CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The Incident Command System (ICS) is used to control resources used to handle large and small emergency incidents. It uses common business practices to create a command structure for each scene. Much like a large business, roles and responsibilities are defined functionally, and limiting the span of control and ensuring unity of command means that one incident commander can control and coordinate the efforts of hundreds of personnel and apparatus. The ICS is scalable, meaning that the fire service does not use a “one-size-fits-all” approach to managing incidents. Some emergencies can be handled with one engine company, whereas others require numerous engine companies and various other types of specialized units. By using the ICS and its concepts on every incident, firefighters can become proficient in and accustomed to its use. After students complete this chapter and the related course work, they will be able to discuss the history and characteristics of the ICS. Students will develop an understanding of the organization of the ICS and the terms used within the ICS. Students will also be able to function within an assigned role within the ICS and describe the transfer of command.

OBJECTIVES AND RESOURCES

Fire Fighter I

Knowledge Objectives
There are no knowledge objectives for Fire Fighter I candidates. NFPA 1001 contains no Fire Fighter I Job Performance Requirements for this chapter.

Skills Objectives
There are no skill objectives for Fire Fighter I candidates. NFPA 1001 contains no Fire Fighter I Job Performance Requirements for this chapter.

Fire Fighter II

Knowledge Objectives
After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

• Describe the characteristics of the ICS. (NFPA 6.1.1, pp 119–122)
• Explain the organization of the ICS. (NFPA 6.1.1, pp 122–126)
• Function within an assigned role within the ICS. (NFPA 6.1.1, pp 122–128)
• Organize and coordinate an ICS until command is transferred. (NFPA 6.1.1, pp 128–131)
• Transfer command within an ICS. (NFPA 6.1.1, pp 131–134)

Skills Objectives
After studying this chapter, you will be able to perform the following skills:

• Operate within the ICS. (NFPA 6.1.2, p 130)
• Assume command. (NFPA 6.1.2, p 131)
• Transfer command. (NFPA 6.1.2, p 134)
Additional NFPA Standards

- NFPA 1026, Standard for Incident Management Personnel Professional Qualifications
- NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program
- NFPA 1521, Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer
- NFPA 1561, Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System

Reading and Preparation

- Review all instructional materials, including *Fundamentals of Fire Fighter Skills*, Chapter 5, and all related presentation support materials.
- Review local firefighting protocols for Chapter 5.

Support Materials

- Dry erase board and markers or chalkboard and chalk
- LCD projector, slide projector, overhead projector, and projection screen
- PowerPoint presentation, overhead transparencies, or slides
- Sample ICS charts and forms
- ICS vests, command post identifiers, etc.

Enhancements

- Direct the students to visit the Internet at www.FireFighter jbpub.com for online activities.
- Direct the students to relevant sections in the Student Workbook for application of the content introduced in this chapter.
- Direct the students to take practice/final examinations in the Navigate Test Prep to prepare for examinations.

TEACHING TIPS AND ACTIVITIES

- Have students role-play different ICS positions for a short scenario.
# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

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<thead>
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<td>You Are the Fire Fighter</td>
<td>Small Group Activity/Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td>Lecture/Discussion</td>
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<td>IV. The ICS Organization</td>
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<td>V. Standard ICS Concepts and Terms</td>
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<td>VI. Implementing the ICS</td>
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<td>VII. Working within the ICS</td>
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<td><strong>Post-Lecture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>I. Wrap-Up Activities</td>
<td>Individual Activity/Small Group Activity/Discussion</td>
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<td>II. Lesson Review</td>
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<td>III. Assignments</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Fire Fighter I and II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. You Are the Fire Fighter

Time: 5 Minutes
Level: Fire Fighter II
Small Group Activity/Discussion

Use this activity to motivate students to learn the knowledge and skills needed to understand and work within an ICS.

Purpose
To allow students an opportunity to explore the significance and concerns associated with the ICS.

