

NORTH BERRIEN FIRE RESCUE

Standard Operating Guideline

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Incident Command System

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Fire Chief



Section 1: Purpose

The Incident Management System (IMS) is a tool designed to provide the emergency-scene commander with a system of personnel control, placement and accountability that provides for structured, consistent guidelines that are easily communicated. The IMS provides a practical field-operation plan and insures the safety of personnel working at an incident.

This Incident Management System is intended to provide a standard approach to the management of emergency incidents. The many different and complex situations encountered by emergency responders require a considerable amount of judgment in the application of the Incident Management System. The primary objective is always to manage the incident, not to fully implement and utilize the incident management system. The Command Officer should be able to apply the incident management system in a manner that supports effective and efficient management of the incident. The use of the system should not create an additional challenge for the Incident Commander.

This policy outlines a standard guideline for the management of emergency operations and for the safety of personnel. Policies may change or be updated as new operational methods or tactics are learned or may be developed.

The following policy or guidelines are designed to provide a practical framework for the management of emergency operations, while ensuring the safety of personnel.

This Guideline is established to:

1. Provide for the safety of personnel operating at emergency incidents through improved command and control of emergency incidents.
2. This policy's objective is to insure that the North Berrien Fire Rescue Department uses consistent terminology, procedures and structure when operating at any incident, multi-jurisdictional or otherwise.

3. Improve the use of resources and tactical effectiveness.
4. Meet OSHA regulations and NFPA standards requiring the use of an incident command system.

To meet these goals, this department shall implement this incident command system accordingly at all incidents which it has management responsibility.

Section 2: Scope

This procedure is to be followed by all members of the North Berrien Fire Rescue Department.

Section 3: Policy

It shall be the policy of the North Berrien Fire Rescue Department to implement the Incident Management System (IMS) for all Fires, Rescues, Haz-mat , Aircraft incidents, and Water or Ice Rescue incidents. The Incident Management System shall also be used at all incidents in which the scope and complexity of the incident exceeds the capabilities of a single resource response.

Establishing Command and Initial Size-up

“Command” is the term used to identify the individual who is responsible to execute all primary command functions. “Command” is established by transmitting, by radio, the officer’s identity, stating that they are in command, as well as the location of the incident (i.e. 4101 will be Main Street Command.)

Once identified, the officer shall use the radio designation “Command” (i.e. Berrien County from Main Street Command.) The Command Officer shall remain stationary, and will be responsible for requesting additional assistance, assignments of on-scene units, and development of strategy aimed at resolving the incident. The Incident Commander automatically retains any command function not delegated.

The first unit arriving on the scene has responsibility for initiating incident command and conducting an initial size-up. The first arriving apparatus or unit at the scene of an emergency may establish “Initial Command”. The Initial Commander may remain in control or transfer command as conditions dictate. When only a single unit responds, the unit is implied as having established command by announcing its arrival on-scene. For larger multiple-company responses, the officer in charge must clearly identify and announce an assumption of Incident Command and develop an appropriate command structure.

The first unit arriving on the scene, by radio, should provide an incident size-up. A building size-up should include:

Size of the building. (small, medium, large, very large)

Height of the building. (# of stories)

Occupancy type of the building. (residential, commercial, apartment, etc.)

Any visible signs and location of fire or smoke. (smoke showing, obvious working fire, etc.)

Declaration of strategy. (offensive or defensive)

Command identification: e.g., “4101 is Main Street Command.”

Below is an example of an acceptable size-up:

“4122 is on scene of a medium sized, 2 story residential structure with smoke showing. 4101 will be Main Street Command. We will be operating in the offensive strategy.”

*Fire units shall not, under any circumstances, make entry into a structure that is involved with fire or suspected to be involved with fire, before obtaining a 360 degree view of the building. 360 degree view may be obtained either by physically walking or driving around the structure, or by sending another unit to the rear of the structure. The second unit, in this circumstance, must provide a verbal report (in person or over the radio) to the Incident Commander, prior to entry being made.

Initial Command Options

The individual in this role shall be responsible for establishing the command system, initial actions, and requests for additional resources, (i.e. all-call, mutual aid, etc.) The Initial Command officer may operate in the following modes:

- Nothing Showing - Investigation Mode

If command deploys in the “Nothing Showing” mode, the remaining incoming units may be ordered to remain in level 1 staging. In this mode, initial command may be mobile and communicating using a portable radio.

