Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services

GENERAL ORDER

# GENERAL ORDER 300.07

# Incident Command System

## EMERGENCY SERVICES BUREAU

**Issue Date:** September 21, 2005

**Revision Date:** November 01, 2016

## APPLICABILITY

All career, volunteer, and contingent operational personnel

## POLICY

An emergency incident presents a complicated and rapidly changing situation. Effective command organization will serve to create effective operations, proficient communications, and maximum accountability and safety for all personnel operating in Hazard Zones and within areas that pose Immediate Danger to Life and Health (IDLH).

Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (Department) shall adopt the National Incident Management System (NIMS) model as outlined and described in the United States Fire Administration/National Fire Academy *Field Operations Guide* (Document ICS 420-1, July 2016), accessible at http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/field_operations_guide.pdf.

This policy shall outline further local applications and procedures of the Incident Command System to help guide the Incident Commander (IC), designated Division and Group (D-G) supervisors, and other personnel operating within the incident command structure.

## DEFINTIONS

- **Accountability** is a set of tasks accomplished by a designated individual that include gathering Unit Collector Rings and Personal Accountability Tags, organizing them on the Accountability Control Board, verifying the number of personnel assigned to each resource, utilizing additional Accountability Managers as necessary, and obtaining PAR status from units as required for a PAR status report to Command at fifteen (15) minute intervals during an incident.

- An **Accountability Control Board** is used to keep track of the current status of all companies and personnel assigned, reference General Order 300.02: Personnel Accountability.

- The **Channel Marker** is a single beep tone that is used once the emergency tone has been activated. This tone will ensure that all personnel utilizing the channel understand that units are operating with an emergency on the fire ground and that transmissions should be limited.

- **Command** is the act of directing, ordering, and/or controlling resources by virtue of explicit legal, agency, or delegated authority.

- The **Command Aide** is a person assigned to assist the IC in the Command Post with documenting resources on a tactical worksheet, monitoring tactical radio channels, and other critical functions of command. The Command Aide may have other assigned duties as directed by Command, but under normal circumstances, the Command Aide should NOT be assigned to tactical or company-task level assignments during emergency incidents. The paramount goal of this resource is to increase the effectiveness of Command.

- A **Command Post Operator** is an optional role within the Strategic Command Team that is assigned to operating the command post and equipment therein.

- A **Command Support Officer** is an optional role within the Strategic Command Team that can support Command by coordinating resources and providing assistance with communication and documentation.

- The **Command Transition Report** is transmitted by the arriving chief or command officer that officially transfers command from an initial IC that had been operating in the Tactical Command mode to the arriving chief or strategic command officer.

- The **Emergency Tone** is an informational tone broadcast transmitted by emergency dispatchers at Howard County's Public Safety Answering Point (Howard Communications) for a period of five (5) seconds over all operational radio channels to notify personnel that an emergency has been declared.

- **Emergency Traffic** is the declaration transmitted over a radio channel when the sender has an urgent message. The phrase is to be recognized and respected by other personnel on the scene so as to give the sender's message absolute priority, and to limit all non-essential radio traffic until the urgent situation is resolved. Any operating personnel can declare Emergency Traffic and the *Emergency Traffic Channel Marker* tone in order to communicate with priority status. In order to facilitate the restriction of all non-essential radio traffic, Howard Communications shall broadcast a repeating *Emergency Traffic Channel Marker* tone for as long as the Emergency Traffic restriction is lifted by Command.

- The **Follow-Up (Basement) Report** is a structured report given following the Initial Radio Report that includes results of a 360 degree assessment, identifying the basement type of the structure, and reconfirms the overall incident strategy and location of accountability tag collection.

- A **Hazard Zone** is any area or zone where there is a known or potential risk to the safety of operating personnel, including but not limited to environments that are IDLH, potential collapse zones, and areas at risk for rapid change in their safety profile. An atmosphere that is IDLH poses an immediate threat to life, would cause irreversible adverse health effects, or impair an individual's ability to escape from a dangerous atmosphere.

- The Department's general **Incident Risk Management Plan** provides a framework for defining the level of acceptable risk given certain sets of circumstances. That plan translates into a clearly communicated overall incident strategy, either "offensive" or "defensive."

- An **Incident Tactical Worksheet** is a type of Command assignment chart that is typically used when in the strategic mode of command within a command post. Command uses this worksheet to visually track the ICS structure for the incident, units operating on the incident and their assigned tasks, and incident features such as occupancy layout and access.

- The **Initial Radio Report** is a highly structured radio report that is transmitted by the first arriving officer following their size-up of the incident critical factors. It officially establishes Command for an incident, as well as establishing the incident's overall strategy.

- A **Known Life Hazard** is a circumstance where responding personnel hear, see, or learn from a reliable source that a person is in or near an IDLH atmosphere and in immediate life-threatening danger. The information may be obtained by direct observation, from emergency dispatchers at Howard Communications, or from bystanders. Often, a risk-benefit decision must be made based on the reliability of the information and other factors. Operational risk should only be significantly elevated in circumstances where the life hazard is reliably known.

- If directed to **Level One Staging**, all companies except the first arriving engine and first arriving truck shall stage prior to arrival at the scene, nearby (within a block if possible) but in an uncommitted position that still allows access into the incident scene. Once staged, units shall be prepared to assume tasks as they are assigned by Command. Engine companies should not stage past their last water source. Units arriving at their Level One staging positions shall transmit notification of their arrival to a Level One staging position to Command. Unit personnel will remain on the apparatus and monitor the assigned incident radio channel.

- Command may establish a **Level Two Staging** area for arriving resources. When this occurs, arriving resources will then assemble at a centralized Level Two Staging area designated by Command that is adjacent to the incident. The area should be close enough to the incident scene to provide timely access, but located out of the way and not exposed to the incident's hazards.

- **MAYDAY** is a term used to alert the IC and other individuals that operating personnel are in a life-threatening situation.

- There are three distinct **Modes of Command**, the Investigation mode, the Tactical mode, and the Strategic mode. Each implies that Command is operating under different circumstances and in differing environments. Depending on which mode is declared, expectations of command capacity are adjusted.

- **NIMS** refers to the National Incident Management System and the defined positions and terminology for incident management and command structure.

- **On-Deck** is a typical unit (or crew) assignment where that unit is to be next in line and prepared to work (Dictionary.com, n.d.). Usually the unit is placed in a forward position located just outside the immediate Hazard Zone and safely distanced from the entrance of a tactical position where they can be easily used to quickly relieve another unit that has completed their work cycle in the Hazard Zone, to reinforce a deployment of the designated Rapid Intervention Crew, or to reinforce crews

operating within the Hazard Zone. Their readiness and immediate availability is critical to being able to provide quick relief and facilitating an effective air management strategy for interior crews. Leaders of on-deck units will report to their assigned supervisor, typically a D-G supervisor or directly to Command. Once assigned to the position of on-deck, crews shall remain on-deck until given another assignment by their designated supervisor.

- A **Personnel Accountability Report (PAR)** is an organized reporting activity designed to provide positive confirmation of the location, assignment, and number of personnel assigned to a division, group, or unit operating within a hazard zone. Being "PAR" signifies that *all personnel assigned to that division, group, or unit that are operating in the hazard zone have been identified, positively located, and are accounted for*. Example: *"Engine 61 to Command, Engine 61 is PAR with 4."*

- Once leaving a Hazard Zone after completing a work cycle, crews may be directed to **Recycle**, or make themselves ready for reuse (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, n.d.), and reassignment into the Hazard Zone. This is typical when it is determined by Command that conditions do not dictate the need for extended periods of rest or shelter in between work cycles or rehabilitation at a formal **Rehabilitation Area**, Division, or at the Medical Unit. When Recycling, crews usually remain assigned to their working supervisor, replace their air cylinders, and when ready the Crew Leader lets their supervisor know they are ready for re-assignment. The length of the work-rest cycle, as well as the need for formal rehabilitation, is set by Command for each incident based on work conditions, environmental conditions, and policy.

- A **Rehabilitation Area** or Division may be established by Command when on-going fire and rescue operations have the potential to significantly affect the physiological condition of emergency personnel. Command may designate a **Medical Unit Leader** who is responsible for development of the Medical Plan (ICS form 206), which includes responder rehabilitation and responder medical care, and supervision of those resources. On large incidents, the Medical Unit Leader may be assigned within the Service Branch of the Logistics Section. Formal rehabilitation cycles may be accomplished within the Medical Unit.

- **Safety Red Flags** are conditions that must "jump out" at personnel and trigger an increased awareness and appreciation of increased risk. A Safety Red Flag will not necessarily change the overall incident strategy or incident action plan, but it must be identified and addressed by Command and the Hazard Zone management team. Examples include fire in a basement, crews operating over a fire, and crews operating in zero visibility.

- A **Senior Advisor** is an optional role within the Strategic Command Team that is designed to provide quality assurance and assist the IC by providing a senior perspective on the effectiveness and appropriateness of incident strategy and organization.

- A **Single Family**, or "detached," is defined as a structure that is usually occupied by one household or family; has only outside walls, does not share an inside wall and does not touch any other dwelling.

- The **Strategic Command Post** is a designated vehicle or place from which the IC and Command Team manage the functions of command with various support elements in place.

- The initial **Strategic Command Team** is, at a minimum, comprised of 1) an IC functioning in the Strategic Command Mode and 2) a dedicated officer or technician whose primary function is to enhance the effectiveness of incident management through technical support of the IC (a Command Aide). The team can be expanded as is required to support the command functions required by the incident. Further expansion of the Strategic Command Team could include the addition of a Senior Advisor and a Command Support Officer, who would actively communicate with a Level Two Staging Manager and manage the assignment of additional Command Team NIMS positions and command post needs as is appropriate.