Instructor Directions
1. Direct students to read the “You Are the Fire Fighter” scenario found in the beginning of Chapter 5.
2. You may assign students to a partner or a group. Direct them to review the discussion questions at the end of the scenario and prepare a response to each question. Facilitate a class dialogue centered on the discussion questions.
3. You may also assign this as an individual activity and ask students to turn in their comments on a separate piece of paper.
LECTURE

I. Introduction

A. All emergency operations and training exercises should be run using an ICS.
   1. Ensures operations are coordinated and conducted safely and effectively
      a. Especially when multiple agencies are working together
   2. Provides a standard approach, structure, and operational procedure to organize and manage any operation

B. Key Components of an ICS
   1. Planning
   2. Supervision
   3. Communications

C. Model Procedures for Incident Management
   1. Have been developed and widely adopted to provide a standard approach that can be used by many different agencies
   2. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
      a. Defines the standards and guidelines at a national level
      b. The command structure discussed in this chapter is a critical component of NIMS.

D. ICS is a concept or a model.
   1. Variations exist, but the overall concepts are the same.
   2. It is the responsibility of the fire fighter to be intimately familiar with the system used in the local jurisdiction.

II. History of the ICS

A. Before the 1970s, each fire department had its own methods of commanding and managing incidents.
   1. The organization often depended on the style of the chief on duty.
   2. Such an approach did not work well with units from different districts or mutual aid companies responding to a major incident.
   3. Fragmented approach to managing emergency incidents is no longer considered acceptable.
   4. Today’s ICS structures comprise an organized system of roles, responsibilities, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) that are widely used to manage and direct emergency operations.

B. The move to develop a standard system began approximately 40 years ago, after several large-scale wildland fires in Southern California.
   1. FIRESCOPE (Fire RESources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies)
      a. Formed by a number of fire-related agencies at the local, state, and federal levels that decided better organization was necessary to combat these costly fires.
      b. Developed solutions to a variety of problems, including command and control procedures, resource management, terms, and communications.
Slide 7
History of ICS
- 1980s
  - FIRESCOPE ICS adopted by all federal and most state wildland firefighting agencies
  - Several federal regulations and consensus standards adopted
- Present
  - ICS is best of ICS and FGC.

c. Developed the first standard ICS in the mid-1970s.
d. Originally intended only for large multijurisdictional or multiagency incidents, but it proved so successful that it was applied to structural firefighting and eventually became an accepted system for managing all emergency incidents.

2. Fire-ground command system (FGC) was developed at about the same time.

C. During the 1980s, the FIRESCOPE ICS was adopted by all federal and most state wildland firefighting agencies.

D. Several federal regulations and consensus standards adopted in the 1980s called for the use of ICS at emergency incidents.

E. ICS, the current model, is an amalgamation of the best of ICS and FGC.

III. Characteristics of the ICS

Time: 19.5 Minutes
Slides: 8–20
Level: Fire Fighter II
Lecture/Discussion

A. Introduction to Characteristics of the ICS
1. A standardized approach facilitates and coordinates the use of resources from multiple agencies, working toward common objectives.
2. Effective management of incidents requires organizational structure to provide hierarchy of authority and responsibility and formal channels for communications.
3. Important characteristics include:
   a. Recognized jurisdictional authority and responsibility
   b. Applicable to all risk and hazard situations
   c. Applicable to day-to-day operations and major incidents
   d. Unity of command
   e. Span of control
   f. Modular organization
   g. Common terms
   h. Integrated communications
   i. Consolidated incident action plans
   j. Designated incident facilities
   k. Resource management

B. Jurisdictional Authority
1. The identification of the jurisdiction in charge is usually not a problem at an incident with a single focus or threat, such as a structure fire.
   a. Matters can become more complicated when several jurisdictions are involved or multiple agencies within a single jurisdiction have authority for various aspects of the incident.
2. Unified command (UC)
   a. Used when there are overlapping responsibilities
   b. Brings representatives of different agencies together to work on one plan and ensures that all actions are fully coordinated
3. Single command
   a. Most traditional perception of the command function
   b. When an incident occurs within a single jurisdiction and when there is no jurisdictional or functional agency overlap, a single incident commander should be identified and designated with overall incident management responsibility by the appropriate jurisdictional authority.
   c. Is best used when a single discipline in a single jurisdiction is responsible for the strategic objectives associated with managing the incident.
4. Incident action plan (IAP)
   a. Strategic incident objectives developed by the incident commander
   b. Oral or written plans that contain general objectives that reflect the overall strategy for managing an incident.

