COMMAND FUNCTION #4 - STRATEGY & INCIDENT ACTION PLAN

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Approved:	Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. COMMAND FUNCTION #4 – STRATEGY AND INCIDENT ACTION PLAN

The primary goal is to use the strategic decision-making model (SDMM) to identify the correct incident strategy and initiate an incident action plan.

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

II. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Risk management connects current and forecasted critical factor information with the fire department's deployment and firefighter capability. The RMP defines levels of risk and serves as a framework for balancing our objectives with firefighter safety and survival.

- We will take a large risk (in a highly calculated and well-managed manner) to protect savable lives.
- We will take small risk (in a highly calculated and well-managed manner) to protect savable property.
- We will take no risk for what is already lost (lives or property)

Large risk

- Presence of known, savable victims or likely victims
- Late-stage offensive fire conditions
- Personnel wear PPE and SCBA
- Operating within the system
- Ability to protect ourselves (water) while maintaining the ability to exit

Small risk

- Savable property with no rescue needs
- Offensive fire conditions
- Personnel wear PPE and SCBA
- Operating within the system
- Ability to protect ourselves (water) while maintaining the ability to exit

No risk

- No savable life or property in the fire area
- Defensive (lethal) conditions

III. INCIDENT STRATEGY

There are two strategies: offensive and defensive. Offensive operations occur inside immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) hazard zones and are designed to achieve the first three tactical priorities: fire control, life safety, and property conversation. The window of opportunity for conducting offensive operations is very narrow and exists only at the beginning of the fire's life cycle. Defensive operations are conducted outside of the hazard zone - in safe locations - to control the incident's problems

Do NOT combine offensive and defensive operations in the same fire area. However, there may be defensive conditions in the main fire area with offense conditions in the exposure. The IC needs to ensure this demarcation is clearly articulated.

IV. TACTICAL BENCHMARKS

The following benchmarks shall be communicated over the fireground talk group.

"Water on fire" indicates that the attack line or lines are in operation and have begun extinguishment.

"Primary All Clear" indicates the completion of the primary search and that no victims were located.

"Water Supply Established" indicates a continuous water supply to the fire attach engine is established off of a hydrant.

"Fire under control" will be transmitted when the main body of fire has been extinguished and all seven sides of the fire have been confirmed as having no fire extension (or when extension has been controlled) in an assigned unit's geographic / operational area. The fire under control benchmark report represents a major shift in the overall focus of the operation going from a water application, to a focus on ventilating the structure followed by secondary searches.

"Fire Out" indicates all visible fire is out.

"Utilities Controlled" indicates all utilities, e.g., gas, electric, have been shut off.

"Customer support / care" indicates whether the customer has been informed of the fire department's actions, the property's current status, and necessary next steps such as securing the property.

"On-scene decon complete" means the crew has completed the appropriate decon procedures given environmental conditions.

V. CONFIRM ONGOING STRATEGY AS PART OF THE ELAPSED-TIME NOTIFICATIONS (ETN)

When an offensive working fire is declared, it will prompt Central Fire Dispatch to begin Elapsed Time Notifications (an IC can also request ETN's whenever they feel it is necessary).

Central Fire Dispatch will announce over the tactical frequency an elapsed time notification every ten (10) minutes until the incident is placed under control, or until command requests to discontinue or restructure the ETN's.

The IC must verbally acknowledge each 10-minute notification by re-announcing the incident's strategy over the assigned tactical radio frequency until the incident is placed under control, or until command requests to discontinue or restructure the notifications.

VI. USE THE INCIDENT ORGANIZATION & COMMUNICATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY/IAP

Using the strategy to control incident operations allows the IC Incident operations begin under control and stay under control when everyone operates within the incident management system and the overall strategy.

The IC decentralizes the hazard-zone by assigning a later arriving chief as a tactical boss. Tactical bosses operating in forward positions give the IC the following strategic advantages:

- They control access into and out of the hazard zone based on the current strategy.
- They have a better view of conditions i than the IC.
- They are in a much better position to directly manage the tactics, safety, and accountability of assigned personnel.
- These officers are in the strongest position to manage and supervise expanding incident operations.

The IC provides the tactical bosses with the overall strategy and objectives for their area. This becomes the starting point for conducting operations within that specific area. As progress is made, objectives are met or conditions change (good or bad), the tactical boss reports this information to the IC along with any resource needs.

VII. WATER SUPPLY

An uninterrupted water supply shall be established (400+ gpm produced the first 15 minutes of the operation) using a fire hydrant or a portable water tank shuttle supply operation whenever an offensive "working fire" is declared.

Command is ultimately responsible for managing attack positions in either offensive or defensive locations. The key to effective attack positioning is WATER. Water not only extinguishes the fire; it protects firefighters from the lethal products of combustion (heat).

The IC must have an acute awareness of the following water supply factors:

- The required fire flows for the incident
- The projected fire flows that can actually be produced
- Is there enough water available to safely extinguish the fire?
- What are the water supply options (hydrants, natural sources, tankers)?
- Are key tactical areas adequately supplied with water?

VIII. STRATEGIC RED FLAGS

Red flags are critical factors with serious firefighter safety consequences. Some red flags are so severe they require a change in strategy. These are:

- Outside fires extending into a structure and quickly infiltrating concealed spaces (walls, floors, and the attic), triggering rapid structural collapse.
- Leaking flammable or pressurized gas filling a structure's interior.
- Heavy fire conditions in a structure with an operational sprinkler system not having an impact.
- Working fires involving energized electrical equipment, including batteries.
- Working fires in basements with exposed structural members, such as the floor above.
- Deep-seated attic fires in old, wide-span, heavyweight wood-truss systems.
- Offensive IAPs that have been revised two to three times, but the fire continues to burn out of control.
- Fires in hoarded occupancies.

IX. ZONES

A hazard zone consists of the overall zones identified which determine the level of risk to civilians and emergency workers in relationship to the incident's problems. The hazard zone is divided up into four (4) separate, distinct areas:

Hot Zone - An IDLH environment due to heat, lack of oxygen, and/or the presence of the products of combustion. Workers inside of the hot zone must be in the proper PPE for the hazards identified

Warm Zone – Just beyond the hot zone and is the gateway to and from the incident's most dangerous areas. Companies within the warm zone fall into two categories: on-deck and recycling. Generally, if the warm zone requires use of SCBA facepieces due to fire conditions, it should be relocated.

Cold Zone - Starts at the outside edge of the warm zone. It hosts no incident hazards and requires no protective gear.

Defensive Hazard Zone – We use the defensive strategy when the fire is of such size and intensity that nothing is left to save. Structural collapse is a standard outcome for defensive fire conditions. Firefighters operate outside of the defensive hazard zone.

X. RULES FOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Our primary goal for offensive structure fires is fire control. The NFPA reports that more than half of all structure fires are extinguished with a single attack line flowing 300 gallons of water. With that in mind, the following tenets apply to offensive fires:

- Avoid any tasks or activities that delay fire control. The quickest way to increase the survivable space inside a building is to attack and control the fire.
- Position apparatus near an entrance or exit that allows firefighters to advance attack lines into the structure's interior.
- Exterior water application is often the fastest method to initiate fire attack. Exterior water application knocks the energy out of the fire, immediately lowering the temperature and improving life safety conditions for anyone inside the structure.
- Ventilation must follow fire control.

XI. RULES FOR DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Defensive incident operations are based on not taking risks for lives or property that the fire has already destroyed. The following tenets apply to defensive fires:

- Firefighters do not operate in defensive fire areas, which means they do not use offensive tactics to overhaul defensive fire areas.
- Position elevated master streams to achieve the greatest exposure protection.
- Protect what is savable. If the IC must choose between putting water on a defensive fire or flowing water onto exposures to protect them, exposures should take priority.

XII. OVERHAUL

The goal of overhaul is to reduce the incidence of secondary fires, control loss, and stabilize the incident scene while providing for firefighter safety. Overhaul activities include thoroughly searching the fire scene to detect and extinguish any hidden fires or "hot spots".
Effective overhaul activities reduce the potential for secondary fires. When addressing overhaul operations, the IC should:

- Ensure overhaul is conducted safely.
- Ensure proper PPE is worn for the conditions
- Ensure allied overhaul and salvage equipment are utilized when necessary.
- Insure all fire is extinguished by addressing the 7 sides
- Ensure at least two firefighters with a charged hoseline remain in the fire area to detect any possible hidden fire and/or re-ignition during the overhaul phase of the operation.
- Fire companies must evaluate and monitor conditions when operating fans.
- Meet with the property owner/occupant concerning overhaul operations.
- Closely coordinate overhaul with fire investigators.

Suppression crews should open any construction voids that were exposed to fire to check for and verify fire control. Floor, wall or ceiling areas showing evidence of extensive decomposition due to fire exposure should be thoroughly examined during overhaul. Plenum spaces, soffits and pipe chases should receive careful inspection as they provide possible routes for fire to spread throughout a structure.

XIII. SALVAGE

Salvage includes the activities required to stop direct and indirect fire damage in addition to those required to minimize the effects of firefighting operations. This includes losses from water, smoke and firefighting efforts.

Salvage operations must be aimed at aggressively controlling loss by the most expedient means. Salvage objectives are:

- Stop or reduce the source of damage
- Protect or remove contents

Command will provide for salvage at all fires or other incidents posing potential damage to property. Salvage operations most often involve smoke removal and covering building contents with salvage covers or plastic. In some cases, the contents of threatened areas, where appropriate, can be removed to a safe location. When removal is not practical, contents should be grouped in the center of rooms, raised off the floor and covered to provide maximum practical protection.

The following items should be considered when addressing salvage:

- Type, value and location of contents
- The extent and location of the fire
- Recognition of existing and potential damage sources
- Estimate of required resource

Salvage efforts should begin in areas most severely threatened by damage. In most cases that will be areas directly adjacent to or below the fire area. Additional salvage activities should expand outward until all areas of potential loss are secured.

All firefighting activities have the potential to damage property and contents. The key to successful salvage is to distinguish between excessive damage, and damage that is required to reduce potential fire damage. All members must avoid creating excessive damage to the structure. The best philosophy to follow is to treat the customer's property as if it is yours. Only do what's necessary to stop loss.