NFPA 1561
Standard on Fire Department Incident Management System

1995 Edition

National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, PO Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101
An International Codes and Standards Organization

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Fire Department Incident Management System

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This edition of NFPA 1561, *Standard on Fire Department Incident Management System*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health and acted on by the National Fire Protection Association, Inc., at its Annual Meeting held May 22-25, 1995, in Denver, CO. It was issued by the Standards Council on July 21, 1995, with an effective date of August 11, 1995, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 1561 was approved as an American National Standard on August 11, 1995.

Origin and Development of NFPA 1561

The Technical Committee on Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health is charged with preparing documents that will have a significant impact on reducing fire fighter injuries and deaths. The adoption of NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program* in 1987 was a major accomplishment in that effort.

One of the areas addressed in NFPA 1500 is a requirement for fire departments to conduct emergency operations with an effective incident management system. While operational coordination and effectiveness are often considered to be the primary objectives of an incident management system, the safety aspects of a functional command structure were recognized by the Technical Committee. The consequences of operating without an effective incident management system have been documented in numerous deaths and injuries to fire fighters.

At the time NFPA 1500 was developed, several different incident management systems and many local variations were known to be in use. In the development of these systems, safety and health were not necessarily identified as major concerns. The Technical Committee determined that, in addition to requiring the use of an incident management system, there should be performance criteria for the components of a system that contributes directly toward safety and health objectives, and developed a standard on incident management that would specifically address those concerns. The Committee began work on NFPA 1561 in July, 1987, and held several meetings in various locations around the country to gain regional input.

In developing this document, the Committee examined several incident management systems that were in use in different fire departments and related organizations. Committee members also met with representatives of departments that were successfully using a variety of systems and organizations that developed and provided training in recognized systems.

The Committee came to the conclusion that many of the performance objectives of this standard could be met through the adoption of one of the existing recognized systems. Some additional considerations may be necessary to address specific safety and health concerns, including the problem of maintaining accountability for members operating at the scene of an incident. The standard allows organizations to adopt or modify existing systems to suit local requirements and preferences, as long as they meet the performance objectives that are considered important for safety and health. The majority of systems were observed to be more similar than different, with the greatest variations in terminology for similar components. The overall opinion of the Committee was that it would be more beneficial to have every fire

department adopt a suitable system than to create one specific system and suggest that every organization should adopt it. Most of the existing recognized systems should meet the requirements of this document with little or no modification.

The Technical Committee believes that this document will emphasize the essential considerations for safety and health in incident management systems, and lead the fire service to utilize such systems to manage all emergency incidents. The goal will be reached when effective incident management is routinely practiced for all types of situations.

The final draft of this document was completed in March, 1989 and submitted for the 1990 Annual Meeting cycle. It was voted on by the Association at the 1990 Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas on May 23, 1990.

The Technical Committee, during the revision process of this document, revisited areas that were looked at in the initial development of NFPA 1561. These areas were expanded, in this edition, to reflect the mainstream utilization of an incident management system. These areas include accountability, use of rapid intervention crews for rescue of members, interagency cooperation, and, lastly, the realization that incident management includes more than fireground operations.

As the fire service expands its roles and responsibilities, it is critical that an incident management system be used. It is imperative to the health and safety of fire department members that the system be used, and that other agencies they respond and work with are properly trained. The actions or inactions of those other agencies impact directly on fire department members.

The Technical Committee feels that an incident management system is an important component of any department's health and safety program. The information contained in this edition is indicative of their work.

This document was voted on by the Association at the 1995 Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado on May 24, 1995.

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NOTE: Membership on a committee shall not in and of itself constitute an endorsement of the Association or any document developed by the committee on which the member serves.

Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for documents on the occupational safety in the working environment of the fire service; and safety in the proper use of apparatus, tools, equipment, protective clothing, and protective breathing apparatus.

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NOTICE: An asterisk (*) following the number or letter designating a paragraph indicates that explanatory material on the paragraph can be found in Appendix A.

Information on referenced publications can be found in Chapter 5 and Appendix C.

Chapter 1 Administration

1-1 Scope.

1-1.1* This standard contains the minimum requirements for an incident management system to be used by fire departments to manage all emergency incidents.

1-1.2* These requirements shall be applicable to organizations providing rescue, fire suppression, emergency medical care, special operations, and other emergency services including public, military, and private fire departments and fire brigades.

1-1.3* This standard shall not apply to fire brigades organized only to fight incipient stage fires as defined in OSHA, 29 CFR, Part 1910.155(c)(26).

1-2 Purpose.

1-2.1 The purpose of this standard is to define and describe the essential elements of an incident management system.

1-2.2* The purpose of an incident management system is to provide structure and coordination to the management of emergency incident operations in order to provide for the safety and health of fire department personnel and other persons involved in those activities. This standard is intended to meet the requirements of NFPA 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, Chapter 6, and OSHA, 29 CFR, Part 1910.120(q)(3).

1-2.2.1* The incident management system shall integrate risk management into the regular functions of incident command.

1-2.3* Many of the performance objectives of this standard can be achieved in a variety of ways. This standard is not intended to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding these minimum requirements or from adopting a system tailored to meet local needs while satisfying the minimum requirements of this standard.

