

# COMMAND GUIDELINES

The effective functioning of Fire Department units and personnel at operating incidents requires clear decisive action on the part of an **Incident Commander**. This guideline identifies the standard operating guidelines to be employed in establishing Command and operating a Command Post. It also fixes responsibility for the command function and the associated duties on one individual at any time during the operation.

The **Incident Commander** is responsible for the command function at all times. As the identity of the Incident Commander changes, through transfers of command, this responsibility shifts with the title. The term Command in this procedure refers jointly to both the person and the function.

## **Command procedures are designed to accomplish the following:**

1. Fix the responsibility for Command on a certain individual through a standard identification system depending on arrival sequence of members, companies and officers.
2. Insure that strong, direct and visible Command will be established as early as possible in the operation.
3. Establish an effective framework outlining the activities and responsibilities assigned to Command.
4. Provide a system for the orderly transfer of Command to subsequent arriving officers.

## **Responsibilities assigned to Command include the following specific outcomes:**

- \* Remove endangered occupants and treat the injured. Stop the fire where he finds it.
- \* Conserve property after fire control is achieved.
- \* Provide for the safety and survival of his personnel.

## **1.0 ESTABLISHING COMMAND**

The first KVFD unit or officer to arrive at the scene of multiple unit responses shall assume Command and remain in command until relieved by a higher-ranking officer or until the incident is terminated.

### **Initial Report**

The person assuming Command shall transmit a brief initial radio report including:

1. Unit identification on the scene and confirming assumption of Command.
2. Building description (*occupancy, size, arrangement, construction and address*).
3. Obvious fire conditions
4. Action taken (*brief description*).
5. Announce location of command post (*command is established at Kipp and 6th or command is across the street from the incident*).

### **Radio Designation**

The radio designation "**COMMAND**" will be used with a street name of the incident (Oak Valley Command, 146 Command, Kipp Command etc). This designation will not change through the duration of the incident. The street designation is not necessary if there is only one incident working at a time.

### **Response Worksheets**

At working incidents Command will use a Tactical Worksheet to outline and record assignments and to assist in the transfer of Command.

Command procedures are designed to offer a practical framework for field operations and to effectively integrate the efforts of all members, officers, and companies. The time involved in performing the functions listed below at the beginning of a tactical operation should produce on-going timesavings in the form of a more effective rescue and fire control outcome. An arriving officer, assuming Command, can quickly and efficiently perform the standard procedures, if they are well known to him. This will facilitate an organized and orderly tactical operation and a more effective effort. This is particularly important in more complex situations and when Command must be transferred to ranking officers.

## **2.0 COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Command is responsible for the following tasks as, required by the circumstances of the situation within his judgment.

### **Initial:**

1. Assume an effective command position.
2. Transmit a brief initial radio report.
3. Rapidly evaluate situation (*size-up*).
4. Develop a plan of attack.
5. Assign units as required, consistent with Level I Staging.
6. Provide continuing overall command and progress reports within the framework of **K.V.F.D. fireground** procedures until relieved by a ranking officer.
7. Review and evaluate attack efforts and revise plan of attack as needed.
8. Requests and assign additional unit as necessary.
9. Return companies to service and terminate "**COMMAND**"

The first four tasks are initial Command responsibilities. The continuing responsibilities stay with Command whether the initial officer remains in Command or, Command is transferred to subsequent arriving officers.

## **3.0 COMMAND OPTIONS**

In cases where the initial arriving officer is a command officer, his efforts should automatically be directed towards establishing a Command Post and fulfilling the listed responsibilities.

An initial arriving company officer must decide on an appropriate commitment for his company. This will usually fall into one of three general modes as listed below.

1. **Nothing Showing Mode:** These situations generally require investigation by the first arriving engine, ladder and rescue while holding staged companies at a distance. Normally the officer should go with his company to check while utilizing his portable radio to continue Command

2. **Fast Attack Mode:** Situations, which require immediate Action to stabilize the situation, such as interior fires. In residences, apartments, or small commercial occupancies, require that the officer quickly decide how to commit his company. Where a fast interior attack is critical, he can take advantage of his portable radio to permit the necessary involvement in the attack without neglecting Command responsibilities. This mode should not last more than a few moments and will end with one to the following:

A - Situation is stabilized

B - Command is passed to next arriving company

C - A Command Officer arrives and command is transferred.

D - Situation is not stabilized and the officer must remove himself to a normal Command position

3. **Command Mode:** Situations that require principally command such situations by virtue of the size of the fire, the complexity/potential of the occupancy or the possibility of extension require strong, direct, and overall command from the outset. In such cases, the officer will initially assume a Command position and maintain that position until relieved by a-ranking officer.

**If a company officer assumes Command and elects not to join his company in action, he may operate within the following options with regard to the assignment of his crew:**

A. He can "move up" within his company and place his company into action with two men. The individual and collective capability of his crew will regulate this action.