- An IC functioning in the **Strategic Command Mode** is typically a chief or command level officer that is commanding from *outside of the tactical environment, and within an environment that facilitates and enhances managing the functions of Command*. A stationary Command Post has been established, in which the IC and their Command Aide (and possibly others) are actively managing an Incident Tactical Worksheet, recording the position and function of all assigned resources, assuring the Incident Action Plan (IAP) aligns with the critical incident factors, and monitoring radio transmissions closely in a noise and distraction-free environment, preferably using a headset. Command functions include, but are not limited to: confirming the overall incident strategy, confirming and continuing to formulate an IAP, regular assessment of the presenting critical incident factors, establishing objectives based on the incident's critical factors, evaluating the need for additional resources, directing and assigning responding resources, and coordinating activities necessary for overall operational control.

- An IC functioning in the **Tactical Command Mode** is typically a company officer that is *performing all the responsibilities of Command while on-foot and from within the tactical environment*. They are maintaining an exterior position near the Hazard Zone, and are NOT committed within an IDLH or potentially rapidly evolving atmosphere. Command functions include, but are not limited to: declaring the overall incident strategy, formulating an IAP that aligns with the identified critical incident factors, establishing objectives based on the incident's critical factors, evaluating the need for additional resources, directing and assigning responding resources as they arrive. They are typically functioning while in turnout gear in a loud and distracting environment, initiating and monitoring incident communications using a portable radio, functioning without a Command Aide, and not managing a Command Assignment Sheet (tactical worksheet). A transition to the **Strategic Command Mode** is anticipated upon arrival of a chief or command officer.

- A **Townhouse** is defined as a house attached to any number of other townhouses (three or more), each of which may have multiple floors, commonly side by side each with their own separate entrances.

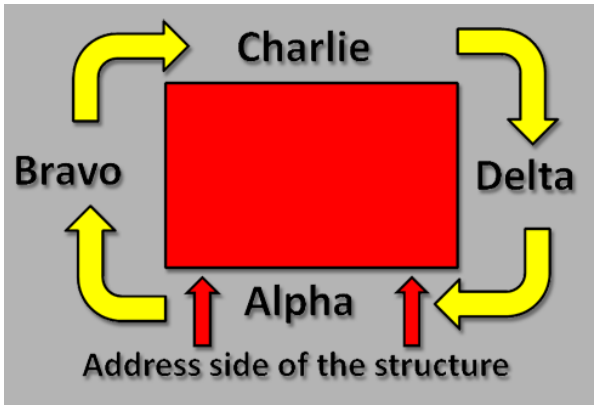
- **Tactical Ventilation** occurs as a result of specific, coordinated tactical actions that are calculated to accomplish an *intended* objective relating to ventilation of a structure. Non-Tactical Ventilation is *unintentional* ventilation of a structure that results from other activities that are taking place on the fire ground, such as making access to a structure through a door or window, advancing a hose line

into a structure, or creating a means of egress by removal of a window. Recent research has shown that unintentional Non-Tactical Ventilation can have unanticipated, rapid, and significant impact to fire intensity and spread, and has been attributed as a factor in several firefighter fatalities regionally and nationally.

## PROCEDURES

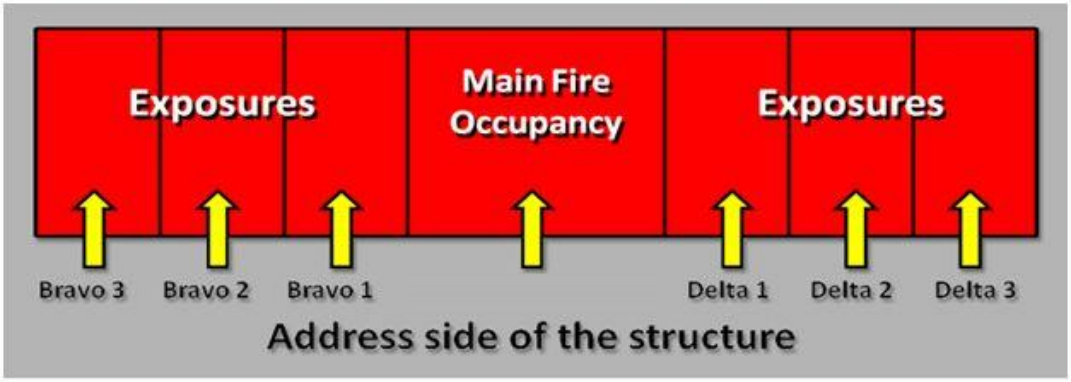
### STRUCTURE AND GEOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:

**Reference to the structure's exterior sides:**




- Side Alpha shall be the side of the building that is utilized as the building address. In most cases, this would be the side that includes the main entrance or foyer. In those situations where the building location or configuration is unusual, the officer shall designate the sides of the building using a landmark (e.g., parking lot, swimming pool, etc.)
- When it is necessary, place a unit on the corner of a building to maintain clarity, denote the corner by using the intersection of the two building sides (e.g., "Truck 7, set up on the Bravo/Charlie corner.").

**Reference to the structure's exposures:**



**Reference to the structure's size:**

The size of the structure shall be defined by the overall size of structure, not by occupancy type.

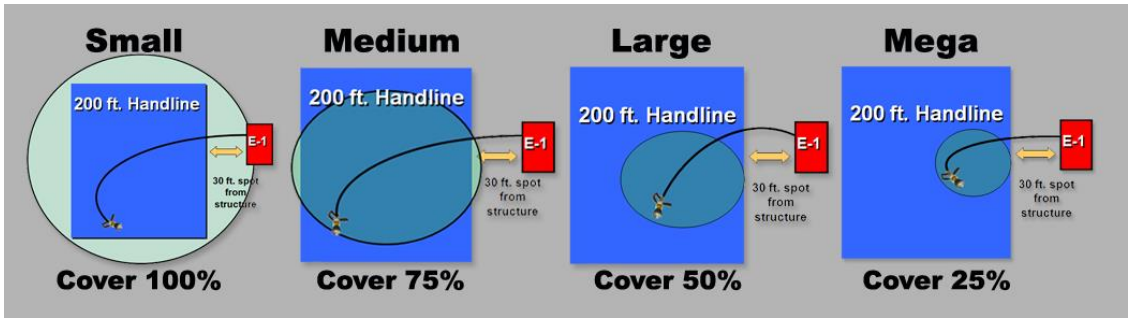
Descriptions of structure size can often be ambiguous. For example, one might call a 4500 square foot home "large," because compared to what might be considered an average sized home (2500 square feet), it seems large when looking at it in the context of a single family residence, the occupancy type. But, if that same 4,500 square foot occupancy was a strip mall, one would likely consider it to be a "small" strip mall. But, operationally, they present similar challenges.

In order to minimize ambiguity, **the description of structure size shall be based on how it relates to the areas that can be covered with a typical 200 foot hose line**, and on the maximum depths into the structure at which safe operations can take place.

- Small - A 200 foot line can access 100% of the fire area/occupancy. This applies to all occupancy types, houses to warehouses.
    - Usually up to about 30'x75' or 50'x50'
- Medium - A 200 foot line can access plus or minus 75% of the fire area/occupancy.
    - Usually up to about 100'x100'
- Large - A 200 foot line can access plus or minus 50% of the fire area/occupancy.
    - Usually up to about 200' x 200' feet per level (e.g. 40,000 square feet)
- Mega - A 200 foot line can access significantly less than 50% of the fire area/occupancy, often 25% or less.
    - Larger than 200'x200'

Using this structure description method will provide more consistent classification of structure size, basing it around a core operational task, hose line access. Note that multiple levels to which access must be made from ground level might make a structure effectively larger, despite the square footage per level (as in a garden style apartment).

This method will also link structure size descriptions to safe air management, as effective management of air reserves is directly related to the distances and depths to which personnel travel within the structure. Firefighters working in an IDLH atmosphere are totally dependent on the air that is brought with them into the Hazard Zone, and must maintain enough air reserve to effectively exit in the event of a sudden or unplanned event without dipping into their emergency reserve. In this way, this method of describing building size can improve safety by providing a direct association to building size with realistic working times of our SCBA, and influence how work-air cycles might be managed at an incident, particularly in larger, more dangerous structures.




**Reference to the interior of a structure:**

| | |
|---|---|
| QUADRANT 2 | QUADRANT 3 |
| QUADRANT 1 | QUADRANT 4 |

The interior of the buildings shall be divided into quadrants 1, 2, 3, and 4, starting at the left front of the building. The floor number shall be used to identify the level of the building (e.g., *"Engine 91, check floor number 4, quadrants 1 and 2."*).

**Reference to multi-story structure interior floors:**

| |
|---|
| FLOOR NUMBER ETC. |
| FLOOR NUMBER 7 |
| FLOOR NUMBER 6 |
| FLOOR NUMBER 5 |
| FLOOR NUMBER 4 |
| FLOOR NUMBER 3 |
| FLOOR NUMBER 2 |
| FLOOR NUMBER 1 |
| SUB-FLOORS AND LEVELS DESIGNATED AS ACTUAL NAME OF THE SUB-FLOOR<br><br>"BASEMENT FLOOR"<br>"MEZZANINE LEVEL"<br>PARKING LEVEL 1" |

- For purposes of radio reporting, basement and sub-level floors **SHALL BE INCLUDED** in the reference to a structure's total number of floors.
    - The term "including" shall be used when providing a radio report that refers to a basement level. For instance, "the structure appears to have a total of three stories INCLUDING a basement with lookout windows in the rear, two complete stories showing below the roof line in the rear." The basement level does not imply three stories PLUS a basement level.

- Floors above basements and sub-levels shall be referred to as "floor number …". Floors shall not automatically be referred to as "divisions." If Command establishes a supervisor for a given floor, activity on that floor may then occur under direction of that Division Supervisor, and that supervisor shall be referred to as "Division …". From that point forward, for floor number 4, "Division 4" would be the title of the supervisor who is supervising the activity on the floor.

