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NFPA 1561 Fire Department Incident Management System 1990 Edition

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Policy Adopted by NFPA Board of Directors on December 3, 1982

The Board of Directors reaffirms that the National Fire Protection Association recognizes that the toxicity of the products of combustion is an important factor in the loss of life from fire. NFPA has dealt with that subject in its technical committee documents for many years.

There is a concern that the growing use of synthetic materials may produce more or additional toxic products of combustion in a fire environment. The Board has, therefore, asked all NFPA technical committees to review the documents for which they are responsible to be sure that the documents respond to this current concern. To assist the committees in meeting this request, the Board has appointed an advisory committee to provide specific guidance to the technical committees on questions relating to assessing the hazards of the products of combustion.

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NFPA 1561

Standard on

Fire Department Incident Management System

1990 Edition

This edition of NFPA 1561, *Standard on Fire Department Incident Management System*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health and acted on by the National Fire Protection Association, Inc. at its Annual Meeting held May 21-24, 1990 in San Antonio, TX. It was issued by the Standards Council on July 20, 1990, with an effective date of August 17, 1990.

The 1990 edition of this document has been approved by the American National Standards Institute.

Origin and Development of NFPA 1561

The Technical Committee on Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health is charged with preparing documents that will have a significant impact on reducing fire fighter injuries and deaths. The adoption of NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program* in 1987 was a major accomplishment in that effort.

One of the areas addressed in NFPA 1500 is a requirement for fire departments to conduct emergency operations with an effective incident management system. While operational coordination and effectiveness are often considered to be the primary objectives of an incident management system, the safety aspects of a functional command structure were recognized by the Technical Committee. The consequences of operating without an effective incident management system have been documented in numerous deaths and injuries to fire fighters.

At the time NFPA 1500 was developed, several different incident management systems and many local variations were known to be in use. In the development of these systems, safety and health were not necessarily identified as major concerns. The Technical Committee determined that, in addition to requiring the use of an incident management system, there should be performance criteria for the components of a system that contributes directly toward safety and health objectives, and developed a standard on incident management that would specifically address those concerns. The Committee began work on NFPA 1561 in July, 1987, and held several meetings in various locations around the country to gain regional input.

In developing this document, the Committee examined several incident management systems that were in use in different fire departments and related organizations. Committee members also met with representatives of departments that were successfully using a variety of systems and organizations that developed and provided training in recognized systems.

The Committee came to the conclusion that many of the performance objectives of this standard could be met through the adoption of one of the existing recognized systems. Some additional considerations may be necessary to address specific safety and health concerns, including the problem of maintaining accountability for members operating at the scene of an incident. The standard allows organizations to adopt or modify existing systems to suit local requirements and preferences, as long as they meet the performance objectives that are considered important for safety and health. The majority of systems were observed to be more similar than different, with the greatest variations in terminology for similar components. The overall opinion of the Committee was that it would be more beneficial to have every fire department adopt a suitable system than to create one specific system and suggest that every organization should adopt it. Most of the existing recognized systems should meet the requirements of this document with little or no modification.

The Technical Committee believes that this document will emphasize the essential considerations for safety and health in incident management systems, and lead the fire service to utilize such systems to manage all emergency incidents. The goal will be reached when effective incident management is routinely practiced for all types of situations.

The final draft of this document was completed in March, 1989 and submitted for the 1990 Annual Meeting cycle. It was voted on by the Association at the 1990 Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas on May 23, 1990.

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NOTE: Membership on a Committee shall not in and of itself constitute an endorsement of the Association or any document developed by the Committee on which the member serves.

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NFPA 1561

Standard on

Fire Department Incident Management System

1990 Edition

NOTICE: An asterisk (*) following the number or letter designating a paragraph indicates explanatory material on that paragraph in Appendix A.

Information on referenced publications can be found in Chapter 5 and Appendix C.

Chapter 1 Administration

1-1 Scope.

1-1.1* This standard contains the minimum requirements for an incident management system to be used by fire departments to manage all emergency incidents.

1-1.2* These requirements are applicable to organizations providing rescue, fire suppression, and other emergency services including public, military, and private fire departments and fire brigades.

1-1.3 This standard does not apply to fire brigades organized only to fight incipient stage fires as defined in OSHA, 29 CFR 1910.155(c)(26).

1-2 Purpose.

1-2.1 The purpose of this standard is to define and describe the essential elements of an incident management system.

1-2.2* The purpose of an incident management system is to provide structure and coordination to the management of emergency incident operations in order to provide for the safety and health of fire department members and other persons involved in those activities. This standard is intended to meet the requirements of 6-1.2 of NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, and OSHA, 29 CFR 1910.120(q)(3).

1-2.3* Many of the performance objectives of this standard can be achieved in a variety of ways. The standard is not intended to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding these minimum requirements or from adopting a system tailored to meet local needs while satisfying the minimum requirements of this standard.

1-3 Definitions.

Emergency Incident. Any situation to which the fire department responds to deliver emergency services, including rescue, fire suppression, medical treatment, and other forms of hazard control and mitigation.

Fire Department. An organization providing rescue, fire suppression, and related activities. For the purposes of this standard, the term "fire department" shall include any public, private, military, or fire brigade organization engaging in this type of activity.

Fire Brigade. A group of people organized to engage in rescue, fire suppression, and related activities.

Imminent Hazard. An act or condition that is judged to present a danger to persons or property that is so urgent and severe that it requires immediate corrective or preventive action.

Incident Commander. The fire department member in overall command of an emergency incident.

Incident Scene. The location where activities related to a specific incident are conducted. This shall include the entire area subject to incident related hazards and all areas used by fire department members and equipment in proximity to the incident scene.

Incident Termination. The conclusion of fire department operations at the scene of an incident, usually the departure of the last unit from the scene.

Intermediate Level of Supervision. A level of supervision within the incident management system that groups fire companies and other resources working toward common objectives or in a particular area under a supervisor responsible for the objective(s) or area.

Liaison. The coordination of activities between the fire department and other agencies.

Member. A person involved in performing the duties and responsibilities of a fire department, under the auspices of the organization. For the purposes of this standard, a fire department member may be a full-time or part-time employee, a paid or unpaid volunteer, may occupy any position or rank within the fire department, and may or may not engage in emergency operations.

Resources. Personnel and equipment that are utilized or available to be utilized at the scene of an incident.

Shall. Indicates a mandatory requirement.

Should. This term, as used in the Appendix, indicates a recommendation or that which is advised but not required.

Staging. A specific function where resources are assembled in an area at or near the incident scene to await instructions or assignments.

Standard Operating Procedure. An organizational directive that establishes a standard course of action.

Supervisor. A fire department member who has supervisory authority and responsibility over other members.

Unified Command. A standard method to coordinate command of an incident when multiple agencies have jurisdiction.

Chapter 2 System Structure

2-1 Implementation.

2-1.1* The fire department shall adopt an incident management system to manage all emergency incidents. The system shall be designed to meet the particular characteristics of the fire department based on size, complexity, and operating environment.

2-1.2 The incident management system shall be defined and documented in writing. Standard operating procedures shall include the requirements for implementation of the incident management system and shall describe the options that are available for application according to the needs of each particular situation.

2-1.3* The fire department shall prepare and adopt written plans, based on the incident management system, to address the requirements of different types of incidents that can be anticipated. These plans shall address both routine and unusual incidents and shall provide standardized procedures and supervisory assignments that can be applied to the needs of different types, sizes, and complexities of situations.

2-1.4* The incident management system shall be utilized at all emergency incidents. The incident management system shall also be applied to drills, exercises, and other situations that involve hazards similar to those encountered at actual emergency incidents and to simulated incidents that are conducted for training and familiarization purposes.

2-2 Interagency Coordination.

2-2.1* The fire department shall develop an integrated incident management system in coordination with other agencies that are involved in emergency incidents.

2-2.2* The incident management system shall provide a plan to coordinate operations with other agencies that have jurisdiction at the incident scene. This plan shall include a standard procedure to designate one incident commander or to establish unified command.

2-2.3* Where the incident is under the command authority of the fire department, the incident commander shall provide for liaison and coordination with all other cooperating agencies.

2-2.4* Where the incident is under the overall jurisdiction of an agency other than the fire department, the fire department shall utilize the incident management system to manage its own operations and coordinate its activities with the agency having overall jurisdiction.

2-3 Command Structure.

2-3.1* The incident management system shall provide a series of supervisory levels that are available for implementation to create a command structure. The particular levels to be utilized in each situation shall depend on the nature of the incident, and the scale and complexity of fire department activities at the scene.

2-3.2 The incident management system shall be modular to allow the application of only those elements that are necessary at a particular incident and to allow elements to be activated or deactivated as the needs of the incident change with time. The system shall provide for a routine process of escalation as additional resources are utilized.

2-3.3 The incident commander shall determine which levels and elements of the incident management system are to be implemented in each case and shall develop the command structure for each incident by assigning supervisory responsibilities according to standard operating procedures.

2-3.4* The command structure for each incident shall maintain an effective supervisory span of control at each level of the organization. An effective span of control shall be determined by the ability of each supervisor to monitor the activities of assigned subordinates and to communicate effectively with them.

2-3.5* The incident management system shall define standardized supervisory assignments. These assignments shall be activated upon assignment by the incident commander.

2-3.5.1* Standardized supervisory assignments shall define the role, authority, and responsibilities of the assigned member. Assignments shall be defined by function or by location at the scene of the incident, or by a combination of function and location. The scope of authority that will be delegated at each supervisory level shall be outlined in standard operating procedures.

2-3.5.2* An assignment that is defined by function shall be based on performing or supervising a particular function or set of functions.

2-3.5.3* An assignment that is defined by location shall be based on supervising all activities that are conducted within a designated area. The area shall be defined by standard terminology or specified by the incident commander at the time of assignment.

2-3.6 The incident commander shall have the authority to modify standard assignments or to apply them in a manner that suits the particular needs of an incident. It shall be the responsibilty of the incident commander to clearly identify the parameters of an assignment when deviating from the standard assignments.

2-4 Training and Qualifications.

2-4.1* All members who could be involved in emergency operations shall be trained in the incident management system.

2-4.2 Members who are expected to perform as incident commander or to be assigned to supervisory levels within the command structure shall be trained and familiar with the incident management system and the particular levels at which they are expected to perform. The fire department shall define training and experience requirements for supervisors.

2-4.3* The incident commander shall make assignments based on the availability and qualifications of individuals. Positions that require specific expertise shall be assigned to qualified individuals.

Chapter 3 System Components

3-1 Incident Commander.

3-1.1* The incident management system shall clearly identify who is in overall command at the scene throughout the duration of the incident. The incident management system shall provide for the assignment of "incident commander" to be transferred one or more times during the course of an incident.

3-1.2* Standard operating procedures shall define the responsibility for one member to assume the role of incident commander from the beginning of operations at the scene of each incident.

3-1.3* Standard operating procedures shall define the circumstances and procedures for transferring command and to whom it shall be transferred. The transfer of command shall be accomplished through a structured process.

3-2 Command Staff.

3-2.1* Command staff functions shall be those elements of the incident management system that operate in direct support of the incident commander and contribute to the overall management of the incident.

3-2.2* Standard operating procedures shall define the roles and responsibilities for members assigned to command staff functions.

3-2.3* Members performing command staff functions shall operate with delegated authority to issue orders and instructions in the name of the incident commander. The scope of this authority shall be established in standard operating procedures. The assigned members shall keep the incident commander informed of significant occurrences.

3-3 Planning Functions.

3-3.1 Planning functions shall refer to those components of the incident management system that are involved with information management to support the incident commander and other levels of the incident command structure.

3-3.2* The incident management system shall include a standard approach for the collection, evaluation, dissemination, and use of information. The system shall account for the organizational structure, availability of resources, deployment of resources, situation status reports, pre-fire plans, reference information, maps, diagrams, and other pertinent information.

