

Tempe Fire Department Policies and Procedures
Command Procedures
201.01
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PURPOSE

The effective functioning of Fire Department units and personnel at operating incidents requires clear decisive action on the part of an incident commander (IC). 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.

PROCEDURE

The Incident Commander is responsible for the command function at all times. As the identity of the incident commander changes, through transfers of command, this responsibility shifts with the title. The term Command in this procedure refers jointly to both the person and the function.

Command procedures are designed to accomplish the following:

1. Fix the responsibility for command on a certain individual through a standard identification system depending on arrival sequence of members, companies, and officers.
2. Insure that strong, direct, and visible command will be established as early as possible in the operation.
3. Establish an effective framework outlining the activities and responsibilities assigned to Command.
4. Provide a system for the orderly transfer of command to subsequent arriving officers.

Responsibilities assigned to Command include the following specific outcomes:

1. Provide for the safety, accountability, and welfare of personnel.
2. Remove endangered occupants and treat the injured.
3. Stabilize the incident.
4. Provide an ongoing loss control effort.
5. Identify hazardous conditions and materials.
6. Isolate and evacuate exposed occupancies.

The first fire department officer or member to arrive at the scene of a three or more company response shall assume command and remain in command until relieved by a higher ranking officer or until the incident is terminated.

One or two company responses that are not going to escalate beyond the commitment of these companies do not require a formal activation of the incident command system (ICS), however, the first arriving unit or officer will remain accountable for all needed command functions.

INITIAL REPORT

The person assuming command shall transmit a brief initial radio report including:

1. Unit identification on the scene and confirming assumption of command.

2. Description of the encountered incident. The following are examples:
 - A. Building (occupancy, size, arrangement, construction, hazardous and/or fire conditions, threatened exposures).
 - B. Transportation Incidents (number of vehicles involved, type of vehicle(s), overturned, extrication required, fire conditions, spills, number of injured persons).
 - C. Brush (fire conditions, size of field, wind factors, access, threatened exposures).
3. Action being taken.
4. Declaration of strategy (offensive, defensive mode) for structure fires.

FOLLOW-UP REPORT

1. Accountability location.
2. Additional resources/greater alarms.
3. Command Post location or announce mobile command.

RADIO DESIGNATION

The term "Command" shall be used for communications between Command and other units.

A specific identifiable command (i.e., Mill Avenue Command, Manzanita Command, etc.) shall be used to communicate with Alarm.

TACTICAL WORKSHEETS

For effective scene management and to facilitate assumption and passage of command, the appropriate tactical worksheet shall be used by Command to outline and record assignments.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMAND

Command procedures are designed to offer a practical framework for field operations and to effectively and safely integrate the efforts of all members, officers, and companies. The time involved in performing the functions listed below at the beginning of a tactical operation should produce ongoing time savings in the form of a more effective and positive outcome. An arriving officer assuming command can quickly and efficiently perform the standard procedures, if they are well known. This will facilitate an organized effective tactical operation and assure fireground accountability. This is particularly important in more complex situations and when command must be transferred.

Command is responsible for the following functions as required by the circumstances of the situation within his/her own judgement.

- Assume and announce command and establish an effective operating position (Command Post).
- Rapidly evaluate situation (size-up).
- Initiate, maintain, and control the communication process.

- Identify the overall strategy, develop an incident action plan, and assign resources and personnel consistent with plans and policies and procedures.
- Begin building a command structure.
- Provide continuing overall command and progress reports within the framework of Tempe Fire Department fireground procedures.
- Assign sectors, branches, and sections as necessary.
- Review and evaluate efforts and revise the plan as needed.
- Request and assign additional resources in support of tactical operations.
- Return companies to service and terminate command.

These responsibilities stay with Command whether the initial officer remains in command or command is transferred to subsequent arriving officers.

MODES OF COMMAND

An initial arriving company officer must assume either a mobile command or a stationary command.

