

3.1.4.5 Transferring Command



YOUR ORGANIZATION
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

TITLE: Transferring Command

SECTION/TOPIC: Command and Control

NUMBER: 3.1.4.5

ISSUE DATE:

REVISED DATE:

PREPARED BY:

APPROVED BY:

X

Preparer

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Approver

These SOPs/SOGs are based on FEMA guidelines FA-197

1.0 POLICY REFERENCE

CFR

NFPA

NIMS

2.0 PURPOSE

This standard operating procedure/guideline addresses process for transferring command once established on an emergency scene.

3.0 SCOPE

This SOP/SOG pertains to all personnel in this organization.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

These definitions are pertinent to this SOP/SOG.

5.0 PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES & INFORMATION

5.1 Process for transferring command once established on an emergency scene:

Transfer of Command

Command is transferred to improve the quality of the Command organization. When Command is transferred it should trigger upgrades in the Command structure. The following guidelines outline the transfer of Command. Using a standard routine for both establishing and transferring command creates the capability within the responding units for the IC to effectively and safely establish and continue command. Using a fast attack company officer IC (IC #1) in the initial stages of an offensive incident, and then having a subsequent arriving response command officer (IC #2) transfer, strengthens and continues command within the IAP from an upgraded Command Post (CP), in a vehicle, outside the hazard zone, creates a strong, safe, and under control approach. The benefits of an upgraded CP include:

- Provides IC #2 with a Support Officer
- Establishes an Incident Safety Officer (FIT) (ISO)
- IC #2 has a wider view of the fireground
- Improves communication
- Creates a lighted, warm (or cool), and dry environment for IC #2 to operate in

Transfer of Command process

- A. The first fire department member arriving on the scene will automatically assume Command. This will normally be a Company Officer, but could be any fire department member up to and including the Fire Chief.
- B. The first arriving Company Officer will assume Command after the Transfer of Command procedures have been completed (assuming an equal or higher ranking officer has not already assumed Command). IC #1 is usually a Company Officer.
- C. The first arriving Command Officer should assume Command of the incident following Transfer of Command procedures and becomes IC #2.
- D. Subsequent arriving Command Officers should report their location to the IC, and wait for an assignment. The first arriving Shift Commander (preferably from the appropriate city that the incident is located in if available) will assume the roll of Senior Advisor and assist the IC. The second arriving Shift Commander sets up the Command Van (CV) and manages the movement of Command to the CV. The Senior Advisor, IC and Support Officer become the Command Team (Incident Advisory Team). The Command Team may assign additional staff such as a Safety Officer (relieves the Support Officer's ISO responsibility) and a Staging Officer.
- E. Assumption of Command is discretionary for Assistant Chiefs and the Fire Chief.
- F. Local events that are of long duration or require long term evacuations may require a larger Command staff including Planning Chief, Liaison, and Public Information Officer (PIO). The Assistant Chief of Operations may provide additional support by assisting the Senior Advisor while a Shift Commander manages the evacuation and Command staff.
- G. When an incident is so large or of such duration that State or Federal resources are called to assist, an Incident Management Team (IMT) may be assigned to manage these resources. In this case the local jurisdiction having authority (JHA) will maintain Command or

delegate authority for managing resources to the IMT. In either case the JHA retains authority to set incident objectives and determine when the IMT, State, and Federal resources are no longer needed.

In certain situations, it may be advantageous for the first arriving IC (i.e. Company Officer) to transfer Command to the next Company ON SCENE. This is indicated when the initial commitment of the first arriving Company requires a full crew (i.e., high-rise or an immediate rescue situation) and another Company or Command Officer is on the scene. When a Chief Officer arrives at the scene at the same time as the initial arriving Company, the Chief Officer should assume Command of the incident.

"Passing Command" to a unit that is not on the scene creates a gap in the Command process and compromises incident management. To prevent this "gap", COMMAND SHALL NOT BE TRANSFERRED TO AN OFFICER WHO IS NOT ON THE SCENE.

