

Bethel Fire Department

NIMS and Incident Command

A-012

Purpose and Policy

To establish a guideline that will provide for a uniform “on the scene” management system for all emergency incidents. To that end, the Bethel Fire Department has adopted the National Incident Management System which is a comprehensive approach to incident management that can apply to emergencies of all types and sizes. Under the NIMS model, the Department uses the Incident Command System (ICS), which is a standardized on-scene emergency management system used to manage resources during incidents.

Scope:

This guideline shall be applied to all emergency operations, not just structural firefighting operations. It is understood that the emphasis of this guideline is on structural firefighting operations, but that the procedures contained within may be *generally* applied to any emergency operation. Specific details pertaining to “out of the ordinary” incidents, such as technical rescue or hazardous materials responses will be addressed in further detail within corresponding Standard Operating Guidelines. Additionally, it should be acknowledged that routine medical calls and simple investigations – our typical responses - do not necessarily require the degree of detail as outlined within this SOG. In other words, it should be understood that we do not require the establishment of a fixed command post for the Incident Commander on a routine medical call, nor do we require a face-to-face transfer of command during the initial stages of an alarm activation

As with any emergency, the authority to deviate from this guideline rests with the Incident Commander (IC) or Fire Chief.

Definitions:

“2 In, 2 Out”: A term used to describe an entry safety team, with a required minimum of two personnel in the hazard area and a required minimum of two personnel out of the hazard area. The two members outside the hazard area may initially consist of the incident commander and a pump operator. Exceptions to this rule is when there is a reported or suspected life hazard where immediate action could prevent loss of life or when the fire is in an incipient stage where it could be controlled by a single portable fire extinguisher.

Branch: The method used to manage Divisions or Groups when the span of control has been exceeded. Branches may include divisions or groups.

Division: The method by which an incident is divided by geographic areas.

Division Supervisor: The individual assigned to supervise companies and personnel assigned to a “geographic” location.

Exposure: Any structure, occupancy, or object which is or may become damaged, destroyed, or threatened by the fire or the effects of the fire.

Group: The method by which an incident is divided by functional areas of operation.

Group Supervisor: The individual assigned to supervise companies and personnel who have been assigned a functional task. This supervisor, and assigned companies/personnel are not usually restricted to a “geographic” location.

Geographic Location: A physical location. As an example, at the scene of a structure fire, the fire floor would be considered a division. Likewise, on a large incident that spans two sides of a river running North to South, the incident commander might choose to divide the incident into an East and a West Division.

IDLH (Immediately dangerous to life or health): An atmospheric concentration of any toxin, corrosive, or asphyxiating substance, or an atmosphere that:

- Poses an immediate threat to life
- Would cause irreversible or delayed adverse health effects
- Would interfere with an individual’s ability to escape from the dangerous atmosphere
- Have an oxygen concentration of less than 19.5%.

Incident Action Plan (IAP): The written or verbal plan by which all incident supervisory personnel receive direction for actions to be implemented during the designated operational period.

Strike Team: A number of resources (usually 5) of the same kind or type, typically equipped with an operator or crew of individuals operating under and identified supervisor.

Task Force: A combination of mixed resources with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a leader.

Guidelines:

A). First Arriving Unit

1. The first arriving unit shall report on the scene and provide the brief initial report as outlined in SOG D-009 Communications.

B). Establishing Command

1. The first arriving company should report on scene, provide the brief initial report; then establish and identify command by name, i.e., “Pearl Street Command.”
2. The first arriving unit may pass command, depending upon conditions on arrival or the proximity of the next arriving officer.
3. Should the first arriving unit choose to pass command, the second arriving engine or truck company shall establish command.
4. The on-duty shift commander, or next arriving chief officer, shall assume command upon reporting on the scene. This transfer of command shall follow the process as outlined within this guideline.

C). Command Post

1. When multiple units are operating, the incident commander should establish a fixed command post, strategically located at the emergency scene, from which he/she will conduct operations.
2. Dispatch will be notified using the primary radio channel as to the location of the command post.

D). Transfer of Command

1. Should generally be a face-to-face meeting of the two commanders to review the status of the incident.
2. The incident status review should include:
 - a. General incident status.
 - b. Location, extent, and conditions of emergency.
 - c. Effectiveness of control efforts.
 - d. Accountability for all units operating.
3. Dispatch, and all units operating, shall be notified when the transfer of command has been completed.
4. The new incident commander shall assume the title of "*Street Name Command.*"
5. The relieved officer shall be utilized to the best advantage of the incident commander.

E). Termination of Command

1. Command will be in effect until the release of all units. As the incident is scaled down, command may be relinquished to subordinates with the appropriate transfer of command procedure.

