Bath Township Fire Department			Standard Operating Guideline	
Section **Operations**	**Referral No.** **O-34**	**Subject:** **Incident Command**	**Date Issued** **5/05**	**Date Revised** **4/08**

Purpose:

- This procedure identifies the Standard Operating Guidelines to be employed in establishing Command and the components of the Incident Management System.
- To comply with the National Incident Management System (NIMS)

Scope:

- This standard operating guideline will apply to all personnel.
- In order to effectively manage personnel and resources and to provide for the safety and welfare of personnel, we will always operate within the Incident Management System.

Responsibilities:

- Officer
  - Ensure that personnel respond properly.
  - Provide direction based on the Incident Management System.
  - Ensure the safety of all personnel.
- Personnel
  - All personnel have the responsibility of following the direction of Incident Command at an emergency scene.
  - All personnel have the responsibility to wear the proper safety equipment and to operate in a safe manner.

Purpose of Command Procedures:

- Fix the responsibility for Command (IC) on a certain individual through a standard identification system.
- Ensure that a strong, direct and visible IC will be established from the onset of the incident.
- Establish an effective incident organization defining the activities and responsibilities assigned to the IC and other individuals operating within the Incident Command System (ICS).
- Provide a system to process information to support incident management, planning and decision-making.
- Provide a system for the orderly transfer of command to subsequently arriving officers.

Responsibilities of Command:

- Completion of the incident priorities.
- The incident priorities are:

  a. Life safety
  b. Incident stabilization
  c. Property conservation

- Provide for the safety, accountability, and welfare of personnel.
  - This is an ongoing responsibility throughout the incident.
- Facilitate the completion of the tactical objectives.
  - The IC is responsible for building a command structure that matches the organizational needs of the incident to achieve the tactical objectives for that incident.
- The responsibilities of Command may be stated as:
  - Providing for responder safety and survival
  - Protecting, removing and providing care to endangered customers
  - Stabilizing the incident
  - Conserving property and the environment during and after incident operations
  - Providing short-term services that stabilize and begin to normalize the customer's lives.

Incident Safety:

- Incident Scene must be controlled to protect fire/ emergency personnel and keep unauthorized persons out of hazardous areas
- Incident Commander may delegate incident safety authority to an appointed Safety Officer who may cease or stop an operation without going through the Chain of Command, only where personnel are in imminent danger of being injured or killed.
- All Fire Officers MUST maintain a constant awareness of the position and function of all personnel assigned to operate under supervision.

- Incident Commander must establish a personnel identification system to identify and keep track of personnel entering and leaving hazardous areas or areas where special protective equipment is required.
- ALL Fire Officers must maintain an awareness of the condition of personnel operating within their control and ensure that adequate steps are taken to provide for their safety and health. This includes medical evaluation, food, and fluid replacement, relief and reassignment of fatigued crews.
- Establish a Rapid Intervention Team to insure protection and safety for all Firefighters operating at the incident.
- Orders from the Incident Commander may specify tactical objectives assigned to subordinate positions within the Incident Command Structure or to a specific resource.

Functions of Command:

- The functions of command define the standard activities that are performed by the IC to achieve the tactical objectives.
- The functions of command include:
    - Assume and announce command and establish an effective operating position.
    - Rapidly evaluate the situation
    - Initiate, maintain, and control the communications process.
    - Identify the overall strategy and develop an incident action plan (IAP).
    - Assign companies, groups, and personnel consistent with the IAP, and standard operating guidelines.
    - Develop the ICS organization (sectors/groups) for effective supervision.
    - Review, evaluate and revise the IAP as needed.
    - Provide for the continuity, transfer, and termination of command.
- The IC is responsible for all of these functions. As command is transferred, so is the responsibility for these functions. The first five (5) must be addressed immediately from the initial assumption of command.

- The IC may (and it may be necessary to maintain an effective span of control) delegate certain responsibilities to sector/group leaders to achieve incident goals and objectives, but the overall responsibility still rests with the IC.

- Without a strong central Command, the typical emergency scene quickly deteriorates into an unsafe, out-of-control situation. It is highly unlikely that responders operating in such an unmanaged atmosphere will have the capability to simultaneously coordinate company and team activities and achieve their planned tactical objectives. To effectively control a significant event, there must be a formal and strong leader.

