

Egg Harbor Fire Department and First Responders Standard Operating Guideline

Subject: Incident Management System/National Incident Management System **SOG 703**

Purpose: The purpose of this guideline is to define Egg Harbor Fire Department's definition of Incident Command. This guideline identifies the responsibilities of Command at all emergency incidents for which EHFD maintains management responsibility. It defines the functions of Command, the Incident Command System/National Incident Management System (ICS/NIMS), and other Command considerations in order to provide for the safety of personnel operating at emergency incidents; to improve the use of resources and tactical effectiveness; to meet OSHA and EPA regulations requiring the use of an Incident Command System/National Incident Management System for Hazardous Materials Incidents; and to meet NFPA Standard 1500 requirements for the use of an Incident Command System/National Incident Management System for operations at all emergency incidents.

Scope: This procedure applies to all members of the Egg Harbor Fire Department.

Guideline: The Egg Harbor Fire Department responds to a wide range of emergency incidents. In order to effectively manage personnel and resources, and to provide for the safety and welfare of personnel, all personnel will work within the Incident Command System/National Incident Management System (ICS/NIMS) at an incident scene. Within ICS/NIMS, the Incident Commander is responsible for building a command structure that matches the organizational needs of the incident to achieve the systematic completion of the tactical priorities for the incident.

Operational Guidance

I. Responsibilities of Command

A. The Incident Commander is responsible to provide for the safety, accountability and welfare of personnel. This is to be ongoing through the duration of the incident.

B. The Incident Commander is responsible for the completion of the tactical objectives.

1. Tactical objectives, listed in order of priority, include the following:

- a. Remove endangered occupants and treat the injured
- b. Stabilize the incident and provide for life safety.
- c. Conserve property.

II. The functions of command

- A. These define standard activities that are performed by the Incident Commander to achieve the tactical objectives.
- B. The functions of command include the following:
 - 1. Assume and announce Command, and establish an effective operating position (or Command Post).
 - 2. Rapidly evaluate the situation (perform a size-up).
 - 3. Initiate, maintain, and control the communications process.
 - 4. Identify the overall strategy, develop an incident action plan (IAP), and assign companies and personnel consistent with pre-fire plans and Standard Operating Guidelines.
 - 5. Develop an effective Incident Management Organization.
 - 6. Provide tactical objectives.
 - 7. Review, evaluate, and revise the IAP as needed.
 - 8. Command goals and objectives.
 - a. Establish a strong, direct, and visible Command from the onset of the incident.
 - b. Establish an effective incident organization defining the activities and responsibilities of all individuals operating within the Incident Command System/National Incident Management System.
 - c. Provide a system to process information to support incident management, planning, and decision-making.
 - d. Provide a system for the orderly transfer of Command to subsequent arriving officers.

III. Incident Command System/National Incident Management System (ICS/NIMS) operations

- A. Command is the responsibility of the Incident Commander.
- B. The Incident Command System/National Incident Management System should be considered the basic management system to be used on any size or type of incident.
- C. It is the responsibility of the Incident Commander to develop an organizational structure.
 - 1. The scope of the emergency determines the size and complexity of the organizational structure.
 - 2. The full establishment of the ICS/NIMS should be viewed as an extension of the existing incident organization.
- D. The determination to expand the organization will be that of Command.

IV. Establishing command

- A. The first fire department member or unit to arrive at the scene will assume command of the incident.
 - 1. This initial Incident Commander shall remain in command until command is transferred or the incident is stabilized and terminated.
- B. The first unit or member on the scene must initiate whatever parts of the Incident Command System/National Incident Management System that are needed to effectively manage the incident scene.
- C. A single company incident (such as a trash fire incident) may only require that the responding company or unit announce their arrival on-scene.
- D. For incidents requiring the commitment of multiple companies or units, the first unit, or member, on-scene must establish and announce “Command” and develop ICS/NIMS appropriate to the incident.
- E. The radio designation “Command” will be used along with the geographical location of the incident (such as, “7th Street Command,” “Convention Center Command”).
 - 1. This designation will remain throughout the duration of the incident. The designation of “Command” will remain with the officer currently in Command of the incident throughout the event.

