

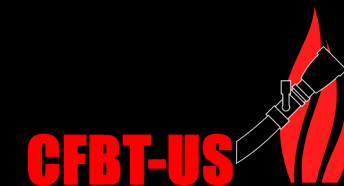


Escalating Incident Operations

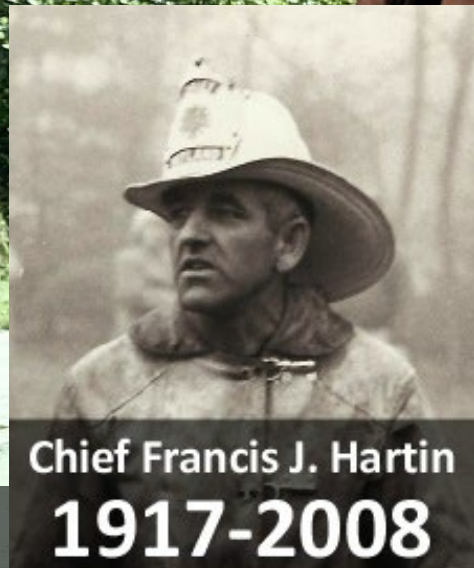
Beyond IC #2 working alone in the Fire SUV!



2026 Washington State Firefighters Association
Annual Fire School & Conference – Wenatchee, Washington



Chief Ed Hartin, MS, EFO, FI FireE, CFO



Learning the Craft Since 1974 1954





23 April 1974



28 February 2025



NIOSH

Causes of traumatic LODD on the fireground

Over the past 20+ years, what has been the most consistent contributing factors in firefighter line-of-duty deaths identified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health?



NIOSH Top 5

Causes of traumatic LODD on the fireground

1. Improper risk assessment.
2. Lack of incident command.
3. Lack of accountability.
4. Inadequate communications.
5. Lack of, or failure to, follow standard operating procedures (SOPs).

We need to know what these five things are. Really know!



The First Arriving Company Officer (IC #1)

Where does IC #1 work?

Why is this the most difficult job on the fireground?

What factors impact IC #1's mental workload and focus?



The First Arriving Response Chief (IC #2)

Where does IC #2 work?

Why does IC # 2 typically work alone?

What factors impact IC #2's mental workload and focus?



When and why does the first arriving response chief take command?

