initial arriving unit
- The location of the tasks
- The objectives of the tasks

Tasks: Some of the standard tasks that should be include in the IRR:

- Investigating (nothing showing)
- Establish a water supply
- Stretching handlines
- Operating a master stream
- Performing forcible entry (takes a while)
- Performing a physical rescue

Location of those tasks should include:

- What floor will you operating on
- What occupancy/exposure will operate in
- What side you'll make entry on
- What side will you be operating on (defensive)

The tasks objectives should center on completing the tactical priorities for the chosen strategy. They are:

- Search/Rescue = Primary and Secondary "All Clears"
- Fire Control = "Under Control"
- Loss Control = "Loss Stopped"

5). Declaration of the Incident's Strategy: Overall operational strategy is divided into only two categories: Offensive or Defensive.

- Offensive operations are conducted inside a hazard zone
- Defensive operations are conducted outside of the hazard zone - in safe locations

Declaring the incident strategy up front, as part of the initial radio report will:

- Announce to everybody the overall incident strategy.
- Eliminates any question on where we will be operating on the incident scene (inside or outside the hazard zone).

6). Resource determination: 1st arriving IC's must match the incidents problems with the resources required to solve the incidents problems. The request for the appropriate amount resource must happen at the beginning of the event, where our window of opportunity has the greatest chance for success. One of the following resource determinations must be made on the IRR:

- Cancel the original assignment
- Hold the original assignment (Lights/Sirens vs. Normal driving)
- Upgrade/Fill out the original assignment
- Strike additional Alarms/Boxes
- Ask dispatch for a callback text page to be sent out for available personnel.

7). Assume and name command: The absence of an effective IC is the most common reason for ragged incident beginnings and unsafe endings. Effective (and coordinated) action is the result of beginning (and ongoing) incident operations with an in place and in charge IC.

Use location/occupancy to name command. The radio designation "**COMMAND**" will be used along with the major cross road, or the specific occupancy name of the incident site (i.e. "Colfax Command", "Rock Rest Command").

The designation of "Command" will remain with the IC throughout the duration of the entire incident.

4.7 – Follow-Up Reports

The initial radio report is usually performed from the front seat of an Engine Company. Once the report has been given and the alarm room acknowledges that report (using the order model) the company officer of the unit is probably out of the cab and has started to go to work.

Follow-up reports make the IRR a little shorter and they give the initial IC a little bit more time to size-up the situation. The follow-up report will probably be the last radio transmission a fast attacking IC gives before entering the hazard zone. This report gives the IC a “last chance” to give clear, concise information before they don full PPE and enter the hazard zone.

Follow-Up Reports should include the following information:

1. Result of a 360 (if performed)
2. Any changes to the initial IAP
3. Any immediate safety concerns

4.7.1 - Result of a 360: 360's should be obtained on every structure fire we respond to before making entry into the structure. But the fact is, many times, the initial arriving IC will not be able to conduct a 360. This will be the case for larger, commercial buildings or with long rows of continuous housing where travel times will prohibit the 1st arriver from performing a 360.

On critical incidents (high life safety or where a basement is suspected) where the 1st arriving unit can't perform a 360, the assignment should be given to a subsequent arriving unit to deploy to the Charlie side to provide a 360 report.

Initial arriving IC's should make every attempt to perform a 360 where life safety is high priority or there is a probability of a basement present. This includes most houses and apartment buildings.

The 360 should only include any additional critical information that was not reported on the IRR.

4.8 - CAN Reporting

CAN reporting gives the troops a regular, consistent way to report back to the IC on their progress and needs. CAN reporting keeps things simple and it delivers the IC the information needed to keep the strategy and IAP current. The CAN acronym stands for:

- Conditions
- Actions
- Needs

CAN reports should be structured around the IC's assignment and the completion of the tactical priorities. Here is a basic list to choose from when providing a CAN report to command:

Conditions

Where you are
Any obstacles
Smoke conditions
Int. visibility
Fire conditions
Heat conditions
Interior layout
Fire separation
Fuel loads
What's burning
What's not burning

Actions

A/C progress
F/C progress
Can't find the fire
Checking for ext.
Concealed space info
PAR's
All Clears
Under Controls
Loss stopped

Needs

Reinforcement
Relief
Support work
Tools or Equip
Cover other areas
Urgent help

5) Organization

Major Goal: To develop an effective incident organization using the D/G system to decentralize & delegate tactical responsibilities.

Organization will focus primarily on managing and expanding the Tactical level (hot/warm zone) of the organization.

5.1 - Organizational Levels

There are 3 operational levels that function at the scene of every hazard zone. They are:

- Strategic level
- Tactical level
- Task level

Each level is distinct, each is managed in a different way, and they each have their own set of roles and responsibilities.

Strategic Level - This organizational level is designed around the IC (and Command Team) operating in the Command position, working out of a stationary command post. The Strategic level involves coordinating the activities necessary for overall operational control, determining the incident's strategy, and developing an IAP that completes the incident's tactical objectives.

