INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM
POSITION MANUAL

FIREFIGHTER INCIDENT SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY GUIDELINES

ICS 910

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This document contains information relative to the Incident Command System (ICS) component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). This is the same Incident Command System developed by FIRESCOPE.

Additional information and documentation can be obtained from the following sources:

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues facing the Incident Commander (IC) is accountability at the scene of emergencies. These Incident Safety and Accountability Guidelines incorporate additional safety measures and accountability that are best practices in accordance with local, State, and Federal regulations and pertinent to the Incident Command System (ICS).

An accountability system shall be adopted and routinely used to collect and maintain the status and location of the resources working in, or potentially working in, an IDLH or otherwise hazardous environment at an incident. All members operating at an incident are responsible for understanding and participating in this system. The IC shall be responsible for the overall accountability for the incident. The IC may delegate to other appropriate staff members, the facilitation of the accountability for those resources to meet those goals, objectives, and tasks as needed.

The NFPA 1500 and 1561 Standards contain specific requirements regarding accountability of members that include but are not limited to the following:

Accountability Levels

The accountability levels are to provide a clear idea of what each term means and how they are to be used while at an event or incident. The five areas of accountability are:

- Personal Accountability
- Single Resource Accountability
- Supervisor Accountability
- Scene Accountability
- Functional Accountability

Specific Accountability Definitions and Recommendations

These more specific accountability definitions and recommendations are to assist a responder with how to maintain accountability while at an event or incident.

Personal Accountability

a. It is the duty of every individual to understand one’s role, limitations, and responsibility in accountability.
b. Every individual is to remain under supervision at all times and is to refrain from
c. “freelancing.”*
d. To be constantly aware of the status and location of fellow crew members and other workers near their area of responsibility.

Single Resource Accountability

a. During an incident all single resource(s) personnel will check in with the supervisor to which they are assigned.
b. Any department member responding directly to the scene in his or her own vehicle must first check in as required.
c. The single resource shall provide constant awareness of their status, location, and function throughout the duration of the incident.
d. It is the duty of every resource to understand its role, limitations, and responsibility in accountability.
e. All resources are to remain under supervision at all times and are to refrain from
f. "freelancing."*
g. To be constantly aware of the status of surrounding resources.
h. Shall be in constant communications and maintain status of adjoining forces.

Supervisor Accountability

a. During an incident, all supervisory personnel will check in with the manager to which they are assigned.
b. The supervisor shall maintain constant awareness of the status, location, and functions of his crew throughout the duration of the incident.
c. The supervisor shall include a proactive reporting of accountability through the chain of command.
d. Supervisor shall ensure crew cohesion, continuity, and communication.
e. "Freelancing"* is strictly prohibited. All on-scene personnel must be under supervision at all times.
f. Supervisors shall conduct, on a regular and routine basis, an accountability check of their assigned personnel. This should include a PAR when specific tasks are completed or, at a minimum, at the end of an operational period. The accountability check(s) and the results of those checks shall be documented on a Unit/Activity Log (ICS Form 214) or similar tool.

*Freelancing is defined as any responder operating independently, or in a group, at the incident scene without notifying incident command and/or without being assigned or delegated a task or function. It must be recognized that there are times when independent action may be appropriate, such as when encountering an immediate threat prior to checking in at an incident. An example of this would be encountering a structure, imminently threatened by fire, prior to checking in at an incident facility or having radio contact with the incident. This action is without orders but reasonably can be assumed to be in alignment with the commander's intent. The obligation is to limit the duration of engagement and attempt to contact the incident to relay conditions and actions taken, and seek follow-up orders.

Scene Accountability

a. The IC is responsible to ensure that the status, location, and functions of each resource are constantly tracked throughout the incident.
b. Upon arrival on-scene, each resource shall check in for assignment.
c. All personnel on the scene will be tracked through the Command Post with the ICS position, assignment, and resource identifier. Each resource shall have a list of assigned personnel available.
d. As the incident increases in complexity, the accountability system shall increase accordingly.