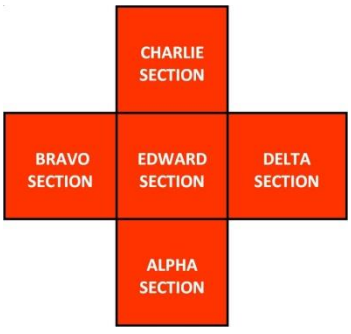
**Reference to the structure's basement:**

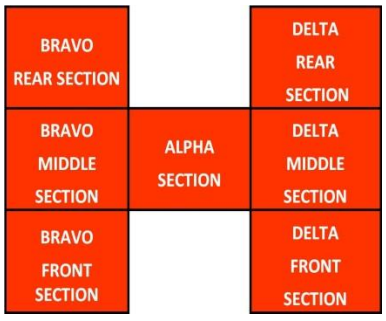
- Type
    - Walk-out
    - Walk-up
    - Note presence or absence of Look-Out Windows
    - Note presence or absence of Window Wells
        - If present, specify if a Window Well window enlarged for egress is present
    - Basement with no exterior openings
    - No basement

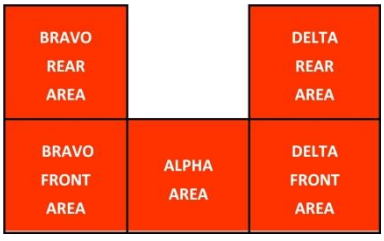
- Condition
    - Finished
    - Unfinished
    - Unable to determine

**Reference to the interior of winged and irregular structures:**

The wings of an irregular structure may be broken down into areas or sections by the officer in charge whenever this will facilitate operations. Whatever designations are implemented at irregular structures, Command must clearly declare them and all company and command officers must be advised of the section or area designations. Possible examples are:



**RESPONSE AND COMMUNICATIONS:**

Communicate in accordance with this General Order, *General Order 410.01 Communications*, and the response policy for the specific occupancy, if any.

The phonetic alphabet shall be used for radio communications, as the alphabetical letters are easily misunderstood over the radio. (Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo, Foxtrot, Golf, Hotel, India, Juliet, Kilo, Lima, Mike, November, Oscar, Papa, Quebec, Romeo, Sierra, Tango, Uniform, Victor, Whiskey, X-ray, Yankee, Zulu).

An exceptionally high level of discipline will be required of all officers and operational personnel during structural firefighting operations. Failure to follow any portion of the Incident Action Plan (IAP),as defined by either general order or incident command, can lead to a breakdown of the entire operation and could have significant life-safety and other consequences.

Units responding shall indicate "responding with [number of] personnel" to Howard. The transmission is to be made on the assigned operating channel.

Units not assigned an action by Command that are initiating actions as outlined in General Order Deployment Models shall report on scene and transmit their assumed position and function (e.g. *"Engine 71 is on location, side Alpha; we have Engine 91's hydrant; stretching a backup line from Engine 91"*). If assigned a task or action by Command they should transmit a confirmation of that order to assure complete understanding.

Only the company officer shall report to or communicate with the Command Post to receive an assignment. Units not assigned by established deployment models or those units who have not received orders from Command shall announce their arrival and stage as appropriate and await orders, gather information, and organize and brief assigned personnel.

Staff and chief officers responding to the incident shall report to the Command Post for assignment.

Agency representatives from assisting or cooperating agencies shall report to the Liaison Officer at the Command Post.

**ESTABLISHING COMMAND:**

While companies are en route to an emergency, the highest ranking responding officer will make operational decisions related to the incident.

The Department shall establish an incident command structure for all incidents where two or more companies are actively engaged in operational tasks, and for incidents that present a potential or on-going Hazard Zone. The establishment of Command shall be designated by the transmission of an Initial Radio Report that identifies the unit establishing Command and the Mode of Command being assumed. Once Command is established, units that are en-route and on-scene shall coordinate and communicate any subsequent unit actions or observations through "Command."

If mutual aid units are first arriving, the first arriving Howard County Department officer will normally transition and assume command as the initial IC**.**

In certain special circumstances, the first arriving company officer may elect to **Pass Command**. This shall ONLY be permissible when:

- There is a **Known Life Hazard** (a known and immediate critical life threat), when the value of quick action by the company officer outweighs the value of establishing Command.
- A chief, command officer, or other company officer is arriving nearly simultaneously and takes Command.
- A Size-Up Report must still be transmitted by the officer that is passing command, but it may be abbreviated as appropriate. The report will reflect the actions of the first unit.
    - *"Engine 22 is on scene, side Alpha, of a small two-story wood frame townhouse. We have a working fire, fire showing from the second floor. Report of victim trapped on floor number one. We have checked the rear and the basement is clear. Lieutenant from Engine 22 is* ***passing command to the next arriving unit.*** *Engine 22 is initiating offensive operations, stretching a hose line to the first floor from side alpha for search and rescue and fire control."*

- In such cases, the officer of the next arriving company MUST establish Command.
- Use of an Initial RIC team shall be in compliance with General Order 300.11: Rapid Intervention and IDLH Initial Entry Teams.
- It is imperative that all firefighters operating within any Hazard Zone always operate in teams of two or more, maintain constant communication with each team member through visual, audible, physical, or safety device, and maintain close proximity to each other to provide assistance in case of any emergency.

Company officers (non-chief officers) that establish command shall include their rank in the transmission of the command statement.

- *"… Captain from E81 is establishing Bethany Lane Command … "*

**MODES OF COMMAND:**

There are three **Modes of Command** that can be assumed: Investigation, Tactical Command, or Strategic Command.

- **Investigation Command Mode**
    - The Investigation Command Mode may be established when a first arriving company officer (or firefighter) cannot identify a Hazard Zone, but must investigate further.
    - The IC is in Command on-foot, mobile and investigating.
    - After arriving on scene and transmitting a Size-Up Report, the company officer might state
        - *"... Company is investigating. Lieutenant from E31 is in Command."*

- **Tactical Command Mode**
    - The Tactical Command Mode is an early Command mode that *may* precede the **Strategic Command Mode**, depending on which unit or level of officer arrives first.
    - The Tactical Command Mode may be established when a first arriving company officer (or firefighter) encounters a Hazard Zone and establishes initial Command in the absence of a

chief or command level officer. A transition to the Strategic Command Mode is anticipated upon arrival of a chief or command officer in an appropriate vehicle.

- The IC functioning in the Tactical Command Mode is typically a company officer that is *performing all the responsibilities of Command while on-foot and from within the tactical environment*. They maintain an exterior position near the Hazard Zone, and are NOT committed within an IDLH or potentially rapidly evolving atmosphere.
- Command functions include, but are not limited to: declaring the overall incident strategy, formulating an IAP that aligns with the identified critical incident factors, establishing objectives based on the incident's critical factors, evaluating the need for additional resources, directing and assigning responding resources as they arrive.
- The IC is typically functioning while in turnout gear in a loud and distracting environment, initiating and monitoring incident communications using a portable radio, functioning without a Command Aide, and not managing a tactical worksheet.
- It is particularly challenging to command from within the tactical environment and function simultaneously on all three organizational levels; strategic, tactical, and task. The IC is often in command of the incident while simultaneously directing initial tactical and task operations of the first arriving crews. Responding resources must take the environment of the IC into consideration. Managing command within these circumstances is not preferable for more than the initial stages of an incident. Based on incident conditions and chief or command officer response times, ICs functioning in the Tactical Command Mode must make the decision whether it may be more appropriate to function from a fixed position inside of a vehicle where the environment can be more focused and some **strategic command post** elements could be employed.
- It should be emphasized that the *role* of the IC functioning in the Tactical Command Mode still includes all Command responsibilities as outlined in the NIMS and organizational policies. These include declaring the overall incident strategy, establishing objectives based on the incident's critical factors, evaluating the need for additional resources, and directing and assigning responding resources. The difference for the IC functioning in the Tactical Command Mode is the conditions under which Command is typically being managed.

- **Strategic Command Mode**
  - The Strategic Command Mode requires a chief or command level officer to establish themselves as the IC and to manage command from *outside of the tactical environment, and within an environment that facilitates and enhances managing the functions of Command*.
  - There is generally a team in place to support managing the functions of Command.
  - The IC and support team are stationary, and are inside of a vehicle designated as the **Command Post**. Within the Command Post, the IC and their Command Aide (and possibly others) are actively managing a Command Assignment Sheet (tactical worksheet), recording the position and function of all assigned resources, assuring the IAP aligns with the critical incident factors, and monitoring radio transmissions closely in a noise and distraction-free environment, preferably using a headset. A Senior Advisor may be present advising and verifying that enough resources are assigned to the incident, that the overall incident strategy and IAP are current and in-line with forecasted incident conditions, confirming the incident organization chart matches the size and complexity of the incident, and managing

the Command Post. A Command Support Officer may also be present, assisting with communications, resource management, and documentation.

- Command functions include, but are not limited to, confirming the overall incident strategy, confirming and continuing to formulate an IAP that aligns with the identified critical incident factors, establishing objectives based on the incident's critical factors, evaluating the need for additional resources, directing and assigning responding resources, and coordinating activities necessary for overall operational control.

Command, whether operating from within a tactical environment or from within a Command Post, is tasked with developing an IAP and managing the resources assigned to mitigate the incident. The Incident Command System should be expanded anytime the incident officer feels that the limit of effective span of control has been reached, and the need for additional management exists.

On routine medical calls, it is typical that a company officer from a supporting unit that is on scene will assume the responsibilities of the IC (e.g., need for additional resources, notifications, etc.), while coordinating closely and effectively with the provider in charge of patient care and other EMS providers to meet the medical needs of the patient or patients.