5. The introduction of the NIMS has sparked tremendous discussion and debate related to the concept of UC.
   a. UC is a critical evolution of the ICS system.
   b. UC provides a framework that allows agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.
   c. The concept of UC is a clear departure from the traditional view of incident command and is frequently misunderstood and difficult to implement.
   d. The lesson is to be concerned less with who is in charge and more with what is required to safely and effectively manage the incident.

C. All-Risk and All-Hazard System
   1. The ICS can be applied to manage resources at fires, floods, tornadoes, plane crashes, earthquakes, hazardous materials incidents, or any other type of emergency situation.
   2. ICS can be used equally well at nonemergency events, such as large-scale public events.

D. Everyday Applicability
   1. ICS can and should be used for everyday operations and major incidents.
   2. Regular use of the system builds familiarity with standard procedures and terms.

E. Unity of Command
   1. Each person working at an incident has only one direct supervisor.
   2. All orders and assignments come directly from that supervisor.
   3. The best-qualified person should be assigned at the appropriate level.

F. Span of Control
   1. The maximum number of subordinates a supervisor can have
   2. In most situations, three to seven is the most one person can manage.
   3. In ICS, span of control should be limited to five.
   4. Actual span of control should depend on the complexity of the incident and the nature of the work being performed.

G. Modular Organization
   1. ICS is designed to be flexible and modular.
      a. The organizational structure is predefined, ready to be staffed and made operational as needed.
      b. ICS has often been described as an organizational toolbox, where only the tools needed for the specific incident are used.
      c. Additional components can be added or eliminated as needed as the incident unfolds.
      d. Some components are used on almost every incident, whereas others apply to only the largest and most complex situations.

H. Common Terminology
   1. ICS promotes the use of common terminology both within an organization and among all of the agencies involved in emergency incidents.
   2. Each word has a single definition, and no two words have the same definition.
      a. Everyone uses the same terms to communicate the same thoughts, so everyone understands what is meant.
      b. Each job comes with one set of responsibilities, and everyone knows who is responsible for each duty.
   3. Common terminology is particularly important for radio communications.
I. Integrated Communications
1. Ensures that everyone at an emergency can communicate with both supervisors and subordinates
2. ICS must support communication up and down the chain of command at every level.
3. Messages must move efficiently throughout the system.
Chapter 5  ■  Incident Command System

J. Consolidated IAPs
1. An ICS ensures that everyone involved in the incident is following one overall plan.
2. The IAP may be developed by the incident commander alone on smaller incidents.
3. The IAP will be developed in collaboration with all agencies involved in larger incidents.

K. Designated Incident Facilities
1. Assigned locations where specific functions are always performed
   a. Incident command post (ICP)
   b. Rehabilitation sector
   c. Casualty collection point
   d. Treatment area
   e. Base of operations
   f. Helispot

L. Resource Management
1. A standard system of assigning and keeping track of the resources involved in the incident.
2. Staging area
   a. Used at large-scale incidents
   b. Location close to the incident scene where a number of units can be held in reserve
3. Personnel
   a. Most vital resource
   b. Uses personnel accountability system to track members

IV. The ICS Organization

A. Introduction to the ICS Organization
1. The ICS structure identifies a full range of duties, responsibilities, and functions that are performed at emergency incidents.
2. ICS organizational chart
   a. May be quite simple or very complex
   b. Each block refers to a function area or job description
   c. Positions are staffed as they are needed
   d. The only position that must be filled at every incident is Incident Command.
3. Fire fighters must understand the overall structure of ICS as well as the basic roles and responsibilities of each position within the ICS organization.
   a. As an emergency develops, a fire fighter could start in logistics, move to operations, and eventually assume a command position.
   b. Knowing how ICS works enables the fire fighter to see how different roles and responsibilities work together and relate to each other.

