FDNY INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

1. POLICY

1.1 To provide guidelines and concepts to manage an incident in an efficient organized manner, this chapter describes the components, operating capabilities and functions of the Incident Command System (ICS). This chapter is in full compliance with the guidelines set forth by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the New York City Incident Management System (CIMS).

1.2 The Incident Command System will improve safety by providing better accountability of personnel and improved use of resources and tactical effectiveness.

1.3 This part of the document includes a general description of the organizational structure. Descriptions of the duties and responsibilities for each position at various types of incidents appear in other portions of the ICS document.

1.4 ICS breaks down the elements that are required to successfully manage an incident into five main functions. The functions are: COMMAND, PLANNING, OPERATIONS, LOGISTICS, and FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION.

1.5 It is the responsibility of the initial Incident Commander, whether an Officer or a Chief, to implement the necessary functions within ICS based on the needs of the incident. As the needs of the incident grow in complexity and the Command function is transferred to succeeding officers, further expansion of the ICS should take place.

1.6 The INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM is the official policy for the management of all incidents and the development of standard operating procedures. The Department will implement the system at all FDNY incidents and operations.

1.7 The charts depicted in this chapter describe the standard ICS designation, level of responsibility and hierarchy of reporting responsibility within the system.

The following chart indicates the various ICS positions within the system. It depicts management responsibility for reporting and levels of authority for issuing orders. The vertical structure of the system does not show the horizontal communication between the various functions for purposes of coordination and safety. Actions, conditions, or deployment of resources that effect or alter the strategy or tactics of the IC must be reported to the next higher level of command.
2. **CAPABILITIES**

2.1 The Incident Command System provides for the following kinds of operations:
   
   A. Single jurisdiction and single agency.
   
   B. Single jurisdiction and multi-agency.
   
   C. Multi-jurisdiction and multi-agency involvement.

2.2 This organizational structure is capable of adapting to any type or size incident to which the Department responds. The system effectively utilizes existing technology and is adaptable to new technology that may become available. It expands in a logical manner based on the needs of the incident, from the initial response to a major incident.

2.3 The ICS provides basic elements in organization, standard terminology and procedures that ensure efficient operations by trained personnel. It can be implemented with a minimum of disruption to existing procedures and provides the means for adding or subtracting resources in a cost-efficient and effective manner. As the incident grows the IC can staff positions that will focus on specific functional responsibilities to assist in managing the incident. As the incident de-escalates, the organization structure can be reduced.
3. COMPONENTS

The ICS has several characteristics or components. These components interact to create a system that ensures optimum information management and control under normal or crisis conditions. The characteristics are:

- COMMON TERMINOLOGY
- MANAGEABLE SPAN OF CONTROL
- MODULAR ORGANIZATION
- INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS
- UNIFIED COMMAND STRUCTURE
- CONSOLIDATED ACTION PLAN
- DESIGNATED INCIDENT FACILITIES
- RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

3.1 COMMON TERMINOLOGY

3.1.1 The use of common terminology ensures that all members are able to communicate effectively. Standard ICS terminology (for functions, resources, facilities) and the utilization of standard procedures for communicating ensures effective intra-agency communication and greater understanding and coordination among different agencies or departments that operate under an incident command system.

3.1.2 The common terms used in ICS are contained in the Glossary of this document.

3.2 MANAGEABLE SPAN OF CONTROL

3.2.1 Safety and sound management practices dictate that a reasonable span of control exists. The organizational options within the ICS are designed to provide span of control ratios that meet these requirements.

3.2.2 In general the span of control of any individual with management responsibility should range from three to seven with five being ideal. Of course, there is allowance to vary this ratio under certain circumstances. For example, when units are in the process of "taking-up" from an incident "under control," there is less need for the close supervision required during the active operational period.
3.2.3 The kind of incident, nature of the tasks, safety factors and communications will affect the span of control consideration. If tasks are simple and routine, take place in a limited or small area, communications are good, no unusual safety hazards are present and the incident is reasonably stable, then one individual may supervise up to seven subordinates. Conversely, if tasks are demanding, take place over a large area, and the incident is escalating, the span of control might be reduced to three or four.

