

# **Bethel Fire Department**

## **Fireground Accountability**

**A-013**

### **Purpose and Policy**

To establish a comprehensive and functional personnel resource tracking system for the Bethel Fire Department which provides for the accountability of all personnel operating at an emergency scene.

### **Scope**

This guideline applies to all officers and firefighters of the Bethel Fire Department. All personnel will adhere to this accountability system; furthermore, they shall utilize the Personnel Accountability Location System (PALS) in order to ensure everyone's safety. The PALS system should be utilized by all personnel who are: on-duty, participating in training, and while operating at an emergency scene.

### **Definitions:**

**Company:** A single tactical unit equipped with tools and equipment, that can be used on an incident.

**Crew:** A team of individuals with an identified work Supervisor that can be used on an incident. The minimum crew size for the Bethel Fire Department shall be two personnel.

**Division:** Divisions are used to divide an incident into geographic areas of operation. Divisions are identified by alphabetic characters for horizontal applications and, often, by floor numbers when used in buildings.

**Group:** Groups are established to divide the incident into functional areas of operation. Groups are composed of resources assembled to perform a special function not necessarily within a single geographic division (See Division).

**IDLH:** Acronym for Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health. The presence in the atmosphere of any inhalable agent capable of causing severe injury or death after a brief exposure to it. In operational terms, the presence of any airborne contaminant that people should avoid unless they have access to respiratory protection.

**MARC:** Acronym for Member Accountability Roll Call. An action point in an incident, where Fire Dispatch notes 20-minute increments, to act as a prompt for the incident commander to elect to conduct a roll call. The roll call will be conducted in an orderly fashion by radio or face-to face between the IC and each unit or command function/division, after each leader has had positive communication with the persons/crews within their direct span of control. Whenever possible, each division or group should account for personnel within their span without the use of the radio in order to keep operational channels open for emergency traffic.

**PALS:** Acronym for Personnel Accountability Location System. A tracking system which utilizes nametags to accurately track personnel operating at an emergency scene.

**PALS nametag:** A 3/8" by 2" plastic name tag, assigned to all personnel of the Bethel Fire Department, with a hook. Chief Officers will have a white tag, Company Officers will have a blue tag, Senior Firefighters will have a green tag, all other members will have a red tag.

**PAR:** Acronym for Personnel Accountability Report. A roll call of all personnel who are not assigned to staging.

**RTS:** Acronym for Riding the Seat. The Fire Officer or Senior Fire Fighter in charge of a fire department company.

## **Guidelines:**

### **A). PALS Procedure and Usage.**

1. The Incident Commander shall maintain an awareness of the location and function of all crews and personnel operating at an incident scene. In order to facilitate this, a Personnel Accountability Location System (PALS) will be used at all times. The PALS system will present an organized and reliable method of tracking personnel operating on incident scenes.
2. All personnel must ensure that crew integrity is maintained at all times. All crews will remain together. Personnel operating in an IDLH environment must operate in at least pairs, while maintaining voice or visual contact with one another at all times as outlined in OSHA [20CFR 1910.134 (g)(4)(i)].
3. All Division and Group supervisors, RTS personnel, and Crew Leaders shall have a working radio. If a radio fails while working within the IDLH environment, all personnel must exit, unless there is another working radio within the group, company, or crew.
4. At any incident where personnel are operating in an IDLH environment, the Incident Commander will use the 20-minute tactical benchmark. The 20-minute MARC will be prompted by Fire Dispatch. At this point the Incident Commander may conduct a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) of all of the Companies operating at an incident and not assigned to Staging. The PAR should reconcile with the accountability of the PALS passports.
5. PAR benefits and communication:
  - a. For a company officer/RTS and Crew Leaders, a PAR is a confirmation that all personnel assigned to his/her company/crew are accounted for. A PAR within a company or crew is conducted by face-to-face communication within the single resource.
  - b. For Division and Group Supervisors, a PAR offers accountability of all companies and crews assigned to the Division or Group. A PAR within a Division or group may be conducted face to face or via Radio with the Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief.
  - c. For the Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief, the PAR offers accountability of the Division or Group Supervisors and those subordinates working under their direction. A PAR requested by the Incident Commander shall be conducted via radio.
  - d. In order to allow enough time for members to ensure an accurate PAR report, the member initiating the PAR check, should announce via the radio, "all units, stand

by for a PAR”. The member should then wait a reasonable timeframe (60 seconds) then initiate the PAR via the radio.

