



Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS

Standard Operating Procedure

DOCUMENT DETAILS

Standard Operating Procedure: 4.1.1	Effective Date: 9/22/2025
Subject: Incident Management System	Section: Fire/Rescue Operations
Authorized: Deputy Chief Paul Supko	Revision Date: N/A

Applicability: ☒ Volunteer ☐ Career

I. PURPOSE

To establish a uniform on-scene management system for emergency operations that:

- Enables initial implementation of an integrated command system for fire/rescue incidents.
- Supports scalable resource deployment and structured command transitions.
- Adapts to incidents of any size or complexity.

II. DEFINITIONS

Assume Command: The action of a Command Officer exercising his/her authority to become the Incident Commander.

Command (Incident Commander, IC): The individual who has overall authority and responsibility for managing incident operations.

Command Officer: A duly elected, fire operations officer of a Carroll County volunteer company, holding the rank of Chief, Deputy Chief, or Assistant Chief. Department of Fire & EMS career officers from the rank of Battalion Chief and above.

Command Post (CP): The physical location from which Incident Command exercises command and control over the entire incident.

Complex Incident: An incident that exceeds the span of control (more than 5 units) The incident or will not be mitigated in less than 1 hour. There are special operations components (hazmat, water rescue or technical rescue).

Incident Command System (ICS): An organizational structure protocol that supports an Incident Commander and is intended to promote communication, coordination, accountability, and effective action to respond to a natural disaster or other emergency.

Mode of Operation: The strategic approach taken by Incident Command based on risk, resources, and conditions. The three (3) primary Modes of Operation:

1. Offensive Mode
2. Defensive Mode
3. Transitional Mode

Pass Command: When the Incident Commander transfers command of the incident to another party. The practice of passing command multiple times is discouraged.

III. POLICY

The ICS concepts shall be utilized during all incidents.

- A. It is the policy of Carroll County that there is an Incident Commander for every incident.
- B. The Incident Commander must create and communicate a vision for a successful incident outcome. This vision is communicated by the issuance of clear incident objectives.
 1. Incident objectives may be embedded by a standard operating procedure.
 2. SOPs do not restrict the use of discretion by an Incident Commander.
- C. The Incident Commander must ensure effective command which means ensuring that all the basic incident management functions are accomplished. Those functions are:
 1. Situation Awareness
 2. Accountability
 3. Effective Communications
 4. Risk Assessment
 5. Established Objectives
 6. Initiating and Monitoring Actions
- D. Complex incidents require the presence of an Incident Commander operating from a stationary command post whenever possible.

E. Exercising the Command Function

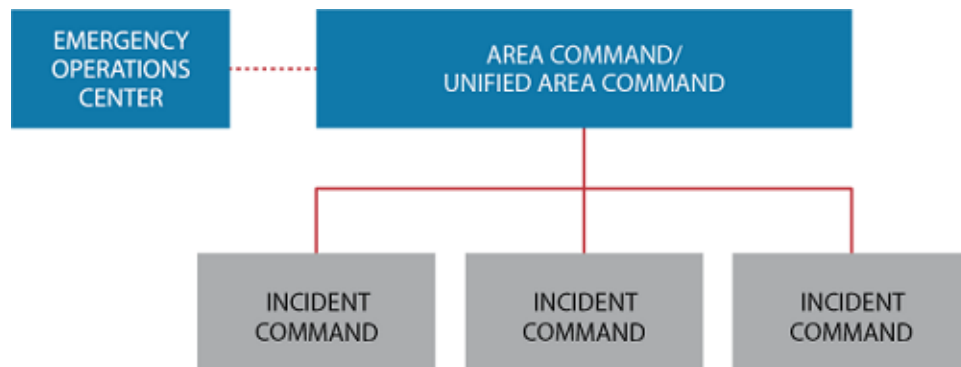
1. Routine medical incidents do not require formal implementation and announcement of Command. It shall be inferred that the officer from the suppression piece, when dispatched to the incident will assume Command responsibilities such as adding additional resources and relaying information, thus freeing EMS clinician(s) to manage patient care.
2. It is possible for units to respond to what was dispatched as a basic incident and find a complex one. When personnel arrive and find a complex incident, they must ensure that a command officer is alerted.
3. Any unit officer may announce via radio that they have Command for an incident when the unit officer believes that assuming Command will improve incident operations.
4. Whenever an EMS transport member establishes command the first arriving suppression officer is strongly encouraged to assume command. This decision will be based upon, crew size and the urgency of executing tactics.
5. An EMS Officer may choose to act as the initial Incident Commander only if command has not been established.
6. Upon arrival at an incident, a Command Officer is strongly encouraged to assume command from any non-command officer. When possible, the initial Incident Commander should be incorporated into the command team to maintain continuity. This integration should only occur if the initial IC is not required to remain with their crew in an operational capacity.
7. Primary Unit Officers are required to announce the unit identifier of the Incident Commander and "name" the Command - typically using the street name - for every complex event.
8. This document covers two methods of managing incident command: Tactical Command and Strategic Command.