3.2.4 It is important to be proactive, anticipate change and prepare for it. This is especially true when an incident is escalating and good management is difficult because many people are reporting to the Incident Commander(s).

3.3 MODULAR ORGANIZATION

3.3.1 Modular organization means that the ICS organization evolves based on the type and complexity of the incident. A routine incident will have a simple structure. A complex incident will require a larger organizational structure. The structure may be expanded in anticipation of events that are predictable or those that have the potential for complex incident needs. The organization structure is reduced as the incident is brought under control and resources are released.

3.3.2 Incident Commanders are responsible for the performance of the five main functions within ICS. The functions are COMMAND, PLANNING, OPERATIONS, LOGISTICS and FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION.

3.3.3 Following the span of control guidelines, an IC may respond initially with only a few units. If the IC can manage all the major functional areas no expansion of the organization is required. If however, the incident continues to escalate, the IC may delegate one or more functions to other persons.

3.3.4 Each function or supervisory authority that is delegated performs a specific role in the system and is identified by specific ICS terminology.

3.3.5 If any function is not delegated, it remains the responsibility of the Incident Commander(s).

3.4 INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS

Communications in the System is managed through the use of a communications plan. Initial communications are on the tactical frequency. At major incidents, primary and secondary Tactical and Command channels are available. The Field Communications Unit or the Resources Unit Leader will consult with the IC to satisfy the incident needs. Radios capable of communicating with other city, state and federal agencies are available.
3.5 **UNIFIED COMMAND**

3.5.1 Unified Command is a means of organizing different agencies that have statutory authority and responsibility at large scale incidents, into one coordinated and controlled effort. It is designed to promote close working relationships among different departments and/or agencies.

Under "Unified Command," each department and/or agency will maintain control over its own personnel. It enables all involved agencies to perform their roles effectively, minimize inefficiency and avoid duplication of effort.

3.5.2 The goal of this concept is to develop a single collective approach to managing an incident. The departments act as "one organization" and are managed as such. Instead of several command posts operating independently, the operation is directed from only one "Command Post."

3.5.3 Implementing the plan of action will be under the direction of an Operations Section Chief. The Operations Section Chief could be from the agency that has the greatest involvement and responsibility at the incident, or there could be a Unified Operations Section.

3.5.4 Under Unified Command, the Senior Officials from the agencies meet and work together at one location, developing a strategy and preparing a single plan of action that ensures an integrated operation that will maximize the use of all assigned resources. Communications flow and the ability to rapidly cope with changing incident conditions are improved.

3.5.5 Situations of Unified Command can be found in the CIMS Manual.

3.6 **CONSOLIDATED ACTION PLAN**

3.6.1 All incidents require a plan to solve problems. For routine incidents the initial IC (the first arriving officer) will do this according to established SOP. The plan of action (SOP) established is based on the known risks and hazards that are expected in the majority of our emergency response activities. Specific conditions requiring variations or adaptation of standard procedures are addressed by the first arriving officer and succeeding commanders.

3.6.2 At complex incidents with a large commitment of resources, the SOP used in the early stage of the incident would generally be replaced by a written plan of action if the incident continued into the next operational period.

3.6.3 The plan is developed by a systematic process. The strategy and objectives are established by the IC. The tactical organization is directed by the Operations Section Chief(s). The tasks are performed by assigned resources. The planning process answers "What do we need to know?" and "What do we need to do?" at complex incidents.
3.7 DESIGNATED INCIDENT FACILITIES

3.7.1 An incident facility is an area that is established to serve a particular purpose. In ICS the facilities are given designated names. There are several types of facilities that can be established at an incident. Some are mandated by SOP.

3.7.2 The Incident Commander(s) determines and designates the type(s) of facilities needed based on the incident.

The following are examples of facilities used in the ICS:

A. Incident Command Post - The Incident Command Post (ICP) is the area from which the IC performs the function of managing the incident. There should be only one "Command Post."

Initially, the IC and his aide will staff the ICP. If the incident escalates, individuals assigned to the Command Staff, Operations, Planning and/or Logistics will be present.