V. Radio reports

- A. In addition to assuming and announcing Command, the first arriving fire department unit will give an initial radio report (size up).
- B. The radio report will include the following information:
 - 1. The arriving unit’s designation.
 - 2. A brief description of the incident situation (such as building size, occupancy, HazMat release, or multi-vehicle accident).
 - 3. Obvious conditions (such as working fire, HazMat spill, or multiple patients).
 - 4. A brief description of actions taken.
 - 5. Declaration of strategy (as they apply to structure fires).
 - 6. Any obvious safety concerns.
 - 7. Identification and location of Command.
 - 8. Announcement of Accountability location.

VI. Command options

- A. It is the responsibility of the first arriving unit or member to assume command of the incident.
 - 1. This presents several options, depending on the situation. If a chief officer, member, or a unit without tactical capabilities, initiates command, the establishment of a Command Post should be a top priority.

2. At most incidents, the initial Incident Commander will be a company officer.

B. Command options define the Company Officer's direct involvement in tactical activities and the mode of command that may be used.

1. Investigative mode (Nothing Showing).

a. These situations generally require investigation by the initial arriving company while other units remain in a staged mode.

b. The officer should go with the company to investigate while using a portable radio to command the incident.

2. Mobile Command mode (Offensive attack strategy).

a. These are situations that require immediate action to stabilize the incident, and require the company officer's assistance and direct involvement in the attack.

b. In these situations, the Company Officer goes with the crew to provide the appropriate level of supervision.

c. Examples of these situations may include the following:

- Offensive fire attacks (especially in marginal situations).
- Critical life safety situations (such as, rescue) which must be achieved in a compressed time.
- Any incident where the safety and welfare of firefighters are a major concern.
- Obvious working incidents that require further investigation by the company officer.

d. Where fast intervention is critical, utilization of the portable radio will permit the company officer's involvement in the attack without neglecting Command responsibilities.

e. The Mobile Command mode should not last more than a few minutes and will end with one of the following:

- The situation is stabilized.
- The situation is not stabilized and the Company Officer must withdraw to the exterior and establish a command post. At some time, the company officer must decide whether or not to withdraw the remainder of the crew, based on the crew's capabilities and experience, safety issues, and the ability to communicate with the crew. No crew should remain in a hazardous area without radio communications capabilities.

- Command is transferred to another higher-ranking officer. When a command officer is assuming command, the incident commander may opt to return the company officer to his/her crew, or assign him/her to a subordinate position.

3. Stationary Command mode incidents, by virtue of their size, complexity, or potential for rapid expansion, require immediate strong, direct, overall command.

a. In such cases, the Company Officer will initially assume an exterior, safe, and effective command position and maintain that position until relieved by a higher-ranking officer.

b. A tactical worksheet should be initiated and used to assist in managing this type of incident.

4. If the company officer selects the Stationary Command mode, the following options are available regarding the assignment of the remaining crew members.

a. The officer may “upgrade” within the company and place the company into action with two or more members.

- One of the crew members will serve as the acting company officer and must be provided with a portable radio.
- The collective and individual capabilities and experience of the crew will regulate this action.

b. The officer may assign the crew members to work under the supervision of another company officer.

- In such cases, the officer assuming Command must communicate with the officer of the other company and indicate the assignment of those personnel.

c. The officer may elect to assign the crew members to perform staff functions to assist Command.

- A company officer assuming Command has a choice of modes and degrees of personal involvement in the tactical activities, but continues to be fully responsible for the Command functions.
- The initiative and judgment of the officer are of great importance. The modes identified are guidelines to assist the officer in planning appropriate actions.
- The actions initiated should conform to one of the above-mentioned modes of operation.

VII. Passing command

- A. In certain situations, it may be advantageous for a first-arriving Company Officer to pass Command to the next company on the scene.
- B. "Passing Command" to a unit that is not on the scene creates a gap in the Command process and compromises incident management.
 - 1. To prevent this "gap," Command will not be passed to an officer who is not on-scene.
 - 2. It is preferable to have the initial arriving Company Officer continue to operate in the Mobile Command mode until Command can be passed to an on-scene unit.

