

	UNION CENTER FIRE COMPANY INC. Best Operating Guidelines	
	Subject: Incident Command System	BOG Series Operations
		Initiated 01/12/06
Approved: Fire Chief Chris Hoyt	Revised 03/02/13	

It is the intent of this guideline to reduce to a comprehensive written document the current practices of the Union Center Fire Company as they relate to the Incident Command System. These operating guidelines have been developed from the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and the Fire Company will attempt to coordinate it's incident command system with Broome County Communications to insure optimal coordination between the two agencies. It is understood that local operating needs may contribute to some difference in procedure.

Objective

The Fire Company responds to a wide range of emergency incidents. These guidelines identify procedures that will be employed in establishing Command in order to provide for the safety & health of personnel and provide for the effective management of personnel & resources.

Command Procedures

The responsibility for Command is fixed on a specific individual through a standard identification System, depending on the arrival sequence of members, companies, and chief officers. A strong, direct and visible Incident Command (IC) will be established from the onset of the incident.

- An effective incident organization will be established defining the activities
- Responsibilities assigned to the IC and to other individuals operating within the ICS.
- A system to process information will be provided to support the IC planning and decision making.
- A system for the orderly transfer of Command to subsequent arriving officers will be provided.

Responsibilities of Command

The Incident Command System is used to facilitate the completion of the tactical priorities. The Incident Commander is the person who drives the ICS towards that result. The IC is responsible for building a command organization that satisfies the needs of the incident to achieve tactical priorities. The IC is responsible for the completion of the following tactical priorities.

- Safety and health of firefighters including accountability throughout the incident and post-incident if necessary
- Life safety of civilians
- Incident stabilization
- Property conservation.

Functions of Command

The first five (5) functions must be addressed immediately on assumption of Command.

- Assume and announce via radio “Command” and establish an effective operating position (Command Post); Normally front of incident in vicinity of first arriving apparatus
- Rapidly evaluate the situation (size-up) and announce via radio.
- Initiate, maintain, and control the communications process.
- Identify the overall strategy and select tactics, develop an incident action plan, and assign companies and personnel consistent with the plan and these Guidelines.
- Develop an effective ICS utilizing support personnel as needed.
- Review, evaluate, and revise (as needed) the incident action plan.
- Provide for the continuity, transfer, and termination of Command.

Establishing Command

The ranking fire department member of the first unit to arrive at the scene shall assume Command of the incident.

- The initial IC shall remain in Command until Command is transferred or the incident is terminated.
- The IC must staff the parts of the ICS that are needed to effectively manage the incident resources.
- The ranking member of the first unit to arrive MUST establish Command and begin to develop an ICS by giving an initial radio report as follows:
- Report arrival on Scene
- Assumption, identification, and location of Command.
- A brief description of the incident situation. (Scene description, description of the incident conditions, including endangered exposures.
- Declaration of basic strategy (Offensive, Defensive, or Investigative).
- Any obvious safety concerns.
- Request of additional resources, or release of resources.
- Assignment of other responding resources as required.
- This brief initial report allows other arriving units to be better prepared to take action on arrival. It also allows other companies and chief officers to pre-think the usual tactics that may be required for this specific situation.
- The radio designation “*Command*” will be used in conjunction with the department number or if multiple calls department number with geographical location of the incident, e.g., Command 53 Taft Ave to Broome. This designation will not change throughout the incident.
- □ Examples:
- “*Chief 53 on the scene 900 Oak Hill Ave, 2-story wood-frame structure with smoke and flames showing from the second floor. Chief 53 will be establishing command.*”
- “*Squad 53 on scene, have a vehicle with smoke showing from under the hood. Squad 53 will be establishing Command.*”

Command Options

Nothing Showing – Investigative Mode: These situations require investigation by the initial arriving unit while other units remain in the Staged Mode. The officer should investigate while using a portable radio to Command the incident.

Offensive Mode:

The Fast Attack Mode is for situations that require immediate action to stabilize the incident. In these situations, the first arriving Chief should establish Command. If there is no Chief the incident commander will be the Officer of the Apparatus. This officer may stay outside OR may go with the initial attack crew to provide the appropriate level of supervision and assistance. These situations include situations where the IC's direct involvement will resolve the incident problems or markedly reduce the problems.

Critical life-safety situation

(i.e., a rescue situation where citizens are trapped and the firefighters need assistance to simultaneously raise a ladder and place a protective hose line)

NOTE: Even if the IC is assisting, Command must be established and Functions of Command satisfied.