F). Expanding Incidents

1. Incidents should be organized in the simplest manner possible. The majority of incidents can be managed with an incident commander overseeing individual companies who have been assigned tasks, but occasionally additional layers of supervision must be added. When the recommended span of control is exceeded or when the incident complexity necessitates, the incident commander should begin to expand his or her command structure. The optimum span of control is 5, with a typical range of 3 to 7. As a reminder, within operations, we should begin expanding from the bottom up.
2. The most common form of maintaining managerial control is to establish division and/or group supervisors. Very rarely should it be necessary to designate branch directors.
3. During expanding incidents, it may be necessary to establish an operations section chief. This role may be filled by the initial incident commander who is relieved by a more senior fire officer.
4. Common General Staff Roles:
 - a. Operations Section Chief – responsible for all tactical incident operations and implementation of the incident action plan. In the incident command system, it normally includes branches, divisions, and/or groups.
 - b. Planning Section Chief – responsible for the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of operational information related to the incident, and for the preparation and documentation of the incident action plan. Also maintains

information on the current and forecasted situation and on the status of resources assigned to the incident.

- c. Logistics Section Chief – responsible for providing facilities, services, and material support for the incident.
- d. Finance and Administration Section Chief – responsible for all administrative and financial considerations surrounding the incident.
- e. Intelligence/Investigations Section Chief – when utilized, responsible for the information that leads to the detection, prevention, apprehension, and prosecution of criminal activities (or individual (s) involved) including terrorist incidents or information that leads to the determination of the cause of a given incident, such as public health events or fires of unknown origins. More frequently, found as a branch or group within the operations section.

G). This quadrant system is established to easily and uniformly identify particular building segments and exposures, with the intent to reduce confusion at an incident.

1. Side of Building Designation

a. Side Alpha

- (1) Facing the street.
- (2) Utilized as the building address-side.
- (3) Normally, the front of the building.

b. See Figure 1 for the standard “clockwise” side designations.

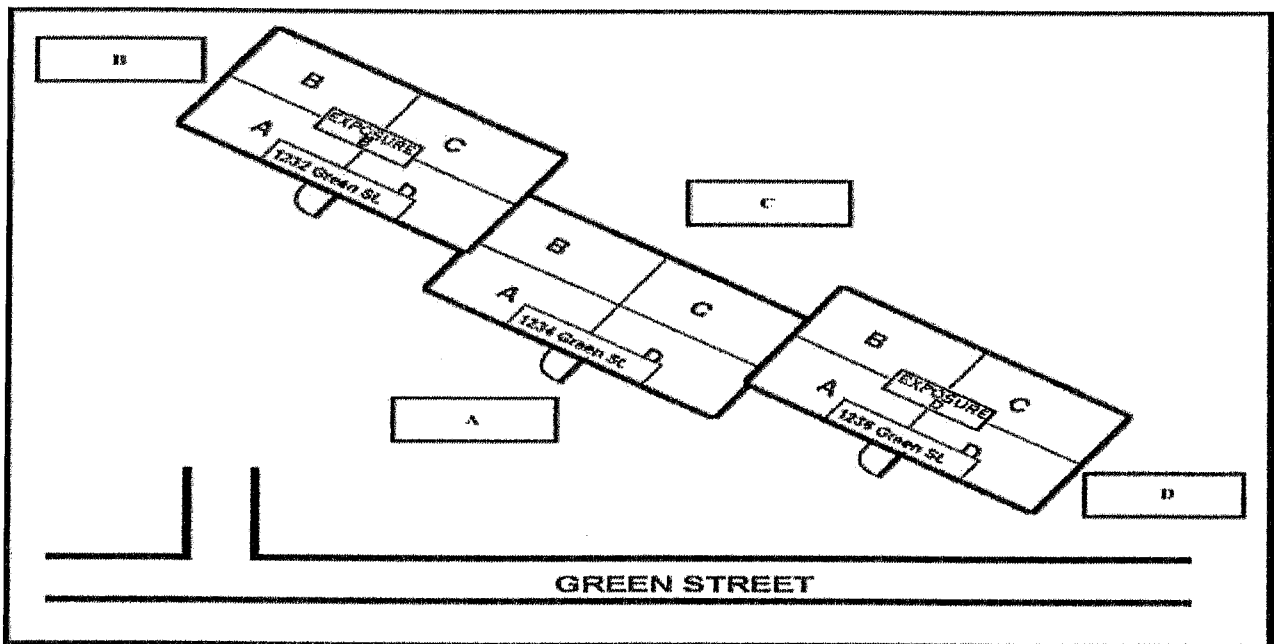


Figure 1- Dividing the Incident Scene

2. Interior Identification Process

- a. The interior shall be divided into quadrants A, B, C, and D; starting at the left front (Side Alpha) of building and moving clockwise.
- b. See Figure 1 for an example of this interior quadrant system.
- c. The floor numbering should be in reference to the alpha side. Count all living floors and the attic space.
- d. See Figure 2 for an example of floor designations.
- e. Under certain circumstances, it may be less confusing to use the floor designations already in place and being used by building occupants.

