

Gaston County Emergency Services

Incident Command

Guidelines (NIMS)

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Introduction to Incident Command System

General

The Incident Command System, hereafter referred to as “ICS”, provides a basis for a standardized system to be utilized in combating emergencies. The ICS encompasses methodologies enabling agencies to work together towards the common objective of effective and efficient management of emergencies. It is a responsive system, capable of incorporating new technology, ideas and the individual needs of the agencies comprising the system. In addition, the ICS provides an umbrella concept which emergency response organizations may find effective in addressing emergencies within their respective jurisdictions.

The Incident Command System (ICS) is mandated by the National Incident Management System (NIMS) which provides a systematic, proactive approach guiding departments and agencies at all levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work seamlessly to prepare for, prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life and property, and harm to the environment. The Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986 developed for handling hazardous materials task OSHA with establishing rules for operations and hazardous material incidents. The OSHA regulation 1910.120 requires all organizations to use ICS for any hazardous material incident.

In order to improve accountability and establish clear lines of authority the adoption of NIMS based ICS guidelines will be used in Gaston County by all emergency responders within the Gaston County Emergency Services. The inclusion of the NIMS based system will increase safety to responders and others, increase achievement of response objectives and improve use of resources.

Purpose

The primary purpose of ICS is the efficient management of assigned resources for effective control of any emergency situation. ICS can be adapted to any task requiring a standard method of organization, terminology, and identification. The system is an “all risk” system, which can be utilized in all emergencies including, but not limited to, tornadoes, major fires, earthquakes, floods, major medical, hazardous materials, traffic accidents, air crashes, and civil disorders.

Components of ICS

The ICS has a number of components. These components working together provide the basis for an effective ICS concept of operation.

- **Common Terminology**
- **Modular Organization**
- **Integrated Communications**
- **Unified Command Structure**
- **Manageable Span of Control**
- **Pre-Incident Surveys (Pre-Plans)**
- **Comprehensive Resource Management**

The Features and Principles of NIMS

The essential features:

Standardization

- **Common Terminology**

Command

- **Establishment and transfer of command**
- **Chain of Command and Unity of Command**

Planning/Organizational Structure:

- **Management by objectives (Life Safety, Incident stabilization, Property/Environmental preservation)**
- **Modular Organization**
- **Incident Action Planning**
- **Manageable Span of Control**
- **Pre-incident surveys (Pre-Planning)**

Facilities and Resources:

- **Incident locations**
- **Comprehensive Resource Management**

Communications/Information Management:

- **Integrated Communications**
- **Information and Intelligence Management**

Professionalism:

- **Accountability**
 - **Check-in**
 - **Incident Action Plan (IAP) (required for all hazardous materials incidents)**
 - **Unity of Command**
 - **Span of Control**
 - **Resource Tracking**
 - **Dispatch/Deployment**

The following NIMS certifications are available for those who have not obtained the required training, the link provided will give access to the NIMS forms:

http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/ics_forms_2010.pdf

Section I ... Response

DISCUSSION:

Gaston County has a Mutual Aid Agreement dating back to 1973, which enables either a Gaston County Fire Department or Gastonia Fire Department to request assistance for the purpose of handling an incident. The request has to be made from the highest ranking member on scene of the organization requesting assistance to the Communications Center and the request will be forwarded to the requested agency. With that said, Gaston County nor any municipality does not have an “automatic aid” agreement enabling dispatch of units automatically on first due assignments. In order, to address this issue, an agreement needs to be established between all agencies detailing what constitutes “automatic aid”. However, current guidelines have been accepted by OSFM/ISO Rating System allowing “call cards” to be acknowledged as “automatic aid agreements”. All emergency services organizations shall use their respective Mutual-Aid agreements i.e. Emergency Medical Services and Police Agencies.

A. Enroute to the Scene

Obtaining the proper information from the dispatcher is essential to making an effective and safe entry into any incident scene. The telecommunicator will provide the most complete information available to the first responding units. For volunteer Fire agencies, when checking enroute identify the number of personnel responding with the unit.

B. Response to Special Risk Incidents

Response to certain incidents may require special precautions even before reaching the scene. While enroute it may be important to obtain from the dispatcher such information as wind direction and speed, identification of the hazardous materials involved, and the exact location of the cloud or spill. (A hazardous materials checklist is provided in this guideline, also the Gastonia Fire Department Special Operations Response Team may need to be contacted to assist with hazardous materials incidents). This request also requires notification of Gaston County Emergency Management. For all Special Risks refer to Section 7 “Agency Responsibilities”.

Section II ... First Arriving Personnel on Scene

Every person in an emergency response agency has the potential of being a key person at a specific site during an emergency. The first arriving personnel on the scene shall institute effective incident management techniques. The following procedures should be instituted immediately upon arrival.

A. Evaluation (Size-Up)

This is a quick check or “recon” to determine the full extent of the situation. This procedure must be executed thoroughly but expeditiously to establish priorities. Accordingly, a 360 degree view of the incident should be conducted if applicable, such as all structure incidents and vehicle accidents.

B. Scene Coordination

Secure the access to the scene to prevent accidents and protect the injured. Also, identify routes for emergency vehicles that will be arriving shortly. In some cases, it may be necessary to designate parking spaces until a staging area is established. Evaluate the need for control lines and safety zones.

C. Call for Assistance

Advise the Communication Center of what the situation is and the nature and numbers of resources that will be needed.

Evaluate and advise responders of any hazards that may affect their safety.

Section III ... Establishing Command

A. Single Agency Response

When an emergency is of such nature as to dictate it to be the primary responsibility of a single agency, the first officer or senior member of that agency on the scene will assume command and remain in command unless appropriately relieved thereof by a higher-ranking official. **IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THIS INDIVIDUAL TO ESTABLISH THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM AND IDENTIFY AS "COMMAND".** He/she should be readily (visually, authoritatively and geographically) identifiable to all concerned.

In a single command incident, the Incident Commander is solely responsible within the confines of his authority, to establish an Incident Action Plan and overall management strategy. He/she is individually responsible that all actions are directed towards the successful accomplishments of that strategy.

B. Unified Command/Multi-Agency Response

When an emergency is of such nature as to require the services of two or more emergency response agencies (fire, law enforcement, rescue/EMS) (example: A passenger airline crash where fire, medical and law enforcement all have immediate but diverse objectives), the first officer of any dispatched agency to arrive at the site will assume Command of their respective unit.

In a unified command, any combination of the following emergency response services may be represented: fire, law enforcement, and EMS/rescue. Under these circumstances, the senior member, or his delegate, from each service on-the-scene will serve the combined command post as that agency's representative. These individuals must jointly determine objectives, strategies and priorities. They, collectively, will affect operational control of the scene.