- Any incident where the safety and welfare of the firefighters is a major concern and visual supervision is a necessity before additional assistance arrives.
- Where fast intervention is critical, the officer will maintain Command by portable radio until one of the following occurs:
- The situation is stabilized.
- The situation does not stabilize and the officer must withdraw to the exterior and establish a Command Post.
- Command is transferred to another officer.

Defensive Mode:

This mode is chosen when there is a complex situation due to a large fire, unstable hazardous materials incident, or multiple casualty incident. The officer in the "combat mode" assisting a firefighter will only bring marginal abatement of the problem. The IC should choose to establish immediate command presence. In these situations, the "greater good" is best served by immediate management and a focus on the "big" picture.

When in a Defensive Mode all personnel and fire apparatus will be outside the collapse zone of the structure, which shall be considered to be 1 ½ times the height of the building. Small equipment (unmanned deluge guns, etc. can operate within the collapse zone, if necessary.

Rescue Mode:

This mode will be implemented when first arriving companies are confronted with confirmed rescue of trapped victims. IC must recognize when rescue of *living* victims is possible without undue risks to firefighters.

This mode will normally be a combination of aggressive Offensive Mode tactics with remaining available personnel assigned to the rescuing of victims.

The Offensive Mode will concentrate on the fire stream protection of firefighters performing interior rescue operations.

Vent Enter Search tactics may be used when operating in this mode.

Changing Modes:

The IC shall clearly state via radio when the Command Mode is being changed. Division Commanders shall acknowledge via radio the changed ordered by the IC. Certain incidents, because of their size, complexity, or potential for rapid expansion require immediate, strong, direct, overall Command. In such a case the Command Officer will

- Report on Scene
- Take Command & give initial report
- Announce via radio Defensive Mode
- Do not risk lives for what is already lost
- Save the big end
- Initiate and use a tactical work sheet.
- Begin to develop the incident Action Plan by developing strategy and tactics.
- Appoint a Safety Officer
- Establish personnel accountability System
- Form Command structure – Groups / Division
- Call for additional resources and assign resources in a coordinated attack
- Give progress report every 10 minutes or when the situation changes
- Report all clear
- Give control time
- Report loss stopped
- Account for personnel
- Satisfy the customer
- Terminate Command

Transfer of Command

Command is transferred to improve the quality of the Command organization. The following transfer of Command procedure shall be used:

- The first arriving department member with radio communications will assume
- Command, provided arrival of the first engine or chief officer is not imminent.
- If the first arriving IC is not an officer, then the first arriving officer will assume
- Commands after the Transfer of Command procedures have been completed.
- Later arriving, higher ranking, chief officers may choose to assume Command by direct order, or assume a support role.
- When an Operations Officer is established by IC, a Chief Officer or Line officer will be assigned Operations, when available.

Transfer Procedure:

The officer assuming Command will communicate with the person being relieved. Face-to-Face communications are preferred. However, this may be done by radio if a face-to-face cannot be accomplished.

The person being relieved will brief the officer assuming Command on the following areas:

- Incident conditions; e.g., fire location, type of spill or release, etc...)
- The incident action plan
- What progress has been made towards completion of the tactical objectives?
- Safety considerations.
- Deployment and assignment of operating companies & personnel.
- Need for additional resources.
- The assumption of Command by the ranking officer will be announced on the radio.
- The person being relieved will be used to best advantage by the new IC.

General Considerations

Use additional officers as needed to strengthen the Command organization.

NOTE: the IC may assign Officers from other fire departments that are familiar with the Incident Command System positions within the ICS organization as deemed necessary.

Incident scene communications from tactical level officers should be limited to the following:

- Reports that the assignment given has been completed.
- Requests for additional resources or for the release of unneeded resources.
- Reports that the assignment cannot be completed and why.
- Any special information, e.g., safety matters, collapses, hazardous materials found, etc.
- A higher ranking officer, who wants to make a change in the management of an incident, must first be on the scene, and then use the transfer of Command procedure.
- Anyone can effect a change in incident management in extreme situations relating to safety by notifying Command to initiate corrective action.

Command Structure

The IC is required to develop an organization structure to manage the incident. The size and complexity of the organizational structure will be determined by the scope of the emergency.

- The ICS is a toolbox. Only staff those functions necessary for the management of the incident. You are not at the scene to create a “great” organization. You are there to bring an out-of-control situation back to normal.
- The ICS is designed to allow for the adequate and effective supervision of resources and to prevent any one officer from becoming “overwhelmed” by too many subordinate personnel or simultaneous tasks.