3-3.2.1 Information management shall utilize standard terminology and methods at all levels of the command structure.

3-3.3 The incident management system shall include standard methods to record and track the assignment of resources throughout the duration of an incident.

3-3.4 The incident management system shall include a standard approach to utilize technical advisors to support the development of strategic plans and assist the incident commander.

3-4 Logistics Functions.

3-4.1 The logistics components of an incident management system shall include those functions that provide equipment, services, material, and other resources in support of the incident.

3-4.2 Members assigned to logistics functions shall keep the incident commander informed, through regular reports, on the amount, condition, and location of available resources.

3-5 Operations Functions.

3-5.1 Operations functions shall refer to those tactical components of the incident management system that are directly involved in rescue, fire suppression, and other activities that are within the primary mission of the fire department.

3-5.2* The incident commander shall assign intermediate levels of supervision and organize resources following standard operating procedures in accordance with Section 2-3 of this standard and based on the scale and complexity of operations.

3-5.3* All supervisors assigned to operations functions shall support an overall strategic plan, as directed by the incident commander, and work toward the accomplishment of tactical objectives.

3-5.4 Supervisors assigned to operations functions shall be responsible for supervising the activities of all resources assigned under their span of control and for coordination with higher levels of the command structure and with other supervisors at the same level. The safety and health of all members shall be primary considerations.

3-6 Communications.

3-6.1* The incident management system shall include standard operating procedures for radio communications that provide for the use of standard protocols and terminology at all types of incidents.

3-6.2 The communications standard operating procedures shall be established to support the escalation of operations from small to large or from routine to unusual without requiring major changes or transitions.

3-6.3* Standard terminology shall be established to transmit information, including strategic modes of operation, situation reports, and emergency notifications of imminent hazards.

3-6.4* The communications system shall provide a standard method to transmit emergency messages and notification of imminent hazards to all levels of the incident command structure with priority over routine communications.

3-6.5 The incident management system shall provide standard operating procedures for communication operators and dispatchers to provide support to emergency incident operations. Operators and dispatchers shall be trained to function effectively within the incident management system.

3-6.6* The incident management system shall provide standard operating procedures for the utilization of communications systems, including radio channels and other capabilities that are provided.

3-7 Staging.

3-7.1* The incident management system shall provide a standard system to manage reserves of personnel and other resources at or near the scene of the incident.

3-7.2* Where emergency activities are being conducted in a location where a delay would be involved in activating standby resources, the incident commander shall establish staging areas close to the area where the need for those resources is anticipated.

3-8 Finance.

3-8.1* The incident management system shall provide for financial services when necessary for the safe conduct of an incident.

3-8.2 The incident commander shall assign finance functions based on the needs or complexity of the incident.

Chapter 4 Roles and Responsibilities

4-1 Incident Commander.

4-1.1* The incident commander shall be responsible for the overall coordination and direction of all activities at the incident scene. This shall include overall responsibility for the safety and health of all members and for other persons operating within the incident management system.

4-1.2 The incident commander shall be responsible for establishing a command structure that meets the needs of the particular situation, for determining the overall strategy that will be employed, for summoning and assigning adequate resources to deal with the situation, for evaluating progress and changing the strategy as appropriate, for communicating directions and interpreting progress reports from assigned persons in the command structure, and for bringing the incident to a termination.

4-1.3 The incident commander shall make assignments and provide direction, as required by the nature and circumstances of the incident, in order to manage the activities of all members and other resources at the incident scene.

4-1.4 The incident commander shall assign supervisory duties and responsibilities to create an organization structure, within the framework of the incident management system, based on the needs of each particular incident. The established structure shall provide a manageable span of control at all levels of the organization to exercise supervision over all aspects of the incident.

4-1.4.1 As the incident increases in size and complexity and as additional personnel and units are assigned to operate at the scene, the incident commander shall expand the command structure to maintain effective levels of supervision and span of control.

4-1.4.2 The assignment of duties and responsibilities to individuals shall also include the delegation of authority necessary to accomplish the assignments. The standard operating procedures adopted by the fire department shall define the scope of authority that will be delegated at each level of the organization.

4-1.5 The incident commander shall utilize standardized terminology and predefined job descriptions to make supervisory assignments.

4-1.6 The incident commander shall determine the overall strategy for the incident and communicate this strategy to all supervisory levels of the incident management structure. The incident commander shall ensure that any change in strategy is communicated to all supervisory levels.

4-2 Supervisory Personnel.

4-2.1* Supervisors shall assume responsibility for activities within their span of control, including responsibility for the safety and health of members and other authorized persons within their designated areas.

4-2.2* Supervisors shall work toward assigned objectives within the overall strategy defined by the incident commander. They shall regularly report progress, or lack of progress, in meeting those objectives and any deviation from established plans.

4-2.3 When supervisors are in a position to recommend changes in strategy or tactics, these recommendations shall be communicated to the incident commander through supervisory levels.

4-2.4 Supervisors shall be alert to recognize conditions and actions that create a hazard within their span of control. All supervisors shall have the authority and responsibility to take immediate action to correct imminent hazards.

4-2.5 Supervisors at each level of the command structure shall receive direction from and provide progress reports to higher level supervisors.

4-2.6 Supervisors shall coordinate their activities with other supervisors at the same level and provide direction to lower level supervisors or members within their span of control.

4-2.7* When conflicting orders are received at any level of the incident management system, the member receiving the conflicting order shall inform the member giving the order that a conflict exists. If the conflicting order is required to be carried out, the member giving the new order shall so inform the member who provided the initial order.

4-3 Personnel Accountability.

4-3.1* The incident management system shall provide for control of access to the incident scene.

4-3.2* All supervisors shall maintain a constant awareness of the position and function of all members assigned to operate under their supervision. This awareness shall structure the basic accountability that is required for operational safety.

4-3.3* The fire department shall adopt and routinely use a standard personnel identification system to maintain accountability for each member engaged in activities at an incident scene. This personnel identification system shall have the ability to provide a rapid accounting of all members on the incident scene.

4-3.3.1 Members who respond to the incident on fire apparatus shall be identified by a system that provides an accurate accounting of those members actually responding to the scene on each company or apparatus. The incident management system shall maintain accountability for the location and function of each company or unit at the scene of the incident.

4-3.3.2 Members who arrive at the scene of the incident by means other than fire apparatus shall be identified by a system that accounts for their presence and their assignment at the incident scene.

4-3.4 The personnel identification system shall include a means to specifically identify and keep track of members entering and leaving hazardous areas, such as confined spaces or areas where special protective equipment is required.

4-3.5* The incident management system shall include a standard operating procedure to evacuate personnel from an area where an imminent hazard condition is found to exist, and to account for their safety. This shall include a method to notify immediately all personnel in the affected area by means of audible warning devices, and by radio signals in accordance with the requirements specified in 3-6.4 of this standard.

4-4 Rest and Rehabilitation.

4-4.1* The incident commander shall consider the circumstances of each incident and make suitable provisions for rest and rehabilitation for members operating at the scene. These considerations shall include medical evaluation and treatment, food and fluid replenishment, and relief from extreme climatic conditions, according to the circumstances of the incident.

4-4.2 All supervisors shall maintain an awareness of the condition of members operating within their span of control and ensure that adequate steps are taken to provide for their safety and health. The command structure shall be utilized to request relief and reassignment of fatigued crews.

Chapter 5 Referenced Publications

5-1 The following documents or portions thereof are referenced within this standard and shall be considered part of the requirements of this document. The edition indicated for each reference is the current edition as of the date of the NFPA issuance of this document.

5-1.1* NFPA Publications.

NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, 1987.

5-1.2* U.S. Government Publications.

Title 29, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 1910, Section 120 (29 CFR 1910.120); 6 March 1989

Title 29, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 1910, Section 155 (29 CFR 1910.155); 1 July 1987.

Appendix A

This Appendix is not a part of the requirements of this NFPA document, but is included for information purposes only.

A-1-1.1 This document establishes minimum requirements for the development and implementation of an incident management system. The system is intended to apply to operations conducted at the scene of emergency incidents by a fire department. While the document is largely written in terms that relate to a single agency system, it is intended to integrate with emergency management systems that apply to multiple agencies and large scale situations.

A-1-1.2 An incident management system should also be used by other types or organizations engaging in activities that involve similar risks to personnel. The basic principles contained within this standard should have broad application in the delivery of emergency services and activities conducted in a high risk environment.

A-1-2.2 This standard establishes minimum performance requirements for an incident management system based on concerns for the safety and health of fire department members. The benefits of an incident management system go

far beyond this one concern, but this is considered to be the most important reason to implement an incident management system. This standard may also be used for guidance in meeting requirements for an incident command system as outlined in other NFPA documents including NFPA 472, *Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents*; and NFPA 471, *Recommended Practice for Responding to Hazardous Materials Incidents*.

A-1-2.3 Many of the requirements of this standard could be satisfied by adopting a "model" system (such as the Incident Command System) that is intended to provide for a uniform approach to incident management while providing for some variations to meet local requirements.

A-2-1.1 The fire department should evaluate existing recognized systems to develop or adopt a system that meets its own particular requirements and provides compatability with systems used by other agencies that would reasonably be expected to work together at emergency incidents.

A-2-1.3 Fire departments respond to a wide variety of incidents. Most of these incidents are considered "routine" and involve a small commitment of resources, while a few incidents involve large commitments of resources, complex situations, and potentially high-risk operations. It is important for an incident management system to accommodate all types and sizes of incidents and to provide for a regular process of escalation from arrival of the first responding units to the largest and most complex incidents. The system should always be applied, even to routine incidents, to provide for familiarity with the system, to be prepared for escalation, and to be cognizant of the risks that exist at all incidents.

A-2-1.4 The fire department should use the same basic approach for all situations, including drills, to ensure that members will be fully familiar and confident with the incident management system. Drills and simulated incidents often involve risks of a similar nature to actual incidents.

A-2-2.1 The incident management system should be a component of interagency and multi-jurisdictional planning for emergency operations. A fire department is seldom the only agency involved in activities at the scene of emergency incidents, particularly large scale incidents. While this standard is based upon the requirements for an incident management system for a fire department, the system should, as a minimum, provide for coordination with police departments and other emergency service agencies within the same jurisdiction, as well as mutual aid fire departments. Any other agencies that have an established role at emergency incidents should also be included.

The fire department incident management system should also integrate with plans for major emergencies that could involve activities at different sites. In these circumstances, the incident management system defined in this document should apply specifically to activities conducted at a particular site and would integrate with larger scale plans for the coordination of activities at multiple sites.

A-2-2.2 At large scale and complex incidents, several agencies could become involved and could have legal jurisdiction over different aspects of the situation or different areas that are involved in the incident.

It is a requirement of 2-2.2 of this standard for the fire department to build a system for interaction and coordination with other agencies into its incident management system. This is best accomplished by developing an integrated system in cooperation with all of the agencies that would be expected to work together at routine or large scale incidents.

It is possible that other agencies would not be willing to develop fully integrated incident management systems with the fire department. In these circumstances, the fire department should utilize its own capabilities to develop and implement an incident management system that meets the intent of this standard.

If plans are not established in advance, the authority for overall command of the incident could be in doubt. Most emergency incidents occur clearly within the jurisdictional area of one fire department. The agency having jurisdiction is normally responsible for designating the incident commander, although pre-established plans could provide for an individual from a different agency to assume command under some circumstances. The basic concept should be to have one fire department incident commander, even where several fire departments are involved in the incident.

Where multiple jurisdictions are involved, the plan should incorporate a process to assign, divide, or share overall command responsibilities in a standard manner. It is essential to establish the roles, responsibilities, and relationships among the different agencies that could be involved in advance of a major incident.

One approach that is used for multi-jurisdictional incidents is "unified command." In this system, each agency having jurisdiction could have its own designated incident commander, with all of the incident commanders working together to develop one unified plan of action. This approach should only be used within a well established interagency standard operating procedure.

Another approach that is employed in some cases, where different agencies have specific jurisdiction over different aspects of an incident, is a "lead agency" concept. In these situations one agency would assume overall command of the incident, while other agencies fulfill their jurisdictional responsibilities under the coordination of the lead agency's incident commander. The lead agency role could be transferred at different stages of an incident, as objectives are accomplished and the overall priority progresses to additional concerns. Each agency could operate with its own incident management structure, under the overall coordination.

A-2-2.3 Designated representatives should be assigned by other agencies involved in emergency incidents to ensure that all functions performed by their agencies support and are coordinated with fire department activities. There should be an established system for representatives of cooperating agencies to report to the command post. When necessary, the incident commander should assign a designated liaison officer to manage interaction with representatives of other agencies. Where fire departments routinely work together under mutual aid or automatic aid

systems, standard operating procedures and communications capabilities should provide for activities to be managed routinely by one incident commander, under a management system that does not necessarily require representatives of each fire department to be present at the command post.

A-2-2.4 At incidents where extensive interaction is required, the agency having overall jurisdiction should request a designated fire department representative to be assigned to the command post to provide liaison and coordinate activities. This should be part of an established interagency standard operating procedure for incident management.

A-2-3.1 For further information on incident management systems see Appendix B.

A-2-3.4 The most frequent determining factor in establishing supervisory levels within the command structure is the need to maintain an effective span of control. When the number of individuals reporting to the incident commander exceeds a span of control that can be effectively managed, the incident commander should consider activating an additional level. In many cases this condition can be anticipated and the incident commander can activate these levels early in the incident to start building the command structure.

A span of control of between 3 and 7 is considered desirable in most cases.

An effective span of control should be maintained at each level of the command structure, and the organization should be expanded to meet this objective whenever the need is identified. This can be accomplished by adding levels or reassigning responsibilities within existing levels, or a combination of the above.

The incident commander should also consider activating additional levels within the command structure when activities become highly complex or are conducted over a large geographic area. In these cases the benefit could be increased overall coordination and more direct supervision over complex activities.

The two basic levels of the incident management system are the incident commander and the company or unit level. The grouping of companies or units, according to task or location, creates an intermediate level of supervision. The incident commander has the option of assigning additional intermediate levels within the command structure for more complex incidents.

The incident commander should begin to assign intermediate level supervisors as soon as it becomes evident that the number of companies or units that will be used at an incident exceeds a number that can be effectively directed by the incident commander (3 to 7 companies). It is preferable to establish intermediate levels of the command structure as early as possible than to establish them after companies have gone into action. The early designation of intermediate level supervisors allows them to plan the utilization of resources that will be assigned, as opposed to regrouping resources that have already initiated action.

In many cases the officer of the first company assigned to a particular area or function is designated as an intermediate level supervisor. The company officer could be relieved of this additional responsibility when a higher level officer is assigned by the incident commander.

Additional levels of the command structure should be available to the incident commander as an option, for activation in complex and large scale incidents. Plans for large scale incidents should provide standard organization charts for command structures.

A-2-3.5 The intent of defining standardized assignments is to provide for efficient communications when assignments are made. Instead of explaining each assignment in detail, the incident commander makes assignments that are predefined and described in standard operating procedures. The incident commander determines which standardized assignments to utilize, depending on the situation. When an assignment is made, both the incident commander and the assigned member(s) know what is expected, based on their knowledge of the written standard operating procedure.

Standard operating procedures could define certain assignments that would be automatically assumed by designated individuals, such as the fire department safety officer, upon arrival at the scene. The preassigned individuals should make the incident commander aware of their presence upon arrival and assume their predesignated functions unless otherwise instructed by the incident commander. This could involve relieving a member who had been assigned to the function pending the arrival of the designated individual.

A-2-3.5.1 In addition to defining the role, authority, and responsibilities, standard operating procedures should provide guidance or direction on how an assignment will be performed.

A-2-3.5.2 Examples of assignments by function include safety officer, public information officer, and water supply officer. These functions are generally performed without geographic limitation and interact with different levels of the command structure. Other functional assignments, such as staging or medical treatment, could refer to both the function and a designated location where it is applied.

A-2-3.5.3 Location assignments generally deal with the supervision of all activities that are conducted within a specified area. An area could include one exterior side of a building, the roof or a particular floor of the building, or a section of the interior. A location assignment could include any subdivision of the area where emergency activities are being conducted. It is important that the limits of the area are defined sufficiently to avoid overlap or omission of areas. Standard terminology should be used to define commonly used subdivisions of the incident scene.

A-2-4.1 In addition to being familiar with the basic structure of incident management system, every member should be trained to assume initial command of an incident in the absence of a more qualified individual. This would

apply to a situation where the individual member could be the first arriving member at the scene of an incident and responsible for initiating command responsibilities at the scene.

A-2-4.3 Some functions are best performed by individuals with specific expertise, particularly in highly technical areas. The fire department should endeavor to have more than one individual qualified to perform all essential functions within the incident management system.

A-3-1.1 There should be one clearly identifiable incident commander throughout the duration of the incident, from the arrival of the first fire department unit until the incident is terminated. While a succession of individuals could assume the role of incident commander, there should be no question of who is in command at any point in time. When the identity of the incident commander changes, command should be transferred in a standard manner.

An exception to the "one incident commander" could be made where two or more agencies have specific jurisdictional responsibility for an incident. In such circumstances a "unified command" procedure could be employed, by prior agreement, with two or more individuals working together to command the incident. See also A-2-2.2.

A-3-1.2 The incident management system should be applied to every incident from arrival of the first member until termination. At small scale incidents the assumption of command could be informal, but the principle of one individual in overall command of the incident should always apply. Routine application of the system is intended to increase familiarity with the concepts and procedures, even where the need to apply a formal command structure is not obvious. The officer in charge of the first arriving company or the first arriving member of the fire department, regardless of rank or function, should be the incident commander until relieved by a more qualified member. Every member should be sufficiently familiar with basic responsibilities and communications protocols to assume the role of an initial arriving incident commander, if only until the arrival of a more qualified individual.