When the representatives collectively determine that a single coordinator is desirable, they may designate one from among themselves or appoint someone to act on their behalf. As the circumstances change, the situation may dictate that another person serve as Incident Commander using the following criteria: (1) the statutory authority, (2) a mutual acknowledgment of an individual's qualifications for a specific type of incident, (3) the greatest jurisdictional involvement, or (4) the number of resources involved.

If the situation escalates beyond the scope of our local resources, the Chairman of the Gaston County Commissioners may be requested (through Gaston County Emergency Management), or may elect, to appoint an Incident Coordinator. Under these circumstances, in all probability, the Gaston County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be activated in an appropriate mode and setting.

C. Radio Designation

The radio designation “command” together with the incident location will be used to identify the Incident Commander (i.e. First Street Command). This designation will not normally change throughout the operation.

Note: The Gastonia Fire Department designated VHF radio frequency will be City Fire (VHF) for all agencies responding into Gastonia. This channel will be used to create a patch between the 800 system and the County VHF system. The Gastonia Fire Department also will have the ability to create on scene patches if needed using an ACU device.

D. Incident Action Plans

At most incidents Command will use an Incident Action Plan (IAP) to record assignments, priorities, and completed objectives. This record will aid the Incident Commander in recalling his actions and transfer of command. When applicable the use of a command board should be utilized to track the on-scene resources as well as those resources located in staging.

E. Transfer of Command

When it becomes necessary for the Incident Commander to leave the scene, command will be transferred to another senior official capable of managing the mission. Transfer of command will be regulated by the following procedures:

1. The first arriving officer or personnel from the first arriving unit will automatically assume Command.
2. The first in officer or unit may pass command to another officer arriving “close” behind. The first arriving officer or unit shall announce by radio that command is being passed and state what actions his unit will take. The second arriving responder then assumes Command and performs all command functions.
3. When the first arriving unit or officer is from an affiliated agency, the first arriving officer from the primary agency may assume Command.
4. Immediately upon arrival, officers assuming Command will communicate with the Incident Commander being relieved by radio or, preferably, face-to-face.
5. The officer being relieved will brief the officer assuming command on all appropriate issues, including:
 - a. The general situation (location, extent, conditions, extensions, etc.)
 - b. Effectiveness of control.

- c. **Deployment and assignments of operating units (Incident Action Plan and/or command boards).**
 - d. **Appraisal of need of additional equipment**
 - e. **Personnel Accountability and Scene Safety**
- 6. **The relieving officer will accept full and total responsibility for the incident from that point on. The radio designation "Command" shall be transferred to the relieving official.**
- 7. **The officer being relieved should review the tactical worksheet and /or command board with the officer who is assuming command. This sheet offers the officer assuming command a record to the actions taken and unit placement, and personnel deployment, thus a better understanding of the overall situation.**
- 8. **The mere arrival of a ranking officer or personnel from the responsible agency at the incident does not mean that Command has been transferred to that person. The response and arrival of ranking officers to the scene strengthens the overall command function. All officers should strive to insure a smooth, effective transfer of command.**

Section IV Divisions and Groups

1. Divisions

If command does not designate the use of divisions, all units on the scene will be addressed by their function.

If the incident covers a large geographical area, which is especially difficult to manage, the Incident Commander cannot see all critical points of the incident, or at his/her discretion will divide the incident into divisions with an officer in charge of each location. The incident should be divided in the following manner:

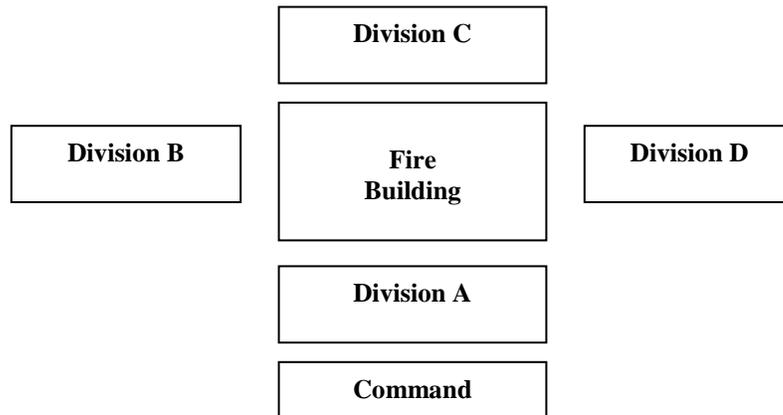
a. Exterior Divisions

Division A (Alpha) will always be directly in front of the command location.

Division B (Bravo) will always be to the left of the command location.

Division C (Charlie) will always be the rear of the building.

Division D (Delta) will always be to the right of the command location.

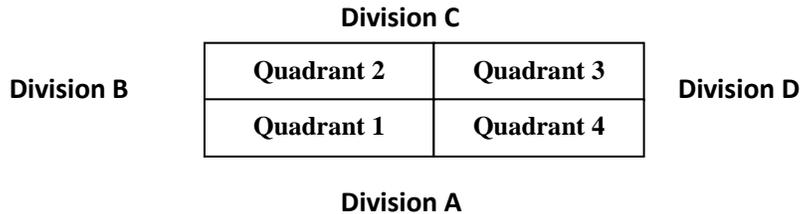


b. Interior Divisions

Interior Division will correspond with the fire building's floors. The first floor will be designated "Division 1", the second floor will be designated "Division 2", etc.

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| Roof, Roof Division |
| 4 th Floor, Division 4 |
| 3 rd Floor, Division 3 |
| 2 nd Floor, Division 2 |
| 1 st Floor, Division 1 |

The illustration below is a top view of a floor division. Each division will be divided into four (4) quadrants.



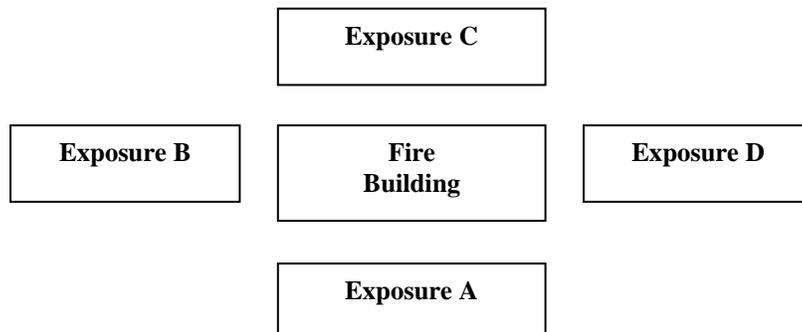
2. Groups

If a division needs to be subdivided further, the term "Group" will be used. Groups will be addressed by their functions. Example: Ventilation, Suppression, Rescue, RIT, etc.

If command designates divisions, he/she should report to the area designated as Division A and make his/her presence known.