What should change when command transfers to IC #2



Tactical Decision Game

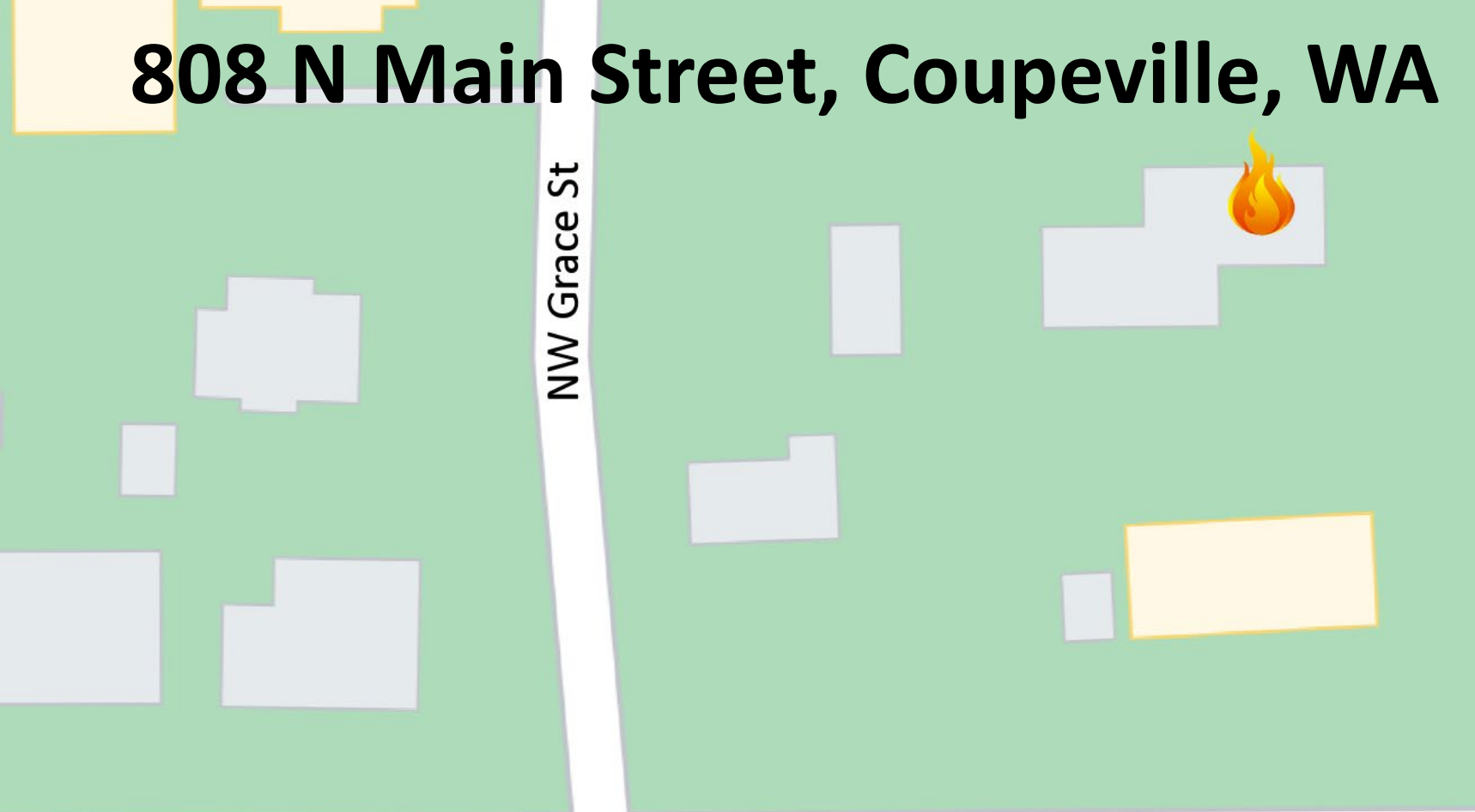


Confirmed Residential Fire
808 N Main Street

Decide first then discuss!



808 N Main Street, Coupeville, WA



NW 8th St

100'

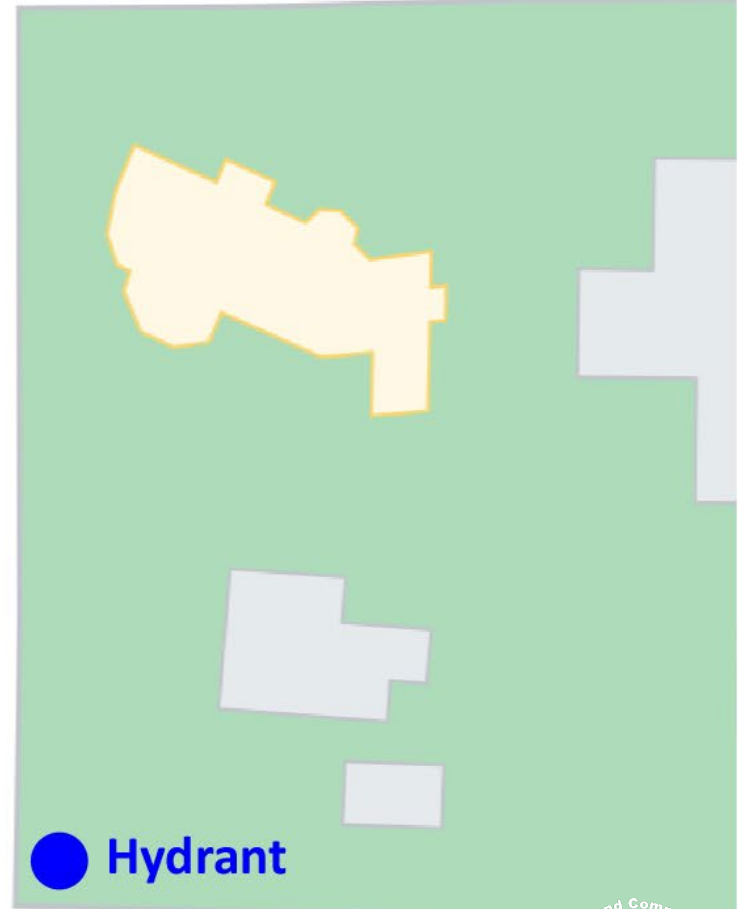
200'

300'



