

# The Woodlands Fire Department Operational Guidelines

## F-02 - INCIDENT COMMAND OPERATIONS

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### 1.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 1.1 To provide for the safety of responders and others, including the achievement of tactical objectives and the efficient use of resources utilizing the Unified Command Structure as set forth by the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

### 2.0 TERMINOLOGY

- 2.1 The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standard, on-scene, all-hazard incident management system. ICS allows users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the needs of single or multiple incidents.
- 2.2 Incident Commander (IC): Person who assumes overall command of all operations at an incident. The IC will be a professional manager directing all fire ground operations.
- 2.3 Command: The radio designation for the IC to be used throughout the incident in place of the respective radio call number, regardless if command transfers from one individual to another. Command will be identified by incident location (street name or business name, etc.) so that multiple incidents utilizing the ICS can be tracked.
- 2.4 Command Post (CP): A **stationary** position designated by the IC where coordination and control of manpower and equipment takes place. The CP will be given a geographic location, and the location of the CP will be announced over the radio to all personnel on scene and en route.
- 2.5 Command Staff: Command Staff positions are established to assume responsibility for key activities that are not a part of the line organization. Four specific Staff positions exist; Incident Safety Officer, Information Officer, Liaison Officer, Command Aide. Additional positions might be required depending upon the nature and location of the incident or requirements established by the IC.
- 2.6 Unified Command: A unified team effort which allows all agencies with responsibilities for an incident, to manage the incident by a common set of strategies and objectives.

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- 2.7 Incident Action Plan (IAP): Contains general control objectives reflecting the overall incident strategy and specific action plans for the next operational period. The IAP is developed by the IC and/or Planning Section Chief (if appointed). The IAP may be written or non-written (but must be written on hazardous materials incidents). The key goals of an IAP are:
- A. Life Safety
  - B. Incident Stabilization
  - C. Property Conservation
- 2.8 Span of Control: Pertains to the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can effectively manage during an incident. An accepted span of control for a supervisor is three to seven resources; optimally the span of control will not exceed five.
- 2.9 Sections: The organizational level immediately below the IC consisting of four major functional areas: Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration. A sixth functional area, Intelligence, may be established if needed. The head of each of the Section will be called Chief, i.e. Operations Chief.
- 2.10 Branches: The organizational level between Divisions/Groups and the Sections. Used to divide elements to maintain an adequate span of control. The head of each established Branch will be called Director, i.e. Law Enforcement Branch Director.
- 2.11 Divisions/Groups: The organizational level between Single Resource Teams and Branches. The head of each established Division/Group will be called Supervisor.
- A. Divisions are responsible for operations in a specified geographical area of an incident, such as Division 3, Division C, Roof Division, etc.
  - B. Groups are responsible for specified functional assignment such as Ventilation Group, Fire Attack Group, Search Group, etc.
- 2.12 Single Resources: A group of individuals assembled for a single assignment and having a designated crew leader.
- A. Designation for the Single Resource will be task specific such as Fire Attack, Search & Rescue, Ventilation, Salvage, Overhaul, RIT, etc.

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- B. Resources that do not have a specific assignment as outlined in (A.) will be identified by position on their assigned apparatus (*Example:* E102 Officer, E102 Driver, E102 Firefighter, E102 Plugman).
- 2.13 Staging: a process used to maintain control and coordination at the Incident by holding companies uncommitted until they receive specific assignments:
- A. Level I Staging: Units park in their direction of travel, uncommitted, approximately one or two blocks from the scene near an identified water supply.
  - B. Level II Staging: A formal area where companies report.
- 2.14 Administrative Chief (AC): The Chief of the department and Deputy Chiefs.
- 2.15 Passing Command: An informal process by which the first arriving officer does not assume overall scene command but designates the second arriving officer as command upon their arrival. Passing command is usually associated with the fast attack mode, usually involves very little information exchange, and will only occur once during a single incident.
- 2.16 Transferring Command: A formal process by which overall scene command is moved from one individual to another. Transferring command usually takes place face to face and involves the exchange of all relevant incident information. Transferring command may be to a superior officer as the incident escalates or to a subordinate officer as the incident deescalates. Transferring command may take place as many times as necessary during a single incident.

### 3.0 ICS FUNCTIONAL AREAS



#### INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM: COMMAND STAFF & GENERAL STAFF

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### 3.1 Incident Commander (IC):

The IC is the individual who is in charge of and has ultimate responsibility for the overall management of emergency scene activities. All incidents must have someone in charge, whether formally established such as on multi company responses or informally assumed such as on single company responses. The IC will normally carry out all of the functional area and command staff functions until such time as they are assigned to qualified individuals. The IC will always serve as the ultimate Incident Safety Officer.

### 3.2 Operations Section:

The Operations Section is responsible for the direction and coordination of all tactical operations at an incident. For most events, the IC serves the role of the Operations Chief. The Operations Section may be implemented with a complex incident having major demands in one or more of the remaining functional areas.