Tactical Level - The first management "subdivision" of the incident scene is done by assigning Division/Group (D/G) responsibilities. D/G Officers are responsible for the tactical deployment and supervision of all assigned resources in their assigned area. These tactical assignments are made directly by the IC to specific units.

Task Level - Is where the work is performed by assigned companies. The Strategic and Tactical levels are in place to support the task level. Task level activities are supervised by Company Officers working with the members of their companies directly in the hazard zone.

The task level is the most important level on the incident site because it solves the incidents problems while taking place in an IDLH atmosphere that can kill the workers. All activities outside the hazard zone are in place to support units working on the task level.

5.2 - Fast Attacking IC's (IC#1)

For the majority of the local incidents we respond to, the responsibility for managing all 3 organizational levels is handled by the Officer of the first arriving Engine Company and they will become the initial IC for the incident, IC #1.

A fast attacking Company Officer IC is the only person on the entire response team who will operate on all 3 organizational levels.

- Strategic level – IC #1 will size up the incident's critical factors, declare the incident strategy and assume command of the incident.

- Tactical level - IC #1 will implement and execute an IAP that addresses the incidents critical factors in order to facilitate the completion of the tactical priorities
- Task Level – IC #1 will directly supervise and assist their crew members with the tasks required to bring the incident's problems under control.

The Command system also calls on the fast attacking IC to assign the next arriving 1 to 2 Engine Companies and the first in Truck Company to support the initial Incident Action Plan.

In most cases, this initial, well-coordinated attack wave usually eliminates the incident hazards and there is no urgent need to upgrade the positions on the Strategic or Tactical levels.

Incidents that are not quickly controlled, are escalating, or are significant in scope and size upon our arrival, must have the Strategic and Tactical operational levels upgraded as required.

The strategic level of command on these types of incidents will usually be the 1st operational level that is upgraded. When the initial arriving Command Officer, IC #2, arrives on scene and transfers command from the fast attacking Company Officer IC, they assume responsibility for the strategic level of the operation.

This command transfer significantly improves the IC's position and ability to perform and manage the 8 Functions of Command and the corresponding strategic safety requirements for the entire incident operation.

5.3 – Subdividing the Incident Scene

An IC must have a system in place where the rate of assigning companies to the emergency scene doesn't exceed their span of control. The IC accomplishes this by forecasting and establishing geographic and functional responsibilities that divides the incident scene into smaller, more manageable tactical sub-divisions.

Tactical Subdivisions: Divisions, or Groups (D/G). The IC must correctly name the different work areas on the incident site to help eliminate any confusion on the fire ground.

ICS/NIMS uses the terminology of Divisions and Groups:

- **Division** is a geographical subdivision of the incident site
- **Group** is a functional work group that is not tied to a specific location

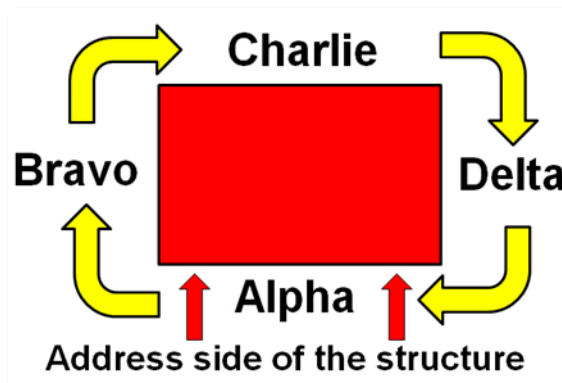
5.4 – Designation of Divisions and Groups

- When division boundaries are established on the exterior of a structure or in nonstructural incidents (such as a wildland fire), a letter designation (A, B, C, D, etc.) shall be used. In addition to establishing the division designation, specific boundaries must be defined.

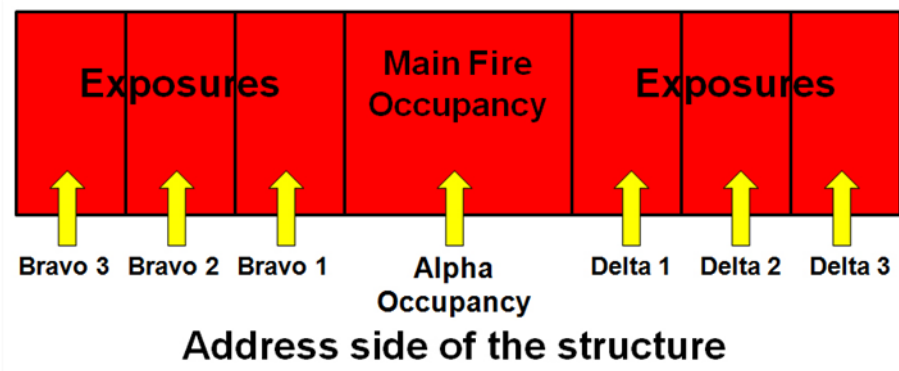
- When division boundaries are defined by level in a structural incident, a number or descriptive designation shall be used (1, 2, 3, 4, basement). If a division is given responsibility for the entire structure, it shall be designated as the Interior Division.
- In radio communications with a Division, the letter or number designation shall follow "Division" (Division A, Division 3). If a descriptive designation is given, it shall precede "Division" in radio communications (Interior Division, etc.).
- Groups shall be designated by function (Ventilation, Water Supply, etc.). In radio communications with a group, the function shall serve as the radio designation.