F. Use of ICS Components

1. All of the listed functions/positions are assigned by the Incident Commander or by standard operating procedure.
2. Only the Incident Commander may assign ICS roles.

3. The Incident Commander should only use the components of ICS as necessary to maintain a reasonable span of control.
4. The ICS must be expanded as necessary to maintain an effective span of control.
5. Common IMS Components:
 - a. The list below contains common IMS terms and how they are expected to be applied on incidents within the scope of this policy.
 - i. Incident Safety Officer (ISO)
 - ii. Liaison
 - iii. Branches
 - iv. Groups
 - v. Divisions
 - b. **Incident Safety Officer (ISO):** The designated individual responsible for monitoring and assessing safety hazards on scene. The ISO has the authority to identify and mitigate risks, ensure compliance with safety protocols, and intervene to prevent unsafe actions. They report directly to the Incident Commander.
 - c. **Liaison Officer:** Responsible for coordinating with other agencies, including local, state, federal, and private sector partners.
 - d. **Branches:** The organizational level having functional or geographic responsibility for major parts of incident operations. Branch Directors are responsible for command, control, and accountability of all assigned resources.
 - e. **Group:** Responsible for the operation with a specific functional assignment under the direction of Command. (Groups are tasks and move around the incident, i.e., Search Group, Vent Group.)
 - f. **Division:** Responsible for the operations within a defined geographical area under the direction of Command (Divisions are locations and don't move, i.e., Division 1, Division A)
6. **Area Command:** An Area Command organization oversees the management of multiple incidents or a very complex incident through establishing multiple ICS organizations.

7. **Unified Command:** Unified command allows all agencies with jurisdictional authority or responsibility for the incident to jointly provide management direction to an incident.

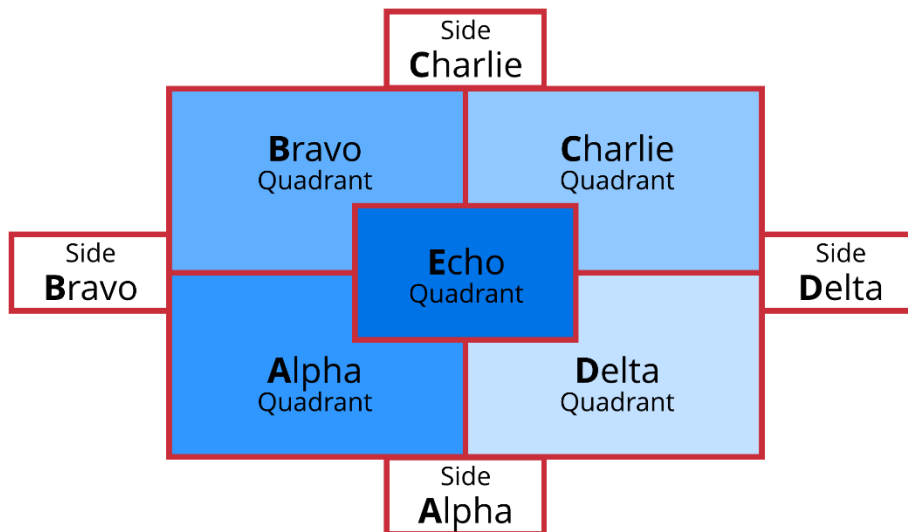


G. Geographic Designations

Carroll County uses standard geographic designations to refer to structures.