If an Operations Section Chief is established for a given incident, that Operations Section Chief shall retain those responsibilities that are operational in nature which are attributed to the IC throughout this section of the document. Obviously, both Command and an established Operations Section Chief share in many incident responsibilities, such as providing effective oversight and providing for the safety of operating personnel.

Units on the scene can be considered as either *available* (ready for an assignment), *assigned* (performing and active function, or in transition from one location to another), or *out of service*.

Command should actively request and receive ongoing **Unit Status Reports** from the units (or their D-G supervisors) that have been assigned tasks in the Hazard Zone. When reporting status, units should report the ***conditions*** they have, the ***actions*** they have taken, and their ***needs*** for additional resources or actions of others, and end the report with their PAR status. Unit leaders, D-G supervisors, and all officers must proactively keep their respective supervisors advised on conditions in their area of responsibility, while respecting the need for brief, concise, and efficient radio communications. Officers shall provide their supervisor a Unit Status Report that outlines their conditions, action and needs in the following situations:

- Mayday
- Victim located
- Sudden change of events
- Unsafe condition identified
- Unable to complete assignment (e.g. obstacle identified, need additional resources)
- Changing crew location (moving from one apartment to another, etc.)
- Concealed space fire is not easily controlled
- Roof Report
- Assignment has been completed

A **Roof Report** is a concise status of roof conditions, and includes the type of roof, location of any fire breaks, an assessment of roof loads, an assessment of roof condition, and the presence of any fire or smoke. If the structure is of tilt-slab construction, roof reports should include an assessment of exterior walls for buckles and bows.

Command should assign D-G supervisors as needed to maintain an effective span of control. Supervisors operating within an IDLH atmosphere should supervise no more than two to three Units (the maximum of five should never be exceeded, and supervisors should strive to remain on the edge of the IDLH in these cases), while outside of the IDLH three to seven units is acceptable, with five being the optimal maximum. The expansion of the ICS structure is developed by Command as the situation dictates. Command will establish sections, branches, divisions, groups, and managers in order to allow for a safe and effective span of control when managing the incident objectives and overall strategy.

- When two or more companies are assigned to a function or area, Command must consider the need to establish a D-G supervisor (or branch director) to manage the assigned companies. The assigned D-G supervisor must not remain in a company officer position.
    - Whenever possible, these individuals should be selected from responding command officers, staff personnel or company officers not already deployed. Company officers used in these positions will assign an individual from their crew as the new Unit Leader, and that unit (if sufficiently staffed) would then be available for assignment. Once an individual is assigned to an ICS position, they assume the radio designation of the command position (e.g. alpha division, charlie division, roof division, rescue group, medical group, or extrication group).
        - If there are not enough personnel left in the crew to form an effective unit, Command may consider assigning those personnel to other crews.

- D-G supervisors must provide thorough oversight over those units and personnel assigned to them. This is usually most effectively done when given responsibility for a specific geographic area. Therefore, when possible, instituting *division* supervisors is preferable to instituting *group* supervisors.
- When possible, D-G supervisors should be positioned at a point of entry to the structure. Once assigned there, all units that enter the structure by way of a point where there is a supervisor assigned shall be assigned to that supervisor.
- D-G supervisors should remain exterior to the structure when at all possible.
    - When operating in an offensive strategy, officers must make a decision about where they will position themselves to perform their assigned role. In particular, assigned D-G supervisors should be positioned outside of the IDLH environment in a position where they can effectively communicate and manage the units assigned to them.
    - Their ability to clearly and effectively communicate is imperative. Therefore, they should not be in a location that requires them to wear breathing apparatus if at all possible.
    - There are infrequent situations where it can be beneficial from tactical standpoint for Command to allow D-G supervisors take a position within the IDLH. If a supervisor elects to position themselves within the IDLH atmosphere, Command must be informed of such immediately so that management tasks that are normally expected from D-G supervisors (such as assuring adequate and timely replacement resources, work-cycle time and rotation, are consumption awareness, etc.) can be accomplished by someone else.

        - The impact of assigned D-G supervisors operating within the IDLH can be very significant to the management of an incident. They are typically impaired or unable to effectively communicate (due to using breathing apparatus), unable to maintain the proper supervisor perspective (due to being in breathing apparatus and inside a hostile IDLH environment), and unable to completely manage their divisions or groups effectively. There is usually little benefit to this situation, as it reduces supervisors to a mere point of radio contact, and thus does not effectively support Command. The decision by a D-G supervisor to operate from a position within the IDLH should not be made lightly or without justification.

- D-G supervisors should assure that unit accountability, work-rest cycles, and breathing air cycles are being managed for companies assigned to them, including effective rotation of their crews and the **on-deck** resources when required to do so.
    - The D-G supervisor's oversight of the management of assigned unit's air supply in no way diminishes the individual member's responsibility to manage their own air supply, or the company officer's responsibility for managing his/her crew's air supply.
    - An effective rule of thumb for managing the work-rest cycle of a Hazard Zone unit is to contact that unit about two minutes before they have reached their estimated air safety margin and remind them they are getting close to their work cycle ending, and they will need to exit the Hazard Zone soon.
    - A D-G supervisor that is managing fire control operations initiated through side alpha access might consider the following resources for use in their division:
        - An engine and a truck company for active work
        - An engine and a truck company to be on-deck for relief
        - Two engine companies to fill-in during a recycle or rest cycle
        - Assure the division has coverage from an established RIC team should it become necessary
        - Consideration for an assigned Aide to assist the supervisor in documenting accountability, air consumption, and work-rest cycles
        - Consideration for a dedicated division safety officer
        - Consideration for a dedicated accountability manager (required for Level 3 Accountability)
            - Accountability must occur in compliance with *General Order 300.02 Accountability*

- Crews that are rotated out of a Hazard Zone can be either **recycled** or re-assigned to an established **rehabilitation area or division**, at the discretion of their D-G supervisor or Command. Company officers and D-G supervisors are responsible to monitor the welfare of their personnel at all times. Companies exiting the Hazard Zone shall perform a face-to-face with the D-G supervisor that shall include a report of the physical condition of their crew.
    - **Recycled** implies that the crew does not need time for rehabilitation and/or medical monitoring. Usually these recycle activities are limited to changing air cylinders and hydration of personnel. If the company is able to recycle, they will retain their assignment to the division or group. During Level 3 Accountability, the D-G supervisor shall retain the unit's PAT tags on their accountability board and note the company is recycling.

- If the company is sent to an established **medical unit** or **responder rehabilitation division**, they will be assigned to that division supervisor until they are released and ready to return to incident operations.
    - *"Division Charlie to Command, I'm sending Engine 22 to Rehab and I need another engine company to replace them."*

- Command officers must maintain an awareness of the condition of the personnel working under them. Personnel can rest between work cycles in any number of places on the scene, but formal rehabilitation processes that include protection from the elements, hydration, nourishment, and medical monitoring, should be proactively considered. Command must assess the current weather and environmental conditions when establishing their work-rest-rehabilitation plan, particularly when extreme conditions exist.
- Units that complete a rehabilitation cycle may become available for assignment in one of several ways, as implemented by Command. They may be reassigned by either the Medical Unit Leader or Responder Rehabilitation Manager (if instituted) to physically report to the Level Two Staging Area, they may be directed to stage at the rehabilitation area and contact the Staging Area Manager by radio to report their availability for assignment, or they may be directed to report their availability from the rehabilitation area by radio directly to Command.

**THE INITIAL RADIO REPORT AND SIZE-UP:**

The first arriving officer or Unit Leader shall perform a size-up and establish command by transmitting an **Initial Radio Report** that includes a command statement for all incidents where two or more units are investigating an incident or are actively engaged in operational tasks. Once Command is established, units that are en-route and on-scene shall coordinate and communicate any subsequent unit actions or observations through "Command." The size-up should begin with an assessment of the incident's critical factors (See Appendix A).

The Initial Radio Report shall communicate their size-up, their determination of overall incident strategy, their IAP and establishes Command. Once Command is established, units that are en-route and on-scene shall coordinate and communicate any subsequent unit actions or observations through Command. The size-up should include an assessment of the incident's critical factors. The report should include:

- Unit ID and arrival to the scene
    - *"Engine 101 to Howard."*
    - *"Engine 101, go ahead."*
    - *"Engine 101 on location ..."*

- Structure and area description
    - Size of structure
    - Number of stories
    - Occupancy type
        - Single-family
        - Multi-family, Multi-family apartment
        - Strip mall

        - Large commercial
        - Big box, High rise
    - Arrangement
        - *"… of a medium sized multi-family garden style apartment, three stories, …"*

- Problem description
    - Conditions (nothing showing, working fire, etc.)
    - Location/floor
    - Location/side
    - Apparent life-safety issues
    - Special circumstances
        - *"… with a working fire, smoke showing from the second floor side alpha …"*

- Initial IAP and actions to be taken by first arriving unit
    - First arriving unit (e.g. Engine 1) location
    - Water supply
    - Task-location-objective
        - Task (Lay out from ..., stretch a line ..., etc.)
        - Location (... into side alpha, 3rd floor, etc.)
        - Objective (... for primary search, fire control, investigate, etc.)
        - *"Engine 101 has laid a supply line from the hydrant at the entrance to the cul-de-sac, and will be making a quick exterior knockdown from side alpha, and then advancing a line to the second floor, quadrant 1 apartment, for primary search and fire control."*

- Declaration of strategy
    - Offensive
    - Defensive
        - *"Units will be operating in the offensive strategy."*

- Assumption of command
    - Naming of command
    - Mode of command
    - Accountability location
        - *"Captain from Engine 101 is establishing Clocktower Lane Command in the tactical mode. Accountability will be at Engine 61 on side alpha."*

- Resource Determination
    - If the incident involves a working fire, in most cases Command should request the Working Fire Task Force
        - *"Dispatch the Working Fire Task Force."*
    - Consider additional alarm assignments if the fire has taken control of the structure or civilians are trapped
    - Consider appropriate staging
        - *"Dispatch the Working Fire Task Force and a second alarm. Have all second alarm units Level Two Stage at the Park and Ride at Snowden River Parkway and Route 32."*

- When designating a Level Two Staging area, Command shall designate a Staging Area Manager to manage, log, and report staging area resources. If no Staging Area Manager is designated by Command, the Engine Company officer from the first engine to arrive in the Level Two Staging area shall assume the role and responsibilities. If it is not necessary for the entire crew of their unit to used to manage the staging area, that officer shall appoint another to be Unit Leader of the unit on which they arrived. Channel six (6) of the incident's assigned zone will be used for staging area communications. Command and the Staging Area Manager will continually communicate as to the number and type of units that are available in the staging area. Staging can request and receive resources from Howard Communications or from an established rehabilitation area, as designated by Command. All units in staging shall monitor that channel until deployed to operational areas.