5.5 - Geographic Landmarks

5.5.1 - Sides: The Alpha side of the structure is "usually" the address, street side. There will be many situations where it is not clear where the Alpha side is. In situations where there is any confusion on the incidents landmarks, initial arriving IC's must make it clear where the Alpha side is located.



5.5.2 - Exposures: We identify exposed structures to the main fire occupancy by the side they are on starting with the closest, moving to the next exposure and so on. When the IC can give the exposure number and the occupancy type/apartment number it greatly enhances our directional sense of awareness.



5.5.3 - Floors: Are identified by stories above and below ground level. Using Divisions, the individual floor will take on the same floor number as the Division (floor 2 becomes “Division 2”). The basement, attic, and roof shall be designated by name.

Floor 4 – Division 4
Floor 3 – Division 3
Floor 2 – Division 2
Floor 1 – Division 1
Sub-Floor 1 – Sub-Division 1
Sub-Floor 2 – Sub-Division 2

5.6 - Forecasting and establishing Geographic & Functional responsibilities:

The IC must forecast where the overall event is going, subdivide the hazard zone into manageable tactical units and then assign geographic responsibilities early on in the incident in order to build an effective incident organization.

Geographic subdivisions are most effective when they are assigned in anticipation of their need, rather than in a crisis because it is very difficult to play catch-up in fast paced, escalating incidents.

Subdividing the incident site provides tactical supervision, direction and support to units assigned and operating in a hazard zone. This delegated management also helps the IC to achieve the incidents tactical objectives much more safely and effectively. Utilizing the appropriate subdivisions will:

- Reduce the IC’s span of control.
- It streamlines and creates more effective incident scene communications.
- They allow the IC to focus on the Strategic elements of the incident from a stationary command post.
- D/G’s give the IC an array of functions to choose from and match to the particular needs of each Incident.
- It greatly improves the accountability system
- It places strong tactical direction and leadership where the work is actually taking place.
- Improves firefighter safety by having dedicated Officers directly manage and control the position and function of the operating companies assigned to them.

Offensive fires usually don’t last very long. We either put the fire out in the limited time frame we have (less than 20 minutes) or we don’t put the fire out, we exit the structure and then get away from the incident problem.

Building large incident organizations on offensive fires doesn't happen very often. But there are many situations that can facilitate long duration, over 30 minute, offensive operations. Some of these offensive situations include:

- Multi-Unit residential structures where the fire has extended into the concealed spaces or into adjoining units.
- Other highly compartmentized structures with fire extension in concealed and common attic spaces
- Sprinkler controlled, large area cold smoke fires
- Defensive fire situations where we operate in offensive positions in the exposed structures
- Compartmentized Mid & High Rise Structures

The IC must automatically, instinctively, and quickly develop and compare the event vs. response profile and then call for the additional resources that will be required to bring the response model up to effectively engage and overpower the problem the event is creating.

As the resource required to bring the incident under control escalates, the Strategic level (the IC) and the Tactical level (D/G Officers) must also be supported. This support needs to be included in the regular dispatch system. The standard response elements of additional staff and response chief's on greater alarms will give the IC the needed resource to implement an organization that keeps up with, and outlasts the event.

5.7 Staging

Any time there are multiple resources responding to an incident the Incident Commander should consider having resources stage away from the scene until they are needed.

5.7.1 Level 1 Staging: Incoming units place their apparatus in an uncommitted location about one block from the emergency scene. These apparatus will wait at this area until given an assignment by command. This does not require a staging officer, and apparatus do not need to stage in the same area.

Engine companies should not pass the last hydrant before the incident scene, and Truck companies should not pass their last access point into the incident scene.

Each unit in Level 1 staging will simply state their unit is Level 1 staged, "T-41 is Level 1."

5.7.2 Level 2 Staging: Requires the implementation of formal staging area with a Staging Officer. This position is usually staffed by the first Company Officer to arrive at the area. All incoming units report to the Staging Officer, who then advises command of the resources available in staging. Units in staging do not talk to command; they sit quietly until given an assignment by the Staging Officer who will receive orders from the Incident Commander. The use of this procedure is reserved for large incidents with a multitude of fire companies.

Level 2 staging should be close enough to the incident scene to provide timely access, but is located in an area that is out of the way and not exposed to the incident's hazards.

END OF GUIDELINE