3. Exposures

Exposures will be designated in the same manner as divisions



Section V Command and General Staff Responsibilities

A. Incident Commander

As a minimum, the Incident Commander is responsible for incident activities including:

1. Initially:

- a. Establish an effective command position ... visually, authoritatively, and geographically.**
- b. Rapidly evaluate the situation (size-up).**
- c. Transmit a brief initial report to Communication Center and other responding agencies.**
- d. Develop the strategy.**
- e. Assign resources as required.**
- f. Activate elements of the ICS, as appropriate including Unified Command.**

2. Continuing Responsibilities

- g. Provide continuing overall command and progress reports to all affected persons with a need to know.**
- h. Assign groups, coordinate staff activities, and manage incident operations. Designate support staff.**
- i. Review and evaluate efforts. Revise plan as needed.**
- j. Request and assign additional resources as needed.**
- k. Approve and authorize release of information to the news media.**
- l. Return units to service and terminate "Command".**
- m. Arrange and conduct debriefing.**

3. Broad Based Responsibilities

- n. Remove endangered people.**
- o. Arrange for necessary medical services.**
- p. Neutralize hazards and dangerous substances.**
- q. Conserve property.**

r. Provide for the safety of emergency personnel

B. Operations Chief

- 1. The Operations Chief, a member of the general staff, is responsible for the management of all operations directly applicable to the primary mission. The Operations Chief activates and supervises resources (personnel and equipment).**
- 2. When the command post is not located at the scene of the incident, the Incident Commander shall appoint at least one Operations Chief to assume command of the incident site.**
- 3. The Operations Chief(s) shall be a senior fire, law enforcement, and EMS officials at the scene of the incident (outside the command post). These officials shall serve as the Incident Commanders eyes and ears pertaining to activities on site.**
- 4. In addition, the Operations Chief(s) shall:**
 - a. Assess the incident scene and report the findings to the Incident Commander.**
 - b. Coordinate field activities within the framework of instructions received from the Command Post.**
 - c. Manage on site location operations.**
 - d. Request from the Command Post additional resources as needed.**
 - e. Ensure that all elements of the Incident Command Guideline or applicable SOG's are being effectively applied.**
 - f. Carry out necessary strategic and tactical assignments.**

C. Planning Chief

- 1. As the situation escalates and when multiple agencies or jurisdictions are deployed, the need for written plans becomes paramount. Of course, not all incidents require written plans.**
- 2. The Planning Chief, a member of the general staff, is responsible for the collection, evaluation, and use of information about the development of the incident and the status of resources.**
- 3. In addition, the Planning Chief shall:**
 - a. Establish a weather data collection system, as necessary.**
 - b. Assemble information on alternate strategies.**
 - c. Identify the need for special resources.**

- d. Provide periodic predictions on incident potential.
 - e. Provide and distribute Incident Commanders orders.
 - f. Insure that normal agency information collection and reporting requirements are being met.
 - g. Prepare recommendations for release of resources.
4. As the situation escalates, the Planning Chief may appoint personnel to assist with the following activities:
- a. Documentation (recorder)
 - b. Technical Specialist
 - c. Timekeeper
 - d. Demobilization
 - e. Special situations (weather, etc.)

D. Logistics

- 1. The Logistics Chief, a member of the general staff, is responsible for providing facilities, services and materials in support of the incident.
- 2. In addition, the Logistics Chief may:
 - a. Identify service and support requirements for planned and expected operations.
 - b. Coordinate and process request for additional support requirements.
 - c. Estimate future service and support requirements.

E. Finance

The Finance Chief is responsible for all financial and cost analysis aspects of the incident. It is recommended that the person responsible for such activity under non-emergency conditions continue to serve in this function if possible.

Section VI ... Command Staff

As the situation dictates, the Incident Commander shall appoint a Public Information Officer, a member of the Command Staff, is responsible for the formulation and release of information about the Incident to the news media, local communities, incident personnel, other appropriate agencies and organizations, and for the management of all information officers assigned to the incident.

1. **Public Information Officer**
 - a. Establish a single, incident information center.
 - b. Obtain briefing from Incident Commander
 - c. Arrange for necessary workspace, materials, telephone and staffing.
 - d. Contact the jurisdictional agency to coordinate public information activities
 - e. Prepare initial information summary as soon as possible after arrival.
 - f. Obtain copies of current Incident Status Summaries (ICS Form 209)
 - g. Release information to news media and post information in accordance with policy of the Incident Commander.
 - h. Develop policy with Incident Commander, Agency Administrator, agency Public Affairs Officer, incident management team members, and / or incident investigators regarding information gathering and sharing. Observe constraints on release of information.
 - i. Attend meetings at the Command Post to update news releases.
 - j. Develop and receive Incident Commanders approval of a comprehensive, proactive communications strategy that reflects both immediate and long term goals.
 - k. Maintain activity log as necessary.
 - l. Prepare initial information summary as soon as possible after arrival.
 - m. Obtain approval for release of information from Incident Commander.
 - n. Attend meetings to update information releases.
 - o. Arrange for meetings between media and incident personnel.

- p. **Provide escort service to the media and VIPs; provide PPE as necessary.**
- q. **Respond to special request for information.**
- r. **Organize and supervise an adequate staff, equipment, and facilities.**
- s. **Keep informed of incident developments and control progress through planning meetings and regular contacts with other incident staff, host unit, and cooperating agencies.**
- t. **Keep the Incident Commander informed of any potential issues involving the general public, news media, or other sources.**
- u. **Maintain Unit Log (ICS Form 214).**
- v. **Review Common Responsibilities.**

2. Safety Chief (Officer)

The Safety Chief, a member of the command staff, is responsible for monitoring and accessing hazardous and unsafe situations and developing measures for assuring personnel safety. The Safety Officer will correct unsafe acts or conditions through the regular line of authority, although they may exercise emergency authority, to stop or prevent unsafe acts when immediate action is required.

Only one Safety Officer will be assigned for each incident. The Safety Officer may have assistant Safety Officers as necessary, and the assistant Safety Officer may represent assisting agencies or jurisdictions. Assistant Safety Officers may have specific responsibilities such as air operations, hazardous materials, etc.

In summary the Safety Chief shall:

- a. **Identify potentially unsafe situations.**
- b. **Analyze proposed and selected strategic alternatives from a safety perspective, insuring that risk management is a priority consideration in the selection process.**
- c. **Exercises emergency authority to stop or prevent unsafe situations.**

- d. DIRECT INTERVENTION WILL BE USED TO IMMEDIATELY CORRECT A DANGEROUS SITUATION.**
- e. Maintains a log of events as necessary.**
- f. Prepare the safety message included in the Incident Action Plan.**
- g. Develop the Incident Safety Analysis (ICS Form 215 a) planning matrix with the Operations Section Chief.**
- h. Present safety briefing to overhead. Safety briefing should emphasize hazards and risks involved in action plan components.**

3. Liaison

The Liaison Officer, a member of the Command Staff, is the point of contact for assisting and cooperating Agency Representatives. This includes Agency Representatives from other fire agencies, Red Cross, law enforcement, public works, etc.

