

Firehouse.com WEEKLY DRILL

DRILL # 45: INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM - PART 2

Introduction

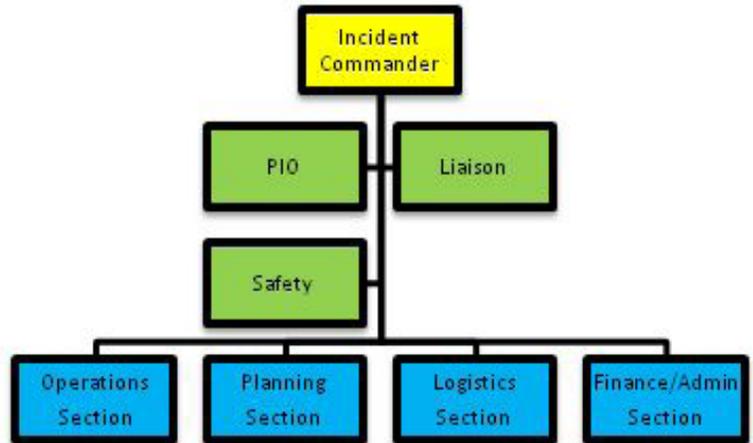
In our last column we looked at the basic command structure, encompassing the Command Staff and the General Staff positions. This week we will examine some of these positions in more detail. But before we get started, let's remember that the Incident Commander (IC) has the authority to staff these positions as he sees fit, while at the same time being responsible for any position that he doesn't fill.

The Safety Officer: This individual has the overall responsibility to maintain safety on the incident scene and report directly to the IC. Should this individual encounter an activity that poses an immediate danger to the individuals performing the task or other individuals in the vicinity, he has the authority to stop such actions. However, other safety concerns that don't rate an immediate stoppage will be filtered through the IC.

The Liaison Officer: This position acts as a middleman and has the responsibility for communicating between the different agencies that have responded. Although seldom activated, this position is essential for incidents that are going to have extended durations or will involve an excessive amount of outside resources.

Public Information Officer (PIO): The PIO provides accurate and factual information to the media about the incident. That said, information cannot just be released to these media outlets without first being approved and authorized by Command. A good PIO will have built a strong relationship with all the different media in the area. This is beneficial should the fire department ever need to pass along vital information to the community, such as evacuation notifications.

Operations Section Chief: This position is second in relationship to Command and is responsible for implementing the strategies or Incident Action Plan (IAP) that Command has developed to control the incident. This person will request resources from command that he feels will be needed to meet the IAP requirement for bringing the incident under control. Should things not go as planned, and additional resources are required, the Operations Section Chief can maintain his span of control by adding more modular's, thereby establishing branches and/or divisions under him.



Command Staff in green-shaded boxes
General Staff in blue-shaded boxes

Planning Section Chief: The planning section chief will gather information on the incident from different sources, from which he will then put together the IAP. This person will provide command with situational status reports throughout the incident. Included in this report will be the number of resources requested, the number of resources being used, a status on how the IAP is affecting the control of the incident and any additional suggestions for how to control the incident, along with any injuries sustained at the incident. In addition, this position will track the status of all resources requested.

Logistics Section Chief: At major incidents, Logistics Section Chief is one of the more critical positions. This person is responsible for securing facilities, equipment, materials and services to support the incident. Assistants used to aid the Logistics Section Chief are the Service Branch Director and the Support Branch Director.

Finance/Administration Section Chief: While not often seen at the incident, this section chief has the responsibility for documenting the total costs of the incident. The Fire/Administration Section Chief is critical for being able to substantiate any reimbursement that might be associated to the incident via insurance claims, state reimbursements or federal reimbursements that may occur after a presidential disaster declaration. This person also tracks any compensations claims for any injuries or time lost from work.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick