

# Emergency Scene Priorities for the Incident Commander

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The responsibilities of the first-due company officer and/or chief officer are tremendous and ever growing. The items below are information I have taken from my experiences, as well as numerous other sources to put together a checklist as a guideline to base your emergency scene decision-making on. This list is not an ending, as much as it is a beginning. Take the time to modify to best meet your needs, based on the situation you may find yourself faced with. Be safe out there, and remember our personnel deserve a round-trip ticket home, every time they come to work.

## Size-up:

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The things you are thinking about, starting with even before the call is dispatched, and ending when you have left the scene.

- F (Facts)
  - o Time of emergency
  - o Location of emergency
  - o Nature of emergency
  - o Life hazard
  - o Exposures
  - o Building or buildings involved
  - o Fire
  - o Weather
- P (Probabilities/possibilities)
  - o Life hazard
  - o Extension of fire
  - o Explosions
  - o Collapse of component parts of involved building
  - o Weather changes
- O (Own situation)
  - o Preventable damage (water, heat, smoke, other causes)
  - o Personnel and equipment
  - o Additional assistance available
  - o Water supply
  - o Private fire protection equipment
  - o Action that has been taken
- D (Decision)
  - o Orders and instructions
  - o Supervision of operations
- P (Plan)
  - o Initial decision
  - o Supplemental decisions

NOTE: The above items come from Lloyd Layman's "Firefighting Tactics" book, and are in many ways, similar to the "Critical Fireground Factors" mentioned on page 2.

## For all emergencies:

- Verify the map pages/find where you are going; view any applicable pre-plans
- Start tracking responding resources (responding units, where each are responding from, in what order they may arrive, possible assignments, etc.)
- Ensure radios are on the appropriate channels
- Ensure appropriate PPE is on or easy to don upon arrival, and not to be put on while enroute unless you can do so with your seatbelt still on!
- Ensure your personnel are not getting too "amped up"
- Remember, fires do not kill firefighters. Instead, lack of situational awareness, complacency, over aggressiveness, poor risk management, acting outside your scope of practice, lack of building construction knowledge, lack of fire behavior knowledge, lack of strategy and tactics knowledge, lack of accountability, lack of using ICS, forgetting we did not create the emergency – we are there to mitigate the emergency and not be a part of the problem, and most importantly, the inability to learn from history kills firefighters!

# Emergency Scene Priorities for the Incident Commander

## For structure fires

- Fire behavior (Think where the fire will most likely travel to and stop it!)
  - o Center hallway construction? If so, stop the horizontal spread and keep the hallways tenable!
  - o Strip Malls? If so, stop the horizontal spread
- Building construction (especially type of construction – I, II, III, IV, or V; is it pre-1933 construction – unreinforced masonry, etc.)

## For EMS responses (or any response where patients may be involved): “ENAMES”

- E (Are there any **E**nvironmental dangers?)
- N (What are the **N**umber of patients?)
- A (Is there a need for **A**dditional resources?)
- M (What is the **M**echanism of injury/illness?)
- E (Is **E**xtrication needed?)
- S (Are **S**pinal precautions necessary?)

## For wildland fires:

- Fire history
- Weather conditions
- Fuels
- Topography
- Fire behavior
- Access
- Water sources/supply
- Number of structures being threatened
- Evacuation issues
- Available firefighting resources
- Special hazards

## Critical Fireground Factors:

To be used in conjunction with your size-up information above, and to help you make decisions and develop your Incident Action Plan: “WALLACE WAS HOT” Every company officer and chief officer should be considering ALL of these items in route to the incident and upon arrival at the incident to ensure they are covering ALL bases.

- W (Water Supply)
- A (Area)
- L (Life Safety)
- L (Location/Extent of fire)
- A (Apparatus responding)
- C (Construction/Collapse potential)
- E (Exposures)
- W (Weather)
- A (Auxiliary appliances)
- S (Special matters)
- H (Height)
- O (Occupancy)
- T (Time of day)

## Command Options:

- Nothing showing (investigative) mode
- Fast attack (possibly passing command if another unit is on scene) mode
- Command mode

## Radio Report:

- Unit designation of arriving unit
- A brief description of the incident situation (type of building/occupancy/location, type of construction, etc.)

## Emergency Scene Priorities for the Incident Commander

- Obvious conditions (fire showing, smoke showing, multiple vehicles involved, etc.)
- Brief description of action taken
- Declaration of strategy (structure fires)
- Any obvious safety concerns
- Assumption of Incident Command
- Location of Command Post
- Request for additional resources or release of responding resources

### Strategic Mode:

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- Offensive
- Defensive
- Marginal/Transitional (Offensive/defensive or Defensive/offensive – key point: not both at the same time!)

### For wildland fires:

- Direct Attack (Offensive), 4 types:
  - o Pincer
  - o Envelopment
  - o Tandem
  - o Flanking
- Indirect Attack (Defensive)

### Incident Priorities:

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- Life Safety / Customer Service (internal and external)
- Incident Stabilization / Hazard Mitigation
- Property Conservation
- Environmental Considerations

### Strategic Priorities/Objectives/Goals:

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- Rescue
- Exposures
- Confinement
- Extinguishment
- Overhaul
- Ventilation
- Salvage

### Tactical Objectives:

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Direction/orders assigned to companies. Based on the above Strategic Priorities/Objectives/Goals, but may include:

- Locate and confine the fire to the room/building of origin
- Rescue (and/or evacuate) all occupants from the building
- Establish water supply
- Place a \_\_\_ hoseline into operation on the \_\_\_\_\_
- Evacuate all occupants from the neighboring buildings
- Provide medical treatment for patients
- Triage for patients
- Establish a treatment area
- Establish a staging area
- Keep the fire from \_\_\_\_\_
- Check for extension
- Assess for ventilation needs
- Collect T-cards/Establish accountability
- Provide ventilation (horizontal or ventilations)
- Secure utilities
- Ladder the building
- Provide salvage
- Establish rehab
- Utilize a gated wye and bundles to \_\_\_\_\_
- Establish SCBA bottle support cache

# Emergency Scene Priorities for the Incident Commander

## Incident Objectives:

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In addition to the above Strategic Priorities/Objectives/Goals (RECEOVS):

- Provide for the safety, accountability and welfare of personnel
- Stabilize the patient
- Keep the fire from spreading to \_\_\_\_\_ (location, street, building, etc.)
- Conserve property
- Secure (or control) the perimeter
- Create hazard zones
- Establish control zones
- Identification of hazard/problem/material
- Secure ignition sources
- Establish decontamination process
- Establish protective action options
- Stabilize the incident and provide for life safety
- Remove endangered occupants and treat the injured
- Contain/control the hazardous materials release
- Identify and eliminate debris and fall hazards
- Providing information to media
- Providing support to on-scene personnel (rehab, tools/equipment, SCBA bottle support, etc.)
- Provide shelter to displaced occupants
- Determine cause and origin of problem
- Determine what caused the explosion
- Secure the scene (prior to departure)
- Notify appropriate other agencies

NOTE: The best way to describe incident objectives is they are items beginning with action verbs.  
Many of these are found within our Standard Operating Guidelines.

## Benchmarks to State on Radio:

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- |                                               |                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| - On scene / report on conditions             | - Confirm core stations are covered                                                              |
| - Command established                         | - Confirm all standard notifications are made and agencies/people are confirmed to be responding |
| - Location of command post                    | - PARs (as appropriate)                                                                          |
| - Strategic mode                              | - Knockdown                                                                                      |
| - Water supply (who will establish)           | - Under control                                                                                  |
| - 2 in/2 out established (or not established) | - Secondary search completed                                                                     |
| - Utilities secured                           | - Command terminated or transferred                                                              |
| - RIC established (including location)        | - Duty Chief notified/updated                                                                    |
| - Staging area location                       |                                                                                                  |
| - All clear (primary search)                  |                                                                                                  |

## When Establishing a Division or Group (or Branch/Unit, etc.):

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- Advise of who will be in charge / their radio designator
- Advise them of their tactical objectives
- Advise them of their assigned resources
- Remind them to provide a CAN (Conditions/Actions/Needs) report as needed

# Emergency Scene Priorities for the Incident Commander

## Notifications to Consider (if not a part of response strings):

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- Utility company (gas and/or electric)
- Utility company supervisor
- On-call department personnel to assist with incident management team responsibilities
- Safety Officer
- Fire Investigator
- Volunteer or off-duty paid personnel
- Station move-ups to cover must-fill stations in the district
- Public Information Officer
- Law enforcement
- Law enforcement supervisor
- Ambulance Supervisor
- Ambulances
- Mutual aid resources not normally dispatched (water tenders, station coverage, etc.)
- Mass Casualty Alert or Activation?
  - o Alert (Local or Countywide)
  - o Activation (If requesting an Activation, don't forget to provide the following information):
    - Level of Activation (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5)
    - Number of patients requiring transportation
    - Ground ambulance staging location
    - Safety or approach instructions
    - Request additional units

## Transfer of Command Briefing:

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- Incident Conditions (Fire location/extent; haz mat conditions – spill or release; # of patients, etc.)
- IAP
- Progress toward completion of the Tactical Objectives
- Safety considerations
- Deployment and assignment of operating companies and personnel
- Appraisal of need for additional resources

**OR**

- What is the life hazard and what actions are being taken to address it?
- What is the location and extent of the fire (or hazard)? Is it extending?
- What are the exposures?
- What is the occupancy? Type of construction?
- What is the location of all on scene units and where have hoselines been placed?
- Are any additional units needed?
- Who is the RIC and what is their location?

**OR**

- |                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| - What I have      | - What I need            |
| - What I have done | - What I recommend doing |

## Incident Now Under Control/Post Incident:

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- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing needed (need may be determined at any time during incident)?
- Start preparing a demob plan to get apparatus/personnel back in service & to their stations.
- Gather on scene officers to determine an overhaul plan, in conjunction with the Duty Investigator

## Emergency Scene Priorities for the Incident Commander

- Ensure cause and origin process has been started and/or determined
- Complete a tailboard session prior to departure
- Ensure occupants/involved citizens are knowledgeable about what we are doing, why we are doing what we are doing, and what they need to do while we are on scene and after we leave the scene
- Prepare for the Post Incident Analysis
- Obtain radio tape from County Communications (automatically generated on 2<sup>nd</sup> alarms or greater)

### Typical ICS Organization Chart Positions Filled Or Relevant Issues:

#### STRUCTURE FIRE:

- Incident Commander
- Safety Officer
- Divisions:
  - o 1, 2, 3, etc.
  - o Subdivision 1, 2, 3, etc.
  - o A, B, C, D (for building/areas when looking from above)
- Groups:
  - o Fire attack
  - o Ventilation
  - o Exposure
  - o Medical
  - o Patient Transportation
  - o Salvage
  - o Rescue
  - o Haz Mat
  - o RIC
  - o Rehab
  - o Structure protection
- Staging Area Manager
- Water Supply Officer
- Units:
  - o Medical
  - o Rehab
  - o Documentation
  - o Resource
  - o Situation

#### HIGH-RISE FIRE:

- Incident Commander
- Safety Officer
- Divisions:
  - o 1, 2, 3, etc.
  - o Subdivision 1, 2, 3, etc.
  - o A, B, C, D (for building/areas when looking from above)
- Groups:
  - o Fire attack
  - o Ventilation
  - o Medical
  - o Patient Transportation
  - o Salvage
  - o Rescue
  - o Rehab
  - o Haz Mat
- Staging Area Manager
- Base Manager
- Units:
  - o Medical
  - o Rehab
  - o Lobby
  - o Systems Control
  - o Ground Support
  - o Resource
  - o Situation
- Water Supply Officer

#### High Rise Incident First Alarm Resource Assignment Acronym – ALS BASE:

A = Fire Attack/Investigation                      S = Staging/Supply  
L = Lobby/Systems Control                          Base = Incident Base

## Emergency Scene Priorities for the Incident Commander

NOTE: If smoke/fire is present at a high-rise, upgrade to a 3<sup>rd</sup> alarm, strongly consider a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> alarm!

### WILDLAND FIRE:

- Incident Commander
- Safety Officer
- Branches:
  - o A, X (left flank/right flank for wildland fires)
  - o Can be functional or geographical
- Divisions:
  - o A, X (left flank/right flank for wildland fires)
- Groups:
  - o RIC (may or may not be a group – could be a Unit)
  - o Rehab (may or may not be a group – could be a Unit)
  - o Structure protection
- Staging Area Manager
- Units:
  - o Medical
  - o Rehab
  - o Documentation
  - o Ground Support
  - o Resource
  - o Situation
- Information Officer
- Operations Chief
- Planning Chief
- Logistics Chief
- Water Supply Officer

### HAZ MAT:

- Incident Commander
- Safety Officer
- Divisions:
  - o 1, 2, 3, etc.
  - o Subdivision 1, 2, 3, etc.
  - o A, B, C, D (for buildings/areas when looking from above)
  - o A, X (left flank/right flank for wildland fires)
  - o Interior
- Groups:
  - o Fire attack
  - o Ventilation
  - o Exposure
  - o Medical
  - o Patient Transportation
  - o Rescue
  - o Evacuation
  - o Haz Mat
  - o RIC
  - o Rehab
- Staging Area Manager
- Units:
  - o Medical
  - o Rehab
  - o Entry
  - o Site Access Control
  - o Documentation
  - o Decontamination
  - o Resource
  - o Situation
- Information Officer
- Operations Chief
- Planning Chief
- Logistics Chief

### Typical Hierarchy Haz Mat:

- Assistant Safety Officer (Haz Mat) – reporting to the Safety Officer/I.C.
- Haz Mat Group Supervisor
  - o Entry Unit Leader
  - o Site Access Control Unit Leader
    - Safe Refuge Area Manager
  - o Decontamination Unit Leader
  - o Technical Specialists

# Emergency Scene Priorities for the Incident Commander

## MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT:

- Incident Commander
- Safety Officer
- Information Officer
- Branches:
  - o Geographical or functional
- Divisions:
  - o A, B, C, D (for buildings/areas when looking from above)
- Groups:
  - o Fire
  - o Law
  - o Medical
  - o Patient Transportation
  - o Rescue
  - o Haz Mat
  - o Rehab
- Units:
  - o Triage
  - o Treatment
  - o Site Access Control
  - o Documentation
  - o Resource
- Managers:
  - o Staging Area Manager
  - o Treatment Dispatch Manager
  - o Immediate Treatment Area Manager
  - o Delayed Treatment Area Manager
  - o Minor Treatment Area Manager
- Other:
  - o Medical Supply Coordinator
  - o Medical Communications Coordinator
  - o Ground Ambulance Coordinator

## Typical Hierarchy Mass Casualty Incident:

### Medical Group Supervisor

- Triage Unit Leader
  - o Triage Personnel
  - o Morgue Manager
- Medical Supply Coordinator
- Treatment Unit Leader
  - o Treatment Dispatch Manager
  - o Immediate Treatment Manager
  - o Delayed Treatment Manager
  - o Minor Treatment Area Manager

### Patient Transportation Group Supervisor

- Medical Communications Coordinator
- Ground Ambulance Coordinator