Establishing Command:

- The first fire department member or unit to arrive at the scene of a multiple unit response shall assume command of the incident. The initial IC shall remain in command until command is transferred, or the incident is stabilized and command is terminated.
- The first arriving unit (person) initiates the command process by giving an initial radio report. The on-scene radio report shall include:
    - Unit designation
        - Who you are
    - A brief description of the incident situation
        - What you have
        - Incident size (Building size & construction, estimated acreage for brush fire, etc.)
        - Obvious conditions (Fire or smoke, multiple patients, etc.)
            - Brief description of action taken
                - What you are doing
                - Declaration of strategy
                    - For fires- offensive or defensive
        - Obvious safety concerns
            - Wires down, fuel leaking, collapse, etc.
        - Additional resources required
        - Assumption and identification of Command
            - Who is Command
            - Location of ICP

Transfer of Command:

- Command is transferred to improve the quality of the command organization. When command is transferred it should trigger upgrades in the command structure to better manage resources and mitigate the incident.

- The following guidelines outline the transfer of command:
  - The first department member arriving on the scene will automatically assume command. This will probably be a company officer, but could be any fire department member up to and including the Fire Chief.
  - The first arriving officer will assume command following the transfer of command procedures have been completed if a non-officer has initially assumed command.
  - The additional arriving chief officers should report to the CP to assume support officer positions.
  - Assumption of command is discretionary for the Fire Chief.
- In certain situations, it may be advantageous for the first arriving IC (company officer) to transfer command to the next company officer on the scene. This is indicated when the initial commitment of the first arriving company requires a full crew and another company or chief officer is on the scene. When a chief officer arrives on the scene at the same time as the initial arriving company, the chief officer shall assume command of the incident.

- Passing command to a unit that is not on the scene creates a gap in the command process and compromises incident management. To prevent this gap, command shall not be transferred to an officer who is not on the scene. It is preferable to have the initial arriving officer continue to operate in the Investigation or Fast Attack Modes until command can be transferred to an arriving on-scene unit.

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

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

  - The officer assuming command will communicate with the person being relieved by radio or face-to-face. Face-to-face is the preferred method to transfer command.

  - The person being relieved will brief the officer assuming command indicating at least the following:

- General situation status: incident conditions, IAP, completion of tactical objectives, safety considerations.
- Deployment and assignments of operating companies and personnel.
- Appraisal of the need for additional resources.

- The arrival of a ranking officer on the incident does not mean that command is automatically transferred to that officer. Command is only transferred when the outlined transfer of command process has been completed.
- The officer assuming command will assign the person being relieved of command to the best advantage.
- A ranking officer may elect to have a subordinate continue in the role of IC. In cases where an individual is effectively commanding an incident, and satisfactory progress is being made to bring the incident under control, it may be desirable for that person to continue in an active command role. The ranking officer must determine that the IC is completely aware of the position and function of operating companies and the general status of the situation. In these cases, the arriving ranking officer may assume a supportive role in the overall command functions.

ALL radio traffic shall use "Clear Text". This entails the use of plain speech when no designated phrases are indicated. Use these procedural words and phrases whenever possible. (see Radio Procedures – Clear Text and Radio Procedures – Terminology SOG)

Sectors:

- When multiple resources are assigned to perform tactical functions in a specific geographic area (such as on a specific floor or side of a structure); a "Sector Officer" should be established to provide coordination and control of tactical operations.
- When Sector boundaries are established on the exterior of a structure or in nonstructural incidents (such as wild-land fire), the term "side" and letter designation (A, B, C, D) SHALL be used. In addition to establishing the Sector designation, specific boundaries must be defined. This is particularly important in nonstructural incidents.
- When Division boundaries are defined by level in a structural incident, the term "Division" and a number or descriptive designation SHALL be used (1,2,3, basement). If the Division is given a responsibility for the entire structure, it SHALL be designated as the "Interior Sector".
- In radio communications with the sectors, the number designation SHALL follow “Division” (Command to Division 3). If the descriptive designation is given, it SHALL precede "Sector" (Interior Sector, etc).
- Sector Groups SHALL be designated by the function (Ventilation, Fire Attack, Water Supply, etc) in radio communications with a Sector Group; the function SHALL serve as the designation. (i.e. Ventilation group, Fire attack group)