1. Mobile Command

- A. Nothing Showing Mode - These situations generally require investigation by the first arriving unit. The officer can go with his/her company to check while utilizing a portable radio to maintain mobile command.
- B. Fast Attack Mode - Situations which require immediate action to stabilize the situation, such as interior fires in residences, apartments, or small commercial occupancies require that the officer quickly decide how to commit his/her company. Where a fast interior attack is critical, the officer can take advantage of a portable radio to permit the necessary involvement in the attack and allows direct supervision of the crew without neglecting command responsibilities. This mode should transition to one of the following as quickly as possible.
 - Situation is stabilized.
 - Situation is not stabilized and the officer transfers command to an arriving company or chief officer who shall establish a stationary command.

If a company officer assumes mobile command and elects to join his/her company in action/investigation he/she should announce to Alarm that "Command will be operating in the mobile command mode."

2. Stationary Command - Incidents that require stationary command are situations that by virtue of the size, complexity, or potential of the incident require strong, direct overall command from the outset. In such cases, the officer will initially assume a command position and maintain that position until relieved by a ranking officer.

NOTE: This does not preclude the option of the first arriving company officer having another company officer arriving with him/her taking command. This may be by pre-arrangement or may be necessitated by circumstances; in either case it shall be confirmed by both parties via radio. Command shall not be transferred to an officer who is not on the scene.

If a company officer assumes command and elects not to join his/her company in action, the officer may operate within the following options with regard to the assignment of his/her crew:

1. The officer can assign a "move up" within his/her company and place the company into action with the personnel available. The individual and collective capability of the crew will regulate this action.
2. The officer can assign company members to perform non-hazard zone functions such as reconnaissance or locating a responsible party.
3. The officer can assign company members to another company to work under the direction of the officer of that company. In such cases, the officer must communicate with the receiving officer and confirm the assignment of personnel.

While the company officer assuming command has a choice of modes and degrees of personnel involvement in the attack, that officer continues to be fully responsible for the identified tasks assigned to the command function. In all cases, the initiative and judgment of the officer are of great importance. The command modes identified are not strict rules, but general guidelines to assist the officer in planning his/her actions.

TRANSFER OF COMMAND

The actual transfer of command will be regulated by the following procedures:

1. Arriving ranking officers assuming command will communicate with the officer being relieved by radio or preferably face-to-face on arrival.
2. The officer being relieved will brief the officer assuming command indicating the following:
 - A. General situation status.
 - 1) Fire or incident location, extent, conditions, extension, and exposures.
 - 2) EMS - number and priority of patients.
 - 3) Haz Mat - type of material and amount.
 - 4) Effectiveness of control efforts.
 - B. Deployment and assignment of operating companies. (This is most effectively accomplished by using the appropriate tactical worksheet.)
 - C. Appraisal of needs for additional resources at that time.
3. A command officer, when being relieved, shall review the appropriate tactical control worksheet with the ranking officer in complex situations; this sheet provides the most effective framework for command transfer as it outlines the location and status of resources in a standard form that should be well known to all members.

All members shall eliminate unnecessary radio traffic while responding unless such communications are required to insure that command functions are initiated and completed.

The arrival (in itself) of a ranking officer on the fireground does not mean command has been transferred to that ranking officer. Command is transferred only when the outlined communication functions have been completed.

The officer relieved of command will be utilized to the best advantage by the officer assuming command.

In cases where Command is effectively handling an incident, it may be desirable for that officer to continue in an active command role. In these cases, the ranking officer may assume a supportive role in the overall command function.

COMMAND STAFF

As the incident grows into and past the requirements of a first alarm assignment, the incident commander can become overloaded and overwhelmed with information management, assigning companies, planning, forecasting, calling for additional resources, talking on the radio, and fulfilling all the other functions of command. While the field incident technician (FIT) initially fills out the tactical worksheet and keeps track of responding companies, the immediate need of Command at this point in the incident is support. The next arriving chief officers should be utilized as part of a command "team" consisting of a support officer (SO) and a senior advisor (SA) in addition to the incident commander. If the IC is still playing catch-up with the functions of command, the only reason to assign the next arriving chief officer to a sector is if safety is an extreme concern in that sector.