B. Command
1. The IC position must always be filled.
2. Command is established when the first unit arrives on the scene and is maintained until the last unit leaves the scene.
3. The IC is ultimately responsible for managing the incident.
4. Command is directly responsible for the following tasks:
   a. Determining strategy
   b. Selecting incident tactics
   c. Setting the action plan
d. Developing the ICS organization
e. Managing resources
f. Coordinating resource activities
g. Providing for scene safety
h. Releasing information about the incident
i. Coordinating with outside agencies

5. Unified command
   a. Provides several advantages when multiple agencies with overlapping jurisdictions or legal responsibilities are involved in an incident
   b. Representatives from each agency cooperate to share command authority.
c. Helps ensure cooperation, avoids confusion, and guarantees agreement on goals and objectives

6. Incident command post (ICP)
   a. The headquarters location for the incident
   b. Command and all direct support staff should always be located at the ICP.
c. Location should be broadcast as soon as it is established.
d. ICP should be in a nearby, protected location.
e. Enables the command staff to function without needless distractions or interruptions

7. Command staff
   a. Perform functions that report directly to the incident commanders
   b. Safety officer
      i. Responsible for ensuring the safety of all on the scene
      ii. Has the authority to stop or suspend unsafe operations
      iii. Authority is clearly stated in national standards, including NFPA 1500, NFPA 1521, and NFPA 1561
      iv. Should be knowledgeable in fire behavior, building construction and collapse potential, firefighting strategy and tactics, hazardous materials, rescue practices, and departmental safety rules and regulations
   c. Liaison officer
      i. The incident commander’s point of contact for outside agencies
      ii. Responsible for exchanging information with representatives from outside agencies
   d. Public information officer
      i. Responsible for gathering and releasing information to the media and other appropriate agencies
      ii. Allows the incident commander to concentrate on the incident
      iii. Information released to media must be approved by public information officer.

C. General Staff Functions
   1. The incident commander may appoint people to oversee parts of the operation.
   2. Everything that occurs at an incident can be divided among the four major functional components within the ICS.
      a. Operations
      b. Planning
      c. Logistics
      d. Finance/administration
   3. The staff of these four sections are known as the ICS general staff.
      a. Command decides which of these four positions needs to be activated, when to activate them, and who should be placed in each position.
   4. Operations
      a. Responsible for managing all actions that are directly related to controlling the incident
      b. Activities include fighting the fire, rescuing trapped victims, treating injured victims, and doing whatever else is necessary to alleviate the emergency situation.
c. Operations section chief takes on responsibility at complex incidents so that command can focus on overall strategy
d. Conducted in accordance with an IAP that outlines strategic objectives and how operations will be conducted

5. Planning
a. Responsible for the collection, evaluation, dissemination, and use of information relevant to the incident
b. Develops and updates the IAP
c. Activated when information needs to be obtained, managed, and analyzed
d. Planning section chief reports directly to command
e. Individuals assigned to planning examine current situation, review available information, predict the probable course of events, and prepare recommendations for strategies and tactics.

6. Logistics
a. Responsible for providing supplies, services, facilities, and materials during the incident
b. The logistics section chief serves as the supply officer for the incident.
c. Responsibilities include keeping the apparatus fueled, providing food and refreshments, obtaining the necessary extinguishing agents, and arranging for heavy equipment.

7. Finance/administration
a. Responsible for the accounting and financial aspects of an incident and any legal issues that may arise in its aftermath
b. Not staffed at most incidents

V. Standard ICS Concepts and Terminology

Time: 10.5 Minutes
Slides: 31-37
Level: Fire Fighter II
Lecture/Discussion

A. Introduction to ICS Concepts and Terminology
1. One of the strengths of ICS is its use of standard terminology.
   a. Specific terms apply to various parts of an incident organization.
   b. Understanding these concepts and terminology is the first step in understanding the system.
2. Some departments may use slightly different terminology.

B. Single Resources and Crews
1. A single resource is an individual vehicle and its assigned personnel.
2. A crew is a group of personnel working without apparatus.

