



Manhattan Fire Protection District

SOP #: 501-1	Effective Date: 08/26/91	Revised Date: 07/11/16
Section: Incident Command		
Subject: Initiation, Confirmation and Location of Command		

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a guideline for the use of an Incident Command system at all multi-unit emergency responses of the Manhattan Fire Protection District. The effective functioning of Fire Department units and personnel at operating incidents requires clear decisive action on the part of an Incident Commander. This procedure identifies the standard operating procedures to be employed in establishing Command and operating a Command Post. It also fixes responsibility for the command function and its associated duties on one individual at any time during the operation.

SCOPE:

This procedure applies to ALL personnel of the Manhattan Fire Protection District responding to and/or operating at the scene of a multi-unit response emergency incident.

DEFINITIONS:

Incident Command: refers to person(s) in charge of an incident responsible for the overall strategic level decisions. The term Command in this procedure refers jointly to both the person and the function. The Incident Commander is responsible for the command functions at all times.

GUIDELINE:

This procedure shall:

- Fix the responsibility for command on a certain individual through a standard identification system depending on the arrival sequence of members, companies, and officers.
- Ensure that a strong, direct and visible Command will be established as early as possible in the operation.
- Establish an effective framework outlining the activities and responsibilities assigned to Command.

The Incident Command System shall apply to all incidents requiring more than a single Ambulance or a single Engine Co. response.

In these incidents Command is responsible for four basic fire-ground objectives:

- Provide for the safety and welfare of emergency personnel.
- Remove endangered occupants and treat the injured (All Clear).
- Gain control of the incident (Fire Control).
- Conserve property after incident control is achieved (Loss Stopped).



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Command is responsible for the following functions as required by the incident:

- Assume and confirm Command and take an effective position.
- Rapidly evaluate the situation (size-up).
- Initiate, maintain and control the communications process.
- Develop an effective incident scene organization.
- Provide continuing Command within the framework of the standing operating procedures.
- Coordinate the transfer of Command, as required.
- Request and assign additional resources, as required.
- Return companies to service and terminate Command.

All of these functions are responsibilities of Command, whether or not Command is transferred from one individual to another. The first five (5) functions must be addressed immediately from the initial assumption of Command.

Establishing Command

The first Fire Department unit (officer of that unit) to arrive at the scene of multiple unit responses SHALL assume Command and remain in command until relieved by a Command Officer or the incident is terminated.

Initial Report

The person assuming Command shall transmit a brief initial radio report following SOP# 501-3.

Follow-Up Report (360 walk-around)

The initial Incident Commander that gave the initial report shall transmit a brief follow-up report following SOP # 501-3.

Radio Designations

The radio designation "Command" should be used with a brief description of the incident location (i.e: "Cedar Road Command"; "Consumers Command"). This designation will not change throughout the incident.

Command Options

In cases when the initial arriving officer is a Chief Officer, efforts should automatically be directed towards establishing a Command Post and fulfilling the listed command functions.

The establishment of a Command Post in a vehicle equipped for this purpose is a priority at all working incidents. The location of Command in a vehicle which provides appropriate work space, lighting, communications equipment, materials, reference items and limited isolation from distractions will make Command more effective.

When Command is initially assumed by a company officer, that officer must decide on an appropriate command position. He will select from the positions as described below.



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Investigative Command Position (Nothing Showing): This is a mobile IC on a portable radio, moving around and evaluating conditions while trying to identify the incident problem. The company officer should remain with their company to investigate while utilizing a portable radio to command the incident. When the initial IC reports "nothing showing" or an equivalent report, any additional units to the incident shall continue into the scene using normal driving.

Fast Attacking Command Position: Many times, the strength of our local IMS is the fast-attacking IC, who directly supervises the use of quick force at the beginning of the event. That action is reinforced and upgraded by responders who come in behind the initial fast attacking IC to quickly establish a stationary, exterior command post that supports and expands on the fast-attacking IC's initial actions. The fast-attacking command position provides the front-end command structure for that capability. The Fast Attacking Command position is defined as: IC #1 enters the hazard zone (when in the offensive strategy) with a portable radio, supervising and assisting their crew in the attack.