A-3-1.3 The fire department should establish a protocol of command authority based on rank structure, assignments, and qualifications to define a hierarchy for transferring command. The qualifications required to perform as incident commander should increase with the size and complexity of the incident. Standard operating procedures should define the circumstances under which a higher level officer would respond to an incident and whether the transfer of command to the higher level officer is mandatory or discretionary.

In certain cases, a member with a higher level of command authority arriving at the scene could direct the current incident commander to continue in this role. The higher level officer has the responsibility for the incident, but could act as an observer or advisor to allow the incident commander to benefit from the experience. The exercise of this option would be at the discretion of the higher level officer.

A-3-2.1 The command staff generally includes those members who work at the command post and provide direct support to the incident commander. This would include members who fulfill specifically assigned duties, such as liaison officers and public information officers. The safety officer is usually considered to be part of the command staff, since this function should report directly to the incident commander.

A-3-2.2 The incident management system should include command staff functions that would be automatically activated upon escalation of an incident or with multiple alarms. Specific individuals would be designated to automatically respond and assume command staff duties.

A-3-2.3 The basic function of the command staff is to support the incident commander. The assigned individuals should be able to differentiate between routine actions and those that could have a significant impact on the overall incident. Part of their responsibility would be to inform the incident commander of significant information and to request direction when major decisions are necessary.

The safety officer has the delegated authority to take immediate action to correct imminent hazards. Under this authority, the safety officer could issue orders that cause a change in tactics or strategy. The safety officer should promptly inform the incident commander upon exercising such authority. In situations where a hazard is not imminent, the safety officer should consult with the incident commander to advise on appropriate action. See NFPA 1501, *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer*.

A-3-3.2 The incident management system should provide standard worksheets, charts, diagrams, and other forms to assist the incident commander in keeping track of pertinent information and to provide for the transfer of information in a standard format when command is transferred.

A-3-5.2 The command structure should be assembled by the incident commander by grouping resources, assigning supervisors, and adding additional levels of supervision, as described in Section 2-3, to meet the objectives for an effective span of control at each level. This provides a degree of supervision that enhances the safety of all personnel.

A-3-5.3 The strategic plan should identify the broad goals of emergency incident activities and the basic manner in which operations shall be conducted. An offensive strategic plan involves operations to provide search and rescue, and to control and extinguish the fire. A defensive stragetic plan involves operations directed toward protecting exposures. Offensive and defensive operations should not be conducted in the same area that would create unnecessary risk to fire department members.

Tactical objectives should be based on the strategic plan and assigned by the incident commander to supervisors within the command structure. Each supervisor should be expected to direct the assigned resources to accomplish one or more tactical objectives. The accomplishment of tactical objectives should support successful completion of the strategic plan. An example of a tactical objective would be to ensure that all occupants are removed from the second floor of a building and to control the fire on that floor. Intermediate level supervisors should direct their efforts toward successively more specific tactical objectives.

A-3-6.1 The use of plain English "clear text" for radio communications is suggested to reduce the confusion that can exist when radio codes are used, particularly where different agencies work together at major incidents.

A-3-6.3 A change in strategic mode of operation would include, as an example for structural fire fighting, the switch from offensive strategy (interior fire attack with hand lines) to defensive strategy (exterior operation with master streams and hand lines). In such an instance it is essential to notify all members of the change in strategic modes, ensure that all personnel withdraw from the structure, and account for everyone who was operating offensively before initiating any exterior stream application with either hand lines or master streams.

A-3-6.4 The emergency notification system should provide a means to rapidly warn all persons who might be in danger if an imminent hazard is identified or if a change in strategy is made. An emergency message format with distinctive alert tones and definitive instructions should be used to make such notifications.

A-3-6.6 The communications system should meet the requirements of the fire department for routine and large scale emergencies. In a small fire department, one radio channel for dispatch and one fire ground communications channel may be sufficient for most situations. The radio capabilities should also provide for communications with mutual aid resources or other agencies that could be expected to respond to a major incident.

A larger fire department could require several additional radio channels to provide for the volume of communications relating to routine incidents and for the complexity of multiple alarm situations. The system should be developed to provide reserve capacity for unusually complex situations where effective communications could become critical.

A-3-7.1 Staging provides a standard method to keep reserves of personnel, apparatus, and other resources ready for action at the scene or close to the scene of an incident. Staging also provides a standard method to control and record the arrival of such resources and their assignment to specific activities. When units are dispatched to assist at working incidents, they should be dispatched to a designated "staging" or "base" area where they can be ready for assignment when required by the incident commander. This process helps the incident commander to keep track of the resources that are on the scene and available for assignment, where they are located, and where specific units have been assigned. The incident commander should always attempt to keep reserves of personnel, equipment, and supplies available to rotate assignments with fatigued crews and to go into action quickly when changing conditions require a rapid commitment of resources. Equipment failures should be anticipated and supplies should be ordered to the scene in time and in sufficient quantities to provide a safe margin over anticipated needs. The ability to provide these reserves is necessarily dependent on the amount of resources that are available, but each fire department should have plans to utilize its available resources to maximum advantage and should have contingency plans to obtain resources from other sources that may be available.

A-3-7.2 It is generally desirable to keep staged resources in locations where they can be ready for action within 2 minutes. In some cases, particularly where imminent hazards exist, it may be advisable to keep an immediate response capability in a state of readiness in a safe location that provides immediate access to the area.

The term "base" is often used to refer to a more remote location where standby resources are gathered but are not available for immediate action. As needed, resources can be moved up to a staging location where they would be ready for immediate action. An example would be a high-rise building where apparatus is parked at a safe distance from the building, and personnel and equipment are moved in to standby on a safe floor below the fire level.