1. Building Sides & Quadrants

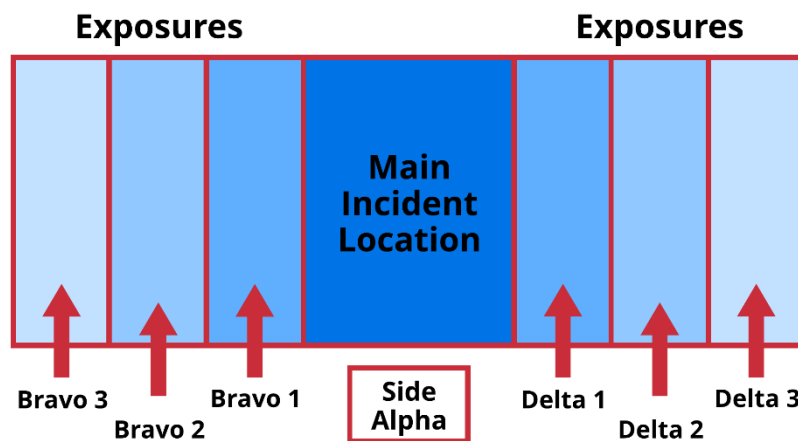
- a. It is assumed that each structure generally has four sides, with the address side of the structure referred to as Side Alpha.
- b. Each structure is divided into quadrants labeled clockwise, beginning in the left front corner as you face the address side of the building, Alpha thru Delta with the center core, where applicable, described as Echo.
- c. While the address side of the building is typically designated as Side Alpha, the Incident Commander may designate any side of the building as Side Alpha and the other sides will then be designated clockwise using the conventions outlined above. This change must be communicated.



Address Side of Structure

2. Exposures

- The designation of exposures is based on the designation of “sides”. The exposure immediately adjacent to a given “side” assumes the same designation as that side.
- In a multi-story structure, the two floors above the fire and the floor below the fire are generally considered exposures.



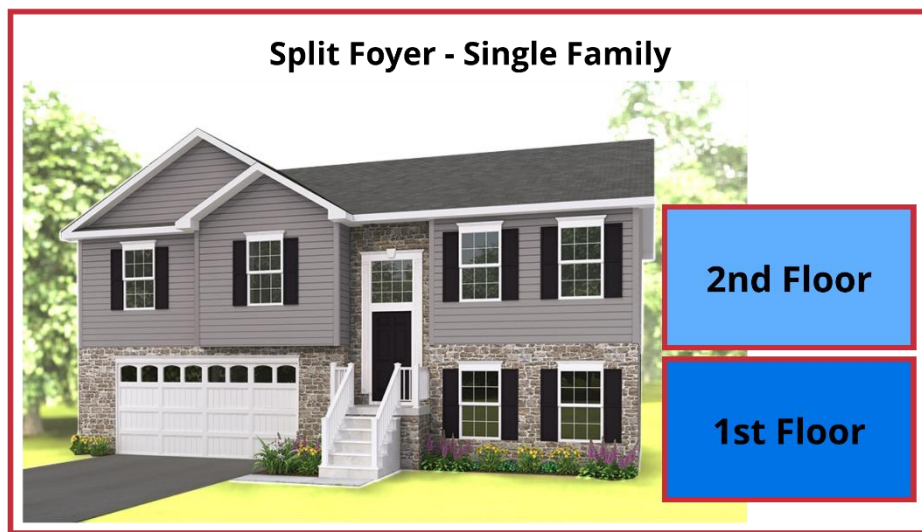
Address Side of Structure

3. Floors

- Floors will be numbered up from the ground entrance.
 - Some buildings are arranged with the entrance numbered other than the first. In this case, this designation will be used and clearly communicated to the units operating on scene.

ii. Floors are referred to by their number until assigned as an operational “Division” by Incident Command. (i.e. 1st Floor, 5th Floor, Basement)

- b. Half (½) stories are occupied spaces within the roof level of a structure. This is typical of, but not limited to, cape cod style construction.
- c. There are structures that do not follow normal conventions and/or do not fit within the descriptions above. When this situation is encountered, the unit officers must advise Command of the building layout and the Incident Commander must ensure that the various levels of the structure are clearly designated.