- Continue with IAP work assignments for arriving resources
  - *"Command to incoming units, **unit assignments will be made by Command**."*
  - Second arriving unit task-location-objective
    - *"Command to Engine 61."*
    - *"Engine 61, go ahead."*
    - *"Engine 61, pump the hydrant for E101, with your crew to report to side alpha, take a line from Engine 101, and back up Engine 101 on the second floor quadrant 1 apartment, primary search and fire control."*
    - *"Engine 61 is direct with our assignment to extend a line from Engine 101 on side alpha to back up Engine 101 on the second floor, quadrant 1, to assist with primary search and fire control."*

  - Third arriving unit task-location-objective
    - *"Command to Engine Tower 10."*
    - *"Tower 10, go ahead."*
    - *"Tower 10, proceed to side alpha, take a line from Engine 101, and primary search and check for extension on the third floor. You will be operating above the fire."*
    - *"Tower 10 is direct with our assignment to extend a line from Engine 101 on side alpha to the third floor for primary search and checking for extension. We will be operating above the fire."*

  - etc.

Once the Initial Radio Report is transmitted by the IC and Command is established, Command shall either conduct or assure that a 360 degree assessment of the structure, that utilizes a thermal imager if available, is quickly completed. Once completed, Command shall transmit a **Follow-Up (Basement) Report** that includes:

- Results of the 360 structure assessment
  - Assessment of occupancy with **total number of stories**
    - *"Side Charlie shows a three-story middle-of-the-group townhouse, …"*

- Stories visible below roof (or gutter) line.
  - *"… with two stories visible **below the roof (or gutter) line** …"*
- Basement type
  - *"… **including** a walk-up basement with a lookout window."*
- Basement condition.
  - *"Basement appears to be unfinished."*
- Conditions visible from side Charlie.
  - *"Fire showing from floor number two, quadrant two."*

- If person transmitting the Follow-Up Report is the IC
  - If any, changes to problem identification
  - If any, changes to IAP
  - Confirmation of the overall incident strategy
    - *"… Units will continue to operate in the offensive strategy …"*
  - Confirmation of the location of PAT tag accountability collection
    - *"… Accountability will be at Engine 101 on side alpha."*

**DETERMINING OVERALL INCIDENT STRATEGY:**

The Overall Incident Strategy, which reflects the incident's risk management strategy, must be determined prior to formulating the initial IAP. There are two distinct strategies; **offensive** and **defensive**. The two distinct strategic choices dictate in simple and understandable terms how close the emergency responders will get to the incident's Hazard Zone. NEVER combine offensive and defensive operations in the same fire area. This overall strategy will then serve as the basis for formulating the IAP, which is the next step. Safety is the number one priority for both civilians and responders, and effective safety practices begin by being in the right overall risk management strategy, either offensive or defensive. Which strategy is chosen depends on the incident's size-up assessment and critical factors weighed against the following Departmental **Incident Risk Management Plan**:

- Risk Management Concept 1: We will risk a lot, in a calculated manner, to save savable lives.
  - If there is a possibility that there are savable lives inside a structure, and it is reasonably safe to conduct offensive interior firefighting, the offensive strategy is appropriate. If fire conditions indicate that the interior of the structure is not survivable or that interior firefighting would not be reasonably safe, interior firefighting is not an option, and the defensive strategy is required.

- Risk Management Concept 2: We will risk a little, in a highly calculated manner, to save savable property.
  - We will risk a little in a highly calculated manner to save savable property. If a Known Life Safety Hazard is not a critical incident factor, and it is reasonably safe for firefighters to conduct offensive interior firefighting, a carefully calculated lower risk offensive strategy is appropriate.

- Risk Management Concept 3: We will not take any risk at all to attempt to save what is already lost.
    - If fire conditions indicate that the interior of the structure is not survivable, or that interior firefighting would not be reasonably safe, interior firefighting is not an option. The defensive strategy is required.

**Offensive Operations:**

Offensive operations are operations being conducted inside a hazard zone. They may include exterior or interior operations. Offensive and defensive operations shall never be simultaneously undertaken in the same fire area. Priorities are:

- Rescue
- Fire control
    - Expect fire control within ten minutes, and revise overall strategy and IAP accordingly.
    - Re-evaluate overall incident strategy at least every five minutes.
    - Command must verbally acknowledge each five minute notification from Communications 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.
    - When in the offensive overall incident strategy, certain exterior operational tactics may not only be appropriate, but in fact may be the *most* appropriate fire attack tactic. An example of this may be Command's intention to employ a **quick exterior knockdown** and then an advance crews to interior positions for fire control operations. Current research clearly demonstrates the advantages of keeping a fire ventilation-limited by using effective flow path control, and quick application of water through available external openings prior to interior attack, both of which consist of exterior tasks that can be employed while in the offensive strategy. Crews must be well disciplined and not make entry into an interior Hazard Zone until assigned to do so by Command, understanding that **operating in the offensive overall incident *strategy* may not mean that Command is employing interior attack *tactics* at the moment**.

- Property conservation
- Customer stabilization

**Defensive Operations:**

Defensive strategy operations are essentially "holding actions" used to keep the hazard from spreading and protecting exposures. These operations become necessary when the critical factors indicate that the *risks of offensive operations outweigh the potential benefits*. This might occur when:

- The benefits of offensive operations are simply too little (as in a vacant abandoned structure).
- The hazard is simply too evolved to be effectively controlled by offensive operations (as in a large, evolved, free burning fire).
    - Once initiated, if defensive operations are effective at reducing the hazard, the risks of potential offensive operations may become reduced to the point that the benefits outweigh the risks. At that point, Command may change the overall incident strategy from defensive to offensive, and tactics may change to offensive exterior or even interior operations.

- The resources available on the scene are not yet adequate to safely initiate offensive operations, making defensive operations appropriate until additional resources arrive. Once adequate resources are in place, the overall incident strategy may change to offensive operations consisting of exterior or even interior operations.
- Defensive operations are NEVER conducted inside the Hazard Zone, but are conducted near the Hazard Zone – from safe locations.
    - Ensure firefighter safety at all times
    - Clearly transmit and define the hazard zone that is defensive only, *including collapse zones*.
        - Be certain of reference designations (primary fire structure, bravo, delta, etc.). Use actual structure addresses only as confirmation information and only when absolutely sure about their accuracy.

    - Establish cut-offs
    - Protect exposures (possibly with master streams)
    - Search exposures

Once the overall incident strategy is established, tactical priorities and the initial IAP can be formulated. If the overall incident strategy changes, the IAP will also change and a structured process be used to communicate the change to all operating units. Incident size-up is an ongoing process.

**THE INCIDENT ACTION PLAN AND ESTABLISHING TACTICAL PRIORITIES:**

Command must ensure that an adequate initial size-up of the incident scene has occurred, that the incident's critical factors have been identified, and that an overall strategy decision has been made and communicated PRIOR to formulating an initial IAP or beginning interior firefighting operations. Additionally, it is crucial that both the initial IC functioning in the Tactical Command Mode (if there is one) and the IC that will be functioning in the Strategic Command Mode (who will be assuming Command from in a command vehicle) *continually* reassess these things and *continually* evaluate the risk versus benefit of all tasks to be accomplished on every incident.

Always establish an action plan that is consistent with the overall incident strategy.

IAP priorities and operational considerations for structures include:

- Assure proper overall incident strategy
- If a fire incident, assure likely fire spread path has been identified
- Hazard verification
    - Investigate to verify the exact location, nature, and extent of the hazard, including the specific location, fire floor, and the extent of fire extension.

- Objectives aimed to achieve established key benchmarks as appropriate for the type of incident. Once achieved, the accomplishment of those **key benchmarks** shall be transmitted by Command to Howard Communications emergency dispatchers. ICs shall document and immediately transmit to Howard notification of certain benchmarks that have been achieved.
- **Rescue** and occupant control
    - Protect, remove, and provide care to endangered customers.
        - Consider the most effective method (evacuation or protection in place).

- Primary search to obtain **"Primary Search Complete"** benchmark (Command shall transmit benchmarks to Howard Communications as soon as they are achieved).
- Secondary search to obtain **"Secondary Search Complete - All Clear"** benchmark.
- Provide short-term customer service to affected parties once the hazard is mitigated.

