



**UNIFIED FIRE AUTHORITY
OPERATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES**

Affiliation: Command Guidelines

Subject: Establishing Command

Number: 450-02

Approved: 8/12/2020 By: AC Stephen Higgs

Last Reviewed: 10/20/2025 By: BC Brad Lynn

PURPOSE:

Establish a common operating picture for the initial and ongoing Command Officer to manage emergency incident operations from routine small Type-5 incidents to Type-1 major disasters.

PROCEDURE:

The first arriving officer is responsible for establishing Incident Command. This is accomplished by transmitting an initial arrival report, completing a 360° assessment, identifying the incident priorities: Size Up, Locate, Identify, Cool, Extinguish, Rescue, and Salvage (SLICERS), developing an initial strategy, making tactical assignments, and maintaining accountability.

If the Incident Command (IC) is established by a Captain, the IC will be passed to a Battalion Chief upon arrival. The Battalion Chief upon assuming Incident Command has the following options for the Captain: retain the Captain at the command post as a resource officer, re-assign the Captain as a division or group supervisor, or release the Captain from the command post to engage at the task level with their crew.

Once the Battalion Chief has gathered situational awareness and assumed command, the incident command post (ICP) should be established at the Battalion vehicle.

1.0 Incident Priorities

The incident commander is responsible to address the following tactical priorities on every response:

- Life Safety – remove endangered occupants, treat the injured and prioritize incident objectives to reduce potential harm to emergency crews at the incident.
- Incident Stabilization – identify the incident priorities (competing priorities), most often fast water on the fire and controlling the ventilation.
- Property Conservation – take those steps that will conserve property not yet impacted by the incident.
- Safety, Accountability and Welfare of Responders – this is an ongoing process and responsibility of the company officer and command officers.



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2.0 Initial Command Functions

- Arrival and unit identification – brief arrival report to include occupancy and structure description, obvious conditions showing, initial actions being performed, command name, location of command and designation.
- Conduct Incident Size-up – 360° assessment of the structure, utilize SLICERS in this process, consider the use of a Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC), identify incident priorities (fire, immediate rescue, severe exposure, etc.).
- Formulate initial strategy – this is based on incident priorities. Make tactical assignments to support your strategy and stabilize the incident.
- Prepare to transfer command- transfer of command should take place once the Battalion Chief has arrived on scene and has conducted their own size up and 360° assessment of the incident.

3.0 Initial Command Options

- Investigation – (nothing showing/no obvious problem) assume command and complete a thorough size-up and investigation.
- Working Fire – (offensive/defensive) incidents that have fire conditions showing on arrival. The first arriving Officer establishes command and determines the initial strategy and makes initial tactical assignments to the first arriving crews. Command will be transferred once the Battalion Chief has arrived on scene and has conducted their own size up and 360° assessment of the incident.
 - If immediate tactical engagement is required by the first due Captain (immediate rescue) command may be passed to the next Officer arrived on scene. This must be clearly communicated via radio and the on-scene Officer must formally assume command and conduct their own size-up and 360° assessment of the incident to support the incident priorities.

4.0 Transfer of Command

It is the expectation that the first arriving Battalion Chief will assume Incident Command after completing their own size-up and 360° assessment. Whenever possible, the transfer of command will be done face-to-face. The initial IC will brief the Battalion Chief assuming command on the following: current incident conditions, deployment of



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resources (tactical assignments), and progress toward stabilization, safety considerations, need for additional resources and any other pertinent information.

At times, the Battalion Chief may take a mentoring/training role and allow the initial incident commander to remain at the command post. In these instances, the Battalion Chief should assume command and keep the initial incident commander at the command post in a mentoring/training position. The objective is to have the Captain supervising their crew, or in a forward leadership role as a division or group supervisor.

- If the initial Incident Commander is engaged in activities to stabilize the incident, they may pass command to the next officer that has arrived on-scene. This transfer of command will likely be done over the radio and will require the new Incident Commander to assume command of the incident, conduct a size-up and continue the development of the incident priorities.

5.0 It is the expectation that Battalion Chiefs and Captains perform their roles within the incident command system. The execution of these duties described in this guideline provides for safe, effective and streamlined operations.