When a support officer and a senior advisor join the incident commander in the Command Post, there are three people performing the functions of command. They are working as a team to enhance the process and make it more effective. The officer communicating directly with companies, sectors, or branches on the radio shall keep the designation "Command" and should be the only member of the command team talking on the radio.

SUPPORT OFFICER

The support officer function is carried out by the next arriving chief officer. The SO helps the IC to focus attention on strategic and tactical activities by taking responsibility for some of the logistical needs of the incident (initially carried out by the FIT).

Role and Responsibilities

- Define, evaluate, and recommend changes to the plan.
- Provide direction relating to tactical priorities, specific critical fireground factors, and safety.
- Evaluate the need for additional resources.
- Assign logistics responsibilities.
- Assist with the tactical worksheet for control and personnel accountability.
- Evaluate the fireground organization and span of control.
- Other duties as needed.

SENIOR ADVISOR

The senior advisor will normally be the assistant chief or the highest ranking officer in the Command Post. The officer serving as "Command" and the support officer will continue to focus on the completion of tactical priorities, the strategic and tactical plan, and the other components of the incident. The senior advisor's focus is on the entire incident and its impact from a broader perspective, and providing direction and overall guidance. In this role, the senior advisor is essentially acting as the overall incident commander.

Role and Responsibilities

- Review and evaluate the plan and initiate any changes.
- Provide ongoing review of the overall incident (the big picture).
- Review the organizational structure, initiate change or expansion as needed.
- Initiate section and/or branch functions as required.
- Other duties as necessary.

In order to maintain continuity and overall effectiveness, the senior advisor and support officer must be in the Command Post with the initial incident commander.

COMMAND STRUCTURE

It is a responsibility of Command to develop an organizational structure, using standard operating procedures, to effectively manage the incident. The development of the organizational structure begins with the first arriving fire department unit and continues through a number of phases, dependant upon the size and complexity of the incident. The command organization should develop at a pace which stays ahead of the tactical deployment of personnel and resources. In order for the IC to manage the incident, he/she must be able to direct, control, and account for the position and function of all operating companies.

The basic configuration of an incident operates at three levels:

- Strategic Level - Overall direction of the incident.
- Tactical Level - Operational objectives to be accomplished.
- Task Level - Tasks assigned to individual companies.

Strategic Level - Involves the overall command of the incident. The command team is responsible for the strategic level of the command structure. The strategic plan defines where and when resources will be assigned to the incident to control the situation. This overall plan is the basis for developing a command organization, assigning all resources, and establishing tactical objectives by priority. Responsibilities include:

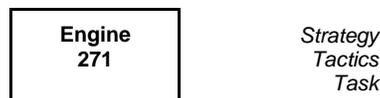
- A. Determining the appropriate strategy (offensive or defensive).
- B. Establishing a strategic plan for the incident.
- C. Setting priorities.
- D. Obtaining and allocating resources.
- E. Predicting outcomes and planning.
- F. Assigning specific objectives to tactical level units.

Tactical Level - Directs activities toward specific objectives that support the strategic goals. Tactical level officers include sector officers who are in charge of grouped resources and are responsible for specific geographic areas or functions and supervision personnel assigned to that sector. A sector assignment comes with the authority to make decisions and assignments, within the boundaries of the overall plan and safety conditions. The accumulated achievements of tactical objectives should accomplish the strategic level goals.

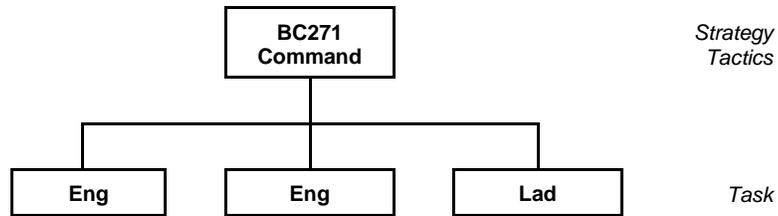
Task Level - Refers to those activities normally accomplished by individual companies or specific personnel. The task level is where the work is actually done. Task level activities are routinely supervised by company officers. The accumulated achievements of task level activities should accomplish tactical objectives.