- Fire control
  - **Exposures** protection.
  - **Water Application: Quick exterior knockdown** tactics prior to interior operations provide many benefits. Care should be taken to NOT significantly disrupt the existing flow path dynamics, accomplished by using straight streams and applying water through only the lower half of openings. Employing the *tactic* of a quick exterior knockdown is part of an *offensive* overall incident *strategy*, and in no way implies that the IC has declared a defensive overall incident strategy. When utilized, units should still position and prepare themselves for offensive tactics.
  - **Confinement: "Fire Under Control"** benchmark, defined as a fire that is no longer free burning, that crews are in position to effectively discover and mitigate fire spread in the structure of origin, fire spread is unlikely (it is "contained"), and the fire no longer threatens any exposure. This benchmark usually precedes the overhaul phase.
  - **Extinguishment: "Fire Out"** benchmark, defined as the absence of fire after appropriate investigative and overhaul activities have taken place and no hidden extension is confirmed.
  - Assure that all personnel in the Hazard Zone are working under the protection of a charged hose line, including truck and squad companies.
  - Assure that active measures to control unintentional non-tactical ventilation are implemented.
  - Take early actions to establish uninterrupted water supply.
  - Control utilities and building systems (gas, electric, HVAC ventilation systems).
  - **Overhaul:** Once the fire is extinguished, the objective is to **overhaul**, **salvage, and ventilate** so that incident conditions cease causing damage. These activities end at the point where cessation of any further property destruction occurs, whether from fire, water, mitigation activities, weather, or any other potential cause.

- **Vehicle Rescue and EMS**
  - "**Patient Extricated**" benchmark, as appropriate.
  - "**Helicopter Airborne**" benchmark, as appropriate.

- **Hazardous Materials**
  - "**Isolation of Hazard**" to recommended distances benchmark, as appropriate.
  - "**Hazard Mitigated**" benchmark.

In formulating and implementing the IAP, with particular attention toward accomplishing in the early command stages, Command shall:

- Ensure that a risk assessment is accomplished and the **critical incident factors are identified** and considered.

- Ensure that potential risks to operating personnel have been identified, and steps to reduce risk are incorporated into the IAP whenever possible.
    - **If personnel are operating in an IDLH, they shall do so under the protection of a charged hose line at all times. Ensure that a charged hose line is available on every floor where operations are taking place and fire spread is possible, and when opening overhead void spaces to check for fire travel and extension.** This includes special service companies. Either assign an engine company to operate on the same floor, or assign the special service company to advance a hose line to their assigned search floor. The only exception is if Command determines that a known life hazard exists and a rapid rescue is to be attempted after considering all critical incident factors, risks, and potential benefits.

- **Recognize indicators of fire location, travel, development, and behavior**. Indicators can include visible fire, smoke color, smoke velocity (from increased pressure from high temperatures), smoke density, and heat detected by thermal imager. Be particularly alert for extreme fire behavior.

- **Identify the expected flow path for fire development EARLY**. Assess the structure for any existing openings and their height in relation to the seat of the fire, and anticipate airflow and fire spread to the upper opening. Actively control non-tactical ventilation upon structure entry. Understand the following premises (Underwriters Laboratories, 2010):
    - **Keep ventilation-limited fires ventilation-limited until water is being applied.** Fires that have progressed beyond the incipient stage are likely to be ventilation-limited when the fire department arrives. Once a fire is ventilation-limited, ANY INCREASED AIR FLOW will result in increased fire development and heat release. Introducing airflow by entering and attacking a ventilation-limited fire can result in significant and catastrophic fire spread (typically occurs 1-3 minutes after airflow, whether intentional or non-tactical, is introduced).
    - **Limit unintended non-tactical ventilation** and do not place companies in attack positions where rapid fire spread is possible from likely events, such as when a window might suddenly fail.
        - Recognize the difference between “tactical ventilation” and “non-tactical ventilation”, and understand the potential impact of both on fire development. Ensure companies take real and substantial efforts to control the flow path and eliminate or reduce unintentional non-tactical ventilation. Assure door operators are assigned at attack points as necessary to prevent unintentional influx of ventilation. Carefully apply tactical ventilation and fire control tactics in a well-*communicated* and well-*coordinated* manner.

    - **Anticipate ventilation profile changes** that can occur as a result of tactical action or fire effects on the structure (**such as a sudden window failure**). These events can change the flow path very quickly and can create untenable conditions for crews within seconds.
    - Recognize the potential impact of windy conditions on fire behavior and implement appropriate tactics to mitigate the potential hazards of wind-driven fire.

**ONGOING RISK ASSESSMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND REASSESSMENT OF RISK:**

All commanders, supervisors, and firefighters shall continually assess the incident's existing and developing critical factors and the risk versus benefit associated with ongoing operations. The following must be continually addressed:

- Assure that emerging risks to personnel are continually re-assessed.
- Reassess and ensure operations are in the correct overall Incident Strategy.
- Reassess the ventilation flow path of the fire and ensure unintentional non-tactical ventilation is actively being limited.
- Assure that a charged hose line is available on every floor where operations are taking place and fire spread is possible.
- Quickly identify and react to emerging "**Safety Red Flags**", because they can end up injuring or killing us. Officers must always take a pessimistic approach when sizing-up, assuming the worst until determining otherwise. A red flag will not necessarily change the overall incident strategy or incident action plan, but it must be identified and addressed by Command and the rest of the Hazard Zone management team:
    - Non-tactical ventilation fire effects
    - Fire in the attic space
    - Fire in a basement
    - Operating above a fire (basements, floor above the fire)
    - Zero visibility
    - Encountering high heat
    - Reports of, "we can't find the fire"
    - Reports that state "fire control," but you can still see active fire conditions from the Command Post
    - Victims discovered
    - Wind-driven fires
    - Smoke or fire showing from cracks in walls
    - Reinforcing fire attack position more than once

Companies assigned to areas where IDLH conditions may be or rapidly become present shall be in appropriate protective equipment at all times. This equipment shall include full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and donned SCBA. Tactical and task level supervisors are responsible for the air management for their assigned crew or crews. Air supply shall be sufficient to exit the IDLH prior to the low air alarm sounding. The minimum number of personnel assigned to a crew or a team operating in a Hazard Zone shall be two firefighters with a least one portable radio. Crews or teams always go in and come out together, and remain in *close* contact while operating within the IDLH atmosphere. All personnel shall remain in contact with their company officer or assigned supervisor by voice (including radio), vision (thermal imager), or touch (hose line).

**Command Progress Reports** are radio reports that provide information on the evolution of an incident. Progress reports may indicate that an incident is continuing to escalate or is being brought under control. Progress reports should also represent a "picture" of the activities underway and the degree of success of the operation. The reports are intended to keep officers and companies informed on incident status as well as to provide a recorded documentation of the incident. Units that are still responding or

who have arrived at staging or base should pay particular attention to progress reports in order to have an understanding of the situation before becoming engaged.

Command shall transmit Command Progress Reports on the main incident channel whenever benchmarks and significant tactical objectives are achieved, and as needed throughout the incident. At a minimum, the first progress report shall be transmitted at approximately the ten minute point into an operation, and every ten minutes thereafter. The first progress report is quite comprehensive:

- Contact Howard Communications
- Confirm the address or location of the incident
- Define commitment of resources
- Define the hazard
- Describe the building or involved area
- Define strategic mode
- State status of search
- Define extent of involvement or hazard
- Provide a brief description of major tactical operations
- Describe the level of containment of the fire or hazard
- Describe the fire ground layout or operational area
- Estimate time prediction for holding units
    - *"Clocktower Lane Command to Howard. We are using all companies from the first alarm for a fire on the second floor of a large three-story apartment structure of wood-frame construction. We are operating in an offensive strategy. Primary search is negative on fire floor and still underway on the floor above. Fire is on one floor with about 25 percent involvement. We have three lines in operation and are still actively searching the structure and two exposures. We will be holding all units in excess of an hour."*

Subsequent progress reports may be shortened as appropriate.

- *"Clocktower Lane Command to Howard. We are continuing to use all companies. Fire is under control, but not yet out. We have a primary and secondary all clear for the primary fire building and both the Bravo and Delta exposures. We will be continuing to hold all units for more than an hour."*

**CHANGING OVERALL INCIDENT STRATEGIES:**

Command may at any point conclude that a change in Overall Incident Strategy is necessary. When moving from a defensive to an offensive overall incident strategy, Command should be methodical and thorough in assigning objectives and operating locations to units. When moving from an offensive to a defensive strategy, ***extreme care and a strong Command presence is essential***. Command must not hesitate to change from an offensive to defensive mode when it is indicated, and the change must be *decisive, clear,* and *rapid*. It must be executed in a specific, consistent, and standardized manner so that operational personnel can anticipate the steps of the process once initiated.

**Offensive to Defensive Strategy:**

- The announcement of a change from an OFFENSIVE TO DEFENSIVE strategy shall be made as follows:

- Command shall request that Howard Communications emergency dispatchers broadcast the **Emergency Tone** and **Emergency Traffic** channel marker.
  - *"Command to Howard."*
  - *"Howard to Command, go ahead."*
  - *"Transmit the Emergency Tone and initiate the Emergency Traffic channel marker."*
  - (Emergency Tone transmitted on all fire ground frequencies and Emergency Traffic channel marker is initiated)

- Command shall declare Emergency Traffic and transmit the change in strategy to all Hazard Zone units in the following manner:
  - *"Command to all fire ground units. Emergency traffic. Shifting to the defensive strategy. All interior units exit (or abandon, as appropriate) the structure. *All interior units report PAR's upon exit."*
    - *Alternatively, Command can instead order *"All units prepare for a role call PAR after exit"* if the number of interior units on the scene may present a communications problem.
    - **"Exit" the structure** will be defined as an immediate orderly withdrawal where interior lines and equipment will be withdrawn and repositioned when changing to a defensive strategy.
    - **"Abandon" the structure** will be defined as an immediate emergency retreat where all hose lines and heavy equipment will be left in place and all personnel in the Hazard Zone will exit the structure as quickly and as safely as possible.