The entire response team coming in behind a fast attacking IC must realize that the initial IC is in an attack position, not a command position. We trade off this position disadvantage because many times this initial front end "hit" is enough to stabilize the incidents problems. When the front-end assault doesn't stabilize the situation, the fast-attacking IC is not in the best position to continue command; they are in the worst position. The Fast Attacking Command position should end in one of 3 (three) ways:

- The situation is stabilized.
- A Chief Officer arrives and Command is transferred.
- The situation is not stabilized and the officer must withdraw to the exterior and establish a Command Post.

Command Position: Certain incidents, by virtue of their size, complexity, or potential for rapid expansion, demand early, strong, stationary command from the outset of the incident. In these cases, the first arriving Company Officer (IC #1) will assume command and, from the beginning of the event, stay out of the hazard zone in a stationary exterior CP (most of these situations present as larger, defensive fires). The IC must remain in the Command position until the incident is terminated or command is transferred. A tactical worksheet shall be initiated and utilized to assist in managing these types of incidents.

If the Company Officer assumes a Command position from the onset of the Incident, the following options are available with regards to the assignment of the remaining crew members on the IC's Unit.

- "Move up" an acting officer within the Company. This is determined by the individual and collective capabilities and experience of the crew.
- Assign the crew members to perform Command staff functions to assist the IC. Staff functions include recon, communications assistance, help with tactical worksheet, tracking resources, etc.
- Assign company personnel to another Company. This must be acknowledged by both the original and the receiving officer by the inclusion in the accountability system.



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If a Command Officer is the initial-arriving unit to the same structure fire, they will operate in the Command position. Chief Officers can only operate in the command position when they are the IC or in Staff functions, including, but no limited to, Support Officer, Sector Officer, Staging, etc.

Responding Command Officers should do the following, if/when possible, while enroute to the scene to set themselves up for success and to make the command-transfer process as seamless as possible:

- Initiate filling out a tactical worksheet with the dispatched assignment
- Reference any pre-plan info, access aerial views and hydrant locations (MDT)
- Listen critically to all radio traffic
- Log assigned companies onto the tactical worksheet

Transfer of Command

The 1st arriving Command Officer will respond directly to the scene. If an active hazard zone still exists, or if there is still tactical benchmarks to coordinate, command should be upgraded into the Command position. When arriving to the scene, IC #2 must transfer command in the following manner:

- Size-Up – Verify that all operating positions match the current conditions.
- Transmit that you unit is On-Scene
- Contact IC#1 and verify the position and function of all hazard zone resources with IC#1
- Contact IC#1 and obtain a CAN report. Announce you will be taking Command
- Contact and confirm the Command transfer with dispatch, announce the current strategy and make a resourced determination.

This command transfer significantly improves IC #2 position and their ability to perform and manage the 8 command functions and the corresponding strategic safety requirements for the entire operation. Placing the IC in a standard CP position where they can focus exclusively on incident management enhances and facilitates both the completion of the tactical priorities and firefighter task-level safety.

Command transfers should be short and sweet. When IC #1 (usually a fast-attacking IC) transmits a concise, clear initial radio report, unit assignments and condition reports, it ensures that IC #2 (usually a command officer working out of an SUV) will have quality information to quickly facilitate the command transfer.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:

Maintaining crew accountability is critical. IC#1 must deliver a quality size-up and follow-up report to ensure later arriving companies understand the incident and any assignments that may be given.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

As a general rule, Command should not be transferred unless it improves command. In certain rare situations, it may be advantageous for the first arriving IC (Company Officer) to transfer Command to the next Company Officer who arrives ON SCENE. This is indicated when the



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initial commitment of the first arriving Company requires a full crew (i.e., high-rise or an immediate rescue situation).

"Passing Command" to a unit that is not on the scene creates a gap in the Command process and compromises incident management and safety. To prevent this command and control gap, command shall not be transferred to any officer who is not physically located on the scene. When a Command Officer arrives at the scene at the same time as the initial arriving Company, the Command Officer should assume Command of the incident.

Approved By:

Signature: _____

Date: _____