Command Organization

The Command organization must develop at a pace that stays ahead of the tactical deployment of personnel and resources. In order for the IC to manage the incident, the ability to direct, control, and track the position and function of all operating companies must be in place.

The basic configuration of Command includes three levels:

- Strategic Level – Overall direction of the incident.
- Tactical Level – Assigns operational objectives (tactics or tasks)
- Task Level – Specific tasks assigned to companies, teams / crews, or individuals.
- The Strategic Level involves the overall Command of the incident. This involves setting the broad goals, or strategy, and having a view of the “big picture”.
- Strategy is the “what” that has to be done to resolve the incident problems.
- Strategies are determined through the size-up of the situation that identifies the incident problems.
- The selection of the appropriate tactics to accomplish the strategies is fundamental.
- Tactics are “how” the strategies will be accomplished.

The IC must develop an Action Plan (AP) for the incident. The strategies and tactics are the basis of all Action Plans. The Action Plan is the basis for developing the ICS for a particular incident.

The Strategic Level responsibilities include:

- INVESTIGATIVE, OFFENSIVE or DEFFENSIVE operation
- Determining the appropriate strategies
- Establishing overall incident objectives
- Setting priorities.
- Developing an incident action plan
- Obtaining and assigning resources.
- Predicting outcomes and planning.
- Assigning specific objectives to tactical level units.

The Tactical Level:

- Directs operational activities toward specific objectives.
- Includes Division and Group officers.
- Responsible for specific geographic or functional areas.
- Has authority to make assignments and decisions within the boundaries of the operational plan and the specific area of responsibilities.
- Has the responsibility for safety in the specific area of responsibility.

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.
- Company Officers or Crew Leaders routinely supervise the Task Level activities. The accumulated achievement of Task Level activities should accomplish the tactics.
- The most basic Command structure combines all three levels.

Division / Group:

The IC shall make Division and / or Group assignments based on the following:

- When the incident will involve a number of companies or crews.
- Command should always start multiple company operations at the Division and Group level.
- The first officer assignment to perform a tactic in a *geographic* area is designated a Division
- The first officer who is assigned to perform a tactical function will be designated as a Group, such as Vent Group.
- When establishing a Division or Group, the IC will indicate:
 - The tactical objective(s) to be accomplished.
 - The Division or Group radio designation.
 - The identity of the resources assigned to the Division or Group.

Division:

- A Division is an organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area. Division “A” will normally be the front of the incident and where the IC will normally be located. The Divisions at a structure will be designated clockwise so that Division “B” is to the left and Division “D” is to the right. Division “C” is the rear of the structure.
- In a multi-level structure, Division 1 is the lowest level with divisions numbered consecutively to the highest level.

Group:

- Group is an organizational level responsible for a specified functional assignment at an incident.
- Group supervisors MUST coordinate their actions with any Division supervisors in whose geographic area they intend to operate BEFORE starting those operations.

Division & Group Supervisor Requirements.

- Division and Group Supervisors must be in a position to directly supervise and monitor operations.
- Division and Group Supervisors are responsible for and in control of all assigned functions with their assignment. Each Division and Group Supervisor will complete objectives assigned
- Account for all assigned personnel
- Ensure that operations are conducted safely.
- Monitor work progress.
- Redirect activities within their assignment as necessary.
- Immediately advise their superior of significant changes involving the inability to complete the objective, hazardous conditions, accidents, structural collapse, etc.
- Coordinate actions with other related activities and adjacent supervisors.
- Monitor the welfare of assigned personnel
- Request additional resources and release unneeded resources as required.
- Provide their superior with essential and frequent progress reports.
- Reallocate resources within the Division or Group as required.
- Use the regular transfer of Command procedures when the Division or Group supervisor is relieved.

Staging

Staging is an area where resources are temporarily placed and are available for immediate assignment into the operation.

Staging reports to the OPS Chief when OPS is staffed.

Level I Staging:

Level 1 staging automatically applies to all responses involving multiple apparatus:

- The first due engine will respond directly to the scene, and operate to best advantage. This shall be accomplished by the engine seeing (3) three sides of any structure. The front of the fire building should be left open if there is a need for the use of an aerial device.
- The second due engine and later arriving engines will “stage” short of the incident usually 1 block away unless or until advised by IC to proceed to a Division or given a Group assignment.
- Level 1 staging should be a strategic location that is close enough to the scene to provide a quick move-up to a tactical assignment and also allow relocating to an alternate site with a minimum of maneuvering / backing-up.
- Apparatus arriving at Level I staging should advise Command on the radio with a brief message: Example:”Command, Engine 1 is at Level staging.”