1-2.3.1* The incident management system described in this standard is to be used by trained individuals and applied in a manner that meets the needs of each particular situation. The many different and complex situations encountered by emergency responders require a considerable amount of judgment in the application of the incident management system. The incident commander shall apply the system in a manner that is appropriate for the circumstances of each specific situation.

1-3 Definitions.

Command Staff. Positions that are established to assume responsibility for key activities in the incident management system that are not a part of the line organization.

Clear Text. The use of plain English in radio communications transmissions. Ten codes or agency-specific codes shall not be used when using clear text.

Emergency Incident. Any situation to which the fire department responds to deliver emergency services, including rescue, fire suppression, emergency medical care, special operations, and other forms of hazard control and mitigation.

Fire Brigade. A group of people organized to engage in rescue, fire suppression, and related activities.

Fire Department. An organization providing rescue, fire suppression, emergency medical care, special operations, and related activities. The term "fire department" shall include any public, governmental, private, industrial, or military organization engaging in this type of activity.

Imminent Hazard. An act or condition that is judged to present a danger to persons or property that is so urgent and severe that it requires immediate corrective or preventive action.

Incident Commander. The fire department individual in overall command of an emergency incident.

Incident Scene. The location where activities related to a specific incident are conducted. This shall include the entire area subject to incident related hazards and all areas used by fire department personnel and equipment in proximity to the incident scene.

Incident Termination. The conclusion of fire department operations at the scene of an incident, usually the departure of the last unit from the scene.

Incipient Stage Fire. A fire that is in the initial or beginning stage and that can be controlled or extinguished by portable fire extinguishers, Class II standpipe, or small hose systems without the need for protective clothing or breathing apparatus.

Intermediate Level of Supervision. A level of supervision within the incident management system that groups fire companies and other resources working toward common objectives or in a particular area under a supervisor responsible for the objective(s) or area.

Liaison. The coordination of activities between the fire department and other agencies.

Member. A person involved in performing the duties and responsibilities of a fire department, under the auspices of the organization. Fire department personnel can be full-time or part-time employees, paid or unpaid volunteers, can occupy any position or rank within the fire department, and might or might not engage in emergency operations.

Personnel. Fire department personnel or any individual participating within the incident scene.

Resources. Personnel and equipment that are utilized or available to be utilized at the scene of an incident.

Risk. A measure of the probability and severity of adverse effects. These adverse effects result from an exposure to a hazard.

Shall. Indicates a mandatory requirement.

Should. Indicates a recommendation or that which is advised but not required.

Special Operations. Those emergency incidents to which the fire department responds that require specific and advanced training and specialized tools and equipment. Special operations include water rescue, hazardous materials, confined space entry, high-angle rescue, and other operations requiring specialized training.

Staging. A specific function where resources are assembled in an area at or near the incident scene to await instructions or assignments.

Standard Operating Guideline. An organizational directive that establishes a course of action or policy.

Supervisor. Fire department personnel who have supervisory authority and responsibility over other personnel.

Unified Command. A standard method to coordinate command of an incident where multiple agencies have jurisdiction.

Chapter 2 System Structure

2-1 Implementation.

2-1.1* The fire department shall adopt an incident management system to manage all emergency incidents. The system shall be designed to meet the particular characteristics of the fire department based on size, complexity, and operating environment.

2-1.2 The incident management system shall be defined and documented in writing. Standard operating guidelines shall include the requirements for implementation of the incident management system and shall describe the options that are available for application according to the needs of each particular situation.

2-1.3* The fire department shall prepare and adopt written plans, based on the incident management system, to address the requirements of the different types of incidents that can be anticipated. These plans shall address both routine and unusual incidents and shall provide standardized guidelines and supervisory assignments that can be applied to the needs of situations of different types, sizes, and complexities.

2-1.4* The incident management system shall be utilized at all emergency incidents. The incident management system also shall be applied to drills, exercises, and other situations that involve hazards similar to those encountered at actual emergency incidents and to simulated incidents that are conducted for training and familiarization purposes.

2-2 Communications.

2-2.1* The incident management system shall include standard operating guidelines for radio communications that provide for the use of standard protocols and terminology at all types of incidents. Plain English (*see definition of clear text*) for radio communications shall be used to reduce the confusion that can be created when radio codes are used.

2-2.2 Standard operating guidelines for communications shall be established to support the escalation of operations from small to large or from routine to unusual without necessitating major changes or transitions. The communications system shall meet the requirements of the fire department for routine and large-scale emergencies. In a small fire department, one radio channel for dispatch and one fire ground communications channel might be sufficient for most situations. The radio capabilities shall also provide for communications with mutual aid resources or other agencies that could be expected to respond to a major incident. A larger fire department shall require several additional radio channels to provide for the volume of communications relating to routine incidents and for the complexity of multiple alarm situations. The system shall be developed to provide reserve capacity for unusually complex situations where effective communications could become critical.

2-2.3* Standard terminology shall be established to transmit information, including strategic modes of operation, situation reports, and emergency notifications of imminent hazards.

2-2.4* The communications system shall provide a standard method to give priority to the transmission of emergency messages and notification of imminent hazards to all levels of the incident command structure over that of routine communications.

2-2.5 The incident management system shall provide standard operating guidelines for communication operators and dispatchers to provide support to emergency incident operations. Operators and dispatchers shall be trained to function effectively within the incident management system.

2-3 Interagency Coordination.