C. Divisions and Groups
1. Established to aggregate single resources and/or crews under one supervisor.
2. The primary reason for establishing divisions, groups, and sectors is to maintain an effective span of control.
3. Division
   a. Companies and/or crews working in the same geographic area.
4. Group
   a. Companies and/or crews working on the same task or objective but not necessarily in the same location.
5. The flexibility of the ICS enables organizational units to be created as needed.
   a. Organizational units are particularly useful when several resources are working near one another.
   b. Assigned supervisor can directly observe and coordinate the actions of several crews.
D. Branches
1. A higher level of combined resources than divisions and groups
2. Established when the span of control exceeds normal capacity

E. Location Designators
1. ICS uses a standard system to identify the different parts of a building or a fire scene.
2. Sides
   a. The exterior sides are generally known as A, B, C, and D.
   b. The front is side A, with B, C, and D following in a clockwise direction around the building.
   c. Companies are designated based on the side.
3. Exposures
   a. Areas adjacent to a burning building
   b. Take the same letter as the adjacent side of the building
4. Floors
   a. Within a building, divisions commonly take the number of the floor on which they are working.

F. Task Forces and Strike Teams
1. Groups of single resources assigned to work together for a specific purpose or for a certain period under a single leader
2. Task force
   a. A group of two to five single resources of any type
   b. Are often part of a fire department’s standard dispatch philosophy
3. Strike team
   a. A group of five units of the same type working on a common task or function
   b. Are commonly used to combat wildland fires
   c. Emergency medical services strike teams are often organized to respond to multiple-casualty incidents or disasters.

VI. Implementing the ICS

A. ICS helps to organize every incident scene in a standard, consistent manner.
1. As an incident escalates in size or complexity, the ICS organization expands to fit the situation.
   a. A small-scale incident can often be handled successfully by one company or a first-alarm assignment.
   b. One-alarm structures consist of command and reporting resources.
   c. At a more complex incident, the increasing number of problems and resources places greater demands on command and can quickly exceed command’s effective span of control.
2. Modular design allows the organization to expand by activating predetermined components.
   a. Command can delegate specific responsibilities and authority to other personnel.
   b. An individual who receives an assignment knows the basic responsibilities of the job because they are defined in advance.
B. **Standard Position Titles**
1. Help to clarify roles within the ICS organization
2. Title typically includes the functional or geographic area of responsibility, followed by a specific designator.
3. Individuals should understand their roles and be able to handle the responsibilities associated with these positions.

### VII. Working Within the ICS

**Time:** 10.5 Minutes  
**Slides:** 42-48  
**Level:** Fire Fighter II  
**Lecture/Discussion/Demonstration**

A. **Fire fighters should understand what ICS is and how it works.**
1. To an outsider, the ICS might appear to be a large, complicated organization model.
2. To the individual fire fighter working within the system, ICS is really simple.
3. Three basic components always apply:
   a. Command is established at every incident, from the time that the first unit arrives until the time that the last unit leaves.
   b. Each fire fighter always reports to one supervisor.
   c. The company officer reports to the incident commander.
   d. Most departments have written procedures specifying who will assume command in certain situations.
   e. Skill Drill 5-1 reviews the steps for operating within the ICS.

B. **Responsibilities of the First-Arriving Fire Fighters**
1. The first fire fighters to arrive at an emergency scene are the foundation of the ICS organization structure.
2. The ICS builds its organization from the bottom up, around the units that take initial action.
3. The officer in charge of the first-arriving unit is responsible for taking initial action and becomes command until relieved by a senior officer.
4. Establishing command
   a. The officer in charge of the first-arriving unit is automatically in command.
   b. The officer who assumes command must announce this fact over the radio.
   c. An initial report should be given that includes:
      i. Size-up report
      ii. Command designation
      iii. Unit or individual who is assuming command
      iv. An initial situation report
      v. Initial action being taken
   d. Most departments have written procedures specifying who will assume command in certain situations.
   e. Skill Drill 5-2 reviews the steps for establishing command at an incident.

C. **Confirming the Command**
1. The initial announcement of command definitely confirms that command has been established at an incident.
2. Identifying the incident
   a. Fire department procedures may vary in terms of the specific protocol used for naming an incident.
b. The first officer to assume command should establish an identity that clearly identifies the location of the incident.