- a. Obtain briefing from Incident Commander.**
- b. Provide a point of contact for assisting/cooperating Agency Representatives.**
- c. Identify each Agency Representatives including communications link and location.**
- d. Maintain a current list of cooperating and assisting agencies assigned. Confirm resource list with Resource Unit Leader.**
- e. Respond to request from incident personnel for inter-organizational contacts.**

- f. Monitor incident operations to identify current or potential inter-organizational problems.**

- g. Provide specific information on the incident relative to:**
 - **Type of assignments.**
 - **Anticipated duration on assignments or incident.**
 - **Operational period change information if crews are to be replaced.**
 - **Expected demobilization schedule.**
- h. Remain visible on the incident to incoming cooperators and assisting agencies.**

- i. Respond to request for information and resolve problems.**

- j. Participate in planning meetings providing current resource status, limitations, and capability of other agency resources.**

- k. Keep cooperating and assisting agencies informed of planning actions.**

- l. Maintain Unit Log (ICS 214).**

- m. Review Common Responsibilities.**

4. Deputy Incident Commander

The Deputy Incident Commander can assist the Incident Commander in a variety of critical capacities and manage the command post. Some of the following responsibilities are as follows.

- a. Oversee the accountability function.**

- b. Monitor the fire ground and dispatch radio channels as directed by the Incident Commander.**

- c. **Manage the setup and function of the command post.**
- d. **Provide administrative support to the Incident Commander.**
- e. **Record incident activities.**

5. Communications Officer

- a. **The Communications Officer has responsibility for establishing and managing communications between the Command Post and field units and between Command Post and Communication Center. At the discretion of the Incident Commander the mobile communications center can be requested and staffed with a Gaston County Telecommunicator if available.**
- b. **Use of a Communications Officer is encouraged to free the Incident Commander from routine radio traffic.**

6. Technical Advisors

Technical Advisors are specialist with special skills needed to support incident operations. In small incidents they may report directly to the Incident Commander, while in larger incidents they may report to the Panning Officer or Haz-Mat Operation Officers.

7. Water Supply Officer

The Water Supply Officer will be responsible for assuring an adequate and reliable water supply. The Incident Commander on all fires deemed necessary, will assign a Water Supply Officer.

Section VII Agency Responsibilities

The following emergency situations are generally, but not exclusively, the primary responsibility of the agencies as indicated. Specific characteristics of any particular emergency will dictate actual responsibility.

A. Response Agencies

Emergency Medical Services

Triage

Evacuation of Injured Persons

Medical Evaluation/Treatment of Personnel on Scene

Medical Liaison with Local and Area Hospitals

Fire

Fire or threat of fire

Chemical Identification and Containment

Decontamination Operations

Radiation Identification and Site Security

Mitigation of Weather Emergencies

Assist EMS (First Responders)

Assist in Traffic Control

Assist in Evacuation

Fire/Rescue

MVA Extrication/Scene Safety

Confined Space Rescue

Technical Rescue

Law Enforcement

Civil Emergencies

Evacuation Management

Command Post and Area Security

Air and Rail Security

Staging Area Security

Coordination of Investigation
Security during Weather Emergencies
Community Disaster Assistance
Traffic Control
Aerial Surveillance
Curfew Enforcement
Searches

Environmental Health

Chemical Clean up
Radiation Clean up
Technical Assistance to Safety Officer

Emergency Management

Site Coordination
EOC Coordination
Resource Acquisition and Coordination
Debriefings and Recommendations

Non-response, Support Agencies

Public Works

Heavy Equipment
Street Barricades
Coordinate Utilities
Provide Temporary Storage Site

Water and Sewer

Technical Assistance on chemical and location of water lines. Issue environmental recommendations on watershed protection. Provide limited laboratory resources.

Red Cross

Coordinate Shelter Activities
Provide Special needs Sheltering
Coordinate Disaster Relief Efforts

Social Services

**Coordinate Shelter Activities
Provide Special Needs Sheltering
Coordinate Disaster Relief Efforts**

Code Enforcement

**Conduct Initial Damage Assessments
Inspect Structures for Soundness**

Tax Department

Conduct Damage Assessment

**Gastonia Transit
Gaston County Access**

Mass Transportation Needs

A. Technical Assistance

On call, the Fire Marshal's Office will assist by providing technical expertise, investigators or other resources of the incident objectives established by the Incident Commander.

B. Coordination of Outside Agencies

As the incident becomes more complex, additional resources may be required to assist with planning, logistics, finance, technical support, food support, and damage assessment. If not immediately or easily accessible to the Incident Commander, the Gaston County Emergency Management Agency will take necessary action to obtain needed auxiliary resources.

C. Responsibility for Evacuation

The ultimate responsibility for ordering an evacuation rests with local government. If a municipality is to be evacuated, the mayor will issue the order. If the evacuation involves more than one jurisdiction, or an area outside of a municipality, the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, or his/her designated representatives will issue the order.

UNDER EMERGENCY CONDITIONS A SENIOR PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIAL SHOULD CALL FOR VOLUNTARY EVACUATIONS OR AREAS IMMEDIATELY THREATENED BY THE EMERGENCY SITUATION.

Section VIII ... Tactical Considerations

A. Incident Levels

It will be the responsibility of command to develop an organizational structure as soon as possible after arrival and implementation of initial control measures. The size and nature of the emergency will determine the size and complexity of the organizational structure.

For ease of management and control, personnel may be assigned to one or more functional task. The Incident Commander may further delegate management authority only if required.

B. Manageable Span of Control

Safety factors, as well as sound management planning, influence and dictate span of control considerations. In general, within the ICS, the span of control of any individual with emergency management responsibility should range from two to seven persons, with five persons being established as the general optimum. Of course, there will be exceptions (i.e. an individual group officer may have more than five personnel under their supervision).

An important consideration in span of control is to anticipate change and prepare for it. This is especially true during rapid build-up of the organization when good management is made difficult because of many reporting elements. The span of control dictates the need for step-up or expansion of the organization.

Section IX ... Command Post Operations

A. The location of the Command Post is generally at or nearby the emergency site. This does not necessarily mean the Command Post and the scene must be located in close proximity to each other. In fact, there are advantages to a location that is not in an immediate proximity of the incident scene.

During single command incidents, the command post may be outside of a vehicle or other fixed location. When Unified Command is established, a fixed command post (location) becomes imperative. Initially, the Command Post may be a vehicle or a location on scene that is mutually agreeable to the agencies represented. If the incident has a long-term potential, it may be advisable to select a more functional facility away from the immediate proximity of the incident scene.

When conditions dictate that a combined Command Post be established, the following procedures should be accomplished:

1. Fix the responsibility for command as outlines in Section III of this guideline.
2. Choose an appropriate location for the Command Post.