2-3.1* The fire department shall develop an integrated incident management system in coordination with other agencies that are involved in emergency incidents.

2-3.2* The incident management system shall provide a plan to coordinate operations with other agencies that have jurisdiction at the incident scene. This plan shall include a standard guideline to designate one incident commander or to establish unified command.

2-3.3* Where the incident is under the command authority of the fire department, the incident commander shall provide for liaison and coordination with all other cooperating agencies.

2-3.4* Where the incident is under the overall jurisdiction of an agency other than the fire department, the fire department shall utilize the incident management system to manage its own operations and coordinate its activities with the agency having overall jurisdiction.

2-4 Command Structure.

2-4.1* The incident management system shall provide a series of supervisory levels that are available for implementation to create a command structure. The particular levels to be utilized in each situation shall depend on the nature of the incident and the scale and complexity of fire department activities at the scene.

2-4.2 The incident management system shall be modular to allow the application of only those elements that are necessary at a particular incident and to allow elements to be activated or deactivated as the needs of the incident change with time. The system shall provide for a routine process of escalation as additional resources are utilized.

2-4.3 The incident commander shall determine which levels and elements of the incident management system are to be implemented in each case and shall develop the command structure for each incident by assigning supervisory responsibilities according to standard operating guidelines.

2-4.4* The command structure for each incident shall maintain an effective supervisory span of control at each level of the organization. An effective span of control shall be determined by the ability of each supervisor to monitor the activities of assigned subordinates and to communicate effectively with them.

2-4.5* The incident management system shall define standardized supervisory assignments. These assignments shall be activated upon assignment by the incident commander.

2-4.5.1* Standardized supervisory assignments shall define the role, authority, and responsibilities of assigned personnel. Assignments shall be defined by function or by location at the scene of the incident, or by a combination of function and location. The scope of authority to be delegated at each supervisory level shall be outlined in standard operating guidelines.

2-4.5.2* An assignment that is defined by function shall be based on performing or supervising a particular function or set of functions.

2-4.5.3* An assignment that is defined by location shall be based on supervising all activities that are conducted within a designated area. The area shall be defined by standard terminology or specified by the incident commander at the time of assignment.

2-4.6 The incident commander shall have the authority to modify standard assignments or to apply them in a manner that suits the particular needs of an incident. It shall be the responsibility of the incident commander to identify the parameters of an assignment clearly where deviating from the standard assignments.

2-5 Training and Qualifications.

2-5.1* All personnel who could be involved in emergency operations shall be trained in the incident management system.

2-5.2 Personnel who are expected to perform as incident commanders or to be assigned to supervisory levels within the command structure shall be trained in and familiar with the incident management system and the particular levels at which they are expected to perform. The fire department shall define training and experience requirements for supervisors.

2-5.3* The incident commander shall make assignments based on the availability, qualifications, and expertise of individuals.

2-6 Personnel Accountability.

2-6.1 The incident management system shall provide for personnel accountability at the incident scene.

2-6.2* The fire department shall adopt and routinely use a system to maintain accountability for all personnel assigned to the incident. This system shall provide a rapid accounting of all personnel at the incident scene.

2-6.3* All supervisors shall maintain a constant awareness of the position and function of all personnel assigned to operate under their supervision. This awareness shall serve as the basic means of accountability that shall be required for operational safety.

2-6.3.1 The incident management system shall maintain accountability for the location and function of each company or unit at the scene of the incident. Personnel who respond to the incident on fire apparatus shall be identified by a system that provides an accurate accounting of those personnel actually responding to the scene with each company or on apparatus.

2-6.3.2 Personnel who arrive at the scene of the incident by means other than fire apparatus shall be identified by a system that accounts for their presence and their assignment at the incident scene.

2-6.4 The system shall include a specific means to identify and keep track of personnel entering and leaving hazardous areas, such as confined spaces or areas where special protective equipment is required.

2-6.5* The incident management system shall include a standard operating guideline to evacuate personnel from an area where an imminent hazard condition is found to exist and to account for their safety. This guidance shall include a method to notify immediately all personnel in the affected area by means of audible warning devices, and by radio signals in accordance with the requirements specified in 2-2.4.

2-7 Emergency Incident Rehabilitation.

2-7.1* The incident commander shall consider the circumstances of each incident and make suitable provisions for the rest and rehabilitation of personnel operating at the scene. These provisions shall include medical evaluation and treatment, food and fluid replenishment, and relief from extreme climatic conditions, according to the circumstances of the incident.

2-7.2 All supervisors shall maintain an awareness of the condition of personnel operating within their span of control and shall ensure that adequate measures are taken to provide for their safety and health. The command structure shall request relief and reassignment of fatigued crews.

Chapter 3 System Components

3-1 Incident Commander.

3-1.1* The incident management system shall clearly identify who is in overall command at the scene for the duration of the incident. The incident management system shall provide for the transfer of the assignment of "incident commander" to take place one or more times during the course of an incident.

3-1.2* Standard operating guidelines shall provide for one individual to assume the role of incident commander from the beginning of operations at the scene of each incident.

3-1.3* Standard operating guidelines shall define the circumstances and guidelines for transferring command and shall specify to whom command shall be transferred.

3-1.4 The incident commander shall be responsible for overall personnel accountability for the incident. The incident commander shall initiate an accountability and inventory worksheet at the very beginning of operations and shall maintain that system throughout operations.