Level II staging:

Level II staging will be utilized at any incident requiring on-scene reserve of apparatus, manpower, & equipment.

- Command will designate a formal and easily identifiable location to which all unassigned units will report. Units at Level I staging will remain until reassigned.
- Responding 2nd alarm & mutual-aid companies will automatically stage at Level II staging.
- STAGING Group officer will be assigned by Command to supervise the staged resources and the staging area (i.e., traffic control, access, and inventory).

Safety Officer:

- IC will staff the SAFETY function when Command’s allotment of time and focus on safety concerns is insufficient for the incident situation.
- SAFETY must know and understand fire behavior, building construction, department safety regulations and be experienced in incident operations relative to their assignment.
- Any officer or Firefighter could be designated the Safety Officer until one arrives on the scene.
- Safety Officers will be used when:
- Working fire or other working incidents where other responsibilities require too much of Command’s time.
- Incidents where Command can not personally see incident operations or structure deterioration.
- Highly hazardous incidents such as haz-mat, technical rescue, or bomb removal.

General Operational Considerations

- The optimal number of firefighters to be supervised is five but may range as high as seven. Divisions and Groups reduce the span-of-control to a more manageable number. Division and Group delegation allows the Incident Commander to communicate with these organizational levels rather than with multiple Company Officers.
- The Division or Group Supervisor is responsible for the details and execution of their part of the Action Plan. They are responsible for the deployment of the resources at their disposal to accomplish the tactical objectives assigned. They are responsible to communicate their needs and progress to their immediate superior in the ICS.
- When properly instituted, the overall radio traffic will be reduced. More face-to-face communications will be established between supervisors and their single resources.
- To promote safety, the Division and Group Supervisors must maintain effective personal or radio communications with all Groups within their Division and all individual firefighters within their Group. They must also constantly monitor all hazardous situations and risks to personnel and take appropriate action to ensure that subordinates are operating in a safe and effective manner.
- Communications between elements within a Division or Group should be done face to-face wherever possible.
- When any new firefighter or Group is assigned to a Group or Division, they resource leader will be told to which Division or Group they are being assigned along with the supervisor's name. The person making the assignment will notify the Division or Group Supervisor of the identity / type of the new resource.
- Division and Group Supervisors will ensure an orderly and thorough reassignment of firefighters to Rehab. Groups must report to Rehab intact to facilitate accountability.

Expanding the Organization

- The transition from the initial response to a major incident organization will be evolutionary, and positions will be filled as the corresponding tasks require.
- The Operations, Planning, and Logistics Section chiefs and the Unit Leader positions in Planning and Logistics will be staffed only when corresponding functions are required for effective incident management.
- The IC should be cognizant of the probable expansion of the organization based on the complexities and the number of resources required for control.
- The first Command officer to arrive at an incident that has started as a complex incident and one that will obviously grow to a resource intensive situation must start thinking about expanding the organization at a high level. The staffing of the Section Chief functions will greatly improve the ability of Command to effectively manage the operation by allowing for the delegation of the responsibilities of an entire Section (Planning, Logistics, Finance /Administrative) to others.

Operations Section Officer:

- The Operations Section officer (OPS) is responsible for the direct management of all incident tactical activities, the tactical priorities, and the safety and welfare of the personnel working in the Operation Section.
- OPS officer is most often staffed when the IC, due to incident complexities, needs to be relieved of the responsibility of being the incident tactician and step back to focus on the "big picture".

- OPS must also be staffed when the IC's span-of-control becomes too large due to the staffing of too many Divisions and Groups and one or more Planning or Logistics Sections or Units.
- Any firefighter, officer or mutual aid officer could become OPS when designated by the IC

Responsibilities of OPS:

- Manage incident tactical activities.
- Coordinate activities with the incident commander.
- Implement the incident action plan.
- Assign resources to tactical level areas based on tactical objectives and priorities.
- Build effective organizational structure through the use of Branches and divisions/groups.
- Control and staging and air operations.
- Provide for life safety
- Determine needs and request additional resources
- Consult with and inform other sections and the Incident Command Staff as needed.
- When the OPS Chief is staffed, the IC is at the Strategic Level, OPS is at the Tactical Level, and the Divisions/Groups and companies are at the Task Level.
- When OPS is staffed, Command **MUST** notify all Divisions, Groups, or single resources that are reporting directly to Command that OPS has been initiated and that those functions are now reporting to OPS. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FROM INDIVIDUAL FUNCTIONS IS REQUIRED.**

Branch Directors:

OPERATIONS SECTION

As the span-of-control begins to become excessive, or the incident becomes increasingly complex, the organization can be further sub-divided into Branches.