2-Story - Single Family



2nd Floor

1st Floor

Basement

1 1/2-Story Cape Cod - Single Family



2nd Floor

1st Floor

Basement

2-Story Split-Level - Single Family

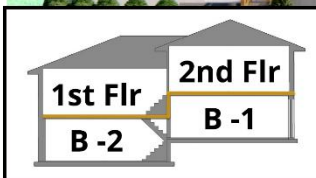


2nd Floor

1st Floor

Basement 1

Basement 2



- d. Terrace Level – Lower apartment floor where primary access is via interior common entrance with a second ground-level exit through the rear of the main living area.



H. Isolation Zones

Some incidents require the establishment of isolation zones. Isolation zones define incident action areas based on their relative hazard. Isolation zones are not always based on concentric circles. The nature of the incident hazards determines the shape of the zones. The Incident Commander should ensure that the zones are clearly identified.

1. **Hot Zone** - where the incident action is occurring and represents the area of the highest hazard.
2. **Warm Zone** – the area of lesser hazards that represents a transitional space between the high hazard area and the no hazard area.
3. **Cold Zone** - area free of incident hazards.
 - a. The incident command post is located in the cold zone.
4. For some events, such as vehicle collisions, these hot and warm zones may be referred to the inner and outer circle respectively.

I. Resource Staging

There are cases where the Incident Commander decides to stage additional resources. The IC may stage units to allow time for reconnaissance or to determine the most appropriate location for unit placement. There are two (2) types of staging:

1. **Level 1 Staging** - Units stage 600 feet or two (2) blocks, whichever is greater, away from the incident without engine companies passing the last available water source.
2. **Level 2 Staging** - Units are assigned to a specific staging area. (a) The location is determined and announced by Command.
 - a. The first primary unit in staging will be the Staging Area Manager, preferably an Engine.
 - b.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Command Officer responsibilities en route:

1. Upon dispatch, and prior to command being established, the first due command officer shall:
 - a. Coordinate all communications with Carroll ECC
 - b. Manage all resources requesting to be added or backed up to the incident
 - c. Ensure complete and accurate BIR, 360, and Entry radio reports and 2 Out
 - d. While en route maintain situational awareness of:
 - i. Incident Action Plan
 - ii. Position of all companies operating in the IDLH
2. The responsibility to complete the above actions are assigned as follows:
 - a. 1st Due Company Ranking Volunteer Chief Officer (if responding)
 - b. DFEMS Ranking Command Officer (if responding)
 - c. 1st Due Engine Officer
3. **If improper or unclear strategies and/or tactics are being communicated and/or applied, the first due command officer should intervene while en route. Command officers should not assume command while en route but should directly recommend key prompts or actions to the initial IC.**

B. **Tactical Command:** The company officer engages in direct action with their crew. Because every incident has an Incident Commander, tactical command is in effect simply by virtue of a unit being on the scene of an incident. Tactical command can be used for both initial incident investigation and for initial engagement in emergency operations.

1. Primary Unit officers will state “establishing tactical command.” From that point forward, you are “Command,” and there is no need to verbalize “Tactical Command.”