3. Identify the Command Post by the radio designation "Command" with the incident location (i.e. First Street Command) and visually displaying a green flashing light or orange traffic cone on top of the vehicle.
4. Insure strong, direct and visible command is established as early as possible in the operation.
5. Establish an effective framework outlining the activities and responsibilities as assigned to command.
6. Provide a system for orderly transfer of command.
7. Establish necessary and effective communication channels.
8. Minimize personnel at the Command Post. Have all others report to the staging area.
9. When appropriate, assess the need of evacuation, routes, and transportation of persons with special needs.
10. Maintain a log of equipment available for use in the tactical operation, based on the following criteria:
 1. Assigned – Performing an active assignment
 2. Available – Ready for assignment
 3. Out-of-Service – Not ready for assignment
 4. Contaminated – Should be segregated

The most important function at the Command Post is for it to be manned at all times by the Incident Commander (s) and their staff (s). If the commander is not at the command post, incoming units may commit themselves to functions or tasks, which are not priorities or conflict with current objectives.

B. Establishing Communications

The person establishing command shall transmit a brief initial radio report including:

1. The radio designation "Command" will be used with the incident location to identify the Incident Commander (i.e. First Street Command).
2. Description of the scene (situation, injuries, fire or other hazardous conditions).
3. Special Warning ("Enter from the East only, fire hose across Hwy 50").
4. Have the Communications Center notify appropriate agencies to report to the scene, be on stand-by at staging, or designated locations.
5. If not assigned an Operations Channel by the Communications Center, request one and transmit the channel to be used for emergency operations. Note: Using a Command Channel for multiple unit response is the preferred choice.

The Operations Channels provide only immediate incident coverage. Refer to the County Communications Plan

C. Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

When incidents of larger magnitude or generalized disasters occur, Gaston County officials may activate the EOC to coordinate resources and prioritize responses. The EOC will be staffed by leaders of individual agencies, with the objective to enhance cooperation between field units and to procure resources needed at individual incidents.

Section X Staging Areas

The primary objective of the staging area is to provide a standard system of initial placement of people and equipment prior to assignment at incidents.

A. Establishing Staging:

When the Incident Commander request assistance from outside agencies to supplement resources already at the scene, he shall establish a staging area for them to report. This staging area will serve as a “holding area” for both personnel and equipment. Command will notify Communications Center of the location of the staging area. Communications Center will advise all incoming units to report to the staging area unless advised otherwise.

B. Staging Officer

The Incident Commander will designate a staging area and appoint a Staging Officer. If a Staging Officer has not been appointed, the first arriving officer at the staging area will assume the responsibility of Staging Officer until relieved.

The Staging Officer will notify Command of the staging area’s readiness status. The radio designation for the Staging Officer shall be “Staging”.

The Staging Officer will have the following responsibilities:

- 1. Initiate a parking plan to prevent excessive congestion at the staging area.**
- 2. Hold all incoming personnel and equipment at the staging area to allow time for Command to evaluate conditions prior to assigning units.**
- 3. Place vehicles and people in an uncommitted location close to the scene to facilitate effective assignment by command.**
- 4. Reduce radio traffic during the operation.**

5. Assume a position that is visible and accessible to incoming and staging units. This may be accomplished by leaving emergency warning lights operating at his/her vehicle.
6. Maintain written logs for all significant activities occurring at the staging area.
7. Establish a check-in/check-out system for all vehicles entering the staging area.
8. Manage fuel supply and other resources at the staging area.

C. Staging Guidelines

The following guidelines will apply to the Staging Operation.

1. Levels of Staging

a. Level I

Level I staging is the initial staging established by emergency vehicles, as they arrive at the scene in normal response situations.

b. Level II

Level II staging will relate to large, complex-type situations requiring an on-scene reserve of companies and will involve formal staging in an area designated by Command. When going to Level II staging, Command will formally announce (Level II staging and will give approximate location of the staging area). Level II staging will automatically supersede Level I staging. Companies already in Level I will remain in Level I until reassigned.

D. Location of the Staging Area

Whenever possible, the staging area should be located at an intersection, this makes for easier access. It may also be located at a parking lot, a schoolyard, a nearby fire station or any other large area that is easily accessible.

The following guidelines should be utilized when selecting a staging area:

1. Have good access and be very visible to the arriving units.
2. Be of adequate size, which may be easily secured.
3. Be sufficiently distanced from the incident scene to minimize noise level and confusion at the Command Post.
4. Provide a safe haven from the incident hazards or weather conditions if possible.

Section XI Debriefing

It is essential that all participants are debriefed in order to gather all of the information necessary for developing a complete, accurate understanding of response activities for future planning purposes and identification as to training needs.

A. Debriefing Tactics

Responding personnel may be debriefed in several ways:

- 1. In small incidents, debrief all personnel as they return to the staging area.**
- 2. In larger operations, debrief only Division/Group leaders who have previously debriefed their team members.**
- 3. In large, complex operations, a debriefing session may be held after the incident is concluded.**

B. Debriefing Procedure

To reduce “joint opinion”, debriefing should be done individually, not in a group. Debriefing should be recorded in writing to reduce misinformation, misinterpretation and confusion. Written information documents shall become part of the incident record.

C. Debriefing Questions

Debriefing should elicit all pertinent information to include descriptions of activity in accomplishing assignment, specific difficulties encountered, hazards encountered and recommendations for further actions.

D. Medical Debriefing

Medical evaluations should be conducted on personnel exposed to potentially hazardous environments.

E. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing teams are available through the Centralina Council of Governments. During prolonged or serious incidents, command should consider activating team members to assist personnel. After incidents, command may request a debriefing team by making such request.

Appendix 1

Hazardous Material Operations Responder Incident Checklist

Before Responding to the Incident

- **Have clear directions and adequate information been given?**
 - **Plan route to approach the incident area from upwind and uphill if possible.**
- * Mutual Aid should be considered if an alternate response route will delay your arrival.**

Upon Arrival

- **Make a scan of the area involved and transmit a “size-up” to incoming units.**
- **Initiate the Incident Command System and appoint staff positions as needed (i.e. Safety Officer, Operations Officer, Planning Officer, Staging Officer).**
- **Determine a staging area if needed.**
- **From a distance and upwind, use binoculars to look for placards, labels, containers or any other symbols of possible chemicals involved. No flares or other sources of ignition should be used at the scene.**
- **Ensure the immediate area has been secured and if chemical (s) is known start planning evacuation areas and routes if needed.**
- **Obtain information from by-standers or witnesses on the scene that relates to the incident.**
- **If an offensive action is required to mitigate the incident, contact the Gastonia Hazardous Materials Team and ALS Unit and Gaston County Emergency Management Officials to assist with the incident.**
- **Establish holding areas for personnel or victims who have become contaminated.**
- **Law Enforcement should be contacted to assist with scene security and the redirection of traffic to alternate routes if necessary.**

Passport Accountability System

I. PURPOSE

- A. To establish a system to identify and account for the assignment of personnel while operating at emergency incidents.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. One of the primary responsibilities of the incident commander is to provide for the safety of every member of the fire department who is operating at the scene of the incident. The incident commander must recognize the risks of each situation and develop a strategic plan to avoid exposing members to unnecessary danger.

