

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 2-1

ISSUE: INCIDENT COMMAND

Every fire department should develop and implement an Incident Command System. The most effective Incident Command System will be specific to each fire department's own resources, but based on the principles of Incident Command referenced from systems such as the:

- Phoenix Fireground Command System;
- California Incident Command System;
- Incident Management System currently being developed by the National Fire Service Incident Management System Consortium which is merging both of the above systems; and
- Incident Command as taught by the Ontario Fire College, Gravenhurst.

Successful emergency scene operations require the application of an effective overall management system and the skill development of the Officer so that they can serve as Incident Commanders.

The lack of a strong Incident Command System adversely affects the outcome of emergency scene operations and places firefighters in needless danger. Conversely an effective command system has a dramatic effect on efficiency, effectiveness of response and safety not only on the fire ground, but during hazardous materials incidents, auto accident extrications, water/ice rescues, or any other incident where personnel and apparatus need to be coordinated.

Although an Incident Command System is of greatest advantage in large or complex situations, it should be used every day during routine incidents to maintain the effectiveness of the Incident Command System and so that personnel have a chance to practice often.

The Incident Command System cannot stand alone but requires the support of operational guidelines, training, post incident analysis and constant review and revision as necessary.

The benefits of using an Incident Command System are:

- It provides a means for using limited resources effectively.
- By having one person in charge, one plan or strategy for handling the incident can be developed and implemented. This reduces loss of life and property.
- Increased firefighter's safety by implementation of such key concepts as crew accountability, safety officers, sectoring, crew rotation, etc.