- Command shall prompt the Howard Communications emergency dispatcher to repeat Command's statement verbatim.
  - *"Howard to all fire ground units. Emergency Traffic. Command advising shifting to the defensive strategy. All units exit the structure. *All interior units report PAR's upon exit."*

- Command shall account for all units in the Hazard Zone.
  - Company officers shall account for their crews and advise their supervisor (D-G supervisor, or Command) as to the status of their crew upon exiting. D-G supervisors shall notify Command of the PAR status of the individual crews assigned to them upon their exit.
  - Command's greatest priority once a strategic shift has been initiated is the safe exit of all units from within the Hazard Zone. Upon switching from an offensive to a defensive overall incident strategy, Command shall verify accountability for all units operating in the Hazard Zone as soon as possible. PAR reports should be conducted face-to-face if possible, and in accordance with General Order 300.02: Personnel Accountability.
    - Level One staged units and other units working outside the Hazard Zone shall maintain radio silence until all PARs from hazard zone units have been tallied (unless they have emergency or high priority traffic).

- Command shall transmit *"All Hazard Zone units have reported PAR"* once verification of Accountability is accomplished.
- Command shall transmit *"All units may resume normal radio traffic"* once a successful move from offensive to defensive has been achieved, and prompt Howard Communications to remove the Emergency Traffic channel marker.

**THE COMMAND TRANSITION REPORT AND TRANSITION FROM TACTICAL COMMAND MODE TO STRATEGIC COMMAND MODE:** If the Tactical Command Mode has been established by a first-in officer, upon arrival of the first chief or command officer, a Command transition to the Strategic Command Mode shall occur if an active Hazard Zone exists or if there are still tactical benchmarks to coordinate. The first arriving chief or command officer shall respond directly into the scene to a suitable Strategic Command Post location with a clear view of the incident scene. The objective of this initial command transfer is to strengthen the functions of command and provide increased support for operational resources. This chief or command officer's **Command Transition Report** shall include the following:

- Perform size-up of incident's critical factors
  - Verify overall incident strategy is appropriate
  - Verify that current operating positions match the current incident conditions.

- Transmit that your unit is on-scene
  - *"Battalion 1 on-scene"*

- Contact the initial IC (by face to face if possible) and transmit that you will be transferring Command:
  - The IC functioning in the Tactical Command Mode remains in command until the transfer of Command has been confirmed.
  - Confirm all achieved benchmarks and Hazard Zone operating positions and their objectives with Command (the IC functioning in the Tactical Command Mode). If a face-to-face transition cannot occur, this might sound like:
    - *"Battalion 1 to Command"*
    - *"Command to Battalion 1, go ahead."*
    - *"Confirming that you have Engine 61 operating interior on floor number one with a hose line from Engine 61 for primary search and fire control, Engine 11 is operating interior on floor number one with a hose line from Engine 11 for primary search and fire control, that you have a "Primary Clear" on floor number 2 and Truck 6 is operating with a hose line from E61 on floor number two for secondary search and rescue, is that correct?"*
    - *"Command to Battalion 1. That is correct."*
    - *"Battalion 1 to Command, I'll be taking command from here."*

- Advise Howard Communications that command is transferring
  - *"Battalion 1 to Howard."*
  - *"Howard to Command, go ahead."*
  - *"I'll be transferring Command from Engine 61 …"*

- Re-announce the current overall incident strategy
    - *"… We will be continuing to operate in the offensive strategy ..."*

- Announce the Command Post location
    - *"…Command will be located on side alpha …"*

- Make a resource determination and request
    - Assure appropriate staging established.
        - *"Staging will be located at the Park and Ride at Route 108 and 29."*

**FIELD COMMUNICATIONS:**

**Field Communications** is a temporary set of communications procedures that can be activated by Command to control and limit radio transmissions from Howard Communications. These procedures allow all radio transmissions related to the active incident to be directed and routed through Command. Field Communications generally occur using Fire Ground Talk Groups, which are a specific sets of channels within the Howard County 800 MHz radio system that are identified as Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta. Each talk group has a set of tactical channels used for incident or other communications.

After Command has been established in the Strategic Command Mode, Command will normally declare the initiation of Field Communications on the incident's tactical channel. Once Field Communications has been placed in effect, Howard Communications and Command will communicate with each other as needed, but Command becomes the central point for communications to and from units operating on the incident scene and for units en route.

- *"Command to Howard, Command is initiating Field Communications."*
- "(Howard Communications sounds a single alert tone). *Attention all units on box alarm 9-1, Field Communications is now in effect."*

Once Field Communications is in effect, responsibilities of the Howard Communications emergency dispatchers include:

- Relay of any additional information received to Command.
- Notifications to Command and radio announcements for events as outlined in Department general orders, such as
    - Those required for changes in overall incident strategy
    - Those required and specified for Mayday and emergency situations
    - Single alert tones and incident duration updates every 15 minutes
    - Etc.

- Documentation of the incident in CAD and CAD comments, including the incident benchmarks
- Monitor other tactical channels being used for the incident
- Process any requests made by Command
- Monitor incident transmissions and act as a second set of ears for Command.
- Whenever possible, the Howard Communications emergency dispatcher shall track and notate assignment of resources and group and division supervisors in the CAD. This information may become invaluable should incident accountability become critical.
- Transmit the Emergency Tone as requested by Command

- Initiate the Emergency Traffic radio restriction and channel marker as requested by Command
- Repeat Command announcements as requested by Command

Howard Communications emergency dispatchers shall intervene by contacting Command anytime a message appears to NOT have been received or acknowledged by Command after the second attempt. In the case of an emergency message, such as a Mayday or emergency identifier activation, dispatchers need not wait for the second attempt before contacting Command to verify their receipt of the emergency message.

When the IC no longer wishes to have Field Communications in effect, the IC shall notify Howard.

- *"Command to Howard, Command is terminating Field Communications."*
- "(Howard Communications sounds a single alert tone). *Attention all units on box alarm 9-1, Field Communications is now terminated."*

**STRATEGIC COMMAND AND THE COMMAND TEAM:**

Once Command is established at an incident that presents an on-going Hazard Zone, Command shall transition to the Strategic Mode within a Command Post as soon as possible. This transition shall be transmitted by radio to all incident personnel. It shall be a priority to establish a Strategic Command Team as soon as possible for ongoing Hazard Zones.

The **Strategic Command Team** is, at a minimum, comprised of an *IC functioning in the Strategic Command Mode* and a *Command Aide*. A Strategic Command Team should be assembled as soon as possible after establishing a Strategic Command Post. The team can be expanded as is required to support the command functions made necessary by the incident. The roles within the team are:

- An IC functioning in the **Strategic Command Mode**; typically a chief or command level officer that is commanding from *outside of the tactical environment, and within an environment that facilitates and enhances managing the functions of Command*. A stationary Command Post has been established, in which the IC and their Command Aide (and possibly others) are actively managing a tactical worksheet, recording the position and function of all assigned resources, assuring the IAP aligns with the critical incident factors, and monitoring radio transmissions closely in a noise and distraction-free environment, preferably using a headset. Command functions include, but are not limited to: confirming the overall incident strategy, confirming and continuing to formulate an IAP that aligns with the identified critical incident factors, establishing objectives based on the incident's critical factors, evaluating the need for additional resources, directing and assigning responding resources, and coordinating activities necessary for overall operational control.
    - This is in contrast to an IC functioning in the **Tactical Command Mode.** They are typically a company officer that is *performing all the responsibilities of Command while on-foot and from within the tactical environment*. They are maintaining an exterior position near the Hazard Zone, and are NOT committed within an IDLH or potentially rapidly evolving atmosphere. The difference for the IC functioning in the Tactical Command Mode is the conditions under which Command is typically being managed.

- The **Command Aide** is an officer or firefighter assigned and dedicated to assist the IC functioning in the Strategic Command Mode from *within the Command Post* whose primary function is to enhance the effectiveness of incident management through technical support of the IC. *The intent of the*

*Command Aide position is NOT to involve the Aide in tactical or company-task level assignments during emergency incidents.* They should not be assigned a firefighter or fire officer role outside of the Command Post on the fire ground unless their technical support of Command is being accomplished by another resource. Within the Strategic Command Post it is expected that the IC and their supporting Command Aide are actively managing a tactical worksheet, recording position and function of all assigned resources, assuring the IAP aligns with the critical incident factors, and monitoring radio transmissions closely in a noise and distraction-free environment, preferably using a headset. Specific operational duties can include:

- Assisting with incident tactical worksheet and documenting or recording incident resources and information
- Monitoring tactical radio channels and assisting with communications
- Building inspection or incident preplan review during incidents
- Functioning as the initial Accountability Manager and/or assisting with unit accountability
- Assisting with incident safety procedures as directed
- Assisting in the mobile command post on larger incidents
- Performing as a liaison with other agencies as directed
- Serving as an Assistant Accountability Manager when their BC is operating as a D-G supervisor and Level III Accountability is in place.
- Serving as a partner to the Battalion Chief should the need arise to operate in an IDLH environment.
- A Command Aide may have other assigned duties within the command post as directed by the IC.
- The **Battalion Aide** is a staffed Department position that shall serve as the Command Aide when a Strategic Command Post is established. In addition to the operational duties listed for the Command Aide, the Battalion Aide shall provide direct administrative support to the field Battalion Chief throughout the shift.
    - The radio designations for the Battalion Aide positions shall be "Battalion 1 Aide" and "Battalion 2 Aide."
    - Apart from responding to emergency incidents functioning in the role of Command Aide, duties shall include operating the BC vehicle, maintaining the BC field office, assisting with building and maintaining daily staffing plans, completing and maintaining daily overtime availability and other appropriate documentation (databases, logs and files), assisting with coordination of battalion training and shift training, coordination of battalion responsibilities such as project management, resource coordination, performance review completion, and other field battalion officer duties as assigned by the field Battalion Chief.

- (Optional) A **Senior Advisor** chief officer may be present within the Strategic Command Post supporting the IC, advising, and:
    - Verifying that enough resources are assigned to the incident.
    - Verifying that the overall incident strategy and IAP are current and in-line with forecasted incident conditions.
    - Confirming the incident organization chart matches the size and complexity of the incident, and determining the need for expansion to additional NIMS ICS positions.
    - Confirming the accountability system in place is both appropriate and effective.