Functional Accountability

a. Functional accountability shall be used for complex incidents. This requires enhanced scene accountability whereby an IC and/or a designee formally tracks the status, locations, and assignments of all resources/personnel. Functional accountability shall be documented using an appropriate tracking system such as recording assignments on an Incident
a. Briefing (ICS Form 201).
b. Accountability process shall be scalable so it may expand or contract with the complexity of the incident.
c. As complexity increases, improved communications should also be attempted. (i.e., face- to-face communications, visual contact of crews if possible).

Accountability Check List

Who - Who is the resource? **This could be a responder or equipment.** Identifies the responder or resource by name(s), assignment, and agency (if an assisting agency). Identifies equipment by type and kind.

What - What is the resource doing? Identifies the tasks and assignments of the resource.

When - When did the person or unit arrive on scene, last check-in (i.e., PAR), become reassigned, or demobilized?

Where - Where is the resource located/assigned (division, group, staging, ICP)?

Why - Why was the resource requested? Identifies the need for the resource.

How – How is the accountability process documented/reported/recorded?

Accountability Considerations

Pre-Incident Accountability Considerations

1. Training on the policies, procedures and tactics of the accountability system should be a priority to a successful system.

2. Pre-written agency policies and standard operating guidelines related to responder emergencies are an integral part of an accountability system. These policies and guidelines, when properly applied at an incident or event, result in solid rescue and recovery plans that are specific to emergency environment and the specific risks faced by responders.

3. The organization’s culture must encompass the understanding that a firefighter’s failure to adhere to standard accountability practices places them, and all on scene personnel, in increased danger.

Incident Accountability Considerations

1. There must be an Incident Management Accountability System in place. The task can be accomplished by the officer in charge or delegated to an individual in more complex incidents.

2. Accountability procedures must be followed and must track individuals regardless of their location or assignment on the incident (i.e., hazard zone, camp, incident base).

3. The supervisor must continually maintain crew integrity at all times to avoid “freelancing” by individual crewmembers.

4. By maintaining company supervision and crew integrity, initiative and resourcefulness can be closely monitored.

5. All personnel must have the ability to communicate with assigned supervisors.

6. It is essential that the supervisor or manager be able to account for different crews by means of an “identifier.”

7. Access to event/incident shall be maintained and monitored. Resources engaged, staged or released from functional assignments must do so through the chain of command.

8. An accounting of all personnel must be conducted at certain points during the incident/event, when conditions change, or assignments are complete.

Post Incident Accountability Considerations

1. Provide post incident summary of the event for review.

2. Discuss and review relevant situations where accountability was a factor during the incident/event.

3. Provide actions taken and lessons learned that would encourage or possibly prevent the same issue(s) from occurring again.

4. Upon release from an incident, assigned resource will contact the home unit or base to inform of release status and travel time; then again upon arrival.

Firefighter Emergency Communications Terms and Procedures

The fire department standard operating procedures shall provide direction in the use of clear text radio messages for emergency incidents.

Emergency Traffic

"Emergency traffic" shall be used as a designator to clear the radio traffic for an emergency affecting the incident and can be declared by any member who becomes aware of an emergency affecting the incident. When a member declares “emergency traffic” that person shall use clear text to identify the type of emergency, change in conditions, or tactical operations. Examples of “emergency traffic” could be: “evacuate the building,” “wind shift from North to South,” “change from offensive to defensive operations,” “electrical wires down,” or “shots fired.”

Mayday

“Mayday” shall be used as the designator to identify when a member is in a life-threatening situation and in need of immediate assistance and can be declared by any member who becomes aware of a member who is in a life-threatening situation and in need of immediate assistance. "Mayday, mayday, mayday" shall be broadcast followed by clear text to identify the type of emergency “RESPONDER DOWN,” “RESPONDER MISSING,” or “RESPONDER TRAPPED,” to all incident personnel.

Once a “mayday” has been declared and broadcast on the radio using the distinctive emergency traffic alert tones, the IC must take action to determine the members’ location, situation, and the resources needed to facilitate assistance (NFPA 1561 6.3.3.2, 2013 Edition).

