

# Egg Harbor Fire Department and First Responders Standard Operating Guideline

**Subject:** ICS/NIMS Sectors

**SOG 707**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this guideline is to define the Egg Harbor Fire Department's approach toward developing an effective Command Structure at emergency incidents. This guideline additionally delineates the use of Sectors as part of the Incident Command System/National Incident Management System.

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

## **Guideline**

The use of Sectors provides a standard system of dividing the emergency incident into smaller subordinate command units or areas. All Egg Harbor Fire Department officers are responsible to comply with and ensure that the personnel under their command are adequately trained in, fully understand, and operate in compliance with this guideline. All Egg Harbor Fire Department members have the responsibility to learn and follow this guideline.

## **Operational Guidance**

Complex emergencies can quickly exceed the capability of one officer to effectively manage the entire operation. Sectors reduce the span-of-control of the overall command function to manageable smaller-sized units. Sectors allow Command to communicate principally with sector officers, rather than with individual fire companies, thereby providing an effective command structure and defined fireground organization.

### **I. Command considerations**

A. 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.

1. The number of Sectors Command can effectively manage varies. Fast moving, complex operations require a smaller span-of-control (no more than five sectors).
2. In slower moving, less complex operations, Command may effectively control more sectors.

B. In situations where the number of sectors exceeds the span-of-control that Command can effectively control, the incident should be divided to branches. Each branch is responsible for several sectors and should have its own radio channel if possible.

## **II. Tactical considerations**

- A. The utilization of sectors provides an array of major functions that 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 officer.
- B. Once Command establishes effective sectors, he or she can concentrate on the overall strategy and resource allocation, allowing sector officers to manage various tasks.
- C. Command determines strategic objectives and assigns available resources to the sectors. Each sector officer is responsible for the tactical deployment of the resources at his or her disposal towards completing Command objectives. They are additionally responsible for communicating their respective needs and progress to Command.
- D. Sectors reduce the overall amount of fireground radio communication. Most routine communications should be conducted within the sector in a face-to-face manner between company officers and their sector officers. This process eliminates unnecessary radio traffic.
- E. Safety of firefighting personnel represents a major reason for establishing sectors. Each sector officer must maintain communication with assigned companies to control both their position and function. Sector officers must constantly monitor all hazardous situations and risk to firefighters, and take appropriate corrective action to ensure that companies are operating in a safe and effective manner.

## **III. Criteria for sector assignment**

- A. Those situations that will eventually involve a number of companies or functions beyond the capability of Command to directly control.
  - 1. Sectors should be assigned to the first-arriving companies based on geographic or functional needs.
- B. When Command can no longer effectively cope with the number of companies currently involved in the operation.
- C. When companies are involved in complex operations, such as large interior or geographic area, hazardous materials events, or technical rescue.
- D. When companies are operating from tactical positions over which Command has little or no direct control.
- E. When the situation presents special hazards and close control is required over operating companies, such as unstable structural conditions, hazardous materials, heavy fire loads, or if the event is a marginal offensive situation.

## **IV. Sectors**

- A. It is the Incident Commander's ongoing responsibility to assign sectors as required for effective emergency operations. The assignment relates to both geographic and functional sectors.
- B. The Incident Commander shall advise each sector officer of specific objectives. The overall strategy and plan will be provided where appropriate, as time permits.
- C. The number of companies assigned to a sector will depend on conditions within that sector. Five companies represent the maximum span-of-control for a sector.

1. Command will maintain an awareness of the number of companies operating within a sector and the capability of that sector officer to effectively direct operations.
- D. Sectors assigned to specific operating areas will be designated by direction (East sector, North sector, West sector, South sector). When incidents involve odd geographic Command chooses geographic designations (such as, North sector); the Incident Commander must provide each sector with specific geographic boundaries to identify that sector's area of responsibility area.
- E. An alternate sector designation: A, B, C, or D may also be used. Sector A is always the side of the building the first engine in pulls up to; the designation of other sectors is defined by going clockwise (from A) around the building.
- F. In multi-story occupancies, sectors will usually be indicated by floor number (Sector 15 indicates 15th floor). In some cases, the floor sector identification may be subdivided into geographic areas (such as Sector 15 East or Sector 15 West) depending on stairwell and floor access.
- G. Functional sectors will be identified by the function (e.g. salvage sector, treatment sector, or ventilation sector).
- H. Sector officers will use the sector designation in all radio communications (i.e., North Sector to Command).
- I. Sectors will be commanded by a sector officer, who can be chief officers, Commanders, company officers, or any other EHF member as designated by the Incident Commander.
- J. In the cases, a sector officer may initially be assigned as a reconnaissance officer, into a geographic area or to evaluate tactical needs. In such cases, he or she will proceed to the sector, evaluate conditions, and assess responsibility for directing resources and operations within the assigned area of responsibility, and then will advise the Incident Commander of needed tasks and resources.

## **V. Sector officer responsibilities**

- A. Sector officers will be responsible for, and in control of, all assigned functions within their area.
  1. Complete objectives assigned by Command.
  2. Account for all assigned personnel.
  3. Ensure a safe operation.
  4. Monitor work progress of those within their sectors.
  5. Re-direct activities as necessary.
  6. Coordinate with related activities and/or sectors.
  7. Monitor welfare of area personnel.
  8. Request additional resources as required by the event.
  9. Provide Command essential and frequent progress reports.
  10. Re-allocate resources within the area.
- B. The sector officer must be in a position to directly supervise and monitor operations. This will require the sector officer to be equipped with appropriate protective clothing and equipment for his or her area of responsibility.

- C. The sector officer should be readily identifiable and should maintain a visible position.
- D. The primary function of Company Officers working within an area is to direct the operations of their individual crews in performing assigned tasks.
  - 1. Company Officers will advise their Sector Officer of work progress, preferably face-to-face.
  - 2. All requests for additional resource or assistance must be directed to the sector officer.
- E. Each sector officer will keep Command informed of conditions in their sector through regular progress reports. They must prioritize progress reports to include only essential information.
- F. When a company is assigned from Staging to an operating area, the company will be advised to what area they are assigned, and to which sector officer they will be reporting.
  - 1. The sector officers will be informed of which companies or units have been assigned to them by Command.
  - 2. It will be the responsibility of the sector officer to contact the assigned company, and to transmit any instructions relative to the specific action requested.