B. He can assign his company members to perform staff functions for him.

C. He can assign his company supervision members, to another company, to work under the supervision of the officer of that company. In such cases, the officer must communicate with the receiving officer and indicate the assignment of his personnel.

While the company officer assuming Command has a choice of modes and degrees of personal involvement in the attack, he continues to be fully responsible for the identified tasks assigned to the command function. In all-cases, the initiative and judgment of the officer are of great - importance. The modes identified are not strict rules, but general guidelines to assist the officer in planning his actions.

## **4.0 TRANSFER OF COMMAND**

The first KVFD unit or officer to arrive on the scene will assume and retain command until relieved by a ranking officer within the following guidelines:

- A. The first arriving company officer will automatically assume Command except as noted below.
- B. The Duty Officer will automatically assume Command, after transfer of command procedures have been completed, in cases of complex tactical situations that have not been declared under control; assumption of Command in other situations is discretionary.
- C. Assumption of Command is discretionary for the Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief.

NOTE: This does not preclude the option of the first arriving company officer having another company officer arriving with him or close behind take Command. This may be by pre-arrangement or may be necessitated by circumstances; in either case it shall be confirmed by both parties by radio.

Within the chain of command indicated above, the actual transfer of command will be regulated by the following procedures:

- 1. Arriving ranking officers assuming Command will communicate with the officer being relieved by radio or preferably face-to-face on arrival.
- 2. The officer being relieved will brief the officer assuming command indicating the following:
  - A. General situation status
    - i. Fire location, extent, condition, and extension
    - ii. Effectiveness of control efforts
  - B. Deployment and assignments of operating companies
  - C. Appraisal of needs for additional resources at that time.
- 3. The IC will then announce the command change over the radio. (***401 will be assuming command***) or (***401 will be assuming command 402 will be safety officer***) 402 transferred command to 401

3. The officer being relieved should review the tactical control sheet with the ranking officer in complex situations; this sheet provides the most effective framework for Command transfer as it outlines the location and status of resources in a standard form that should be well known to all members.

Command officers should eliminate all unnecessary radio traffic while responding unless such communications are required to insure that Command functions are initiated and completed.

The arrival (*in itself*) of a ranking officer on the fireground does not mean Command has been transferred to that ranking officer. Command is transferred only when the outlined communication functions have been completed.

The response and arrival of ranking officers on the fireground strengthen the overall command function. All officers will exercise their Command prerogatives in a supportive manner that will insure a smooth transition and the effective on-going function of Command.

The officer relieved of Command will be utilized to best advantage by the officer assuming command.

In cases where Command is effectively handling a tactical situation, and is completely aware of the location and function of operating companies and the general status of the situation, it may be desirable for that officer to continue in an active command role.

In these cases, the ranking officer may assume a supportive role in the overall command function. Command will be considered to be transferred within this context by virtue of the ranking officer being involved in the command process.

## **5.0 COMMAND STRUCTURES**

It will be responsibility of Command to develop an organizational structure utilizing standard operating procedures as soon as possible after arrival and implementation of initial tactical control measures. The dimensions of the particular tactical situation obviously will determine the size and complexity of the organization structure.

The ideal structure of a complex incident should include four (4) levels:

Strategy Level (Command)

Control Level (Operations)

Tactical Level (Sectors)

Task Level (Companies)

**COMMAND** refers to those functions necessary for over-all-control and accomplishment of strategic objectives. The Command Level should be staffed by the highest ranking officers who will plan overall strategy, develop an adequate and effective Command structure and fireground organization and provide the necessary support to meet these objectives.

**OPERATIONS** refers to those organizational elements in situations that are complex enough to require an intermediate, or control level, in organizational structure. Operations is an optional level which may be implemented when command finds it necessary to group sectors or strike teams together to lessen command's span of control. Generally, operations elements will assume command of several sectors or strike team and will answer to "command". This level should be staffed by experienced command officers, usually Asst. Chief or Senior level Captains who plan and control the functions of several sectors or strike teams.

**SECTORS AND STRIKE TEAMS** are identified as the immediate tactical level of command in the organizational structure. Sectors and strike teams are commanded by Captain or Lieutenant level supervisors who concentrate on more specific areas and tasks needed to meet the overall operational objectives. Generally several companies will be assigned to each sector, however; one strike team or company may be assigned to a sector. All sectors or strike teams will answer directly to Command. A strike team may be comprised of as few as two men, who are performing tasks needed to meet the overall objective.

**THE TASK LEVEL** in the organizational structure refers to those evolution-oriented functions or company level, operations and individual accomplishments, which, when accumulated, add up to the achievement of sector or strike team objectives. These are company functions with the company officer answering to the Incident Commander.

In order to provide the resource for an effective tactical organization as soon as possible, the dispatch system will provide for response of all available on duty command personnel to any greater alarm call. Off-duty Command, and Company Officers will be alerted by the automatic alerting system and will respond to assume pre-designated functions or provide the resource for development of the organizational structure. Alarm or the Shift Commander will provide coverage for the remainder of the city from this command officer resource until on-duty Company Officers can be released from the emergency scene.