In general, Branches may be staffed for the following reasons:

- Span-of-control problems for Command, or for OPS when staffed.
- For specific functional or geographic area supervision and control
- When the incident involved multi-agency, or multi-jurisdictional response.
- Branch Directors may be located at the Command Post and work face-to-face with Command and the OPS chief(s).
- On incidents that encompass a large geographic area – such as a wildlands fire, it may be more effective to have the Branch Directors in their tactical locations.
- When a Branch is staffed, Command, or OPS as appropriate, **MUST** notify all Divisions, Groups, and single resources assigned to the Branch that the Branch has been initiated and that those functions are now reporting to that Branch. **ACKNOWLEDGMENT FROM THESE FUNCTIONS IS REQUIRED.**
- When an incident is multi-agency or multi-jurisdictional, resources are best managed under the officers of those agencies who have normal control over those resources.
- Branches should always be used at incidents involving two or more distinctly different major management components, e.g., fire with a major evacuation; a large fire with a multi-casualty component, etc.

Planning Section:

The PLANNING Section is responsible for gathering, assimilating, analyzing, and processing information needed for effective decision making. Information management is a full time task at large and complex incidents. Information is needed for both long term and short term planning. The Planning's goal is to plan ahead of currently events and to identify the need for resources before they are needed.

- The Planning Section is responsible for:
- Evaluate current strategy and plan with the Incident Commander.
- Maintain resource status and personnel accountability.
- Refine and recommend any needed changes to the action plan.
- Evaluate incident organization, specific critical factors and safety.
- Gather, update, improve, and manage the situation status in a systematic way.
- Coordinate with any needed outside agencies for planning needs.
- Plan for incident demobilization
- Maintain incidents records.

Logistics Section

LOGISTICS is the support mechanism for the organization. LOGISTICS provides service and support systems to all organizational components involved in the incident. This may include: facilities, transportation, equipment maintenance, fueling, feeding, communications, responder medical services, and responder rehab.

Logistics is responsible for:

- Providing for medical aid for incident personnel and manage REHAB.
- Coordinating immediate critical incident stress debriefing function.
- Providing and manage any needed supplies or equipment.
- Forecasting and obtain future resource needs (coordinate with PLANNING).
- Providing the communications plan and any needed communications equipment.
- Providing fuel and needed repairs to equipment.
- Obtaining specialized equipment or expertise per Command.
- Providing food and associated supplies.
- Securing any needed fixed or portable facilities.
- Providing any other logistical needs as requested by Command.
- Supervising assigned personnel.

Administrative Section

ADMINISTRATION is established for incidents when the agency(s) who are involved have a specific need for finance and human resource services. In some cases where only one specific function is required, e.g., cost analysis, that position could be established as a Technical Specialist in PLANNING.

ADMINISTRATION is responsible for:

- Procurement of services and / or supplies from sources within and outside the fire department or community as requested by Command (coordinates with LOGISTICS).
- Documenting all financial costs of the incident.

- Documenting for possible cost recovery for services or supplies. Analyzing and managing legal risk for incidents.
- Documentation for compensation and claims for injuries.
- LIASON is established when Command's ability to personally interface with representatives from outside agencies will interfere with incident management.
- LIASON will establish a Liaison area where all members from outside agencies will be directed to report. This excludes agency representatives that will be part of the Unified Command Post. Public Information Officer will be established when Command's ability to personally meet with media representatives would interfere with incident management.
- The PIO will Establish an Information Area where all members from the media will be directed to report.
- Brief the press after consulting with Command on the information to be released.
- Provide the press with opportunities for pictures of the incident and keep them abreast of conditions.
- Provide other governmental agencies with information about incident conditions on an as needed basis.

Unified Command

- When more than one agency or more than one jurisdiction has a legal responsibility for the mitigation of the incident, Unified Command will be established.
- All agencies with legal responsibility for the incident outcome will influence the Strategy and Tactics that are determined and selected.
- A command post will be established with representation from all of the agencies that have legal jurisdiction.
- The Union Center Fire Co, INC will have the responsibility to implement the Action Plan if the incident is under the fire department's jurisdiction.
- If the incident is under the jurisdiction of another agency, the Union Center Fire Co, INC will function in a support role to the IC from the commanding agency in the Unified Command Post.

The Fire Company may select representatives of the other agencies to act as Division, Group, or Command staff as needed in implementing the Action Plan