The first stage of accountability for each and every member who is operating at the scene is to know vital information about every individual - who they are, where they are, and what they are doing at every moment. On the surface this may appear to be an impossible task, but it is one of the fundamentals of an effective incident management system.

Being accountable for the safety and health of firefighters or any emergency worker includes looking for signs of fatigue and rotating tired crews before their fatigue results in unnecessary injuries. It also means that supervisors are always looking for hazards and directing their personnel to react appropriately to them. One of the fundamental principles of managing safety and health is that management, working through supervisors, is responsible for ensuring that safety and health measures are implemented. Accountability ensures that these measures are implemented for everyone.

The responsibility for accountability works in two directions. Not only is an officer responsible for keeping track of every member he/she is assigned to supervise, but members have an equal responsibility to keep their supervisors informed. If there is a reason for members to be in areas other than where their supervisors expect them to be or if they need to engage in some other activity, it is their responsibility to inform their supervisors to gain approval.

The accountability system should be used at every incident, not reserved for use at large-scale or high risk incidents. To be effective when it is needed most, it must be a routine part of the way operations are conducted.

III. DEFINITIONS

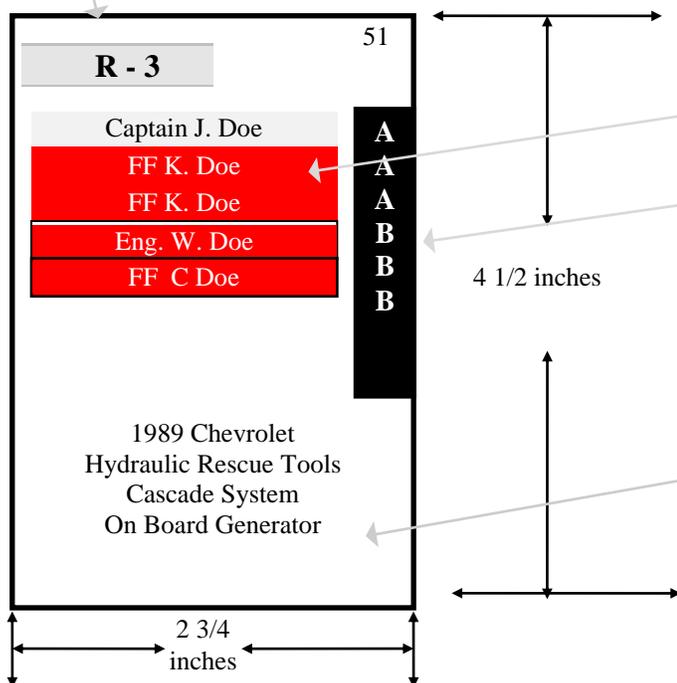
- A. Passport : A small plastic or metallic card with the “ Engine, Ladder, or Rescue Company or any emergency vehicle such as command units, ambulances or police units” designation affixed to the upper most portion by Velcro . The Passport will also bear the number of the specific vehicle. The “specific vehicle” information will be permanently engraved or affixed to the Passport. The names of the individual members assigned to the unit or company will be attached to the center portion of the Passport. Supplemental vehicle information will be permanently affixed or engraved on the lower portion of the Passport. The Passport will also have a column of “A’s and B’s “aligned vertically along the right side to indicate the assignment of each of the individual members to an “Interior or Exterior Team “should the need arise.
- B. Roll Call: A poll taken of units and teams to account for all personnel on an incident.
- C. PAR: A term used to report that all personnel are accounted for. It is an acronym for “personnel accountability report “.
- D. Status Board : A tool used by the Incident Commander, sector officers, section chiefs, or control officers to collect and store the passports of assigned units or teams. It is also used to record information for the monitoring of personnel.
- E. Control Officer: A person designated as a Passport Accountability Officer to keep track of personnel entering and exiting a control point at an emergency incident area.
- F. Control Point: A location where a Sector Officer or Control Officer monitors, and controls the entry and exiting of personnel to and from an emergency incident area.
- G. Emergency Incident: Any situation in which the Emergency Service responds to and delivers emergency services. This includes fire, rescue, medical treatment and other forms of hazard control and mitigation.
- H. Emergency Incident Perimeter: Any area where the public is not allowed access during operations at an emergency incident for safety reasons.

IV. PASSPORT HARDWARE

- A. The Passport Accountability System hardware will consist of primary passports, reserve passports, name tags and portable status boards.
 - 1. **Passports**
 - a. Each unit or team will have passports to provide accountability of each team member during operations within the emergency incident perimeter.
 - b. Passports consist of three sections :

Top section : Unit, Team, or Staff designation such as E-1, L-4, C-1 etc. The top section will also bear the engraved number of the particular vehicle to which the passport is assigned. **All Gaston County Emergency vehicles will have a Passport assigned to the particular vehicle. The unit, team, or staff designation may change daily due to mechanical problems or vehicle reassignment. It may also be necessary to place a reserve unit in service to serve as a “front line “engine, (ex, E-1). It is important to remember that E-1 is not the vehicle but the assignment**

Sample Passport



Middle Section: Unit or team members name tags are attached to this section. A vertical column of A's and B's will be permanently affixed to the far right side of the middle section. Each members name will then be followed by an "A or B "to designate assignment to **Interior or Exterior** Operations on incident scenes.

Bottom Section : Space will be provided in the bottom section for supplemental information which is unique to the particular vehicle such as rated pump capacity, booster tank capacity, aerial ladder length and special equipment carried (on board generator for example).

2. Unit , Team or Staff Designation Tags (Company Identification Tags)



- a. These tags will also be referred to as “company identification tags “and will be affixed to the Passports by Velcro. The company ID tags must be removable because they indicate a function, not a vehicle. All Unit, Team or Staff Designation Tags will be made of durable plastic and will bear the designation in white letters and numbers on a black background.

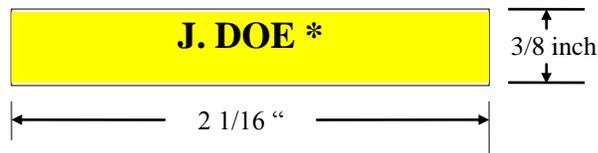
PASSPORT HARDWARE (continued)

3. Name Tags

- a. Each member of the Gastonia Fire Department will be issued two (2) name tags which will be made of durable plastic with a Velcro strip on the rear.
- b. The name tags will be color coded as follows :

| |
|--|
| Chief Officers: Black letters on a white background |
| Company Officers: Black letters on a white background |
| Drivers/Engineers: White letters on a red background |
| Firefighter Level I: White letters on a red background |
| Firefighter (probie): Black Letters on a yellow background |
| EMS: White on blue background |

- c. All personnel certified by the state of North Carolina as a Hazardous Materials Technician will have a " dot " (.) at the upper right side of their name.



