Egg Harbor Fire Department and First Responders
Standard Operating Guideline

Subject: Command Structure   **SOG 704**

Purpose: The purpose of this guideline is to define Egg Harbor Fire Department's definition of the Incident Command Structure.

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

Command Structure

It will be the responsibility of the Incident Commander to develop an organizational structure utilizing standard operating guidelines as soon as possible after arrival and implementation of initial tactical control measures. The size and complexity of the organizational structure, obviously, will be determined by the scope of the emergency.

Incident Command System/National Incident Management System Operations

The Incident Command System/National Incident Management System should be considered the basic incident management system to be used on any size or kind of incident. The only change in using the Incident Command System/National Incident Management System on a very large incident rather than a small incident is the method of growth of the basic emergency management organization to meet the increased needs. Thus, the full establishment of the Incident Command System/National Incident Management System should be viewed as an extension of the existing incident organization. The determination to expand the organization will be that of Command and would be done, when a determination is made that the initial attack or reinforced attack will be insufficient. That determination would be made by the Incident Commander at the scene.

ICS/NIMS Organizational Development

The following examples are guides in using the basic Incident Command System/National Incident Management System Organization for various size incidents.

- Initial Response
- 1-5 increments/First Alarm
- Reinforced Response
- Greater Alarm/Mutual Aid

Initial Response

The first arriving unit or officer will assume Command until arrival of a higher ranking officer. Upon arrival of a higher ranking officer, they will be briefed by the on-scene Incident Commander. The higher ranking officer may then assume Command. Transfer of Command is to be announced. The officer being relieved of Command responsibilities will be reassigned by the new Incident Commander.

Reinforced Response

A reinforced response will be initiated when the on-scene Incident Commander determines that the initial response resources will be insufficient to deal with the size or complexity of the Incident.

Command Organization

The Command organization must develop at a pace which stays ahead of the tactical deployment of personnel and resources. In order for the Incident Commander to manage the incident, they must first be able to direct, control, and track the position and function of all operating companies. Building a Command organization is the best support mechanism the Incident Commander can utilize to achieve the harmonious balance between managing personnel and incident needs. Simply put, this means:

- Large scale and complex incidents/ Large Command organizations
- Small scale and simple incidents/ Small Command organizations

Note: The Incident Commander should have more people working than Commanding.

The basic configuration of Command includes three levels:

- Strategic level
  Overall direction of the incident
- Tactical level
  Assigns operational objectives
- Task level
  Specific tasks assigned to companies

Strategic Level:

The Strategic level involves the overall Command of the incident the Incident Commander is responsible for the strategic level of the Command structure. The action plan should cover all strategic responsibilities, all tactical objectives, and all support activities needed during the entire operational period. The Action Plan defines where and when resources will be assigned to the incident to control the situation. This plan is the basis for developing a Command organization, assigning all resources, and establishing tactical objectives.

The strategic level responsibilities include:
- Offensive, Defensive, or Rescue in Progress
- Determining the appropriate strategy.
- Establish overall incident objectives.
- Setting priorities.
- Develop an incident action plan.
- Obtaining and assigning resources.
- Predicting outcomes and planning.
- Assigning specific objectives to tactical level units.

Tactical Level:

The Tactical level directs operational activities toward specific objectives. Tactical level officers include Branch Directors and Sector Officers who are in charge of Sectored resources. Tactical level officers are responsible for specific geographic areas or functions, and supervising assigned personnel. A tactical level assignment comes with the authority to make decisions and assignments, within the boundaries of the overall plan and safety conditions. The accumulated achievements of tactical objectives should accomplish the strategy as outlined in the Incident Action Plan.
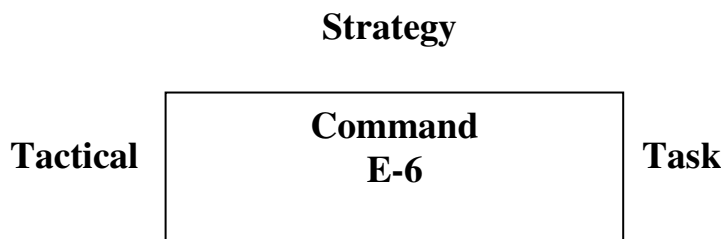
Task Level:

The Task Level refers to those activities normally accomplished by individual companies or specific personnel. The task level is where the work is actually done. Task level activities are routinely supervised by Company Officers. The accumulated achievements of task level activities should accomplish tactical objectives.
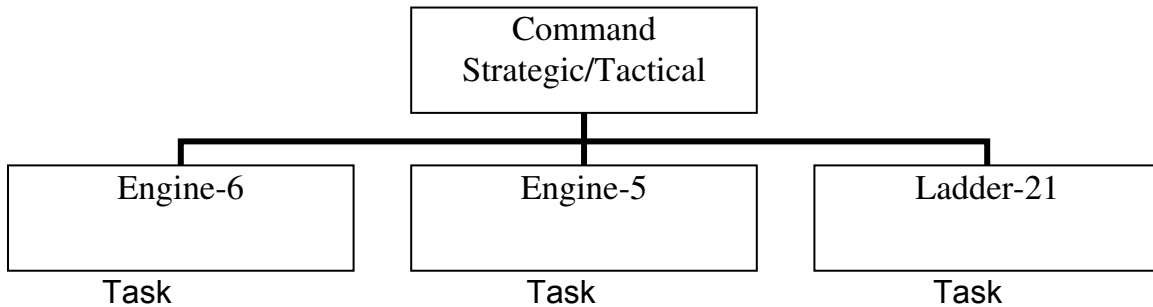
Command Structure - Basic Organization

Examples:

The most basic Command structure combines all three levels of the Command structure. The Company Officer on a single engine response to a dumpster fire determines the strategy and tactics, and supervises the crew doing the task.

Strategy

	Command **E-6**	
Tactical		**Task**

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The basic structure for a "routine" incident, involving a small number of companies requires only two levels of the Command structure. The role of Command combines the strategic and tactical levels. Companies report directly to Command and operate at the task level.

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                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │     Command          │
                    │  Strategic/Tactical  │
                    └──────────────────────┘
            ┌──────────────┼──────────────┐
    ┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐
    │   Engine-6    │ │   Engine-5    │ │   Ladder-21   │
    └───────────────┘ └───────────────┘ └───────────────┘
         Task              Task              Task
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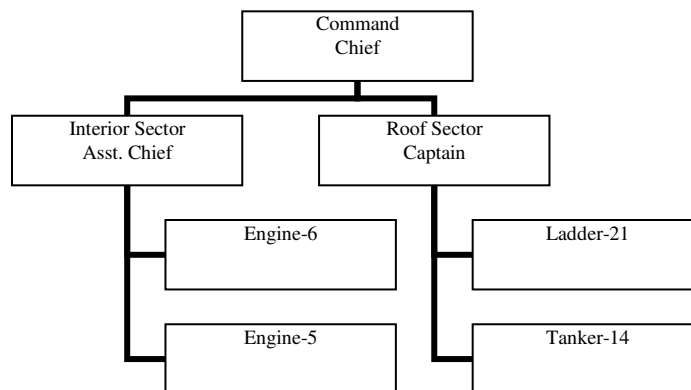
Command Structure: (Sector)

Sectors are tactical level management units that group companies. Sectors represent both geographic and functional operations.

Tactical Level Officers: (Sector)

As an incident escalates, the Incident Commander should group companies to work in Sectors. A Sector is the organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area or specific function. In order to effectively use the Sector terminology, the Egg Harbor Fire Department has adopted the following method for dividing an incident scene.
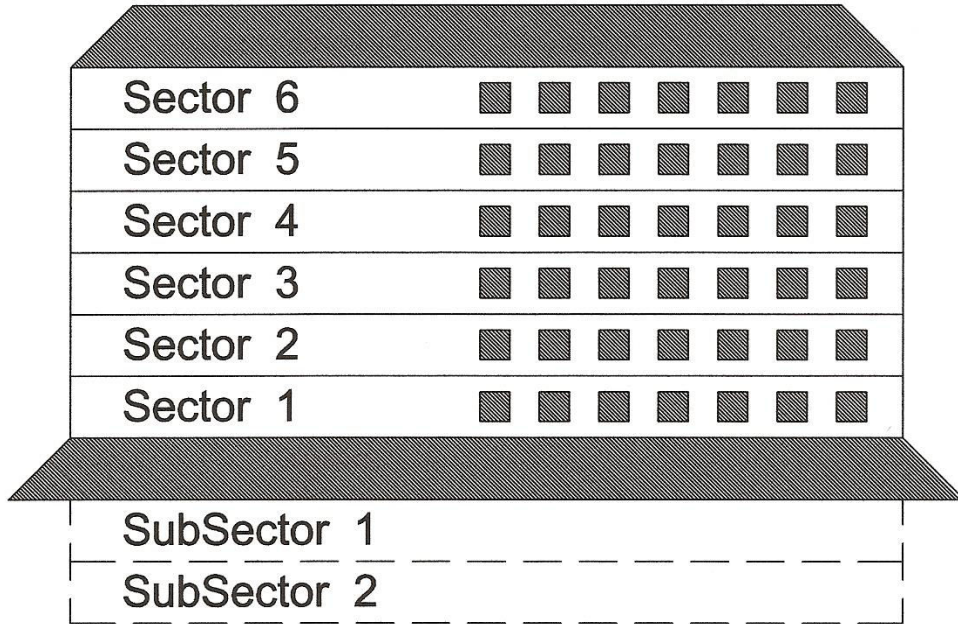
Sector Designation:

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                        ┌──────────────┐
                        │   Command    │
                        │    Chief     │
                        └──────────────┘
              ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
    ┌──────────────────┐            ┌──────────────────┐
    │  Interior Sector │            │   Roof Sector    │
    │    Asst. Chief   │            │     Captain      │
    └──────────────────┘            └──────────────────┘
         │  ┌──────────────┐             │  ┌──────────────┐
         │  │   Engine-6   │             │  │  Ladder-21   │
         │  └──────────────┘             │  └──────────────┘
         │  ┌──────────────┐             │  ┌──────────────┐
         └──│   Engine-5   │             └──│  Tanker-14   │
            └──────────────┘                └──────────────┘
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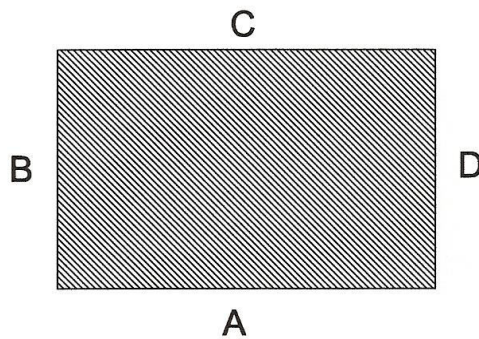
Sector Designation:

Tactical Assignments for a Multi-Story Incident.
In multi-story occupancies, Sectors will usually be indicated by floor number (Sector 6 indicates 6th floor). When operating in levels below grade, such as basements the use of sub Sectors is appropriate.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Sector  6      ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨        │
│  Sector  5      ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨        │
│  Sector  4      ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨        │
│  Sector  3      ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨        │
│  Sector  2      ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨        │
│  Sector  1      ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨ ▨        │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘

   SubSector  1
   SubSector  2
```
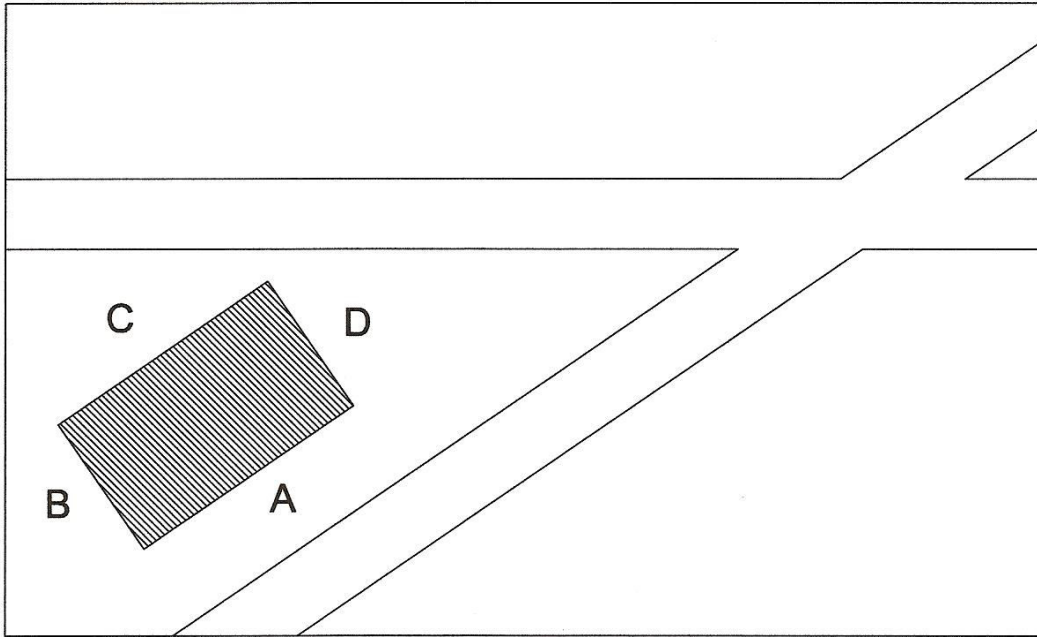
Sector Designation:

For situations where the incident has an odd geographical layout - not obvious North, South, East and West the front of the building is designated "Sector A" and the remaining sides are given a radio designation of B, C, and D in a clockwise manner. Exterior designations are identified by alphabetical letter identifiers. Starting at the front of a building and progressing clock-wise around the building as illustrated.