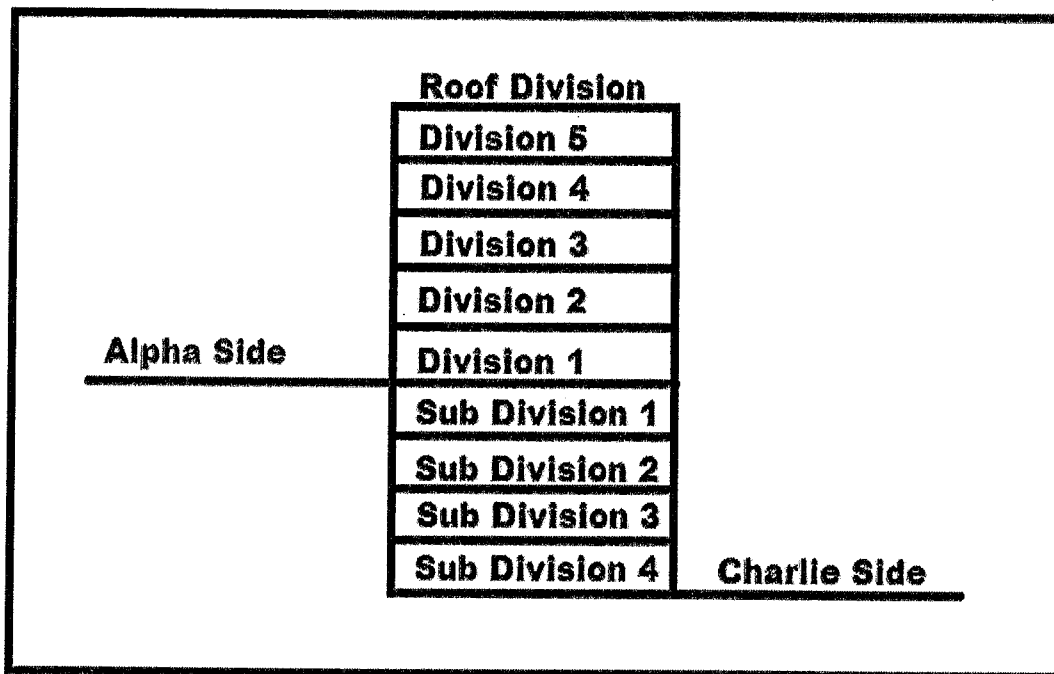


Figure 2- Floor Designations

3. Exposure Designations

- a. Coincides with the side of the fire building and progresses from "Bravo 1 Exposure" outward i.e. Bravo 1 Exposure, Bravo 2 Exposure, etc.
- b. See Figure 3 for an example of exposure designations.

**Middle of the Row
Exposure Designations**


Bravo 3 Exposure	Bravo 2 Exposure	Bravo 1 Exposure	Fire Occupancy 	Delta 1 Exposure	Delta 2 Exposure	Delta 3 Exposure
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Figure 3- Exposure Designations

4. Unusual Building Configurations and Building Wings

- a. Determine a landmark. (Swimming pool, command post, etc.)
- b. Base side alpha on the landmark.
- c. Determine remaining sides by clockwise flow.
- d. See Figure 4 for an example of how to address unusual building configurations.
- e. First due station captains should identify such buildings in their response area and prepare a preplan indicating a quadrant system designation. This preplan shall be disseminated department-wide.