3-1.5* The incident commander shall provide for appropriate control of access to the incident scene.

3-2 Command Staff.

3-2.1* Command staff functions shall be those elements of the incident management system that operate in direct support of the incident commander and contribute to the overall management of the incident.

3-2.2* Standard operating guidelines shall define the roles and responsibilities of personnel assigned to command staff functions. Three specific staff positions shall be identified as information officer, safety officer, and liaison officer. Additional staff functions shall be assigned, depending upon the nature and location of the incident or upon requirements established by the incident commander.

3-2.2.1 The information officer shall provide liaison between the media and the incident commander. The information officer shall consult with the incident commander regarding any constraints on the release of information and shall prepare press briefings.

3-2.2.2 Safety officers shall have the authority to immediately correct situations that create an imminent hazard to personnel.

At an emergency incident, where activities are judged by a safety officer to be unsafe and to involve an imminent hazard, the safety officer shall have the authority to alter, suspend, or terminate those activities. The safety officer shall immediately inform the incident commander of any actions taken to correct imminent hazards at an emergency scene.

At an emergency incident where a safety officer identifies unsafe conditions, operations, or hazards that do not present an imminent danger, the safety officer shall take appropriate action through the incident commander to mitigate or eliminate the unsafe condition, operation, or hazard.

3-2.2.3 The liaison officer shall provide a point of contact for assisting and cooperating agencies. The liaison officer shall identify current or potential interagency needs.

3-2.3* Personnel performing command staff functions shall operate with delegated authority to issue orders and instructions in the name of the incident commander. The scope of this authority shall be established in standard operating guidelines. The assigned personnel shall keep the incident commander informed of significant occurrences.

3-3 Planning Functions.

3-3.1 Planning staff functions shall include those components of the incident management system that are involved with information management to support the incident commander and other levels of the incident command structure.

3-3.2* The incident management system shall include a standard approach for the collection, evaluation, dissemination, and use of information. The planning staff shall account for the organizational structure, availability of resources, deployment of resources, and situation status reports.

3-3.3 The incident management system shall include standard methods and terminology to record and track the assignment of resources for the duration of an incident.

3-3.4 The incident management system shall include a standard approach to utilize technical advisors to support the development of strategic plans and to assist the incident commander.

3-4 Logistics Functions.

3-4.1 Logistics provides services and support systems to all the organizational components involved in the incident including facilities, transportation, supplies, equipment maintenance, fueling, feeding, communications, and medical services, including responder rehabilitation.

3-5 Operations Functions.

3-5.1 Operations functions shall refer to those tactical components of the incident management system that are directly involved in rescue, fire suppression, emergency medical care, special operations, and other activities that are within the primary mission of the fire department.

3-5.2* The incident commander shall assign intermediate levels of supervision and organize resources following standard operating guidelines in accordance with Section 2-4 and based on the scale and complexity of operations.

3-5.3* All supervisors assigned to operations functions shall support an overall strategic plan, as directed by the incident commander, and shall work toward the accomplishment of tactical objectives.

3-5.4 Supervisors assigned to operations functions shall be accountable for all resources assigned under their span of control and for coordination with higher levels of the command structure and with other supervisors at the same level. The safety and health of all personnel shall be primary considerations.

3-6 Staging.

3-6.1* The incident management system shall provide a standard system to manage reserves of personnel and other resources at or near the scene of the incident.

3-6.2* Where emergency activities are being conducted in a location where there would be a delay in activating standby resources, the incident commander shall establish staging areas close to the area where the need for those resources is anticipated.

3-7 Finance/Administration.

3-7.1* The incident management system shall provide for financial/administrative services where necessary.

3-7.2* The incident commander shall assign finance/administrative functions based on the needs or complexity of the incident.

Chapter 4 Roles and Responsibilities

4-1 Incident Commander.

4-1.1* The incident commander shall be responsible for the overall coordination and direction of all activities at an incident. This shall include overall responsibility for the safety and health of all personnel and for other persons operating within the incident management system.

4-1.2* The concept of risk management shall be utilized on the basis of the following principles:

(a) Activities that present a significant risk to the safety of personnel shall be limited to situations where there is a potential to save endangered lives.

(b) Activities that are routinely employed to protect property shall be recognized as inherent risks to the safety of personnel, and actions shall be taken to reduce or avoid these risks.

(c) No risk to the safety of personnel shall be acceptable where there is no possibility to save lives or property.

4-1.3* The incident commander shall evaluate the risk to personnel with respect to the purpose and potential results of their actions in each situation. In situations where the risk to fire department personnel is excessive, as defined in 4-1.2, activities shall be limited to defensive operations.

4-1.4 The incident commander shall be responsible for establishing a command structure that meets the needs of the particular situation, for determining the overall strategy that will be employed, for summoning and assigning adequate resources to deal with the situation, for evaluating progress and changing the strategy as appropriate, for communicating directions and interpreting progress reports from assigned persons in the command structure, and for bringing the incident to a termination.

4-1.5 The incident commander shall make assignments and provide direction, as demanded by the nature and circumstances of the incident, in order to manage the activities of all personnel and other resources at the incident scene.

