



Charleston County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedures Manual

Sheriff Carl Ritchie

16-01 Incident Command System

- ☐ NEW
- ☒ REVISED
- ☒ REVIEWED

ACA Standards Reference:

CALEA Standards Reference: 46.1.1, 46.1.2, 46.1.3, 46.1.4, 46.1.5, 46.1.6, 46.1.7, 46.1.9, 46.1.10, 46.1.13, 46.3.2

NCCHC Standards Reference:

SCLEA Standards Reference:

SC Minimum Standards:

This policy dated 1/29/2025 replaces prior policies cited above and supersedes all previously issued directives.

I. Purpose:

To establish guidelines for the utilization of the Incident Command System.

II. Policy:

The Charleston County Sheriff's Office is committed to protecting life, stabilizing the incident and protecting property while endeavoring to return the community to normality in an unusual occurrence and disaster management.

III. Definitions:

A. For purposes of this procedure, the word "deputy" applies to all agency employees with a certification classification of Class I, Class II, Class III, or Reserve Deputy, as defined by the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy.

The following terms are used interchangeably; however, they carry guidance to specific employees based on usage of the term:

1. Deputy, deputies, deputy sheriff, detention deputy, sworn employee, uniformed sworn employee, sworn administrative employee, and
2. civilian, non-sworn employee.

B. *Employee:* When used without further clarification, the term employee is inclusive of all agency members (sworn and non-sworn).

IV. Procedure:

A. Federal law requires the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) for response to Hazmat incidents. Additionally, ICS will be the standard for agency response to all unusual occurrences and disaster management.

B. Initially, the Incident Commander (IC) will be the senior first responder to arrive at the scene. As additional responders arrive, command will transfer on the basis of who has primary authority for the overall incident.

1. A deputy sheriff who is the first emergency responder arriving at an ICS emergency scene will advise the Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center (hereafter referred to as 911 Center) that they have assumed Incident Command.

2. In incidents that the agency exercises overall responsibility, a sworn supervisor will assume Incident Command as soon as possible.
- C. Responding units will advise the 911 Center that they are enroute and/or on-scene. Off-duty deputy sheriffs will advise the 911 Center to show them on-duty and responding to the scene and/or on-scene. Ideally, once arrived, they will report to and/or advise the IC that they are on-scene for assignment; however, if it is an active threat scenario, it is understood that the responding deputy sheriff may not be afforded that opportunity. Once on-scene, all non-uniformed responding deputy sheriffs will don their issued protective vest / body armor that clearly identifies them as law enforcement.
- D. The IC/Command function is responsible for developing strategies, managing resources, and planning overall operations. The IC has full responsibility for overall management of an incident and is responsible for:
1. activating the incident command system; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item a)
 2. establishing a command post; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item b)
 3. initiating the notification and mobilization of additional agency personnel; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item c)
 4. obtaining support from other agencies; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item d and 46.1.10 item b)
 5. establishing a unified command, if necessary; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item e)
 6. establishing a staging area, if necessary; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item f)
 7. providing public information and maintaining media relations; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item g and 46.1.10 item a)
 8. maintaining the safety of all affected personnel; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item h)
 9. ensuring the 911 Center is advised of current incident conditions;
 10. constantly evaluating the situation;
 11. ensuring resource needs are assessed, ordered, deployed and released as needed; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.10 item b)

12. assessing incident priorities;
 13. determining strategic goals and tactical objectives;
 14. ensuring the incident action plan is developed;
(Ref: CALEA 46.1.5 item a)
 15. developing the appropriate incident command structure for the incident;
 16. ensuring that overall emergency activities are coordinated;
 17. ensuring that information released to the media is in accordance with the agency's policy [2-15 Release of Information](#); and
 18. preparing a documented after-action report. (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item i)
- E. The IC will ensure that responding units are directed to areas for immediate utilization or to a designated standby or staging position. Independent commitment of personnel and resources in conflict with the IC's objectives will be avoided.
- F. The IC should continually obtain progress reports from operating units and evaluate efforts. The action plan should be revised or refined as necessary.
- G. The IC retains responsibility for incident management until properly relieved.
1. At transfer of command, the outgoing IC will give the incoming IC a full briefing.
 2. Incident Command will be transferred in person whenever possible to facilitate effective communication and feedback. If face-to-face communication is not possible, transfer of command by radio may be accomplished.
 3. When transferring Incident Command, the person being relieved should at a minimum provide the incoming IC with:
 - a. an assessment of the general conditions and tactical priorities;

