

Egg Harbor Fire Department and First Responders Standard Operating Guideline

Subject: Single or Unified Command

SOG 706

Purpose: The purpose of this guideline is to establish the Egg Harbor Fire Department's approach to using Single Command or Unified Command at major incidents.

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

Guideline

The Command function for overall management of a given incident may utilize one of two approaches, Single Command or Unified Command, depending on the circumstances of the event. This guideline details both approaches and when they are appropriate.

Operational Guidance

I. Single command - Incident Commander

- A. Single Command in the form of one Incident Commander is appropriate for an event which occurs wholly within one agency's jurisdiction
- B. When the Single Command structure is utilized:
 - 1. A single Incident Commander is solely responsible, within the confines of their authority, to establish objectives and overall management strategy associated with the incident.
 - 2. The Incident Commander is directly responsible for follow-through, to ensure that all functional area actions are directed toward accomplishment of the strategy.
 - 3. The Incident Commander will approve the trial action plan, and approve all requests for ordering and releasing of primary resources.
 - 4. The Incident Commander may have a deputy.
 - a. The deputy should have the same qualifications as the Incident Commander, and may work directly with the Incident Commander, be a relief, or perform certain specific assigned tasks.
 - b. In an incident within a single jurisdiction, where the nature of the incident is primarily a responsibility of one agency, e.g., fire, the deputy may be from the same agency.
 - c. In a multi-jurisdictional incident or one which threatens to be multi-jurisdictional, the deputy role may be filled by an individual designated by the adjacent agency.
 - d. More than one deputy could be involved.

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II. Unified command

A. Unified Command structure is called for under the following conditions:

1. The incident is totally contained within a single jurisdiction, but more than one department or agency shares management responsibility due to the nature of the incident (e.g., a passenger airliner crash within a national forest).
2. The incident requires resources not available from only one agency and coordination between agencies is required (e.g. a major hazardous materials release requiring mitigation and evacuation).
3. The incident is multi-jurisdictional in nature (e.g., a major flood).

B. In a Unified Command structure, the individuals designated by their jurisdictions, or by departments within a single jurisdiction, must jointly determine objectives, strategy and priorities.

1. As in a Single Command structure, the Operations Chief will have responsibility for implementation of the incident plan.
2. The determination of which agency or department the Operations Chief represents must be made by mutual agreement of the Unified Command.
3. The assignment of the Operations Chief may be done on the basis of greatest jurisdictional involvement, number of resources involved, by existing statutory authority, or by mutual knowledge of the individual's qualifications.