4-1.6 The incident commander shall assign supervisory duties and responsibilities to create an organizational structure, within the framework of the incident management system, based on the needs of each particular incident. The established structure shall provide a manageable span of control at all levels of the organization to exercise supervision over all aspects of the incident.

4-1.6.1 As the incident increases in size and complexity and as additional personnel and units are assigned to operate at the scene, the incident commander shall expand the command structure to maintain effective levels of supervision and span of control.

4-1.6.2 The assignment of duties and responsibilities to individuals also shall include the delegation of the authority necessary to accomplish the assignments. The standard operating guidelines adopted by the fire department shall define the scope of authority to be delegated at each level of the organization.

4-1.7 The incident commander shall utilize standardized terminology and predefined job descriptions to make supervisory assignments.

4-1.8 The fire department shall provide personnel for the rescue of individuals operating at emergency incidents if the need arises. A rapid intervention crew shall consist of at least two individuals and shall be available for rescue of personnel if necessary.

4-1.9 The incident commander shall ensure that any change in strategy is communicated to all affected supervisors.

4-2 Supervisory Personnel.

4-2.1 Risk management principles shall be employed routinely by supervisory personnel at all levels of the incident management system to define the limits of acceptable and unacceptable positions and functions for all personnel at the incident scene.

4-2.2* Supervisors shall assume responsibility for activities within their span of control, including responsibility for the safety and health of personnel and other authorized persons within their designated areas.

4-2.3* Supervisors shall work toward assigned objectives within the overall strategy defined by the incident commander. They shall, on a regular basis, report progress, or lack of progress, in meeting those objectives and any deviation from established plans.

4-2.4 Supervisors at each level of the command structure shall receive direction from and provide progress reports to supervisors at a higher level.

4-2.5 Supervisors shall be alert to recognize conditions and actions that create a hazard within their span of control. All supervisors shall have the authority and responsibility to take immediate action to correct imminent hazards and to advise the appropriate supervisor regarding these actions.

4-2.6 Supervisors shall coordinate their activities with other supervisors at the same level and shall provide direction to supervisors at a lower level or personnel within their span of control.

4-2.7* Where conflicting orders are received at any level of the incident management system, the individual receiving the conflicting order shall inform the individual giving the order that a conflict exists. If the conflicting order is required to be carried out, the individual giving the conflicting order shall so inform the individual who provided the initial order.

Chapter 5 Referenced Publications

5-1 The following documents or portions thereof are referenced within this standard and shall be considered part of the requirements of this document. The edition indicated for each reference is the current edition as of the date of the NFPA issuance of this document.

5-1.1 NFPA Publication. National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101.

NFPA 1500 *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, 1992 edition.

5-1.2 Other Publications.

5-1.2.1 U.S. Government Publications. U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402.

Title 29, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 1910, Section 120 (29 CFR 1910.120(q)(3)); March 6, 1989.

Title 29, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 1910, Section 155 (29 CFR 1910.155(c)(26)); July 1, 1987.

Appendix A Explanatory Material

This appendix is not a part of the requirements of this NFPA document but is included for informational purposes only.

A-1-1.1 This document establishes minimum requirements for the development and implementation of an incident management system. The system is intended to apply to operations conducted at the scene of emergency incidents by a fire department. While this document is written largely in terms that relate to a single-agency system, it is intended to integrate with emergency management systems that apply to multiple agencies and large-scale situations.

A-1-1.2 An incident management system also should be used by other types or organizations engaging in activities that involve similar risks to personnel. The basic principles contained within this standard should have broad application in the delivery of emergency services and activities conducted in a high risk environment.

A-1-1.3 The intent of this requirement is to ensure that industrial fire brigades that perform fire fighting beyond the incipient stage comply with the requirements of this standard. Based upon the organizational statement of the industrial fire brigade, the types or potential types of fires (i.e., fires that develop beyond the incipient stage) encountered, and other job tasks performed by personnel, dictate the required compliance with NFPA 1561. These requirements should be addressed through training, standard operating guidelines, and company or corporate policy.

A-1-2.2 This standard establishes minimum performance requirements for an incident management system based on concerns for the safety and health of fire department personnel. The benefits of an incident management system extend far beyond this single concern, but personnel health and safety is considered to be the most important reason to implement an incident management system. This standard also may be permitted to be used for guidance in meeting the requirements for an incident command system as outlined in other NFPA documents, including NFPA 471, *Recommended Practice for Responding to Hazardous Materials Incidents*, and NFPA 472, *Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents*.

A-1-2.2.1 The incident commander has the ultimate responsibility for the safety of all fire department personnel operating at an incident and for any and all other persons whose safety is affected by fire department operations. Risk management provides a basis for the following:

(a) Standard evaluation of the situation;

(b) Strategic decision-making;

(c) Tactical planning;

(d) Plan evaluation and revision;

(e) Operational command and control.

A-1-2.3 Many of the requirements of this standard could be satisfied by adopting a "model" system (such as the Incident Command System) that is intended to provide for a uniform approach to incident management while providing for some variations to meet local requirements.

A-1-2.3.1 An incident management system is intended to provide a standard approach to the management of emergency incidents. The primary objective is always to manage the incident, not to fully implement and utilize the incident management system. The command officer should be able to apply the incident management system in a manner that supports effective and efficient management of the incident. The use of the system should not create an additional challenge for the incident commander.