- b. current personnel and equipment assignments;
 - c. resources available for assignment; and
 - d. additional resources needed.
- 4. Any time an agency member assumes Incident Command the 911 Center will be notified.
- 5. The 911 Center will be notified if Incident Command is transferred to another agency.
- H. If the agency does not have primary responsibility for the incident, agency members will only assume Incident Command until command is properly transferred to the agency that has primary authority for the overall incident. Agency members will provide support as necessary, regardless of which agency exercises Incident Command.
- I. Unified Command may be established under ICS when multiple agencies contribute to the command process. Unified Command may be utilized when an incident is within the agency's jurisdiction, but other agencies have concurrent jurisdiction, or when an incident is multi-jurisdictional in nature, or when more than one commander is designated to share overall management responsibility. Overall goals, objectives, operations and use of resources will be decided jointly. (Ref: CALEA 46.1.3 item e)
- J. The ICS permits a clear point of control and can be expanded or contracted to escalating or diminishing situations.
 - 1. When ICS is activated, all incidents, regardless of size or complexity, will have, at a minimum, an IC.
 - 2. The ultimate goals are to protect life, stabilize the incident and protect property. The IC will base the decision to expand or contract the ICS organization on three major incident priorities:
 - a. the life safety of emergency responders and the public;
 - b. incident stability; and
 - c. property conservation.

3. As incidents grow, the IC may delegate authority for performing certain activities to others. As required, the IC may establish a Safety, Liaison and/or Information Officer.
4. The Safety Officer is responsible for monitoring the entire incident for potential threats to personnel safety and developing measures for assuring personnel safety. This position is usually only activated in very large and complex incidents and reports directly to the IC.
5. The Liaison Officer serves as a point of contact with other agencies and departments. Responsibilities include:
 - a. coordinating activities with other agencies to allow each agency or department to contribute their expertise and to avoid duplication of effort;
 - b. establishing lines of authority, responsibility and communication with other departments and agencies; and
 - c. establishing or designating a specific location where outside agencies can report to, work, and communicate with each other.
6. The Information Officer is responsible for interfacing with the media in order to relieve the IC from this function. When practical, this position should be filled by the agency's Public Information Officer. The Information Officer's responsibilities include:
 - a. establishing a media post in an area away from the command post and other incident activities;
 - b. arranging for press conferences, media tours and interviews; and
 - c. acting as a central point of contact for dissemination of information to the media and the public.
7. As incidents become more involved the IC can activate additional general staff sections to include Operations, Planning, Logistics, and/or Finance Administration. Each section has the authority to expand internally to meet the needs of the situation.

- K. The Operations function will be responsible for:
 - 1. establishing perimeters;
 - 2. conducting evacuations; (Ref: CALEA 46.1.10 item *d*)
 - 3. maintaining command post and scene security;
 - 4. providing for detainee transportation, processing, and confinement;
 - 5. directing and controlling traffic; and
 - 6. conducting post-incident investigation. (Ref: CALEA 46.1.4 items *a-f*)
- L. The Planning function will be responsible for:
 - 1. preparing a documented incident action plan;
 - 2. gathering and disseminating information and intelligence;
 - 3. participating in a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)/Continuity of Government Plan (COG); and (Ref: CALEA 46.1.13)
 - 4. planning post-incident demobilization. (Ref: CALEA 46.1.5 items *a-c*)
- M. The Logistics function will be responsible for:
 - 1. communications;
 - 2. transportation;
 - 3. medical support;
 - 4. supplies; and
 - 5. specialized team and equipment needs. (Ref: CALEA 46.1.6 items *a-e*)
- N. The Finance/Administration function will be responsible for:
 - 1. recording personnel time;
 - 2. procuring additional resources;
 - 3. recording expenses;

4. documenting injuries and liability issues; and
 5. preparing appropriate reimbursement documents, if applicable.
(Ref: CALEA 46.1.7 items a-e)
- O. The IC will designate a radio frequency. During extended operations, Sheriff's Office personnel may be directed to a mutual aid channel for radio communications.
1. The 911 Center will clear the channel of all unrelated traffic during a critical incident. The channel will remain in emergency status until the IC advises the 911 Center to lift emergency status. During emergency radio status, personnel will refrain from unnecessary transmissions or switch to another channel to relay information to the 911 Center.
 2. The 911 Center will maintain communications with other agencies as directed.
 3. If involved agencies do not use the same codes and phonetic alphabet, the IC will direct that "plain language" be used.
 4. When multiple incidents are being mitigated simultaneously, emergency incidents should be given specific names or designators to reduce confusion.
- P. At ICS emergency incidents, personnel will:
1. assume responsibility for activities within their span-of-control, including responsibility for the safety of personnel within their designated areas;
 2. work toward assigned objectives within the overall strategy defined by the IC;
 3. provide progress reports to higher level supervisors;
 4. communicate recommended changes in strategy or tactics to the IC through supervisory levels, when they are in a position to make recommendations; and
 5. be alert to conditions and actions that create a hazard within their span-of-control.

- Q. If an emergency or disaster necessitates opening of the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) then the ICS will serve as field command and the EOC would be staffed as necessary per the Charleston County Emergency Operations Plan.
1. Certain functions such as Liaison, Public Information, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance may be directed from the EOC as required.
 2. During emergency operations, personnel will utilize the Charleston County Emergency Preparedness Operations Organization Assignment List to track assignments and personnel involved.
(Ref: CALEA 46.1.5 item c)
- R. A Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)/Continuity of Government Plan (COG) will be implemented in order to maintain and ensure primary mission essential functions and operations of the Sheriff's Office in times of manmade or natural disasters, or other circumstances having detrimental effects on the staffing of critical functions.
1. In the event of a natural or manmade disaster, or other circumstances that, within the Sheriff's discretion, may warrant adjustments to agency operations to ensure an acceptable level of service while maintaining the safety and well-being of Agency members, the Sheriff or designee may initiate a COOP/COG Plan, with ICS protocols implemented as outlined in this policy. Depending on the event, the phases of the event may include:
 - a. *Readiness and preparedness:* When time warrants (i.e., a planned/anticipated event), begin agency's members personal preparedness and limiting non-essential functions of the Agency.
 - b. *Activation:* Plans, procedures, emergency schedules, and transfer/relocation of personnel and equipment, if required, are activated. A partial activation may be ordered if circumstances don't warrant a full activation of personnel and resources. Coordination with Charleston County Emergency Management on the activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) if it is determined that the circumstances are of a sufficient magnitude to require deviation from established protocols.

- c. *Emergency Operations:* Full execution of essential operations with mobilization of personnel and equipment as circumstances dictate.
 - d. *Recovery:* Normal operations resume with an After-Action Report completed.
- 2. Responses to specific event types, whether man-made or natural, and deployment of Agency or County resources are outlined in the agency's [Unusual Occurrence Manual](#) and Charleston County Emergency Management's [Red Book](#) and should be utilized as a guide when appropriate.
- 3. Affected agency personnel will conduct or participate in a tabletop or full-scale COOP/COG exercise at a minimum of once every four years.
(Ref: CALEA 46.1.13)
- S. Deputy sheriffs will receive documented training on hazmat response.
(Ref: CALEA 46.3.2)
- T. At least annually, the affected agency personnel will complete ICS and [Unusual Occurrence Manual](#) training.
(Ref: CALEA 46.1.9 item a)
- U. At least biennially, the affected agency personnel will conduct or participate in a tabletop or full-scale exercise to assess the agency's capabilities with ICS and the [Unusual Occurrence Manual](#).
(Ref: CALEA 46.1.9 item b)
- V. Following any unusual occurrence, whether of natural or man-made origin, there is the need to review tactics, develop intelligence for future incidents, screen actions for possible civil liability and generally document the incident for historical purposes. An After-Action Report for internal use will be completed by the IC and forwarded to the Sheriff every time the agency activates or participates in the ICS. *After Action Reports* will be completed in accordance with the [Unusual Occurrence Manual](#).
- W. Written plans and procedures for specific incidents are provided in the [Unusual Occurrences Manual](#). These plans are available to all supervisory personnel.
(Ref: CALEA 46.1.1)