Examples:

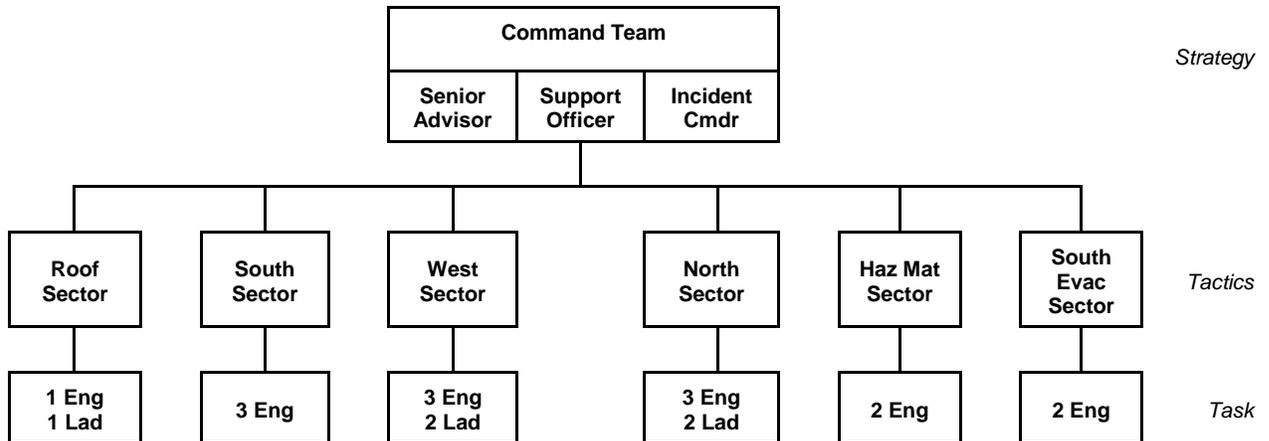
The most basic incident combines all three levels of the command structure. The company officer on a single engine response to a dumpster fire determines the strategy and tactics, and supervises the crew doing the task.



The basic structure for a "routine" incident involving a small number of companies combines the strategic and tactical levels. Companies report directly to Command and operate at the task level.



If the number of companies increases, the ability of a single officer to effectively manage is often exceeded. The IC should group companies into sectors to reduce span of control and to assure fireground accountability (see Policy and Procedure on Sectors).



BRANCHES

As the incident grows in complexity, and the span of control with sectors is maximized, the IC may implement an additional intermediate level within the structure. The branch level is designed to provide coordination between the sectors and command. Branch officers supervise and manage a number of sector officers and report to the IC (see Policy and Procedure on Branches).

- Strategic Level - Incident commander/command staff.
- Coordination Level - Branch officers.
- Tactical Level - Sector officers.
- Task Level - Companies/company officers.

SECTIONS

The specific organizational structure established for any incident will be based upon the management needs of the incident. The command organization should continue to grow to keep ahead of an incident as it escalates to major proportions. During the initial stages, the IC and his/her staff normally carry out all of the functions of Command. However, as one or more areas require independent management, four separate sections can be developed fixing responsibilities for these areas upon section officers. The further arrival of command officers assist the IC at the strategic level.

The fire department's involvement and needs at the incident scene can be divided into four sections. These have the ability to provide for the inclusion of other agencies (such as police or other city/governmental units) under the command/control of the command staff (see Policy and Procedure on Sections). The four sections are:

- Logistics
- Planning
- Administrative
- Operations

Logistics - Provides services and support to all organizational components involved in the incident.

Planning - Gathers, assimilates, analyzes, and processes information needed for effective decision making.

Administrative - Evaluates risk management and financial requirements for the Fire department's involvement in an incident.

Operations - Manages the actual tasks which attain tactical objectives in order to reach strategic goals and effect outcomes.