Dispatch Communications

Other guidelines for “Emergency Traffic” or “Mayday” include the Dispatch Center transmitting a distinctive emergency traffic alert tone on designated channel(s) followed by a clear text verbal message that identifies the type of emergency.

Conclusion of Emergency Situation

At the conclusion of the “mayday” or the “emergency traffic” situation, the IC should transmit an “All clear, resume radio traffic.” on all assigned radio channels.

Incident Clock

The fire department communications center shall start an incident clock when the first arriving unit is on-scene of a working structure fire or hazardous materials incident, or when other conditions appears to be time sensitive or dangerous (NFPA 1500 8.2.4, 2013 Edition).

The dispatch center shall notify the incident commander at every 10-minute increment with the time that resources have been on the incident until the fire is knocked down or the incident becomes static (NFPA 1500 8.2.4.1, 2013 Edition). The incident commander shall be permitted to cancel the incident clock notification through the fire department communications center based on the incident conditions.

Rapid Intervention Crew/Company (RIC) Members:

Rapid Intervention personnel have two very important duties. These are:

- Monitor designated radio channel(s) while standing-by and during rescue operations.
- Be fully prepared to participate in the rescue of a downed firefighter as assigned by the Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief.

In the initial stages of an incident where only one team is operating in the hazardous area at a working structural fire, a minimum of four individuals is required, consisting of two individuals working as a team in the hazard area and two individuals present outside this hazard area for assistance or rescue at emergency operations where entry into the danger area is required. The standby members shall be responsible for maintaining a constant awareness of the number and identity of members operating in the hazardous area, their location and function, and time of entry. The standby members shall remain in radio, visual, voice or signal line communications with the team (NFPA 1500 8.8.2 – 8.8.2.3, 2013 Edition).

Members that arrive on the scene of a working structural fire prior to the assembling of four persons can initiate exterior actions in preparation for an interior attack.

Initial attack operations shall be organized to ensure that if, upon arrival at the emergency scene, initial attack personnel find an imminent life-threatening situation where immediate action could prevent the loss of life or serious injury, such action shall be permitted with less than four personnel. No exception shall be permitted when there is no possibility to save lives. Any such actions taken in accordance with this section shall be thoroughly investigated by the fire department with a written report submitted to the fire chief (NFPA 1500 8.8.2.10 – 8.8.2.10.2, 2013 Edition).

In the initial stages of an incident, the IC supervises the RIC. As the incident grows in complexity, this supervision can be assigned to the Operations Section Chief or even to individual Divisions to ensure the most rapid and effective deployment on a rescue.

When sufficient personnel are on-scene, the rapid intervention capability for the incident should be raised from the two-in, two-out minimum to include an entire crew or company dedicated as the RIC. In some instances, such as multiple and/or remote entrance points, multiple RIC elements should be assigned and a Rapid Intervention Group Supervisor activated to supervise positioning and deployment of these Crews/Companies.

In high-rise fire incidents the RIC should typically be located at Staging. This will allow for RIC's to be deployed in a timely manner. Consider multiple RIC's if multiple floors are involved with positioning based on the assigned floor.

The assignment of resources to the rescue effort should continue as requested by the officer in charge of the rescue effort. Once the rescue is properly staffed, the IC shall reestablish the rapid intervention capability by identifying a fresh company as the RIC. The IC must ensure that crews in the immediate vicinity of the downed firefighter are properly reassigned to assist in the rescue effort as appropriate.

This may include continuing to control the spread of the fire

that threatens the firefighter or striving to stabilize other situations that threaten the firefighter or otherwise allow for more rapid extrication.

Additional Rapid Intervention Considerations

When preparing for a firefighter rescue, consider the worst-case scenario. Rapid Intervention Crew/Company (RIC) standard operating guidelines are incident driven.

Officers or members assigned the task of RIC shall not get involved in routine firefighting activities, but remain in a state of readiness keeping company members together and ready for deployment.

Operational Retreat Guidelines

In addition to radio traffic requiring evacuation, the following standardized audible signal can be used to indicate evacuation.