In multi-agency operations, the individuals designated by an agency representative should be located at the Command Post (e.g., Con-Edison, Department of Environmental Protection, U.S. Coast Guard). It is from the ICP that the IC delegates management functions to subordinate officers while he provides overall direction.

B. Staging - The area where resources are held awaiting assignment. A staging area may be located away from the incident or any other appropriate location based on need. Staging is under the direction of a Staging Area Manager who reports to the IC or Operations Chief when Operations has been staffed.

C. Rehabilitation Area - The area where personnel are placed to rest, replenish fluids and be protected from the weather (heat or cold).

3.8 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

3.8.1 Within ICS, resources are organized in several ways depending on the incident. Some resources are managed either as single units, groups or teams. The ability to form single units into groups or teams maximizes the use of resources and reduces the communications load. Various options are available to the IC.

3.8.2 Knowledge of the current status of resources at an incident is critical to effective management. The Resources and Situation Unit provides up to date status of resources. The aide of the first to arrive Battalion Chief initially performs this function. The status of resources is continually monitored and this keeps the IC informed and up to date.
3.8.3 All resources at the incident are assigned a status. In ICS, once resources are allocated to an incident, they are assigned to one of three status conditions:

A. Available - ready for immediate assignment.
B. Assigned - performing an active assignment.
C. Out of Service/R&R - not ready for assignment.

3.8.4 Changes in status or location of resources must be promptly reported by the individual who makes the change. This provides an accurate accounting of all tactical resources at the incident.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

4.1 COMMAND - is the functional authority the IC exercises over subordinates. It includes the responsibility for effectively using resources to accomplish strategy. It is the function through which all the incident activities (tactical and support) are directed, coordinated and controlled to accomplish the mission. It encompasses the personnel, equipment, communications, facilities and procedures to plan for what has to be done, issue orders and supervise the execution of operations. ICS uses two Command Models for managing incidents:

4.1.1 Single Command

When an incident occurs within a single jurisdiction and there is no jurisdictional or functional agency overlap, a single IC should be designated with overall incident management responsibility by the appropriate jurisdictional authority.

4.1.2 Unified Command

When an incident occurs and there are jurisdictional and/or functional agency overlaps, a Unified Command will be designated. Agencies meet and work together at one location, developing strategies and preparing a single Incident Action plan.
4.1.3 At all incidents, COMMAND conducts a size-up, develops a strategy and is responsible for its outcome. Command staffs the functions necessary to support the incident.

4.1.4 The IC retains responsibility for Command and the performance of any functions or areas in the system that are not delegated.

4.1.5 At most incidents the IC will handle all the major functions within the ICS. As the incident becomes more complex, or progresses to greater alarms, the IC must delegate some of the authority for performance of the functions to other individuals. Some ICS functions are automatically addressed in our SOPs.

4.1.6 Delegation is the key to ICS. Each of the major functional sections concentrates on a primary assignment and is not distracted by other responsibilities. This provides functional clarity, greater attention to the details of a specific function and fixes accountability.

4.1.7 The IC has the option of implementing a COMMAND STAFF. The Command Staff includes the following functions:

A. The Liaison Officer is the point of contact for assisting and cooperating agency representatives.

B. The Public Information Officer (PIO) is responsible for gathering pertinent factual information concerning the incident. Upon approval from the IC, the PIO will interface with the media and other agencies.

C. The Safety Officer is responsible for monitoring hazardous or unsafe conditions and initiating action to protect personnel from life-threatening situations.
4.2 **PLANNING** - is the function responsible for gathering, evaluating and disseminating information about the incident and status of resources. It prepares alternate strategies and objectives to control the incident. The Planning Section is comprised of several functions:

![Diagram of Planning Section]

4.2.1 The Resources Unit is responsible for maintaining status information of all resources allocated to the incident.

4.2.2 The Situation Unit is responsible for the collection, processing and organization of incident information. Generally this information is graphically displayed on the command board, or other display at the Incident Command Post.

4.2.3 The Demobilization Unit ensures safe, effective, organized release of resources from the incident.

4.2.4 The Documentation Unit maintains an accurate and complete log of incident records for analytical, historical and legal purposes.