6. A Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) should be initiated by the incident commander in the when:
  - a. There is a report of a missing or trapped firefighter.
  - b. There is a change of tactics from offensive to defensive.
  - c. There is a sudden hazardous event – flashover, backdraft, collapse, etc.
  - d. Anytime the Incident Commander feels necessary.
7. Lost or Missing Members. If, upon completion of a PAR, personnel are noted to be lost or missing, the Division/Group Supervisor or Crew Leader must immediately notify the incident commander. The incident commander will declare a “MAYDAY” for the lost/missing person. Command should consider activating the Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC) to the last reported working area of the unaccounted for member to begin a search.

#### B). PALS – Daily Use

1. Personnel Name Tags All personnel of the Bethel Fire Department shall be assigned two (2) PALS system nametags, which clearly identify the firefighter’s name. Each PALS nametag shall be attached to the underside of the rear brim of each firefighter’s helmet, when not being used for accountability.
2. Pump/Aerial Driver Operators If individual personnel of a company are working outside of the hazard area (such as pump operators & tanker operators) their name tags shall be placed upside down on the vehicle passport upon collection. The company officer (RTS) and back end positions will remain in their respective places on the passports.
3. Compliance and Safety Company Officers/RTS Personnel shall be aware and account for their personnel at all times while working at the incident. They must work to ensure that all personnel assigned on their apparatus have their nametags on the passport in the correct place.
4. Lost Nametag Replacement Members who lose a nametag and need replacement shall submit a request to the Assistant Chief.

#### C). PALS Passports – Multiple Alarm Incidents

1. One of the first positions that the incident commander should establish after escalating the alarm, is the role of the accountability manager. This person can be an On-Scene Safety Officer. The accountability manager shall assume the responsibility of maintaining the PALS system. Please note: The accountability manager is not the same person who assumes the role of Staging Area Manager
2. All personnel arriving at the scene of an incident that has escalated to a second alarm or greater shall report to the accountability manager. If no one has yet been identified as the accountability manager, they should report to the incident command post. No multiple alarm call personnel shall operate at any incident without utilizing the PALS system. Members operating at an incident scene without their assigned tags, may report to the Staging Manager or designee to receive a numbered tag for tracking themselves during the incident.
3. The accountability manager should deploy the PALS accountability board and collect the passports of initial companies at the scene. The accountability manger shall work with the incident

commander to identify the location of the companies operating on the incident scene and mark their location on the accountability board.

4. As individuals arrive on scene they must report to the accountability manager. The accountability manager will collect each person's PALS nametag and check them in to the incident. The accountability manager will then assign personnel to crews. The minimum crew size shall be two (2) personnel, where at least one member shall be the rank of Senior Firefighter or above. Each crew shall be assigned a passport crew number at the top. The PALS nametag of the Officer/RTS of each crew shall be placed at the top of the PALS accountability board tag holder. This person shall be the crew leader. The other personnel of the crew shall follow below. The accountability manager will then track crews and their location on the accountability board.

5. Individual nametags shall be utilized on the accountability board for personnel who arrive at the scene and are assigned a task for other functions in the incident command system that are not specific to apparatus or a crew (i.e. filling air cylinders, rehab officer, or staging manager).

6. Companies that have completed a task at an incident scene and have been released to rehab and/or staging, shall check in with the accountability manager as soon as practical after exiting the IDLH environment.

7. Companies that are being relieved from the scene, yet are made up from mutual aid personnel as a result of the multiple alarm, are to check out with the staging manager to retrieve their nametags prior to departure from the scene.

## **V. Responsibility:**

A. The Incident Commander shall be responsible for overall personnel accountability for the incident.

B. Each Division or Group supervisor shall be responsible for maintaining an awareness of all the crews assigned to them.

C. All personnel must understand who they report to within the ICS system of an emergency scene, as well as those personnel that they are responsible for. No personnel shall operate outside of direction of their ICS Supervisor. **Freelancing will not be tolerated.**

D. Each company officer or person Riding the Seat shall be responsible for ensuring that each firefighter on the apparatus has attached their nameplate on the PALS board, at all times.

E. Each firefighter shall be responsible for ensuring that their nametag is stored on their helmet when not in use, and placed on the accountability board when reporting for duty.

F. In the event of a complex incident, that has not escalated to a multiple alarm, the IC shall be responsible for assigning personnel to collect passports and maintain the accountability board, as conditions warrant.

## **Final Intent:**

This policy is intended to inform the company of the basics of the accountability system Bethel Fire Department employs. While small calls such as First Response or alarm activation – investigate may not require any system due to the small size of the response, it is critical that any

operation involving personnel that are or may be exposed to an IDLH situation must be accounted for at all times. Limited air, fast evolving situation, and time require immediate knowledge of who, what, and where in order to effect a rapid intervention.

**It is the responsibility of all members to read, understand and follow this Standard Operating Guideline**

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_