The **EVACUATION SIGNAL** will consist of repeated short blasts of the air horn for approximately 10 seconds, followed by 10 seconds of silence. This sequence of air horn blasts for 10 seconds followed by a 10-second period of silence will be done three times; total air horn evacuation signal including periods of silence will last 50 seconds. This should be done in conjunction with the radio announcement of “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC”, with direction for emergency scene personnel to evacuate the hazard area.

The Dispatch Center should continue to advise the Incident Commander of the elapsed time at each additional 10-minute interval, or until canceled by the IC or until the incident is declared under control, i.e., knockdown.

PROCEDURES FOR THE USE OF FLAGGING TAPE

Flagging is often very specific to geographic locations on an incident. It is essential to include the proper communication and ensure that incident resources are familiar with what flagging colors are being utilized and what they represent. It is imperative that this information is passed along to incoming resources so all assigned personnel are familiar with what information is being conveyed through the use of the flagging. It is also recommended that flagging information be added to the Incident Action Plan (ICS 204) so that all resources are familiar with the colors at a specific incident to assure that consistent coloring standards are being applied. Incidents should at a minimum stock the flagging colors referenced in the most current edition of the “NWCG Red Book.” The NWCG “Red Book” flagging reference and FIRESCOPE “Procedures for the Identification and Management of Life Hazard Zones” identified below are recommended for flagging.

PROCEDURES FOR THE IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF LIFE HAZARD ZONES

INTRODUCTION

Incident Commanders are responsible for the safety of all incident personnel and may have to take actions to protect personnel from life threatening conditions that on-scene Fire personnel and other responders do not have the capabilities, tools, or training to immediately mitigate. These actions may include:

- Immediate notification of personnel
- Notification for on-going or long term life hazards
- Methods to isolate and clearly identify the life hazard with three strands of barrier tape
- Assignment of Lookouts or Assistant Safety Officers when needed
- Identification methods for remote or large area life hazards

The clearly identifiable method to assure that Fire Personnel and other responders do not enter Life Hazard Zones includes the use of a minimum of three (3) horizontal strands of barrier tape that states, **“Do Not Enter” or “Do Not Cross”,** to prevent entry to the hazardous area. Three horizontal strands of any Fire-line tape or flagging tape between one inch and three inches with the words “Do Not Enter” or “Do Not Cross”, securely fixed to stationary supports, and in sufficient locations to isolate the hazard, will meet the requirement of identifying a Life Hazard Zone.

DEFINITIONS

A. **Life Hazard:** The existence of a process or condition that would likely cause serious injury or death to exposed persons.

B. **Life Hazard Zones:** A system of barriers surrounding designated areas at the incident scene that is intended to **STOP** fire personnel and other responders from entering a potentially Life Threatening, Hazardous Area.

C. **Life Hazard Lookout:** A qualified person in a location where they can safely observe a Life Hazard, monitor resources and personnel in the area, and communicate with resources keeping them a safe distance away. The Lookout will also isolate and deny entry to any responders or resources until the life hazard is mitigated and the Incident Commander approves the release of the Life Hazard Zone.

INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES

Whenever a life hazard is present, or an immediate threat to the health and safety of incident personnel is present at an incident, any person who recognizes the potential life hazard shall immediately contact the Incident Commander (IC) using **EMERGENCY TRAFFIC** to advise of the situation. Included in the Emergency Traffic notification:

- Type/Nature of the hazardous condition (i.e., downed electrical wires, imminent building collapse, etc.)
- Specific location
- Resource needs
- Any immediate exposure needs or issues

Incident Commander shall request the appropriate resource or agency to respond to the incident to evaluate and mitigate the life hazard (i.e., Utility Company, Structural Engineer, etc.) and assign a Lookout or Assistant Safety Officer until Life Hazard Zone(s) are established.

The Incident Commander shall assign a Life Hazard Lookout to prevent any incident personnel from entering the area until such time as the procedures below have been completed

Identification of Life Hazard Zones

A. The standard for identification of a LIFE HAZARD ZONE

1. Deploy barrier tape in the following manner to prevent entry and identify the hazard zone. The optimal tape would be red and white striped or chevron barrier

tape that states, **"Life Hazard - Do Not Enter."** However, existing Fire-line or Police perimeter tape that includes the words "Do Not Enter" or "Do Not Cross" will meet this standard.