A-3-8.1 When resources necessary for the safe conduct of an incident reach beyond the procurement authority of the incident commander, a finance function should be provided to authorize and expedite procurement of necessary resources.

A-4-1.1 The incident commander should be located at a fixed command post and should be visible and accessible to authorized individuals. The fixed command post should be established as early as possible, preferably in a location that provides a view of the incident scene.

For small scale incidents the command post could be as simple as the cab of a piece of fire apparatus or the command officer's response vehicle. Being inside a vehicle is usually helpful in providing a functional work environment for the incident commander. Specially equipped command post vehicles are often used for major incidents, where the incident commander is assisted by several command staff members and liaison personnel from other agencies.

A-4-2.1 Supervisors should be visible and recognizable to their subordinates and to other persons who would need to communicate with them. First level supervisors, such as company officers, are often identified by distinctively colored helmets or other markings. Intermediate level supervisors should also be identified, particularly in situations where personnel from different agencies are directly involved in operations. Colored helmets, vests, and other means are often used to make intermediate level supervisors recognizable.

The incident command post should also be visible and recognizable. This can be accomplished by displaying a colored light, flag, banner, or other symbol to mark the location. When special command post vehicles are used, such vehicles are usually marked with distinctive identification to make the command post recognizable.

A-4-2.2 The fire department should establish a standard time interval for progress reports from supervisors. Routine progress reports should be provided at intervals of 10 to 15 minutes. If conditions change significantly at any time, this information should be transmitted promptly to the higher level supervisor. Any report relating to the safety of personnel should have the highest priority.

A-4-2.7 The procedure for clarifying conflicting orders should not apply to imminent hazard situations where immediate action is necessary to avoid a dangerous situation.

A-4-3.1 The incident management system should include standard operating procedures to protect members from hazards and to keep unauthorized persons out of hazardous areas. All supervisors should be aware of hazards and take necessary steps to control access to areas under their supervision. The incident commander should provide for control of access to the entire incident scene and, where appropriate, should exclude, establish limitations for, or provide an escort for nonfire department personnel.

A-4-3.2 The incident management system should account for the degree of danger that is involved in specific activities and provide more direct supervision over members exposed to greater risks.

A-4-3.3 One purpose of the personnel identification system is to provide rapid determination if any members are missing in the event that an area must be evacuated, or if a structural collapse or other unplanned event occurs.

A-4-3.5 The intent of this requirement is to provide assurance that all personnel are notified of urgent safety warnings and to account for all personnel in the event of an unanticipated emergency situation. The system must include all members and any other individuals who are operating in areas where they could be endangered. See also 3-6.4.

A-4-4.1 Weather factors during emergency incidents can impact severely on the safety and health of members, particularly during extremes of heat or cold. When these factors combine with long duration incidents or situations that require heavy exertion, the risks to members increase rapidly. The fire department should develop procedures, in consultation with the fire department physician, to provide relief from adverse climatic conditions.

A-5-1.1 National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101.

A-5-1.2 Copies of 29 CFR 1910 can be obtained from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402; or at their regional branch offices.

Appendix B

This Appendix is not a part of the requirements of this NFPA document, but is included for information purposes only.

This standard presents performance requirements for incident management systems for emergency situations. The emphasis of the standard is placed on safety and health considerations to ensure that emergency scene operations are conducted in a manner that provides an appropriate emphasis on the welfare and survival of fire department members and other emergency response personnel. These objectives may be satisfied by a variety of systems that meet the specified criteria and may provide additional benefits that go beyond safety and health.

In the development of the standard, it was considered more important to state the required performance criteria for any system and encourage fire departments to adopt or modify an effective existing system that meets their particular needs, rather than to require all users to adopt one particular system. The user has the option to adopt a model system, to adapt an existing system to meet local conditions, or to develop a different system.

It was noted that several different incident management systems are already in existence. These systems have been successfully adopted and employed and address many or all of the requirements of this standard. Upon close examination, it was evident that there are many similarities among these systems, and the differences were considered to be less significant than the benefits of meeting the overall performance objectives. Some differences were noted in terminology and specific procedures. The standard was developed to allow for local options, while recognizing the benefits of standardization and compatibility among systems.

The following points are considered to be key factors in any incident management system for a fire department.

1. Overall authority and responsibility is assigned to the incident commander.

2. The incident management system provides structured authority and responsibilities for different command levels and positions.

3. There is a structured hierarchy reporting system with a manageable span of control at each level.

4. The system is used to coordinate all incident scene operations.

5. Individuals performing command functions must be trained and qualified.

6. Everyone involved in operations at the incident scene has a relationship to the system that includes reporting and receiving assignments in a standard manner.

7. The system is documented in written standard operating procedures.

8. The system is simple and familiar and is used routinely at all incidents.

9. Supervisory assignments are based on functions or locations or in some cases both.

10. Communications protocols are structured to match the command system.

11. There is a structured system for the response of resources and for summoning additional resources.

12. The system provides for expansion, escalation, transfer, and transition of command roles and responsibilities.

13. The system requires safety and health to be managed as major strategic and operational priorities in all cases.

14. The system employs standard tactical approaches that are applied to different situations and circumstances.

15. The system leads to the eventual termination of the incident.

The following are two existing incident management systems that illustrate how the performance objectives of the standard might be achieved. These examples do not signify any approval or endorsement of the systems:

Fire Command System, available from the NFPA, 1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101

National Fire Academy – Incident Command System, available from the National Fire Academy, 16825 South Steton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727.

Appendix C Referenced Publications

C-1 The following documents or portions thereof are referenced within this standard for informational purposes only and thus are not considered part of the requirements of this document. The edition indicated for each reference is the current edition as of the date of the NFPA issuance of this document.

C-1.1 NFPA Publications. National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101.

NFPA 471, *Recommended Practice for Responding to Hazardous Materials Incidents*, 1989 Edition

NFPA 472, *Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents*, 1989 Edition

NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, 1987 Edition

NFPA 1501, *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer*, 1987 Edition

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The NFPA Codes and Standards Development Process

Since 1896, one of the primary purposes of the NFPA has been to develop and update the standards covering all areas of fire safety.

