COMMAND FUNCTION #2 - ASSUME, CONFIRM, & POSITION COMMAND

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Approved:	Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. COMMAND FUNCTION #2 - ASSUME, CONFIRM, & POSITION COMMAND

The primary goal is to establish and confirm one incident commander (IC) and place that individual in the most effective command position.

Brunacini, Alan V., and Nick Brunacini. *Fire Command*. 3rd ed., Across the Street Productions, 2026 is the foundational resource document for this SOP.

Command should be formally declared on all incidents where two (2) or more units are dispatched. One or two company responses that are not going to escalate beyond the commitment of these companies do not require the first arriving unit or officer to establish command. The first arriving unit or officer will remain responsible for any needed command when required.

Examples would include:

- Single unit response check welfare
- Check Hazard
- EMS incident

The first unit or member to arrive to the scene of a multi-unit dispatched incident will establish command of the incident by transmitting a standard Initial Radio Report (IRR).

The confirmation of command occurs when Central Fire Dispatch uses the order model to repeat the IRR back to all responding units, confirming that the initial arriving unit is in command of the incident.

When the incident begins with an in-place IC, all later-arriving units will be assigned based on the IC's IAP. This puts all the incident players on the same page. Everyone knows what the problem is and what action is being taken to solve it.

The absence of an effective IC is the most common reason for ragged incident beginnings and unsafe endings.

Once command has been established, all routine communication between the dispatch center and the incident will be directed through command. IC #1 will remain in command until command is transferred, or the incident is stabilized, and command is terminated.

II. NAMING COMMAND - RADIO DESIGNATION

The radio designation "COMMAND" will be used along with the major crossroad, or the specific occupancy name of the incident site, e.g., "Main Street Command," "Michigan Stadium." This designation will not change throughout the duration of the incident. The designation of "Command" will remain with the IC throughout the duration of the entire incident.

III. MOBILE IC

The mobile IC position is utilized only by company officers serving as IC #1. It allows the first arriving company officer to establish command, lead the initial attack and supervise their crew while assigning later-arriving units over the portable radio.

The advantages of a mobile IC:

- Enhances crew safety and accountability
- Offers views of all seven sides of the incident
- Provides additional critical factors to evaluate (360 and interior conditions)
- Usually solves the problem quickly

The disadvantages of a mobile IC:

- Challenging to combine action and command duties
- Communication challenges
- Limited visibility
- Reduced span of control

The entire response team coming in behind a mobile IC must realize that IC #1 is in an attack position, not a command position. We trade off this position disadvantage because many times this initial front end “hit” is enough to stabilize the incident’s problems.

If the following benchmarks have been met, the ranking officer might elect to leave the mobile IC in command of the incident.

1. Fire control has been achieved.
2. The primary search has been completed.
3. No more than two to three companies have been assigned.
4. All hazard-zone assignments have been made.

IV. FIRST-ARRIVING OFFICER ASSUMES COMMAND

The assumption of command is mandatory for the officer of the first-arriving unit, but sometimes, the first-arriving fire department vehicle is not staffed with an officer (rescue). If the vehicle has a radio that can receive and transmit, the member staffing the vehicle should give an arrival report that includes their unit ID and a general description of the incident scene. The report ends with something like this, “Standing by for the first-arriving company.”

When the first arriving officer of the first-arriving company arrives at the scene, they should acknowledge the first report and follow-up with an IRR that includes assumption of command.

The mobile IC is the only individual who functions across all three operational levels:

Task level – As a working boss, the mobile IC participates in their company's task-level evolutions when operating in the hazard zone. They are also responsible for supervising their crew.

Tactical level – The mobile IC establishes the initial attack position and works toward completing that area's tactical priorities.

Strategic level – The mobile IC manages the initial operation. While they are in command of the incident, they must oversee the functions of command, including size-up, assuming command, identifying the correct strategy and assuming all later-arriving units based on the IAP.

"Passing Command" to a unit that is not on the scene creates a gap in the command process and compromises incident management and safety. To prevent this command and control gap, command shall not be transferred to any officer who is not physically located on the scene. When a chief officer arrives at the scene first or at the same time as the initial arriving company, the chief officer should establish command of the incident.

V. TRANSFER OF COMMAND

When the mobile IC initiates command, it ends in one of two ways: #1 The initial operation quickly eliminates the fire, eliminating the need to transfer command; or #2 The initial operation does not control the hazard, and command is transferred to a strategically positioned IC.

By setting up and staying in a command position (vehicle), IC #2 is in the ideal position to maintain on-line control; remain continuously available to communicate; and monitor and evaluate responders' changing welfare and survival needs while they are operating within the hazard zone.

When arriving at the scene, IC #2 must transfer command in the following manner:

1. Transmit that your unit is on-scene "Battalion 1-1 On-Scene"
2. Dispatch copies, "Battalion 1-1 On-Scene"
3. "Battalion 1-1 to Command. I'm on scene and transferring command. I copy you are operating on the first floor and Tower 1-1 is on the roof. If this is correct, give me a CAN report."

4. "That is correct Battalion 1-1. Engine 1-3 has fire control and is completing primary search on the first floor. We have no needs. Engine 1-3 copies Battalion 1-1 will be transferring command."
5. "Battalion 1-1 to Dispatch. Battalion 1-1 is transferring command and will continue to operate in the offensive strategy. We will be holding the first alarm assignment."
6. IC #2 may conduct a 360-degree assessment; while developing a separate command Size-Up verifying all operating positions match the current incident conditions.
7. If IC #2 conducts a 360°, IC #2 needs to state via radio they will be conducting a 360°. This needs to be a rapid process with IC #2 ending up in the command position. IC #2 needs to also state via radio when they are back in the command vehicle.

Strategic Command Position Advantages

- More powerful radios and a better position from which to listen
- Protects from the elements and external distractions
- Support officer (if available) can manage the tactical worksheet and accountability
- Best location to listen, talk. monitor, record, think and reference
- Good view of two sides of the building / incident scene
- Can quickly reposition if necessary