- Fast Attack Mode

This mode is used when the company officer must assist in stabilizing the situation or become involved in other immediate action. In this mode, the officer remains in mobile command or may choose to transfer command to a qualified member outside the building and away from the hot zone. Situations in which the fast attack mode may be employed include:

*Offensive fire attacks in marginal situations.

*Life safety rescue situations that must be accomplished quickly.

*Obvious working incidents that require further quick size-up.

When the fast attack mode is used, the IC will be directly involved in the actual tasks and may be unable to provide effective command. This mode *should last only a few minutes* and should be terminated when:

*The incident is under control and there are sufficient resources to allow the IC to return to command;

*The incident is not immediately stabilized or under control and the IC must retreat to request and direct additional resources;

*Command is transferred to another member.

- Command Mode – Stationary Command Post

Where the occupancy, or incident is large or complex, it is imperative that a well-organized incident command structure is established. If possible, the first arriving company officer should establish an outside command post and maintain command until properly relieved.

A company officer assuming Initial Command has a choice of modes and degrees of personnel involvement in the tactical activities, but continues to be fully responsible for the Command function until Command is transferred to another on-scene officer.

“Command” is responsible for assigning a Safety Officer, or he/she will fulfill this function. The Incident Commander automatically retains any command function not delegated.

“Command” shall determine when the incident is resolved, and shall be responsible for releasing units and downgrading the incident.

Transfer of Command / Establishment of a Fixed Command Post

Arrival of Senior Officers in and of itself does not constitute a transfer and/or sharing of Command. "Command" may be transferred for a variety of reasons; however, the following procedure shall take place prior to the transfer:

The Officer who will be accepting command shall meet "face to face" with the existing Commander, unless unable to because of circumstances and/or conditions. If conditions do not allow for a face to face exchange, the exchange shall take place over the radio. The existing Incident Commander shall brief the new Commander on the following:

- A. General situation status
- B. Primary problem or location, and the current conditions and probabilities.
- C. Current effectiveness of the operations in place, and a review of the tactical goals.
- D. Established strategic objectives.
- E. The current assignment and deployment of operating companies or units.
- F. Any resources located in staging and/or rehab.
- G. Accountability status.

All rules required for the establishment of command shall apply to the transfer. The new Incident Commander shall advise Dispatch of the change. Any changes in established strategic or tactical priorities shall be communicated to all units operating at the scene.

When available on scene, the fixed command post shall be established inside of Battalion 41. Command shall remain inside of the vehicle with the windows up and the doors locked. All communication should be made via radio. The purpose for remaining isolated inside of the Battalion is to limit distraction for the Incident Commander. Command may deviate from this procedure, if he/she deems the situation necessary for him/her to exit the vehicle.

The Incident Commander is responsible for continually re-assessing the scene. When possible, the Incident Commander should re-establish the current operating strategy (offensive or defensive) via radio every 10 minutes, throughout the duration of the incident.

Section 4: Divisions, Groups, Branches, and Sections

Complex emergency situations may exceed the capabilities of one officer to effectively manage the entire operation. It may be necessary to divide the responsibilities of the incident among additional operational and functional areas. Delegating these responsibilities assists with the span of control of Command into more manageable units, allowing Command to communicate with principal positions rather than individual units.

The Incident Commander shall determine which levels and elements of the incident management system that is to be implemented in a particular incident. The Incident Commander shall make assignments based on the availability, knowledge, and qualifications of individuals. Many of these assignments could be completed by personnel from assisting mutual aid departments.

The Incident Commander should begin to assign the appropriate supervisory positions under the following circumstances:

- A. When the Incident Commander foresees a situation which will eventually involve a number of units beyond the average span of control.
- B. When the Incident Commander can no longer effectively manage the number of personnel currently involved in the incident.
- C. When personnel are involved in complex interior operations.
- D. When personnel are operating in a tactical position over which the Incident Commander has little or no control.
- E. When the situation demands close control because of structural conditions, hazardous materials, heavy fire load, marginal offensive situations, etc...

The Incident Commander is a required function at all emergency incidents. Division, Group, Branch and Section Officers are assignments directly under the Incident Commander.

It is extremely important for all operations to abide by an approved accountability system with an incident tracking system. North Berrien Fire Rescue Department shall use the TACT-ICS Tactical Accountability System at all incidents utilizing multiple companies.

Division / Group Supervisors

The following system, known as dividing the incident, shall be used to identify geographical location or functional group at an incident. When in doubt, the Incident Commander shall identify and title certain operational areas. Incident divisions based on geographic location shall be designated as divisions. Incident divisions based on function shall be designated as groups.