VIII. Transfer of command

- A. Command is transferred to improve the quality of the Command organization. The following guidelines outline the transfer of Command process.
 - 1. The officer assuming Command will communicate with the person being relieved by radio or face-to-face.
 - a. Face-to-face communication is the preferred method to transfer Command.
 - 2. The person being relieved will brief the officer assuming Command indicating at least the following information:
 - a. Incident conditions (such as, the fire location, extent of Haz-Mat spill or release, or number of patients).
 - b. Incident action plan (IAP).
 - c. Progress made toward completion of the tactical objectives.
 - d. Any safety considerations.
 - e. The deployment and assignment of operating companies and personnel.
 - f. Appraisal of need for additional resources.
- B. The first-arriving Officer may assume Command of the incident following transfer of Command.
- C. The second-arriving Officer should report to the command post for assignment.
- D. Later arriving, senior Officers may choose to assume Command, or assume adviser positions.
- E. Assumption of Command is discretionary for the Assistant Chief and the Fire Chief.
 - 1. Within the chain of Command, the actual transfer of Command will be regulated by the following guideline:
 - a. The person being relieved of Command should review the tactical worksheet with the Officer assuming Command.

- This tool provides the most effective framework for Command transfer as they outline the location and status of personnel and resources in a standard format.
 - The person being relieved of Command will be assigned to best advantage by the officer assuming Command.
- b. The transfer of command shall be announced and acknowledged over the radio.

IX. General considerations

- A. The response and arrival of additional ranking officers on the incident scene should strengthen the overall Command function.
1. As the incident escalates, the Incident Commander should use these officers as needed.
- B. The arrival of a ranking officer on the incident scene does not mean that Command has been transferred to that officer.
1. Command is transferred only when the outlined transfer of Command process has been completed.
 2. Chief officers and staff personnel should report directly to the Command Post for assignment by the Incident Commander.

X. Command Staff

- A. As the incident grows into and past the requirements of a first-alarm assignment, the Incident Commander can become overloaded and overwhelmed with information management, assigning companies, filling out and updating the tactical worksheet, planning, forecasting, calling for additional resources, talking on the radio, and fulfilling all the other functions of command.
- B. The immediate need of command at this point in the incident is support.
1. The Incident Commander should utilize the next-arriving Captain as a support officer.
 2. If the Incident Commander is still playing “catch up” with the functions of Command, the only reason to assign the second Captain to a sector is if safety is an extreme concern in that sector.
- C. Roles and responsibilities of the Support Officer.
1. Define, evaluate, and recommend changes to the IAP.
 2. Provide direction relating to tactical priorities, specific critical fireground factors, and safety.
 3. Evaluate the need for additional resources.

4. Assign Logistics responsibilities.
 5. Assist with the tactical worksheet for control and accountability.
 6. Evaluate the fireground organization and span-of-control.
- D. Roles and responsibilities of the Senior Advisor.
1. The Senior Advisor will normally be the senior Captain, or the highest-ranking officer in the command post.
 2. The officer serving as “Command” and the support officer would focus on the completion of the tactical priorities, the strategic and tactical plan and the other components of the incident.
 - a. The Senior Advisor’s focus is looking at the entire incident and its impact from a broader perspective and providing direction, guidance and advice to the “Command” and/or support officer.
 - b. In this role the Senior Advisor is essentially acting as the overall Incident Commander.
 3. Specific roles and responsibilities of the Senior Advisor Include the following:
 - a. Review and evaluate the IAP, and initiate any needed changes.
 - b. Provide on-going review of the overall “Big Picture” incident.
 - c. Review the organizational structure, initiate change or expansion to meet incident needs.
 - d. Initiate section and branch function as required.
 - e. Provide a liaison with other government agencies and officials, outside agencies, property owners and/or tenants.
- E. In order to maintain continuity and overall effectiveness, the Senior Advisor and the Support Officer must be in the Command Post with the Incident Commander.
1. When a Support Officer and Senior Advisor are supporting “Command” in the command post, there are three people performing the functions of Command, as shown in Table 1.
 2. They are working as a team to enhance the command process and make the functions of command more effective.

Table 1.

	Command Team	
Senior Advisor	Support Officer	Incident Commander

F. The officer assigned to communicate directly to companies, sectors, or branches will use the radio designation “Command” and should be the only member of the command team talking on the tactical radio channel.