D. Transfer of Command
1. Occurs when one person relinquishes command of an incident and another individual becomes command.
2. Established procedures must be followed whenever command is transferred.
3. A current situation status report is given to the incoming IC and includes:
   a. Tactical priorities
   b. Action plans
   c. Hazardous or potentially hazardous conditions
   d. Accomplishments
   e. Assessment of effectiveness of operations
   f. Current status of resources
4. Command transfer rationale
   a. When three or more companies are operating at an incident, it is better to have a chief officer assume command.
   b. A command transfer may be required if the situation is beyond the training and experience of the current command.
   c. Skill Drill 5-3 reviews the steps involved in transferring of command.

VIII. Summary
Time: 3 Minutes
Slides: 49-50
Level: Fire Fighter II
Lecture/Discussion

A. ICS provides a standard, professional, and organized approach to managing emergency incidents.
B. All emergency operations and training exercises should be run using ICS.
C. All functions in the ICS must be addressed at every incident.
D. On smaller incidents, this may only require one person to handle all functions.
E. The incident commander has ultimate responsibility to manage the incident.
F. All fire fighters must understand the ICS and what their role in an ICS is.
POST-LECTURE

I. Wrap-Up Activities

Time: 40 Minutes
Level: Fire Fighter I and II
Small Group Activity/Individual Activity/Discussion

Fire Fighter in Action and/or Fire Fighter II in Action

This activity is designed to assist the student in gaining a further understanding of the ICS. The activity incorporates both critical thinking and the application of fire fighter knowledge.

Purpose

This activity allows students an opportunity to analyze a firefighting scenario and develop responses to critical thinking questions.

Instructor Directions

1. Direct students to read the “Fire Fighter in Action” and/or “Fire Fighter II in Action” scenario located in the Wrap-Up section at the end of Chapter 5.
2. Direct students to read and individually answer the quiz questions at the end of the scenario. Allow approximately 10 minutes for this part of the activity. Facilitate a class review and dialogue of the answers, allowing students to correct responses as needed. Use the answers noted below to assist in building this review. Allow approximately 10 minutes for this part of the activity.
3. You may also assign these as individual activities and ask students to turn in their comments on a separate piece of paper.

Answers to Multiple Choice Questions

1. C  
2. B  
3. C  
4. D  
5. A  
6. D

Technology Resources

This activity requires students to have access to the Internet. This may be accomplished through personal access, employer access, or a local educational institution. Some community colleges, universities, or adult education centers may have classrooms with Internet capability that will allow for this activity to be completed in class. Check out local access points and encourage students to complete this activity as part of their ongoing reinforcement of firefighting knowledge and skills.

Purpose

To provide students an opportunity to reinforce chapter material through use of online Internet activities.

Instructor Directions

1. Use the Internet and go to www.FireFighter.jbpub.com. Follow the directions on the Web site to access the exercises for Chapter 5.
2. Review the chapter activities and take note of desired or correct student responses.
3. As time allows, conduct an in-class review of the Internet activities and provide feedback to students as needed.
4. Be sure to check the Web site before assigning these activities because specific chapter-related activities may change from time to time.
II. Lesson Review

Time: 15 Minutes
Level: Fire Fighter II
Discussion

Note: Facilitate the review of this lesson’s major topics using the review questions as direct questions or overhead transparencies. Answers are found throughout this lesson plan.

Fire Fighter II

A. How is the ICS used in the fire service?
B. Name the key characteristics of the ICS.
C. Who creates the IAP?
D. Who makes up the command staff?
E. Discuss the differences between divisions and groups.
F. Discuss the differences between task forces and strike teams.
G. How should different sides of a building be labeled?
H. What is the difference between passing command and transferring command?
I. Describe the information that should be included when one relinquishes command.
J. What is the goal of the national incident management system?

III. Assignments

Time: 5 Minutes
Level: Fire Fighter I and II
Lecture

A. Advise students to review materials for a quiz (determine date/time).
B. Direct students to read the next chapter in as listed in your syllabus (or reading assignment).