### 3.3 Planning Section:

The Planning Section is responsible for gathering, assimilating, analyzing, and processing information about the incident status (SITSTAT) and resources (RESTAT). The Planning Section's primary goal is to plan ahead of current events and to identify the need for resources before they are needed through the development and use of the IAP.

### 3.4 Logistics Section

The Logistics Section is the support mechanism for the organization. The Logistics Section Chief provides facilities, services materials and support systems to all organizational components involved in the incident.

### 3.5 Finance/Administration Section:

The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for tracking all incident costs and evaluating the financial considerations of the incident, and provides guidance to the IC on financial issues.

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### 4.0 COMMAND STAFF POSITIONS

- 4.1 Incident Safety Officer - The Incident Safety Officer's (ISO) function is to manage the health and safety of all personnel and to relieve the IC of direct involvement in this responsibility. An ISO will be assigned on all multiple alarm incidents. The ISO does have the authority to bypass the chain of command when necessary to correct imminent hazards. The IC will always be informed of these corrective actions. **It will not be the responsibility of the ISO to direct strategic or tactical operations.**
- 4.2 Public Information Officer (PIO) - The Public Information Officer's function is to interface with the media and other appropriate agencies. The PIO normally will be the point of contact for the media and governmental agencies desiring information.
- 4.3 Liaison Officer - The Liaison Officer's function is to be a point of contact for representatives from other agencies. In a single command structure, assisting agency representatives would coordinate through the Liaison Officer. Under a Unified Command structure, representatives from agencies not involved in the Unified Command would coordinate through the Liaison Officer.
- 4.4 Incident Command Aide – The Incident Command Aide is responsible for assisting the IC with administrative functions at the Command Post (CP) such as monitoring radio traffic, capturing incident notes, tracking deployed and reserve incident resources and other tasks as determined by the IC. Unless otherwise directed by the IC, it will be the responsibility of the Driver/ Operator of the 3<sup>rd</sup> arriving TWFD apparatus to report to the CP and assume the role of the Incident Command Aide. If the third arriving apparatus D/O can not assume the role of Incident Command Aide for any reason (i.e., must pump the apparatus, set up aerial device, etc.), responsibility for assuming the role of Incident Command Aide will be transferred to the fourth arriving apparatus D/O. This transfer must be clearly communicated among those involved.

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### 5.0 PROCEDURE

5.1 The first officer arriving at the scene will size up the incident and determine an appropriate mode and announce the size up and selected mode over the radio. Available modes are:

- A. Investigating - The first arriving officer takes command but proceeds to further investigate the situation. This officer maintains command of the incident until transferred to another officer on location. All other apparatus will arrive on location and automatically Level I Stage unless given a specific assignment.
- B. Offensive Fire Attack – First arriving officer on location takes actions to effect an offensive attack on the fire. This mode may include a fast attack, rescue operation, or other offensive tactics. The officer may pass command to the second arriving officer.
- C. Defensive Fire Attack – First arriving officer on location takes action to set up for defensive operations. This mode will include exposure protection, exterior master streams, water supply establishment, or other defensive measures. The officer may pass command to the second arriving officer.
- D. Command – First arriving officer takes and maintains command of the emergency until transferred to another officer on location.

5.2 Initial responsibilities of the IC may include:

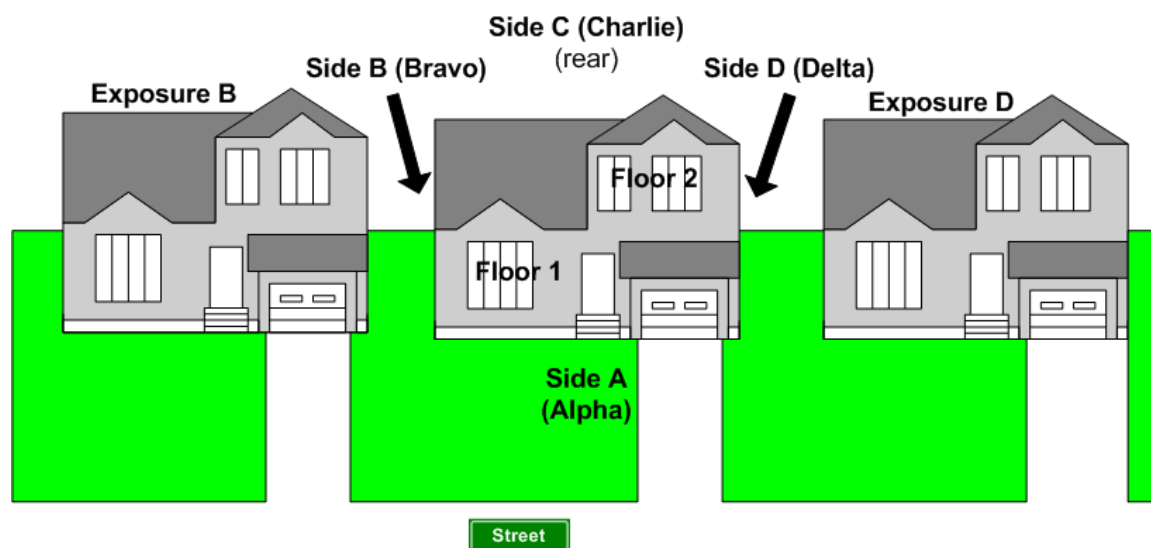
- A. Perform and transmit an incident size-up. Example: *Engine-101 on location, fire showing from the roof of a two-story residence, establishing Command.*
- B. Establish an appropriate Command Post
- C. Evaluate and manage personnel risk
- D. Assess incident priorities (Life Safety, Incident Stabilization, and Property Conservation)
- E. Develop an incident strategy and associated tactics [Incident Action Plan (IAP)]
- F. Implement the IAP by assigning specific tasks
- G. Monitor incident progress and revise IAP as needed
- H. Maintain overall command of the incident and all assigned resources