- Assisting with the management and logistics of the Command Post.
- Potentially assuming Command should the need to expand the ICS system arise, with the previous IC often assuming the Operations Section Chief position.

- (Optional) A **Command Post Support Officer** may be designated and:
  - Coordinating the assignment of additional NIMS positions as called for by the IC.
  - Coordinating additional resources as they arrive at the incident.
  - Coordinating and communicating with an established Level Two Staging Area Manager.
  - Assisting with communications to established divisions and groups within the command structure.
  - Coordinating and documenting elements of safety, accountability, and logistics during the incident as called for by the IC.
  - Coordinating the resolution of Command Post needs as is appropriate.

- (Optional) A **Command Post Operator** may be assigned to operate the command post vehicle and the technology therein.

**DEMOBILIZATION AND COMMAND TERMINATION:**

- Command shall order the demobilization of resources when appropriate. Command may be transferred to officers of lower rank (e.g. from a Battalion Chief to a company officer) during demobilization.
- Care should be taken not to exceed an effective span of control.
- Officers that are given Command, even during demobilization, become accountable for all incident command responsibilities, including but not limited to: overall authority for management of the incident, the responsibilities and duties of all unassigned ICS positions, situational awareness for the position and function of all operating units, awareness of incident critical factors, revision of the IAP, management of unit task assignments, evaluation of progress, accountability of incident personnel, and incident risk assessment and safety.
- Command transitions that occur as part of demobilization MUST include:
  - A face-to-face transition between incident command officers.
  - A review of the IAP and overall strategy of the incident.
  - A complete understanding of units still on the scene, their current assigned tasks, and their operating position.
  - A PAR of each unit operating on the incident scene.
  - Must be announced on the radio.

- The announcement of a transition of Command during demobilization shall be made as follows:
  - *"Command to Howard."*
  - *"Howard to Command, go ahead."*
  - *"Battalion 1 has transferred Command to Truck 2. All units operating on the scene have been confirmed to be PAR."*
  - *"Howard is direct, Truck 2 is now in command."*

- Command shall terminate Command upon the conclusion of emergency service operations at the scene of an incident, usually upon the departure of the last unit from the scene.

- The announcement of the termination of Command shall be made as follows:
  - *"Command to Howard."*
  - *"Howard to Command, go ahead."*
  - *"Terminating Clocktower Command. All units will be going in service as ready."*

**INCIDENT COMMAND LESSONS LEARNED ANALYSIS:**

The organization shall maintain a proactive approach to quality improvement through routine analysis of incident management events and subsequent development of any lessons that could be learned, procedures that could be improved, and/or training that could be developed. Personnel that function as an IC shall actively participate in an established Lessons Learned educational and quality assurance process for those incidents designated by the Fire Chief, Department Operations Officer, or Emergency Services bureau chief as appropriate for quality assurance analysis.

**RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT MODELS FOR ARRIVING COMPANIES:**

- Specific resource deployment and assignments may be outlined in General Order Deployment Models that pertain to specific types of structures or occupancies. These deployment models shall be considered the default unit task assignments as indicated. In these General Order Deployment Models, companies are expected to complete the listed tasks and responsibilities based upon their position in the arrival sequence, but should remain alert to being directed to different tasks and responsibilities by Command. Once Command is established, whether Command is an initial company officer or a chief officer, Command has the autonomy to deviate from an established resource deployment model and assign tasks and responsibilities to arriving companies in order to address Command's established incident action objectives.
- IC's shall transmit and declare whether the General Order Deployment Model is to be followed, or whether command shall be making unit assignments. *"Command to incoming units …*
  - ***" … unit assignments will be made by Command."***
  - ***"… unit assignments will be by General Order."***

- When Command makes unit assignments, Command shall communicate the new objectives being assigned to arriving units, and each must be advised and acknowledged through radio communications or face-to-face interaction between supervisors.
- When Command assigns a task or establishes an ICS position (assigning an individual to manage the position), that action will be transmitted by radio, and confirmation of the assignment with those involved units will be obtained.
- When Command directs incoming units to assume unit assignments per General Order, or if Command is not yet established, arriving **companies shall announce their arrival order and the tasks assignments they are undertaking** as outlined in the General Order Deployment Model for the appropriate type of structure or occupancy.
  - *"E31 on location as the third arriving engine. We have our own hydrant supply and are positioned on side Charlie, and are stretching an inch and three quarter hose line from E31 to the side Charlie garage door to standby if needed for fire control."*

- Companies responding from an "out of position" location shall notify Command (if established), or the highest-ranking responding officer (e.g. a responding chief officer) if Command is not yet established.

- The process and discipline for control and accountability of each resource is of extreme importance. This is a responsibility of not only Command, but of all officers, firefighters, providers, unit leaders, branch directors, and D-G supervisors.

## REFERENCES


- General Order 300.02: Personnel Accountability
- General Order 300.04: Mayday Operations
- General Order 300.11: Rapid Intervention Crews
- General Order 310.01: Single Family and Townhouse Structure Fire Operational Guidelines
- General Order 310.02: High Rise Structure Fires
- General Order 310.04: Flammable Gas Fires
- General Order 410.01: Communications
- NFPA 1561(2014): *Emergency Services Incident Management System and Command Safety*
- Department of Homeland Security's National Incident Management System (December 2008), Appendix B: Incident Command System.
- On deck. (Def. 22a, 22b]. (n.d.). Dictionary.com. Retrieved from http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/on--deck http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/on%20deck
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## SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT CHANGES

2016-10-31-1100

Significant updates that include:

- Includes and provides updates for many concepts of previous version
- Aligns with current Residential Structure Fires General Order
- Establishes the organizations overall Incident Risk Management plan
- Establishes strategic benchmarks for certain types of incidents
- Establishes the United States Fire Administration/National Fire Academy *Field Operations Guide* (Document ICS 420-1, July 2016) as our official reference for ICS
- Establishes a procedure for field (IC) based incident communications
- Incorporates many aspects of current officer training
    - Provides detailed structure of radio reports Defines specific command roles and responsibilities of the company officer
    - Establishes expectations of command strategic level ICs, including the use of a tactical worksheet
    - Outlines common operational flow and how it relates to command and control
    - Outlines local roles and responsibilities of the Level IV and V Command Team, including the Command Aide and Senior Advisor

    - Provides guidelines to assess and classify structure size
- Provides procedure for transfer of command
- Provides procedure for changing overall incident strategy
- Provides direction on reference to interior floors of multi-story structures
- Incorporates flow path and ventilation limited fire recognition and awareness
    - Defines Non-Tactical Ventilation and emphasizes positive control of unintended ventilation
- Establishes that all companies operating shall operate under the protection of a charged hose line
- Establishes participation in a Lessons Learned analysis of designated incidents as an IC responsibility
- Establishes a defined process for demobilization of Command
- Reinforces that ICs can deviate from General Order Deployment Models, and provides radio report structure and procedures to do so
- Defines and provides local Level One and Level Two staging procedures
- Defines Known Life Hazard
- Adopts the NFPA definition for Emergency Traffic
- Defines a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR)

## FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Incident Critical Factors, Basement Type, and Building Size Quick Reference

## APPROVED

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## Attachment A - Critical Incident Factors, Basement Type, and Building Size Quick Reference Guide

**OCCUPANCY**

- occupancy (single family, multi family, strip mall, large comm, big box)
- occupancy type (business, mercantile, public assembly, institutional, industrial, residential, multi-residential, strip mall, commercial, manufacturing, storage, high rise)
- value
- status (open/closed, occupied/vacant, abandoned, under construction)
- type of contents
- loss control
- moral hazard

**BUILDING (STRUCTURE)**

- size
- interior arrangement/compartmentalization
- construction type and features
- age
- condition
- outside openings
  - Are any **susceptible to rapid failure and flow path impact?**
  - Do any need to be **actively controlled?**
- value
- utility characteristics
- effects of fire
- fuel load/how much is left to burn
- fire protection features

**FIRE**

- size, extent, location, and stage
  - Is fire **ventilation-limited?**
- What is the **current flow path**?
- most dangerous direction of extension
- time of involvement, fire load
- fuel type
- products of combustion liberation
- fire perimeter
- how widespread
- ability to operate on fire
- time projection on building
- is contents or structure on fire

**LIFE HAZARD**

- number of occupants
- location, condition
- in capacities, access
- search resources
- fire control for search
- EMS needs, exposures
- hazards for firefighters
- escape routes

**ARRANGEMENT**

- distance of external exposures
- combustibility of exposures
- access and arrangement of internal exposures
- most dangerous direction of fire extension
- barriers/obstructions to operations
- limitations on apparatus movement
- multiple buildings

**RESOURCES**

- anticipated arrival of tactical support
- staffing and equipment on scene, responding, and available
- condition of responders
- number and capability of responders
- capability of command staff
- hydrants
- after supply
- built-in protection systems

**SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

- weather (wind direction and intensity?)
- time of day
- day of week
- season, holidays
- special events
- social unrest

**ACTION**

- effect of current action
- areas not yet covered
- stage of operations as related to tactical priorities
- remote IC setup
- effectiveness of IAP
- worst case scenario
- are operating positions effective
- are resources adequate
- are operations safe
- are there layers of resources in place

### Basement Types Reference

- walk-out
- walk-up
- look-out windows
- window wells
- basement with no exterior openings
- no basement
- condition finished vs. unfinished

### Building Size Reference

Given a 30' engine spot of the engine from the structure, a 200' hand line could reach **…**

- SMALL - **100%** of the building interior
- MEDIUM - **75%** of the building interior
- LARGE - **50%** of the building interior
- MEGA - **25%** of the building interior