Division A:

Division A- (Alpha Division) shall be the side of the building facing the road that has an established street address. This will usually be the front of the building.

If it is not obvious what side of the building is Division A, the Incident Commander will designate the appropriate side.

- Division B: Division B- (Bravo Division) is the exterior side of the structure directly to the left of Division A. This is the next side of the building going clockwise.
- Division C: Division C- (Charlie Division) is the exterior side of the structure directly to the left of Division B. This generally the rear of the building, opposite of Division A.
- Division D: Division D- (Delta Division) is the exterior side of the structure directly to the left of Division C. This is generally the right side of the building, from Division A.

All exposures shall be identified according to their location(s) relative to the fire building. As an example, Exposure C is located on the Division C side of the building, Exposure B is located on the Division B side of the building.

The Incident Commander may assign other geographical points or locations as needed by using reference points. These areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

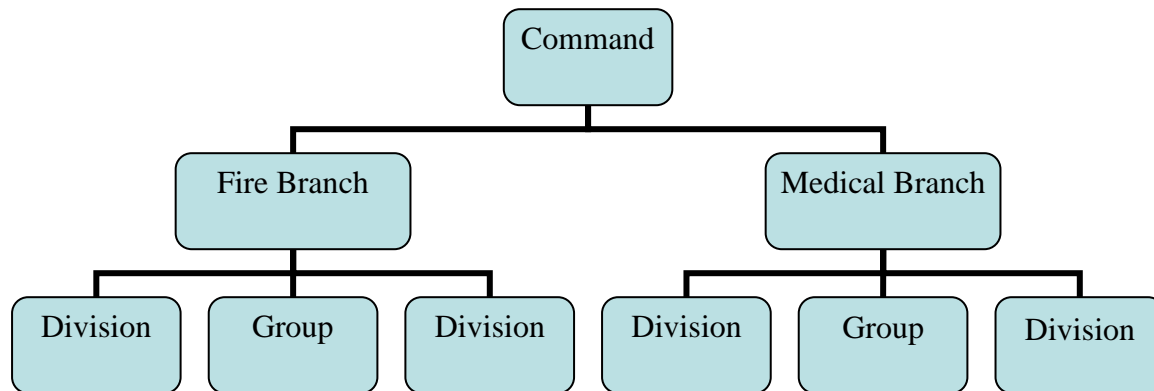
- A. Attic
- B. Roof
- C. Basement
- D. 2nd. Floor, 3rd. Floor, etc...

Branch Directors

As the incident organization grows in complexity and the span of control with divisions and groups is maximized, the Incident Commander may implement an additional intermediate level within the Command organization. The Branch level of the organization is designed to provide coordination between Divisions and Command. Branch Directors supervise and manage a number of Division and Group Supervisors and report to the Incident Commander.

Branch Directors should be utilized at incidents where the span of control with Divisions and Groups is maximized and/or incidents involving two (2) or more distinctly different major management components (i.e., a large fire / rescue incident with mass casualties). The Incident Commander may elect to assign Branch Directors as forward positions to coordinate activities between Divisions and Groups.

The intent of the Branch Level of the Command structure is to split an incident into manageable components and reduce the span of control. The following diagram is an example of a potential Branch operation.



Other types of incidents where Branch Officers could be used include a Haz-Mat incident with a fire and/or that requires large evacuation, a large scale incident spread over a wide geographic area, mass causality incidents with a rescue function, and tactical rescue incidents.

Radio communications should be directed from the Division Supervisor to the Branch Director. The Branch Director will then contact Command for any needs /updates as required.

Sections

As a small incident escalates into a major incident, additional organizational support will be required. As additional Command Officers arrive on-scene, the Command “team” may be expanded through the involvement of Command Officers and staff personnel to fill Section positions.

Section Chiefs assist the Incident Command Staff with the overall management of the incident scene and operate at the Strategic Level. The Incident Commander implements Sections as needed, depending on the situation and priority of needs. Examples of Section functions include:

- Operations Section
- Logistics Section
- Planning Section
- Finance (Administrative) Section.

Section 5: General Guidelines for “Command” Application

Freelancing by personnel will not be tolerated. Any offender shall be removed from the operation immediately to ensure a safe condition for others.

The Incident Commander shall determine between an offensive and a defensive strategy. All personnel operating at the scene shall adhere to the established strategy.