2. The tape shall be configured in **three horizontal strands** approximately 18 to 24 inches apart and securely fixed to stationary supports to establish the LIFE HAZARD ZONE. The LIFE HAZARD ZONE <u>barrier</u> shall be of sufficient size to provide complete isolation, distance and protection from the hazard, and supports shall be capable of supporting the barrier tape throughout the incident.
3. The use of illumination is recommended to enhance nighttime visibility to further identify the LIFE HAZARD ZONE. Examples include orange cones with a flashing strobe light on the ground, or glow sticks securely attached to the barrier tape.

B. The Established Life Hazard Zone

1. **THE THREE HORIZONTAL STRAND CONFIGURATION OF RED AND WHITE STRIPED OR CHEVRON BARRIER TAPE SHALL <u>ONLY</u> BE USED FOR LIFE HAZARD IDENTIFICATION. WHEN INCIDENT PERSONNEL SEE THE THREE STRAND CONFIGURATION OF BARRIER TAPE IT SHALL BE RECOGNIZED AS THE STANDARD FOR ISOLATING A LIFE HAZARD, AND INCIDENT PERSONNEL <u>SHALL NOT</u> ENTER THE LIFE HAZARD ZONE.**

2. Ensure the LIFE HAZARD ZONE measures provide visibility to approaching personnel to prevent entry into the area throughout the duration of the incident.

3. Maintain the LIFE HAZARD ZONE for the duration of the incident <u>or hazard</u>. Approval from the IC is required prior to the removal of the Life Hazard Zone barriers.

4. The LIFE HAZARD ZONE identification measures are intended to provide a visual cue to all incident personnel. Life Hazard Lookout(s) or Assistant Safety Officers shall be considered to ensure a physical barrier between personnel and the LIFE HAZARD ZONE through effective communications and notifications.

5. The Incident Commander shall be responsible for ensuring that all incident personnel are notified of the Life Hazard Zone. This may be accomplished through any approved method such as face-to-face, emergency traffic radio messages or the Incident Action Plan.

C. Remote Locations

In cases where the extent of the hazard zone is so large that is not practical to completely isolate the area, such as on large incidents in remote locations, the following will be the minimum standard for these situations:

1. The Incident Commander must approve the use of these minimum standards for each Life Hazard. The Incident Commander shall assign a life hazard lookout at appropriate access points to prevent any incident personnel from entering the area until such time as the procedures below have been completed:

   Three horizontal stripes of red and white Life Hazard tape or barrier tape (as described above) will be affixed to two vertical uprights at appropriate locations along the access route to the Life Hazard area. A description of the hazard, location of the hazard, and distance from the Life Hazard indicator tape to the hazard shall be attached at each location.

2. All Personnel working in the area or Division shall be notified of the Life Hazard immediately. Incident personnel may be notified through the routine briefings, emergency traffic radio messages, the Incident Action Plan and the Incident Map.

3. The location(s) of the Life Hazard(s) and Placard(s) shall be marked on the Incident Map using standardized symbols. The symbol to mark the Life Hazard Zone on the Incident map is a red octagon (Stop Sign) with three white horizontal lines with a description of the hazard noted underneath.

WIRES

Personnel shall not breach, alter, or remove any LIFE HAZARD ZONE identification measures until the hazard has been abated and approval has been granted by the Incident Commander.

All personnel have a personal responsibility to be aware of LIFE HAZARDS and make proper notifications when they are encountered at an incident.

Remember the slogan: **THREE STRIPES, YOU'RE OUT!**

The "NWCG Red Book" found at https://www.nifc.gov/policies/pol_ref_redbook.html recommends the following Safety Zone/Escape Route flagging for wildland fire activities:

- Hot-pink flagging marked "Escape Route" (NFES 0566). Crews with colorblind members may wish to carry and utilize fluorescent chartreuse flagging (NFES 2396)

- Yellow with black diagonal stripes, 1 inch wide (NFES 0267) for Hazards.