4. Status Boards

- a. The status boards will be available in two (2) sizes:
 - (1) Metallic "sectional" clip boards will be available in the smaller size which shall measure approximately nine (9) inches by eleven (11) inches and will consist of an area covered in Velcro for the attachment of the Passports of committed teams and units. The boards will also provide an area for the storage of "tactical command worksheets" and general note taking material. The smaller size status boards will be utilized on most "single alarm incidents".
 - (2) Large Status board will be available on the command vehicle and will be designed to accommodate Passports and all data necessary to handle a multi- alarm, large scale incident.

5. Reserve Hardware

- a. Blank passports and other materials will be maintained in order to keep the Passport Accountability System as "current" as possible.

6. Helmet Identification

- a. Each member of all Gaston County Fire Departments will adhere to the helmet Color identification system, which allows quick identification of certified firefighters, officers and probationary status firefighters.

- b. Fire Service helmet identification
Qualified Officers: White
Certified Firefighters: Black
Probationary Firefighters: Yellow

- c. EMS helmet identification
Qualified Officers: White
Certified EMS personnel: Blue

V. PROCEDURE

- A. Each member of the Emergency Service Agency will remove one of their Velcro backed name tags from the underside of the helmet at the beginning of their tour of duty and attach it to the Passport of their assigned company in the proper position. The Officer / acting officer's name tag will be placed on top, the Engineer's tag in the second place, and Firefighters as assigned by the company officer.
(The company officer will assign firefighters to either A or B {Interior search / rescue or exterior ladder company functions} as needed.) The company officer will always serve as the " A " Team Leader and the Engineer will serve as the " B " Team Leader. Interior Search and Rescue - "A Team "and Exterior Ventilation and Support Team - "B Team ".

- B. Each company officer will be responsible for maintaining the Passport of his / her apparatus at all times during the tour of duty.

- C. Passports will be located in an easily accessible area which should not require "climbing "when opening the officer's door of apparatus and near the driver's area of the staff vehicles. The Passports for the staff vehicles will be approximately one half the size of the apparatus Passports. Due to the various designs of Fire Department apparatus and Staff vehicles, it is difficult to designate a " standard location " for the placement of the Passports however they should generally be located as directed and should be readily accessible to any department member designated to collect them on an incident without having to search for them.

- D. Reserve Apparatus: As previously stated, all Fire Department vehicles will "carry "a Passport. If vehicle number 79 goes to the garage for repairs and it is temporarily replaced by reserve vehicle number 57, then only the Unit, Team, or Staff designation tag should be removed from the Passport of vehicle 79 and attached to the Passport of vehicle number 57, along with of course, the name tags of the members assigned. It will prove very helpful to the incident commander to learn that E-1 is not carrying the water as usual, or the rated capacity of the pump is not as great as before, or the deck gun that you wanted to utilize is missing, etc.

- E. The Command Staff will maintain portable status boards in two (2) sizes on the command vehicle which can be used by the incident commander, sector officers,

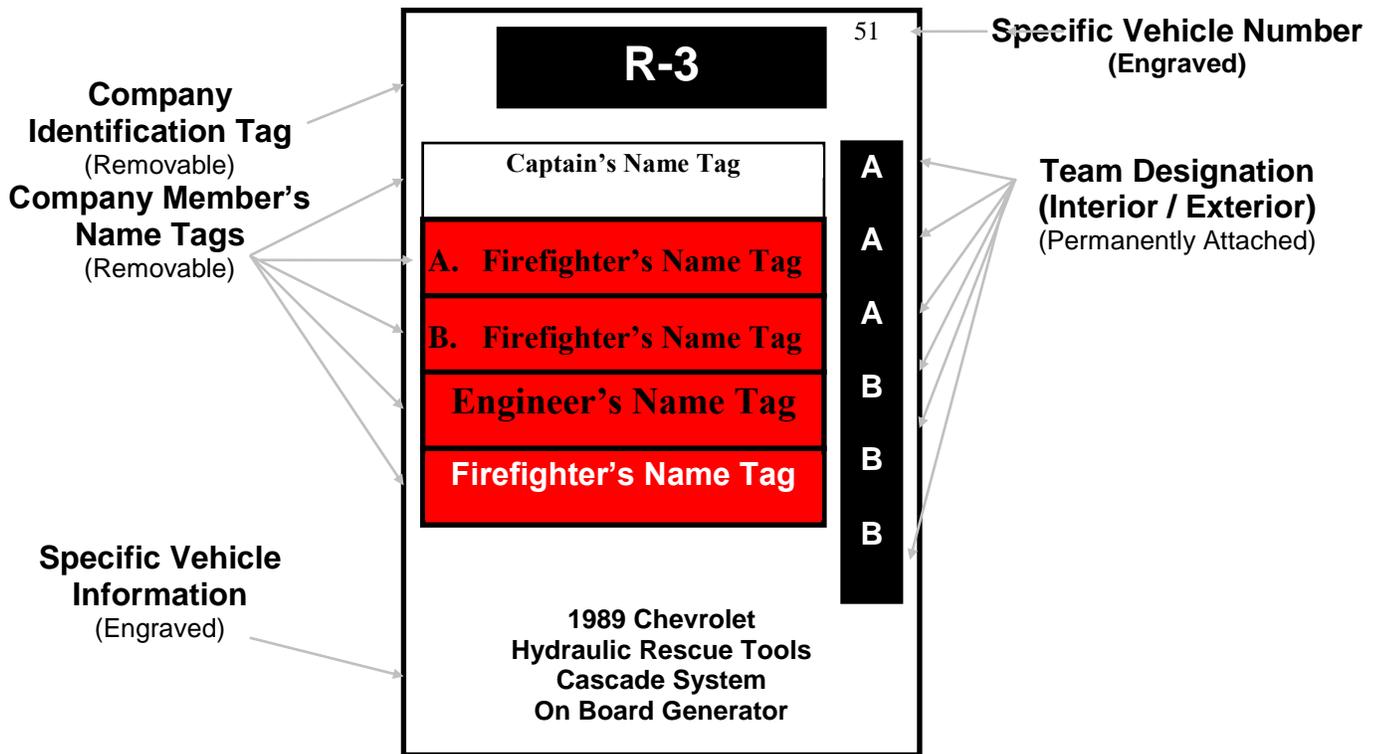
accountability officers etc. on the fire/ incident scene. The smaller status board will provide space for the collected Passports of the committed units and Staff Vehicles for most emergency incidents. The smaller status board will provide storage for Tactical Command Worksheets and other note taking material. This board will also provide a section which shall display "available units ". This will consist of a list of all "front-line "units under a "status "column. This board will consist of three columns titled "Status 1" , "Status 2" and "Status 3".