Calls for Proposals
The code adoption process takes place twice each year and begins with a call for proposals from the public to amend existing codes and standards or to develop the content of new fire safety documents.

Report on Proposals
Upon receipt of public proposals, the technical committee members meet to review, consider, and act on the proposals. The public proposals – together with the committee action on each proposal and committee-generated proposals – are published in the NFPA's Report on Proposals (ROP). The ROP is then subject to public review and comment.

Report on Comments
These public comments are considered and acted upon by the appropriate technical committees. All public comments – together with the committee action on each comment – are published as the Committee's supplementary report in the NFPA's Report on Comments (ROC).

The committee's report and supplementary report are then presented for adoption and open debate at either of NFPA's semi-annual meetings held throughout the United States and Canada.

Association Action
The Association meeting may, subject to review and issuance by the NFPA Standards Council, (a) adopt a report as published, (b) adopt a report as amended, contingent upon subsequent approval by the committee, (c) return a report to committee for further study, and (d) return a portion of a report to committee.

Standards Council Action
The Standards Council will make a judgement on whether or not to issue an NFPA document based upon the entire record before the Council, including the vote taken at the Association meeting on the technical committee's report.

Voting Procedures
Voting at an NFPA Annual or Fall Meeting is restricted to members of record for 180 days prior to the opening of the first general session of the meeting, except that individuals who join the Association at an Annual or Fall Meeting are entitled to vote at the next Fall or Annual Meeting.

"Members" are defined by Article 3.2 of the Bylaws as individuals, firms, corporations, trade or professional associations, institutes, fire departments, fire brigades, and other public or private agencies desiring to advance the purposes of the Association. Each member shall have one vote in the affairs of the Association. Under Article 4.5 of the Bylaws, the vote of such a member shall be cast by that member individually or by an employee designated in writing by the member of record who has registered for the meeting. Such a designated person shall not be eligible to represent more than one voting privilege on each issue, nor cast more than one vote on each issue.

Any member who wishes to designate an employee to cast that member's vote at an Association meeting in place of that member must provide that employee with written authorization to represent the member at the meeting. The authorization must be on company letterhead signed by the member of record, with the membership number indicated, and the authorization must be recorded with the President of NFPA or his designee before the start of the opening general session of the Meeting. That employee, irrespective of his or her own personal membership status, shall be privileged to cast only one vote on each issue before the Association.

Sequence of Events Leading to Publication of an NFPA Committee Document

Call for proposals to amend existing document or for recommendations on new document.

▼

Committee meets to act on proposals, to develop its own proposals, and to prepare its report.

▼

Committee votes on proposals by letter ballot. If two-thirds approve, report goes forward. Lacking two-thirds approval, report returns to committee.

▼

Report is published for public review and comment. (Report on Proposals - ROP)

▼

Committee meets to act on each public comment received.

▼

Committee votes on comments by letter ballot. If two-thirds approve, supplementary report goes forward. Lacking two-thirds approval, supplementary report returns to committee.

▼

Supplementary report is published for public review. (Report on Comments - ROC).

▼

NFPA membership meets (Annual or Fall Meeting) and acts on committee report (ROP and ROC).

▼

Committee votes on any amendments to report approved at NFPA Annual or Fall Meeting.

▼

Complaints to Standards Council on Association action must be filed within 20 days of the NFPA Annual or Fall Meeting.

▼

Standards Council decides, based on all evidence, whether or not to issue standard or to take other action, including hearing any complaints.

▼

Appeals to Board of Directors on Standards Council action must be filed within 20 days of Council action.

FORM FOR PROPOSALS ON NFPA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS

Mail to: Secretary, Standards Council
National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, Massachusetts 02269-9101
Fax No. 617-770-3500

Note: All proposals must be received by 5:00 p.m. EST/EDST on the published proposal-closing date.

If you need further information on the standards-making process, please contact the Standards Administration Department at 617-984-7249.

Date 9/18/93 **Name** John B. Smith **Tel. No.** 617-555-1212

Company _____

Street Address 9 Seattle St., Seattle, WA 02255

Please Indicate Organization Represented (if any) Fire Marshals Assn. of North America

1. a) NFPA Document Title National Fire Alarm Code **NFPA No. & Year** NFPA 72, 1993 ed.

b) Section/Paragraph 1-5.8.1 (Exception No.1)

2. Proposal recommends: (Check one)
- ❑ **new text**
- ❑ **revised text**
- ☒ **deleted text**

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
Log # _____
Date Rec'd _____

3. Proposal (include proposed new or revised wording, or identification of wording to be deleted):

Delete exception.

4. Statement of Problem and Substantiation for Proposal: (Note: State the problem that will be resolved by your recommendation; give the specific reason for your proposal including copies of tests, research papers, fire experience, etc. If more than 200 words, it may be abstracted for publication.)

A properly installed and maintained system should be free of ground faults. The occurrence of one or more ground faults should be required to cause a "trouble" signal because it indicates a condition that could contribute to future malfunction of the system. Ground fault protection has been widely available on these systems for years and its cost is negligible. Requiring it on all systems will promote better installations, maintenance and reliability.

5. ☒ This Proposal is original material. (Note: Original material is considered to be the submitter's own idea based on or as a result of his/her own experience, thought, or research and, to the best of his/her knowledge, is not copied from another source.)

❑ **This Proposal is not original material; its source (if known) is as follows:** _____

Note 1: Type or print legibly in black ink.
Note 2: If supplementary material (photographs. diagrams, reports, etc.) is included, you may be required to submit sufficient copies for all members and alternates of the technical committee.

I hereby grant NFPA the non-exclusive, royalty-free rights, including non-exclusive, royalty-free rights in copyright, in this proposal and I understand that I acquire no rights in any publication of NFPA in which this proposal in this or another similar or analogous form is used.

John B. Smith
Signature (Required)

PLEASE USE SEPARATE FORM FOR EACH PROPOSAL