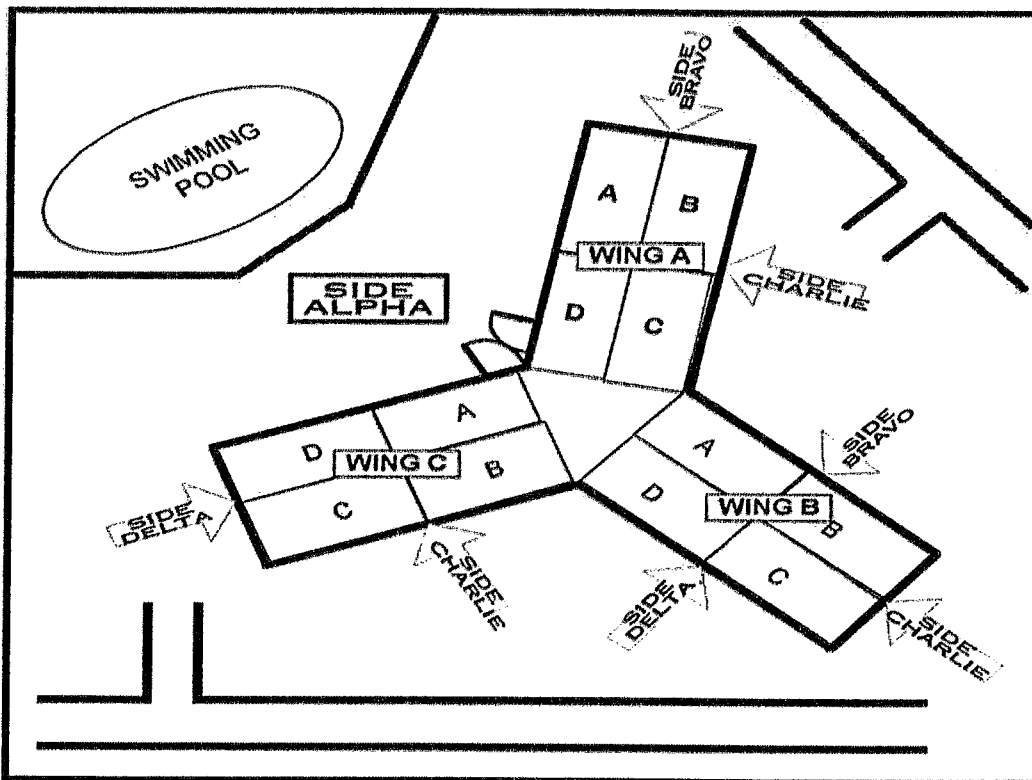


Figure 4 – Unusual Building Designs

Responsibility:

A). Incident Commander

1. Establishes and identifies command by name.
2. Responsible for providing a Brief Initial Report, if not completed by previously arriving units.
3. Responsible for conducting a 360. If unable to physically conduct a 360, the incident commander will ensure that a size up is conducted of those sides of the fire building that are not accessible by his or herself. The information obtained by this size up, typically of the Charlie side of the building, will be relayed via radio according to SOG D-009 Communications
4. Responsible for ensuring compliance with "2 In, 2 Out".
5. Responsible to ensure RIC is established and maintained until operation is under control and structures deemed safe.
6. Responsible for on-scene accountability.
7. Responsible for determining the IAP and assigning responsibilities and tasks to accomplish objectives. (I.e., company assignments, assignment of division and group supervisors, etc.)
8. Responsible for designating a fire-ground channel, if not already assigned, and communicating this to all assigned units, as well as dispatch.
9. Responsible for providing 20-minute progress reports as outlined in SOG D-009 Communications
10. Responsible for authorizing the addition or release of units.
11. Responsible for ensuring compliance with all SOGs and department policies.
12. The incident commander shall make use of a chart whenever (5) or more units are operating.
13. The incident commander assumes directly responsibility for all command functions (i.e., operations, planning, safety, public information, etc.) unless designating these roles. If, on an expanding incident, such roles are filled, responsibilities will be consistent with the principles of ICS. The responsibilities for the safety officer, pertinent to our organization, are outlined within this guideline.

B). Safety Officer

A safety officer should be appointed on every working incident and will report directly to the incident commander. The safety officer shall have the authority and responsibility to halt unsafe acts that might occur on the emergency scene.

1. Safety Officer Criteria
 - a. Appointed by the incident commander when required or deemed necessary.
 - b. Identified as "Safety" on the radio.
 - c. Normally will be the Chief of Training and Safety.
 - d. The safety officer will typically be positioned at the Command Post, but will have to be flexible and mobile on the scene to best observe conditions.
 - e. The safety officer shall not engage in operations unless safety is jeopardized.
2. Safety Officer Duties
 - a. Shall enforce all safety regulations in a fair and equitable manner.

- b. Shall ensure all personnel are wearing appropriate PPE on the emergency scene.
- c. Shall establish safety zones to protect both citizens and personnel.
- d. Shall maintain communication with the incident commander to advise of changing conditions and hazards.
- e. Shall halt any operations deemed unsafe.
- f. Shall assist in any incident critiques pertaining to incident safety.
- g. Shall assist in firefighter injury and/or death investigations.
- h. Shall prepare written statements of unsafe, flagrant, or repeated safety violations and submit said report to the Incident Commander and Chief Engineer.

Final Intent:

This policy is intended to inform the company of the basics of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and to ensure NIMS, or some part thereof, is used at every event, emergency and non-emergency the department is involved in.

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

Approved: _____ Date _____

Printed Name: _____