4.2.5 Technical specialists advise the IC on technical matters concerning incident operations such as environmental concerns, building construction, hazardous materials, specialized operations, etc. Technical Specialists may be assigned anywhere in the Incident Command structure.
4.3 **OPERATIONS** - is the function of managing all the tactical operations at the incident to accomplish the primary mission and plan of the Incident Commander(s).

All units are managed using the fundamental principles of Incident Command. An Officer assigns and supervises various functions (such as pump operator, forcible entry etc.) at each operation. These functions form the basis of our standard operating procedures. The Company organization provides for a manageable span of control over specific functional areas.

As operations escalate beyond the first responder SOP, succeeding Commanders have several options available. Unless mandated, the specific command options utilized at an operation (within the ICS parameters) depend on the nature and complexity of the incident and the needs of the Incident Commander(s). ICS is not rigid. Experience, common sense, and imagination are the guiding principle in using these options.

These options may be activated at any appropriate level of command to solve/reduce span of control problems. They provide control, supervision and coordination in a designated area or for a specific function. They fix personnel accountability.
4.3.1 The following describe the options available within the System to utilize resources:

A. SINGLE RESOURCES

  Company - A company is a vehicle providing equipment capability and personnel such as an Engine Company, Ladder Company or Rescue Company.

  Team - A specific number of personnel assembled for an assignment such as search, ventilation under the direction of a team leader.

B. COMBINING RESOURCES

To maintain a manageable span of control, improve communication, improve control and coordination, single resources may be combined into sectors and groups.

1. Sector - Defines the activities and operations of resources within an assigned geographical area. For example, the IC might form a sector from units operating in an exposure to reduce the span of control and more efficiently manage radio traffic by only dealing with one sector supervisor. A Sector Supervisor manages a sector.

2. Group - Consists of resources formed to address specific functional tasks. For example, the IC forms a group to search specific floors of a high rise building. Each resource within the group performs the search function and reports to a group supervisor. Additionally, at the scene of a multiple casualty incident, resources may be assigned to perform the functions of triage, treatment and transportation. The IC has achieved closer supervision of the units and reduced the number of radio contacts. This allows more time to deal with other problems that exist. A Group Supervisor manages a group.

   a. Functional and geographical assignments may not always require the implementation of a group or sector. An activity that requires one unit to effectively handle the problem would not need the activation of a sector or group. There would not be a coordination problem and the assignment does not cover a large area or the supervision of many units.

   b. While sectors are restricted to a specific geographical area such as an exposure, groups may cross sector boundaries to accomplish an assigned functional task (e.g., search). When a group is assigned a task or function that overlaps sector boundaries, the sector may be relieved of that responsibility. Groups and sectors coordinate their efforts and report to the next higher level of command.

   c. Sector/group supervisors are responsible for the implementation of their assigned portion of the tactical plan and they coordinate activities within their assignment. They assign specific tasks to single resources under their control.
d. Sector/group supervisors keep the next higher level of command informed of the status of conditions and resources within their assigned area of responsibility.

e. Sector/group supervisors require certain information from the next higher level of command. They must know their radio designation, assigned objectives and resources assigned to their command.

C. SPECIAL APPLICATION

1. **Strike Team** - Specific combinations of the same kind and type of resources with common communications, under the supervision of an Officer designated as a Strike Team Leader (e.g., five engine companies and a Chief Officer assigned to brand patrol at a multiple alarm).

2. **Task Force** - Any combination of resources with communications capability, under the supervision of an Officer designated as a Task Force Leader, put together for a temporary assignment. Generally, the number of resources in a task force should be limited to five for control purposes. A task force may be formed when more than one unit must be managed. Task forces may be formed for many functions. They may be pre-established or made up at the incident (e.g., members of FDNY-FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Task Force).

4.3.2 BRANCHES - EXPANDING THE ORGANIZATION

The next higher form of organizational tool available to the IC is called a BRANCH. A branch is created when the span of control over sectors and groups is excessive or at major incidents when resources from other agencies are committed. A branch is managed by a Branch Director.