```
          C
      ┌───────┐
    B │       │ D
      └───────┘
          A
```

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For Example:

Note: For clarity of purpose during radio communications, the phonetic designations of "Adam", "Baker", "Charlie" and "David" are suggested.

A Sector is that organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area or for a specific functional assignment. The Sector level is the organization level that falls between single resources or a task force, and the Branch level.

Sector Designation:
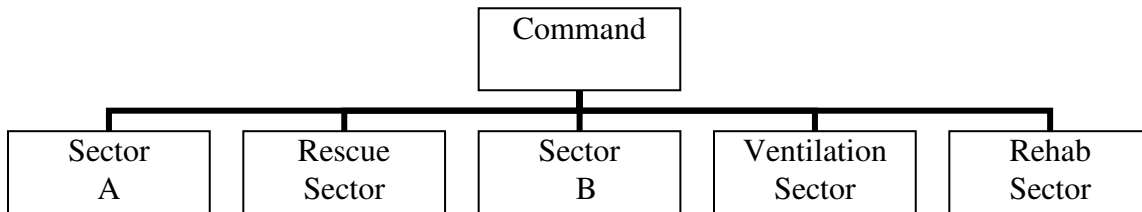
Command Structure - Sector: Basic Operational Approach

The use of Sectors in the Command organization provides a standard system to divide the incident scene into smaller subordinate management units or areas.

Complex emergency situations often exceed the capability of one officer to effectively manage the entire operation. Sectors reduce the span of control to more manageable smaller-sized units. Sectors allow the Incident Commander to communicate principally with these organizational levels, rather than multiple, individual Company Officers providing an effective Command structure and incident scene organization. Generally, Sector responsibilities should be assigned early in the incident, typically to the first Company assigned to a geographic area or function. This early establishment of Sectors provides an effective Incident Command organization framework on which the operation can be built and expanded.

 The number of Sectors that can be effectively managed by the Incident Commander varies. Normal span of control is 3-7. In fast-moving, complex operations, a span of control of no more than 5 Sectors is indicated. In slower moving less complex operations, the Incident Commander may effectively manage more Sectors.

Where the number of Sectors exceeds the span-of-control, that the Incident Commander can effectively manage, the incident organization can be expanded to meet incident needs by assigning an Operations Section Chief. The Operations Section is responsible for the Branches or Sectors. Each Branch is responsible for several Sectors and should be assigned a separate radio channel if available.

Sector procedures provide an array of major functions, which may be selectively implemented according to the needs of a particular situation. This places responsibility for the details and execution of each particular function on a Sector.

When effective Sectors have been established, the Incident Commander can concentrate on overall strategy and resource assignment, allowing the Sectors to manage their assigned units. The Incident Commander determines strategy and assigns tactical objectives and resources to the Sectors. Each Sector Officer is responsible for the tactical deployment of the resources at their disposal, in order to complete the tactical objectives assigned by the Incident Commander. Sectors are also responsible for communicating needs and progress to Command.

Sectors reduce the overall amount of radio communications. Most routine communications within a Sector should be conducted in a face-to-face manner between Company Officers and their Sector Officer. This process reduces unnecessary radio traffic and increases the ability to transmit critical radio communications.

The safety of firefighting personnel represents the major reason for establishing a Sector. Each Sector must maintain communication with assigned companies to control both their position and function.
The Sector must constantly monitor all hazardous situations and risks to personnel. The Sector must take appropriate action to ensure that companies are operating in a safe and effective manner.

The Incident Commander should begin to assign Sectors based on the following factors:

A. Situations which will eventually involve a number of companies or functions, beyond the capability of Command to directly control. Command should initially assign Sector responsibilities to the first companies assigned to a geographic area or function until Battalion Commanders are available.
B. When Command can no longer effectively cope with (or manage) the number of companies currently involved in the operation.
C. When companies are involved in complex operations (large interior or geographic area, hazardous materials, technical rescues, etc.)
D. When companies are operating from tactical positions which Command has little or no direct control over (i.e., out of sight).
E. When the situation presents special hazards and close controls is required over operating companies (i.e., unstable structural conditions, hazardous materials, heavy fire load, marginal offensive situations, etc.).

When establishing a Sector, the Incident Commander will assign each Sector:
A. Tactical objectives
B. A radio designation (Roof Sector, Sector A, etc.)
C. The identity of resources assigned to the Sector.

Sector Guidelines:

Sectors will be regulated by the following guidelines:

A. It will be the ongoing responsibility of Command to assign Sectors as required for effective emergency operations. This assignment will relate to both geographic Sectors and functional Sectors.
B. Command shall advise each Sector of specific tactical objectives. The overall strategy and plan will be provided, so the Sector has some idea of what is going on and how their assignment fits into the overall plan.
C. The number of companies assigned to a Sector will depend upon conditions within that Sector. Command will maintain an awareness of the number of companies operating within a Sector and the capability of that Sector to effectively direct Operations. If a Sector cannot control the resources within the Sector, they should notify the Incident

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Commander so that Sector responsibilities can be split or other corrective action taken. In most cases 3-7 companies represent the maximum span of control for a Sector.

    D. The incident scene should be subdivided in a manner that makes sense. This should be accomplished by assigning Sectors to geographic locations (i.e., Roof Sector, Sector A, etc.) and assigning functional responsibilities to a Sector (i.e. Ventilation Sector, Salvage Sector, etc.).

Sector Officers will use the Sector designation in radio communications (i.e., "Roof Sector to Command").

Sectors will be commanded by Company Officers, or any other Fire Department member designated by Command. The guideline for span-of-control with Sectors is five. This applies to Operational Sectors. Many of the functional responsibilities (P.I.O., Safety, etc.) are reassigned to certain individuals and are driven by standard operating procedures. These types of functional responsibilities should operate automatically and as such should not be included in the Incident Commander's span of control.

Regular Transfer of Command procedures will be followed in transferring Sector responsibility.

In some cases, a Sector Officer may be assigned to an area/function to evaluate and report conditions and advise Command of needed tasks and resources. The assigned officer will proceed to the Sector, evaluate and report conditions to the Incident Commander, and assume responsibility for directing resources and operations within his/her assigned area of responsibility.

The Sector Officer must be in a position to directly supervise and monitor operations. This will require the Sector Officer to be equipped with the appropriate protective clothing and equipment for their area of responsibility. Sector Officers assigned to operate within the hazard zone must be accompanied by a partner.

Sector Officers will be responsible for, and in control, of all assigned functions within their Sector. This requires each Sector Officer to:

    A. Complete objectives assigned by Command.
    B. Account for all assigned personnel.
    C. Ensure that operations are conducted safety.
    D. Monitor work progress.
    E. Redirect activities as necessary.
    F. Coordinate actions with related activities, and adjacent Sectors
    G. Monitor welfare of assigned personnel.
    H. Request additional resources as needed.
    I. Provide Command with essential and frequent progress reports.
    J. Reallocate resources within the Sector.

The Sector Officer should be readily identifiable and maintain a visible position as much as possible.

The primary function of Company Officers working within a Sector is to direct the operations of their individual crews in performing assigned tasks. Company Officers will advise their Sector Officer of work progress, preferably face-to-face. All requests for additional resources or assistance within a Sector must be directed to the Sector Officer. Sector Officers will communicate with "Command."

Each Sector Officer will keep Command informed of conditions and progress in the Sector through regular progress resorts. The Sector Officer must prioritize progress reports to essential information only. Command must be advised immediately of significant changes, particularly those involving the ability or inability to complete an objective, hazardous conditions, accidents, structural collapse, etc.

When a company is assigned from Staging to an operating Sector, the company will be told to what Sector, and the name of the Supervisor they will be reporting to. The Sector Officer will be informed of which particular companies or units have been assigned by the Incident Commander. It is then the responsibility of the Sector Officer to contact the assigned company to transmit any instructions relative to the specific action requested.

Sector Officers will monitor the condition of the crews operating in their Sector. Relief crews will be requested in a manner to safeguard the safety of personnel and maintain progress toward the Sector objectives. Sector Officers will ensure an orderly and thorough rehabilitation. Complete crews must report to rehabilitation to facilitate accountability.