Orders from the Incident Commander shall take precedence over all others, and shall be carried out without delay, unless an immediate and extreme danger to the public and/or fire personnel will result. The Incident Commander shall be advised of any delay, and the reason for the delay in carrying out the order.

If an individual and/or unit has been given an assignment from another officer, and the Incident Commander requests that individual and/or unit to perform a different function, the individual and/or unit shall advise the Incident Commander of their previous assign task. At that time, the Incident Commander will determine if the individual / unit shall continue with their task, or follow the new directive.

All personnel at an incident have a responsibility and an obligation to communicate any changing conditions or hazardous situations.

Communication discipline at an incident must be maintained in order to achieve a safe and effective operation. The chain-of-command shall be honored, and all non-essential communications shall be kept to a minimum.

“Plain language” or “clear text” radio traffic should be used for radio communications to facilitate understanding. Numerical codes or “10-Codes” should not be used at North Berrien Fire Rescue incidents.

Code messages can also be used in sensitive situations when a plain message could cause problems or be unwise to use at the scene. For example, a fatality may be announce over the radio with an announcement of the situation being a “10-0”

The radio term “Emergency Traffic” shall be used as a designation to clear radio traffic. It will be utilized by any unit encountering an immediately perilous or imminent hazard situation and will receive the highest communications priority from Command, Dispatch, and all operating companies / units.

The radio term "May Day, May Day, May Day" shall be used only for firefighters who are lost, disorientated, down, missing, or to activate the F.A.S.T. / R.I.T. All radio communications shall cease or be moved to another channel with the exception of the unit

calling the May Day, the F.A.S.T. / R.I.T., the Incident Commander and/or Rescue Group/F.A.S.T. Supervisor.

All other applicable SOG's shall be followed to insure standardized operations. Deviations must be reported to the Incident Commander, along with the reason for the deviation.

The Incident Commander shall communicate to dispatch, and all units assigned to the incident, progress marks based on reports from their observations and reports from Division, Group or Branch Officers.

Activities that present a significant risk to the safety of personnel should be limited to situations where there is a potential to save endangered lives.

A post-incident analysis (critique) shall be held as soon as possible after any significant working fire, rescues, Hazmat incidents, aircraft emergency, etc.

Section 6: IMS Terminology

Each incident is different in many ways, and may require the use of a small part of the Incident Command System, or the entire concept. The following lists terminology and functions of the Incident Command System:

- Incident Command Team: The IC Team consists of the Incident Commander and the Section Chiefs. The Team is limited by span-of-control and may change in composition as the incident progresses.
- Incident Commander (IC): The stricken community's incident commanding officer. This individual is responsible for overall scene command and control.
- Accountability Officer (AO): The Accountability Officer shall be responsible to assure that all individuals who are actively participating at the emergency scene are accounted for. In addition, the Accountability Officer shall attempt to maintain the "accountability board", whereby locating the units that are operating on the scene. Division Supervisors charged with maintaining the accountability board and tracking crew locations.
- Plans Section (PS): The Planning Section Chief is responsible for the collection, evaluation, dissemination, and use of information about the development of the incident, and the status of the resources. The Planning Section Chief is responsible to retrieve information needed to understand the current situation, predict the probable course of events, and prepare alternate strategies

of the incident. This position reports to and is directed by the IC; oversees and reviews the action plan and supports the IC.

- Public Information (PIO): The PIO formulates and releases information to the media on behalf of the IC, briefs the IC on media needs and prepares for and coordinates press conferences.
- Incident Safety Officer (ISO): The ISO is an operations-level position, which is responsible for physically monitoring incident scene safety. The ISO is responsible for monitoring and assessing hazardous and/or unsafe situations, and developing measures for the assuring of personnel safety. The ISO may exercise emergency authority to stop and/or prevent unsafe acts, but must notify the Incident Commander as soon as possible of the circumstances that warranted such action.
- MAYDAY The term MAYDAY is reserved and used to indicate an emergency exists, involving incident emergency personnel.
- FAST / RIT Team: FAST / RIT is a dedicated rescue team prepared to enter the structure or hot zone and perform firefighter rescue actions
- Operations Section: The Operations Section Chief is responsible for the management of all operations directly applicable to the primary mission. It is the responsibility of the Operations Section Chief to activate and supervise organizational elements in accordance with the Incident Commanders plan, and direct its execution.
- The Operations Section Chief shall also direct the operational plan, request and/or release resources, and suggest or communicate changes to the Incident Commander.
- Liaison Officer: The Liaison Officer is the point of contact for representatives from other assisting agencies (i.e. Red Cross, Public Works, etc...)
- Logistics Section: The Logistics Section Chief is responsible for providing facilities, services, and material to support units assigned to the incident.
- Finance Section: The Finance Section Chief is responsible for all financial aspects of the incident, and shall provide the Incident Commander with a cost analysis of the operation whenever necessary.
- Staging Manager: The Staging Manager is responsible for managing all activities within the staging area, including:

1. Establish and maintain a dedicated area for apparatus and personnel to assemble for assignment.
2. Maintain an adequate equipment and personnel pool to supply the incident, and shall keep the Incident Commander or the Operations Officer apprised of the status of the resources.

Rehabilitation Group: The Rehabilitation Group Supervisor (Rehab Supervisor) shall be responsible for finding and establish an appropriate area for R & R that is safe from the incident, out of the way, protected from the weather, and with easy access. In addition, the Rehab Officer shall maintain a list of personnel that have moved through the Rehab Area, and advise the Accountability Officer when the crew is ready for an additional assignment.

Interior Supervisor(s): The Interior Division Supervisor shall be responsible for interior operations, and shall relay to the Incident Command as to their status, needs, and situation. The Interior Division Supervisor shall be responsible for all units / teams that are assigned to their area.

It may be possible to have more than one- (1) Interior Division Supervisor at the scene of an emergency. If there is more than one Interior Division Supervisor, each supervisor shall be identified (i.e. Interior 1, Interior 2, or 1st. Floor Interior, 2nd. Floor Interior, etc...)

Division Supervisor(s): The primary function of Division Supervisor(s) is to direct the operations of the personnel assigned to their area. As an example, Division 3 Supervisor shall be responsible for all operations at or around Division 3 (rear of building).

Another example would be Roof Division Supervisor. This individual will be responsible for all operations on the roof. All Sector Officers shall coordinate, and report their efforts to Command. It may be possible to have an individual assigned as Sector 3 Officer, who is communicating with Sector 3 Interior.

Rescue Group Supervisor: The Rescue Group Supervisor shall generally be responsible for all operations immediately associated with the rescue/removal of victim(s) at non-fire incidents (i.e., vehicle entrapments, tactical rescues, etc...).

Water Supply Group Supervisor: The Water Supply Group Supervisor shall be responsible for the establishment of a water supply. This includes coordinating shuttle tankers, operating pumps, and fill sites. If the Water Supply Group Supervisor deems that additional tankers are needed, he/she shall inform Command, and Command will request additional units.

Section 7: MABAS Terminology

Automatic Aid	Automatic-aid responses are non-MABAS agreements between two or more departments to respond on an initial call. While auto-aid may utilize mutual-aid resources, it is not mutual-aid.
Mutual-Aid	By MABAS agreement, mutual aid includes providing emergency resources to departments that have exceeded their emergency response capabilities. Under MABAS agreements, departments' are obligated to have sufficient resources to meet their basic response needs. MABAS is not intended to supplant a community or department's own resources and responsibilities.
Still Alarm	The initial response to any incident. The number and type of responding equipment is at the jurisdictional department's discretion. The Still Alarm typically includes the department's own equipment and may include a limited number of auto-aid companies.
Box Alarm	This is the first MABAS alarm level requesting mutual-aid response. In most cases, this would be requested after the resources assigned to the Still Alarm response have been depleted and additional resources are needed.
Special Alarms	Special alarms may include a request for special or additional types of equipment. For example, an IC may "special in" an additional four truck companies for a high-rise fire.
Box Chief:	The Box Chief is a senior advisor to the IC. This position involves assisting the IC with operating the various functions of the Incident Management System.
Engine	A vehicle whose primary purpose is the delivery of water at increased pressures on the emergency scene. Reference is NFPA 1901 and ISO. Minimum staffing is three (3) persons.

Rescue	A vehicle whose primary function is to provide manpower and equipment for rescue functions and operations. Reference is NFPA and ISO. Minimum staffing is three (3) persons.
Tanker	The minimum gallons for a tanker will be 1,800 gallons with a minimum staffing on one (1) person.
Truck	A vehicle whose primary function is performing rescue, ventilation, and/or delivery of large volumes of water from an elevated height on an emergency scene. Reference is NFPA 1901 and ISO. Minimum staffing is three (3) persons.