Should a situation occur where a later arriving Company or Command officer cannot locate or communicate with Command (after several radio attempts), they will assume and announce their assumption of Command and initiate whatever actions are necessary to confirm the safety of the missing crew.

Within the chain of Command, the actual transfer of Command will be regulated by the following procedure:

- A. The officer assuming Command (IC #2) will communicate with the person being relieved (IC #1) by radio or face-to-face. Face-to-face is the preferred method to transfer Command.
- B. The person being relieved will brief the officer assuming Command indicating at least the following:
 - 1. General situation status:
 - a. Incident conditions (fire location and extent, Hazmat spill or release, number of patients, etc.)
 - b. Incident Management Plan.
 - c. Completion of the Tactical Objectives.
 - d. Safety considerations.
 - 2. Deployment and assignments of operating companies and personnel.
 - 3. Appraisals of need for additional resources.
- C. When an incident becomes so large that an Incident Management Team (IMT) is requested, Command will not transfer to the IMT (Type I/III) unless a formal written Delegation of Authority has been signed by both the JHA and the IMT.

The arrival of a ranking Officer on the incident scene does not mean that Command has been automatically transferred to that Officer. Command is only transferred when the Transfer of

Command process has been completed. The person being relieved of Command will be assigned to the best advantage by the Officer assuming Command.

A ranking Officer may elect to have a subordinate continue the role of Incident Commander. In cases where an individual is effectively commanding an incident, and satisfactory progress is being made to bring the incident under control, it may be desirable for that person to continue in an active Command role. The ranking Officer must determine that the Incident Commander is completely aware of the position and function of operating companies and the general status of the situation. In these cases, the arriving ranking Officer may assume a supportive role in the overall Command organization.

The response and arrival of additional command officers strengthens the overall Command organization. As the incident escalates, the IC should use these Command Officers to fill Sector (Division), Branch, and Section positions. Command should consider adding a command officer to any sector with three or more operating companies. Strengthening the Command organization:

- Improves safety
- Decreases the span of control
- Improves communication
- Improves accountability
- Improves management of the Sector

When the first arriving unit is a Command Officer, efforts should be automatically directed towards establishing a Command Post and fulfilling the Command functions. A Command Post in a vehicle equipped for this purpose is a priority at all working incidents. A vehicle that provides appropriate work space for the Incident Commander and staff personnel, lighting, communications equipment, supplies reference items, and some isolation from outside distractions will make Command more effective.

Company and Command Officers should eliminate all unnecessary radio traffic while responding, unless such communications are required to ensure that Command functions are initiated and completed. This requires the initial Incident Commander to give a clear initial radio report and continue to give updated progress reports as needed.

Chief Officers or Battalion Chiefs should stage over the radio. Staff Personnel should report directly to the Command Post to notify the Incident Commander of their availability to assume incident duties. These personnel should park their vehicles in a location that does not restrict access to the scene.

The IC is responsible for managing the incident. The fire department empowers the IC with the authority to turn his/her decisions into actions (develop an IAP and assign companies). Simply stated, the Incident Commander outranks everybody*. If a higher ranking Officer wants to affect a

change in the management of an incident, he/she must first be on the scene of the incident, and then follow the Transfer of Command procedure.

*Anyone can effect a change in incident management in extreme situations relating to safety by notifying Command and initiating corrective action.

The Incident Command System (ICS) never "sleeps". The ICS is in a constant state of readiness. When there are no working incidents the Alarm Room Battalion Chief and Supervisor share the responsibility of initiating the ICS. When the Alarm Room receives notification of a working incident (normally via the telephone) they start the ICS process by giving instruction to the caller and dispatching the appropriate response. The Alarm Room continues in an active management role by ensuring that the first on-scene unit takes Command. The Shift Commanders share this responsibility by virtue of being the highest ranking on duty members.