A-2-1.1 The fire department should evaluate existing recognized systems to develop or adopt a system that meets its own particular requirements and provides compatibility with systems used by other agencies that would reasonably be expected to work together at emergency incidents.

A-2-1.3 Fire departments respond to a wide variety of incidents. Most of these incidents are considered "routine" and involve a small commitment of resources, while a few incidents involve large commitments of resources, complex situations, and potential high risk operations. It is important for an incident management system to accommodate all types and sizes of incidents and to provide for a regular process of escalation from the arrival of the first responding units to the largest and most complex incidents. The system always should be applied, even to routine incidents, in order to provide for familiarity with the system, to be prepared for escalation, and to be cognizant of the risks that exist at all incidents.

A-2-1.4 The fire department should use the same basic approach for all situations, including drills, to ensure that personnel are fully familiar and confident with the incident management system. Drills and simulated incidents often involve risks that are similar in nature to those of actual incidents.

A-2-2.1 The intent of the use of plain English (clear text) for radio communications is to reduce confusion at incidents, particularly where different agencies work together.

A-2-2.3 A change in strategic mode of operation would include, as an example for structural fire fighting, the switch from offensive strategy (interior fire attack with hand lines) to defensive strategy (exterior operation with master streams and hand lines). In such an instance, it is essential to notify all affected personnel of the change in strategic modes, ensure that all personnel withdraw from the structure, and account for everyone who was operating offensively before initiating any exterior stream application with either hand lines or master streams.

A-2-2.4 The emergency notification system should provide a means to rapidly warn all persons who might be in danger if an imminent hazard is identified or if a change in strategy is made. An emergency message format with distinctive alert tones and definitive instructions should be used to make such notifications.

A-2-3.1 The incident management system should be a component of interagency and multijurisdictional planning for emergency operations. A fire department is seldom the only agency involved in activities at the scene of emergency inci-

dents, particularly large-scale incidents. While this standard is based upon the requirements for an incident management system for a fire department, any system should, as a minimum, provide for coordination with police departments and other emergency service agencies within the same jurisdiction, as well as mutual aid fire departments. Any other agencies that have an established role at emergency incidents also should be included.

The fire department incident management system also should integrate with plans for major emergencies that could involve activities at different sites. In these circumstances, the incident management system defined in this document should apply specifically to activities conducted at a particular site and should integrate with larger-scale plans for the coordination of activities at multiple sites.

A-2-3.2 At large-scale and complex incidents, several agencies could become involved and could have legal jurisdiction over different aspects of the situation or different areas that are involved in the incident.

Paragraph 2-3.2 requires the fire department to build into its incident management system a system for interaction and coordination with other agencies. This is best accomplished by developing an integrated system in cooperation with all of the agencies that would be expected to work together at routine or large-scale incidents.

It is possible that other agencies might be unwilling to develop fully integrated incident management systems with the fire department. In these circumstances, the fire department should utilize its own capabilities to develop and implement an incident management system that meets the intent of this standard.

If plans are not established in advance, the authority for overall command of the incident could be in question. Most emergency incidents occur clearly within the jurisdictional area of one fire department. The agency having jurisdiction is normally responsible for designating the incident commander, although pre-established plans could provide for an individual from a different agency to assume command under some circumstances. The basic concept should be to designate one fire department incident commander, even where several fire departments are involved in the incident.

Where multiple jurisdictions are involved, the plan should incorporate a process to assign, divide, or share overall command responsibilities in a standard manner. It is essential to establish the roles, responsibilities, and relationships among the different agencies that could be involved in advance of a major incident.

One approach that is used for multijurisdictional incidents is "unified command." In this system, each agency having jurisdiction can have its own designated incident commander, with all of the incident commanders working together to develop one unified plan of action. This approach should be used only within a well established interagency standard operating guideline.

Another approach that is employed in some cases, where different agencies have specific jurisdiction over different aspects of an incident, is a "lead agency" concept. Under a lead agency structure, one agency assumes overall command of the incident, while other agencies fulfill their jurisdictional responsibilities under the coordination of the lead agency's incident commander. The lead agency role can be transferred at different stages of an incident, as objectives are accomplished and priorities change. Each agency can operate using its own incident management structure under the overall coordination.

A-2-3.3 Designated representatives should be assigned by other agencies involved in emergency incidents to ensure that all functions performed by their agencies support and are coordinated with fire department activities. There should be an established system for representatives of cooperating agencies to report to the command post. Where necessary, the incident commander should assign a designated liaison officer to manage interaction with representatives of other agencies. Where fire departments routinely work together under mutual aid or automatic aid systems, standard operating guidelines and communications capabilities should provide for activities to be managed routinely by one incident commander under a management system that does not necessarily require representatives of each fire department to be present at the command post.

A-2-3.4 At incidents where extensive interaction is required, the agency having overall jurisdiction should request a designated fire department representative to be assigned to the command post to provide liaison and coordinate activities. This should be part of an established interagency standard operating guideline for incident management.

A-2-4.1 For further information on incident management systems, see Appendix B.

A-2-4.4 The most important factor in establishing supervisory levels within the command structure is the need to maintain an effective span of control. Where the number of individuals reporting to the incident commander exceeds a span of control that can be effectively managed, the incident commander should consider activating an additional level. In many cases, this condition can be anticipated and the incident commander can activate these levels early in the incident to begin building the command structure.

A span of control of between 3 and 7 is considered desirable in most cases.

An effective span of control should be maintained at each level of the command structure, and the organization should be expanded to meet this objective wherever the need is identified. This can be accomplished by adding levels or reassigning responsibilities within existing levels, or a combination of both.

The incident commander also should consider activating additional levels within the command structure where activities become highly complex or are conducted over a large geographic area. In these cases, the benefit could be increased overall coordination and more direct supervision over complex activities.

The two basic levels of the incident management system are the incident commander and the company or unit level. The grouping of companies or units, according to task or location, creates an intermediate level of supervision. The incident commander has the option of assigning additional intermediate levels within the command structure for more complex incidents.

The incident commander should begin to assign intermediate level supervisors as soon as it becomes evident that the number of companies or units that will be used at an incident exceeds the number that can be effectively directed by the incident commander (3 to 7 companies). It is preferable to establish intermediate levels of the command structure as early as possible rather than to establish them after companies

have gone into action. The early designation of intermediate level supervisors allows them to plan the utilization of resources that will be assigned, as opposed to regrouping resources that have already initiated action.

In many cases, the officer of the first company assigned to a particular area or function is designated as an intermediate level supervisor. The company officer can be relieved of this additional responsibility when a higher level officer is assigned by the incident commander.

Additional levels of the command structure should be available to the incident commander as an option for activation in complex and large-scale incidents. Plans for large-scale incidents should provide standard organization charts for command structures.

A-2-4.5 The intent of defining standardized assignments is to provide for efficient communications when assignments are made. Instead of explaining each assignment in detail, the incident commander makes assignments that are predefined and described in the standard operating guidelines. The incident commander determines which standardized assignments to utilize, depending on the situation. When an assignment is made, both the incident commander and assigned personnel know what is expected, based on their knowledge of the written standard operating guideline.

Standard operating guidelines can define certain assignments that would be assumed automatically by designated individuals, such as the fire department safety officer, upon arrival at the scene. The preassigned individuals should make the incident commander aware of their presence upon arrival and assume their predesignated functions unless otherwise instructed by the incident commander. This could involve relieving an individual who had been assigned to the function pending the arrival of the designated individual.

A-2-4.5.1 In addition to defining the role, authority, and responsibilities, standard operating guidelines should provide guidance or direction on how an assignment will be performed.

A-2-4.5.2 Examples of assignments by function include safety officer, public information officer, and water supply officer. These functions generally are performed without geographic limitation and interact with different levels of the command structure. Other functional assignments, such as staging or medical treatment, could refer to both the function and a designated location where it is applied.

A-2-4.5.3 Location assignments generally address the supervision of all activities that are conducted within a specified area. A specified area could include one exterior side of a building, the roof or a particular floor of a building, or a section of an interior. A location assignment could include any subdivision of the area where emergency activities are being conducted. It is important that the limits of the area are defined sufficiently to avoid overlap or omission of areas. Standard terminology should be used to define commonly used subdivisions of the incident scene.

A-2-5.1 In addition to being familiar with the basic structure of the incident management system, all personnel should be trained to assume initial command of an incident in the absence of a more qualified individual. This applies to a situation where an individual could be the first arriving at the scene of an incident and, therefore, responsible for initiating command responsibilities at the scene.

A-2-5.3 Some functions are performed best by individuals with specific expertise, particularly in highly technical areas. The fire department should endeavor to have more than one qualified individual to perform all essential functions within the incident management system.

A-2-6.2 One purpose of the system is to provide rapid determination if any personnel are missing in the event that an area should be required to be evacuated, or if a structural collapse or other unplanned event occurs.

A-2-6.3 The incident management system should account for the degree of danger that is involved in specific activities and should provide more direct supervision over personnel exposed to greater risks.

A-2-6.5 The intent of this requirement is to provide assurance that all personnel are notified of urgent safety warnings and to account for all personnel in the event of an unanticipated emergency situation. The system should include all personnel and any other individuals who are operating in areas where they could be endangered. (*See also 2-2.4.*)

A-2-7.1 Weather factors during emergency incidents can impact severely on the safety and health of personnel, particularly during extremes of heat or cold. Where these factors combine with long-duration incidents or situations that require heavy exertion, the risks to personnel increase rapidly. The fire department should develop guidelines, in consultation with the fire department physician, to provide relief from adverse climatic conditions.

For more information on emergency incident rehabilitation, see the United States Fire Administration Publication FA-114, *Emergency Incident Rehabilitation.*

A-3-1.1 There should be one, clearly identifiable incident commander for the duration of the incident, from the arrival of the first fire department unit until the incident is terminated. While a succession of individuals could assume the role of incident commander, there should be no question of who is in command. When a transfer of command takes place, it should be performed in a standard manner.

An exception to the "one incident commander" requirement may be permitted where two or more agencies have specific jurisdictional responsibility for an incident. In such circumstances a "unified command" guideline may be permitted to be employed, by prior agreement, with two or more individuals working together to command the incident. (*See also A-2-3.2.*)

A-3-1.2 The incident management system should be applied to every incident from arrival of the first individual until termination. At small-scale incidents, the assumption of command may be permitted to be informal, but the principle of one individual in overall command of the incident always should apply. Routine application of the system is intended to increase familiarity with the concepts and guidelines, even where the need to apply a formal command structure is not obvious. The officer in charge of the first arriving company or the first arriving individual of the fire department, regardless of rank or function, should be the incident commander until relieved by more qualified personnel. All personnel should be sufficiently familiar with basic responsibilities and communications protocols in order to assume the role of initial-arriving incident commander, if only until a more qualified individual arrives.

A-3-1.3 The fire department should establish a protocol of command authority based on rank structure, assignments, and qualifications to define a hierarchy for transferring command. The qualifications required to perform as incident commander should increase with the size and complexity of the incident. Standard operating guidelines should define the circumstances under which an officer at a higher level should respond to an incident and whether the transfer of command to an officer at a higher level is mandatory or discretionary.

In certain cases, an individual with a higher level of command authority arriving at the scene may be permitted to direct the current incident commander to continue in this role. The higher level officer is responsible for the command of the incident, but could act as an observer or advisor to allow the incident commander to benefit from the experience. The exercise of this option should be at the discretion of the higher level officer.

A-3-1.5 The incident management system should include standard operating guidelines to protect personnel from hazards and to keep unauthorized persons out of hazardous areas. All supervisors should be aware of hazards and should take the necessary steps to control access to areas under their supervision. The incident commander should provide for control of access to the entire incident scene and, where appropriate, should exclude, establish limitations for, or provide an escort for non-fire department personnel.

A-3-2.1 The command staff generally includes those personnel who work at the command post and provide direct support to the incident commander. This includes personnel who fulfill specifically assigned duties. (*See Figure A-3-2.1.*)

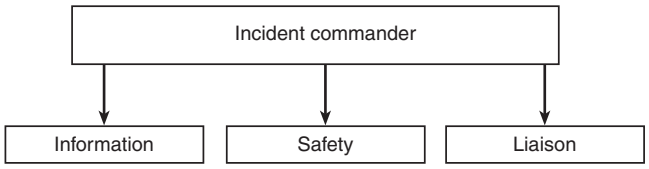

Figure A-3-2.1. Command structure from IMS book.

A-3-2.2 The incident management system should include command staff functions that are automatically activated upon escalation of an incident or with multiple alarms. Specific individuals should be designated to respond and assume command staff duties automatically.

A-3-2.3 The basic function of the command staff is to support the incident commander. The assigned individuals should be able to differentiate between routine actions and those that could have a significant impact on the overall incident. Part of their responsibility is to inform the incident commander of significant information and to request direction when major decisions are necessary.

A-3-3.2 The incident management system should provide standard worksheets, charts, diagrams, and other forms to assist the incident commander in keeping track of pertinent information and to provide for the transfer of information in a standard format when command is transferred. The planning staff function should be able to provide information such as accountability, pre-fire plans, reference information, maps, diagrams, and other pertinent information to the incident commander as needed.

A-3-5.2 The command structure should be assembled by the incident commander by grouping resources, assigning supervisors, and adding additional levels of supervision, as described in Section 2-4, to meet the objectives for an effective span of control at each level. This provides a degree of supervision that enhances the safety of all personnel.

A-3-5.3 The strategic plan should identify the broad goals of emergency incident activities and the basic manner in which operations should be conducted. An offensive strategic plan involves operations to provide search and rescue and to control and extinguish the fire. A defensive strategic plan involves operations directed toward protecting exposures. Offensive and defensive operations should not be conducted in an area that would create unnecessary risk to fire department personnel.

Tactical objectives should be based on the strategic plan and assigned by the incident commander to supervisors within the command structure. Each supervisor should be expected to direct the assigned resources to accomplish one or more tactical objectives. The accomplishment of tactical objectives should support successful completion of the strategic plan. An example of a tactical objective is to ensure that all occupants are removed from the second floor of a building and to control the fire on that floor.

A-3-6.1 Staging provides a standard method to keep reserves of personnel, apparatus, and other resources ready for action at the scene or close to the scene of an incident. Staging also provides a standard method to control and record the arrival of such resources and their assignment to specific activities. When units are dispatched to assist at working incidents, they should be dispatched to a designated "staging" or "base" area where they can be ready for assignment when required by the incident commander. This process helps the incident commander to keep track of the resources that are on the scene and available for assignment, where they are located, and where specific units have been assigned. The incident commander always should attempt to keep reserves of personnel, equipment, and supplies available to rotate assignments with fatigued crews and to go into action quickly when changing conditions require a rapid commitment of resources. Equipment failures should be anticipated and supplies should be ordered to the scene in time and in sufficient quantities to provide a safe margin over anticipated needs. The ability to provide these reserves is necessarily dependent on the amount of resources that are available, but each fire department should have plans to utilize its available resources to maximum advantage and should have contingency plans to obtain resources from other sources that might be available.

A-3-6.2 It generally is desirable to keep staged resources in locations where they can be ready for action within two minutes. In some cases, particularly where imminent hazards exist, it is advisable to keep an immediate response capability in a state of readiness in a safe location that provides immediate access to the area.

The term "base" is often used to refer to a more remote location where standby resources are gathered but are not available for immediate action. As needed, resources can be moved up to a staging location where they are ready for immediate action. An example is a high-rise building where apparatus is parked at a safe distance from the building, and personnel and equipment are moved in to stand by on a safe floor below the fire level.