Status 1 : Available for immediate response,

Status 2 : Busy but available for emergency response,

Status 3 : Unavailable for any type of response. (mechanical breakdown, committed to another incident etc.) The "front-line units" will be listed on the same Velcro backed labels as the " Company Identification "tags. All Fire Department Units will be listed under one of the three columns.

Sample Passport

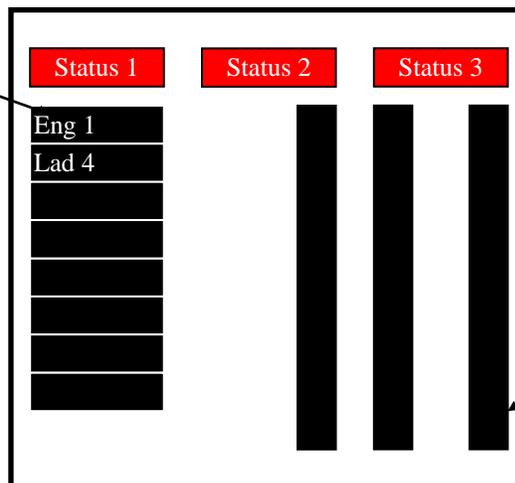
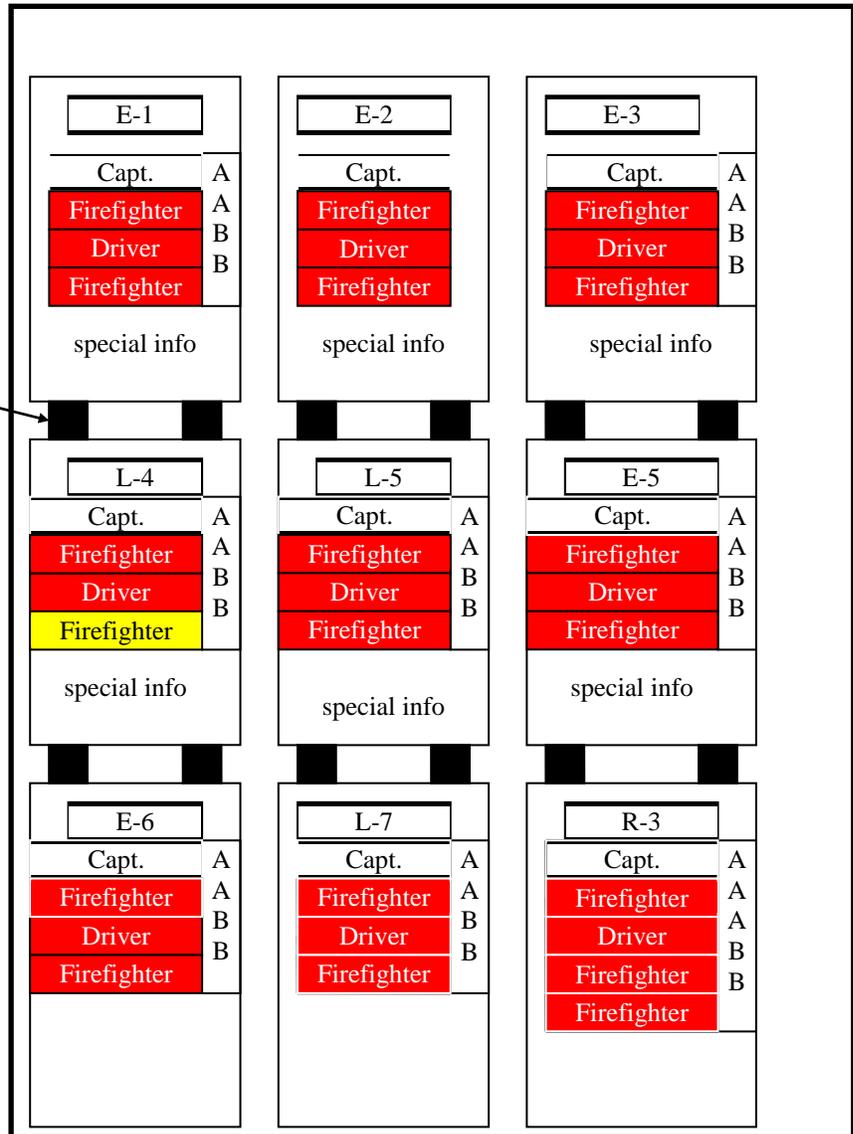


Sample Status Board

A portion of the Status Board shall have Velcro strips attached to hold the Passports (or tickets) of all apparatus committed to the incident. The two sizes of Status Boards shall have similar areas for this purpose.

All Gaston County Fire/EMS/RescueDept. "Front-line" apparatus will be listed in the preferred viewed location on the small status board. The units will be listed under one of three columns:
 Status 1 = Available for immediate response
 Status 2 = Busy but available for emergency response

Status 3 = Unavailable for any type of response (due to mechanical problems etc.)



Velcro Strips for attaching the engine company identification labels to the "Status" columns

VI. Summary

- A. The Passport Accountability System, like any other system, will be of benefit to us in the Fire Service only to the extent that we allow. It is only as good as the people who use it, therefore, it is extremely important that the Passports along with the name tags and company identifier labels display the “current information” at all times. We must form the habit of attaching a name tag to the Passport of our assigned unit and removing it when the assignment is changed. The incident commanders should rely on the system to help them “keep track” of the personnel and equipment under their command.

These standard operating guidelines satisfy the requirements of NFPA Standard 1561 section 2-6 (1995 edition).

This system is compatible with the system utilized by various departments in Gaston County although there are slight variations. Variations exist between the Gastonia Fire Department's Passport Accountability System and the systems used by county departments and there are even variations between the systems of the county departments but these are not major differences. The Passport of most of the county departments is physically larger than the ones used by the Gastonia Fire Department. The number of personnel who respond with a particular volunteer engine company will vary and the number of personnel who arrive on the scene by means of personal owned vehicles is not fixed thus, the Passport for the volunteer companies must be large enough to accept the name tags of several members who must be accounted for by associating them with a particular company.

The color code system used by the Gastonia Fire Department is the same as County VFD's for the purpose of identifying officers, qualified FF's and non-qualified structural FF's. The Gastonia Fire Department member's rank is identified by color while the type of agency (fire, EMS, police, etc.) is the purpose of color coded name tags within the various county systems.

The safety of all personnel is among the top priorities of Gaston County Emergency Services and its supervisors. Putting this system to use will be a priceless aid in maintaining safety among employees by answering the questions, “**Who is on the emergency scene, where are they, and what are they doing**, at every moment?”