Branch Director:

1. Manages a specific part of the tactical plan appropriate to that branch.
2. Coordinates the activities of units within the branch.
3. Assigns specific tasks to sectors or groups within the branch.
4. Keeps the next higher level informed of the status in the area of responsibility.

Branches may be established at an incident to serve several purposes. In general, branches may be established for the following reasons:

- Span of control
- Functional
- Multi-agency
- Geographical
A. SPAN OF CONTROL

Branches should be utilized at incidents where the span of control of sectors or groups becomes unmanageable.

In the following example, if the organization were formed this way the Operations Section Chief(s) would be beyond a manageable span of control.

Before Multi-Branch Structure

![Diagram of before multi-branch structure]

A two-branch organization would be appropriate.

![Diagram of after multi-branch structure]

Branches should operate in their area of responsibility. The radio designation should reflect the objective of the branch. When Operations implements a branch, the sector should be notified of their new Branch Director.
B. FUNCTIONAL BRANCHES
When the nature of the incident calls for a functional branch structure, the organization is created with each functional branch under the direction of a single Operations Section Chief or a Unified Operations Section.

In the following example a medical function was added because the complexity of the operation was beyond the sector or group level capability.

C. LARGE SCALE MULTI-AGENCY INCIDENTS
When the incident requires a large commitment of resources from multiple agencies, resources are best managed by the agency that has normal control over those resources. It is anticipated other agencies would operate as their branch under the direction of a single Operations Section Chief or a Unified Operations Section.

An example would be a major hazardous materials incident requiring multi-agency commitment.
4.3.3 STAGING - A specific area to which resources are assigned before deployment. Staging has several advantages:

- It is a checkpoint to provide accountability and prevent freelancing.
- It provides an area of protection from exposure in hazardous environments.
- It establishes a reserve immediately available for a contingency.

Initially, the IC can manage the staging area. If an incident is very complex, the IC can set up a formal staging area and assign an Officer as Staging Area Manager.

If the position of Operations is staffed, Staging reports to Operations since this Chief now is managing the tactical part of the Incident Action Plan. The Operations Section allocates the available resources from a defined staging area.

4.4 LOGISTICS - is the function that provides the supplies, services and facilities needed to support the incident. Within the Logistics Section, functions are carried out through various Service and Support functions.

4.4.1 Service branch includes Communication, Rehabilitation and Food Units.

A. Communication Unit - establishes and operates the network of resources to manage the radio traffic and information flow within the ICS and between the Incident Command Post and the dispatcher.

B. Rehabilitation Unit - responsible for ensuring rehabilitation assistance for incident responders. This unit does not provide assistance for civilians.

C. Food Unit - responsible for coordinating the feeding of personnel at extended operations, if necessary.
4.4.2 Support Branch includes the Supply, Facilities and Ground Support Units. Its function is to supply and re-supply the hardware and special equipment to carry out and sustain the operation.

A. Supply - responsible for providing, ordering equipment and receiving supplies for the incident.
B. Facilities - responsible for layout and activation of incident facilities e.g., Command Post and Rehab.
C. Ground Support - is responsible for support of out-of-service resources, fueling, service, and repair of vehicles as well as transportation.

4.5 **FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION** - is the function responsible for financial cost recording and recovery when possible for the incident operations.

4.5.1 The Finance/Administrative Section is responsible for recording vendor contracts and collecting expenses and cost data for the incident. It provides cost estimates and cost-saving recommendations.

4.5.2 Under most circumstances, this function is performed as part of the Department's normal administrative function. However, cost recovery and budget justification begin with data collection and tracking. Commanders at every level should be aware of the actual and potential impact of the costs of emergency operations in decision making.
5. **SUMMARY**

5.1 Think of ICS as a toolbox available to help the IC manage the incident. Use only the tools that are needed. The use of the tools that are available to you will make the job of managing an incident more tolerable and less stressful. Tools that are not needed should be left in the box.

5.2 Incident Command is not a static concept. The System and this document are meant to be used and constantly improved to meet the changing and challenging environment facing emergency services. Other training material, checklists, guides and support material, and SOPs are under development to support professional operations in the field.

5.3 Practice and experience using the Incident Command System and its components will determine the level of professionalism, safety and efficiency achieved in emergency operations by this Department.