C. **Strategic Command:** The company officer operates separately from their crew and works outside of the IDLH at a stationary command post. By virtue of size, complexity, or potential for rapid expansion, there is a smaller number of incidents that demand early, strong, stationary command from the onset. Examples of these situations include:

1. Indications of a working incident in a large commercial building
2. Any incident where defensive operations will be the initial mode of fire attack

D. **Stationary Command Post:**

1. Physically locating the Strategic Command in a stationary command position puts the IC in the strongest position to carry out the functions of command, accomplish the incident's tactical objectives, and ensure all members' safety working on the fire ground. Responding command officers should listen carefully to all radio traffic while en route to the scene to set themselves up for success, paying particular attention to:
 - a. Initial Water Supply Instructions
 - b. BIR, 360, Entry radio reports and 2 Out
 - c. IAP as communicated by the initial IC
 - d. Location units are deploying to
2. To a significant extent, command effectiveness directly correlates to stationary command positioning. By setting up and remaining stationary at the CP, the IC is in the ideal position to maintain control, remain continuously available to communicate, and monitor and evaluate responders' changing needs while operating within the IDLH. Under most situations, the first arriving command officer shall assume a strategic command position inside the command vehicle. This will give the strategic IC the following advantages:
 - a. A stationary, remote, and quiet place to listen, analyze, and make decisions.
 - b. A more dependable communication position with the utilization of full power wattage radios.
 - c. A place to write and record.
 - d. Protection from the elements.
 - e. Access to CAD data, other IT equipment, and reference materials.
3. While the IC must remain disciplined at operating in a fixed location, there will be occasions where the IC must have the flexibility to adjust.
 - a. When the first arriving command officer is unable to position the command vehicle in a location where they can visually observe the hazard area, they may relocate to a better position and will:

- i. Announce the exact location
 - ii. Remain stationary at that location (except for number 3. below)
 - iii. Continue to utilize the tactical worksheet
- 4. When the first arriving command officer believes that either conducting a 360 themselves or taking an opportunity to view a specific hazard area quickly is beneficial, they may choose to do so, providing:
 - a. They make a verbal announcement on the radio that they will be away from the command post conducting a 360.
 - b. Immediately return to the stationary command post.
 - c. When possible, have another member of the Command Team remain at the command post.
- 5. When a command officer arrives on location and the first incident commander has not established a stationary command post, the command officer will establish the stationary command post by advising the initial incident commander to either join them in the vehicle or by conducting a formal transfer of command.
- E. **Transfer of Command:** When a command officer arrives on location a proper transfer of command must occur. The new incident commander will not assume command until they identify the following:
 - a. The incident strategy
 - b. The location of all units operating inside the IDLH
 - c. Their task being performed
 - d. Number of personnel in each crew
- 1. Confirm, or establish if not done already, that the name of Command reflects the incident's geographical location (e.g., "Green Street Command").
- 2. Select a suitable location to establish the Command Post. When doing so, consider the following:
 - a. A clear view of the incident scene is critical.
 - b. The command post location should not hinder units from mitigating the incident. Ensure to leave space for access and egress of additional responding units. It is understood that the initial command post location may be suitable but could later become blocked by arriving apparatus positioning. In these cases, the IC should evaluate another suitable location and not hinder an apparatus tactical position and/or operation.

3. Transferring Command when IC #1 is operating from the Tactical Command Position

- a. Because IC #1 will likely be operating in the tactical command position inside of the IDLH, a face-to-face transfer will not be possible. If the command officer cannot conduct a face-to-face with IC #1, the formal transfer of command should occur via radio. In this case, the command officer (IC #2) should confirm with IC #1 the location of all units operating inside the IDLH, their task and number of personnel in their crew. Once confirmed, the command officer will confirm the transfer of Command.

Example:

Chief 9 – *"Chief 9 to Engine 91 Bethel Rd. Command, I've arrived on location and will take it from out here. I copy that you have yourself with 2 and Tower 3 with 2 operating on Floor #1, and Engine 131 with 2 stretching a line to the second floor; is that correct?"*

Engine 91 – *"That's correct."*

(Chief 9 now knows that he/she has 6 personnel operating in the IDLH , where they are and what tactical objectives they are working on)

Chief 9 – *"Chief 9 to Carroll, assuming Bethel Rd.. Command, the command post is my vehicle on the Alpha side of the building."*

V. RECISION

This Standard Operating Procedure rescinds all directives regarding the Incident Management System or similar content previously issued for personnel of the Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS.

VI. RELATED STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES / DOCUMENTS

None

VII. ATTACHMENTS

None