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- 5.3 Additional responsibilities may include:
- A. Assign Sections, Branches, and or Divisions/Groups as needed to maintain an effective span of control of 3 to 7 (5 optimum)
  - B. Collect and record information concerning responding and staged companies including personnel from support agencies
  - C. Establish a Level II staging area when necessary to manage arriving resources as described in section 5.6 of this guideline
  - D. Review IAP and revise as necessary
  - E. Request and assign additional units as necessary
  - F. Divide the scene/building as necessary to maintain effective control of the incident. Scenes will be divided as follows:



- G. Terminate the emergency and return companies to service.
- 5.4 Administrative Chief (AC) - Arriving Administrative Chiefs (AC) will report directly to the CP and either assume command of the incident or be assigned a specific tasks by the IC. If an AC does not assume Command or is not assigned a specific function by the IC, the AC will remain in the CP area until they are assigned a task or function by the IC.
- 5.5 Command Positioning – The IC must establish a strategically located CP on all working structure fires and other significant incidents. The CP should be located in or at a department vehicle, preferably the Battalion

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Chief's vehicle. The IC will remain at the CP and manage the incident from that position if at all possible.

### 5.6 Staging:

A. Level I Staging will automatically be in effect at all box alarm or greater assignments.

### B. Level II Staging:

- 1) Level II Staging will be established by the IC when needed, primarily on large, complex incidents.
- 2) When the IC formally announces "Level II Staging" and the location, all fire companies and medic units that have not been given an assignment will report to the staging officer at the staging area. Staff officers and support assistance such as the Fire Marshal, utility representatives, etc., will report directly to the CP.
- 3) The IC will designate a staging officer to coordinate and manage the staging area. This officer will conduct all communication between Staging and Command.
- 4) When requested by the IC, the staging officer will verbally assign companies to a specific task or to report to a specific area and or officer. The staging officer will then advise the IC of the specific units assigned.
- 5) The staging officer will coordinate with law enforcement to control access into the staging area, maintain a log of available companies in the staging area, and keep the IC advised periodically of the number of companies still available in staging.

5.7 Divisions/Groups will be utilized by the IC whenever the number of single resource teams begins to exceed a manageable span of control. Divisions/Groups will be composed of at least two single resource teams. A single resource team does not make up a Division or Group. An exception to this is when the IC elects to establish a Division in order to monitor the status of the incident in a specific area. An example to this would be establishing a Division C simply to monitor the incident progress in the rear of a building.

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A. A division may be but not limited to:

- 1) A side of a building (Division C)
- 2) One floor of a building (Division 3)
- 3) A portion of one floor (Division 3B)
- 4) A geographical area (Roof Division)

B. A Group may be but not limited to:

- 1) Investigative
- 2) Search & Rescue
- 3) Fire Attack
- 4) Salvage
- 5) Overhaul
- 6) Ventilation
- 7) RIT

C. Division/Group Supervisors:

- 1) Assigned by the IC and will use a “Division/Group designation” in radio communications.
- 2) Will be in command and control of all companies assigned to them.
- 3) Will keep the IC informed of their working conditions and progress.
- 4) Will request additional resources as needed from **Command** only.
- 5) Will have responsibility for safety and accountability of all members assigned to them.
- 6) Will monitor the activities of the members assigned in order that they are sent to the Rehab Group when it is necessary.
- 7) All communications to and from the divisions/groups will be through the division/group supervisor.

5.8 Single Resources will be designated according to their specific task and a number based on the number of teams assigned that similar functions such as investigative team 1, fire attack team 1, fire attack team 2, search team 1, search team 2, search team 3, and vent team 1.

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- 5.9 Good communications are essential to a safe and effective operation. The IC must clearly communicate to all single resource teams their specific assignments, desired results, and conditions that could affect their specific assignments. The single resource team officer will advise the IC of the conditions they encounter, the actions currently taking place, and any additional resources needed to complete their assignment. This communication should take place at regular intervals.