NE 9th St

N Main St



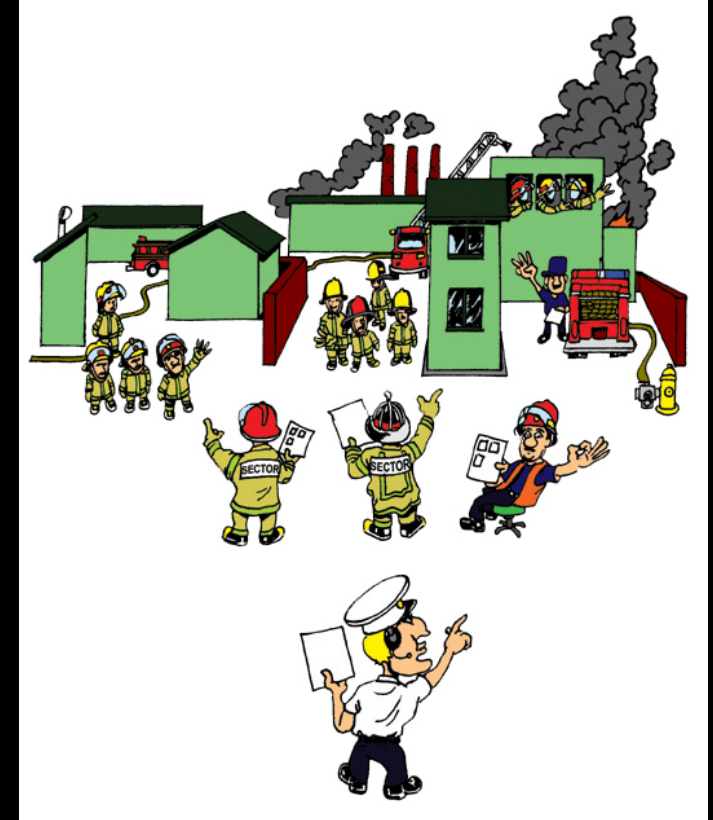
NE 8th St





Common Language

1. Level 1 & 2 Staging.
2. On-Deck.
3. Recycle.
4. Accountability Location.



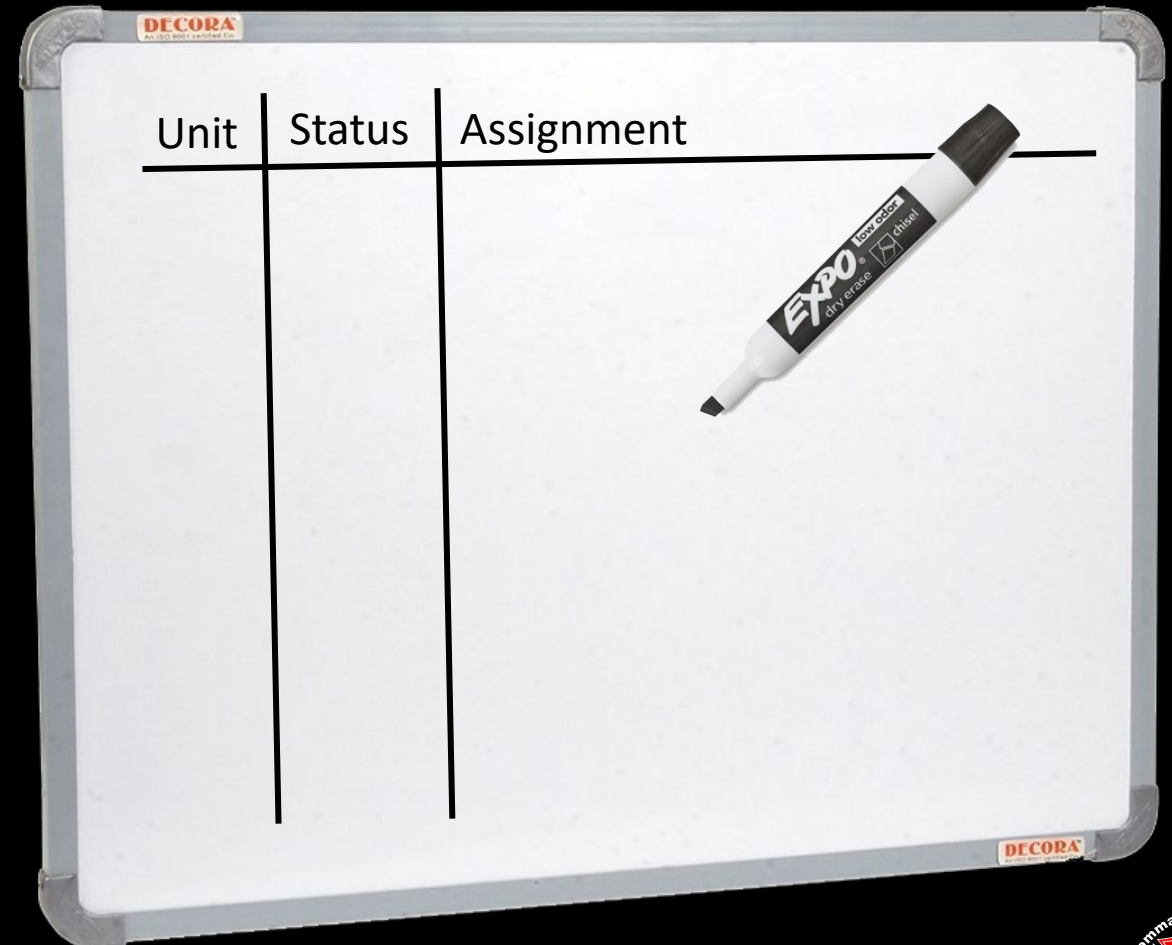
This is not a “Blue Card” class but draws on some of the important concepts from this program.



Strategic, Tactical, and Task Level Accountability

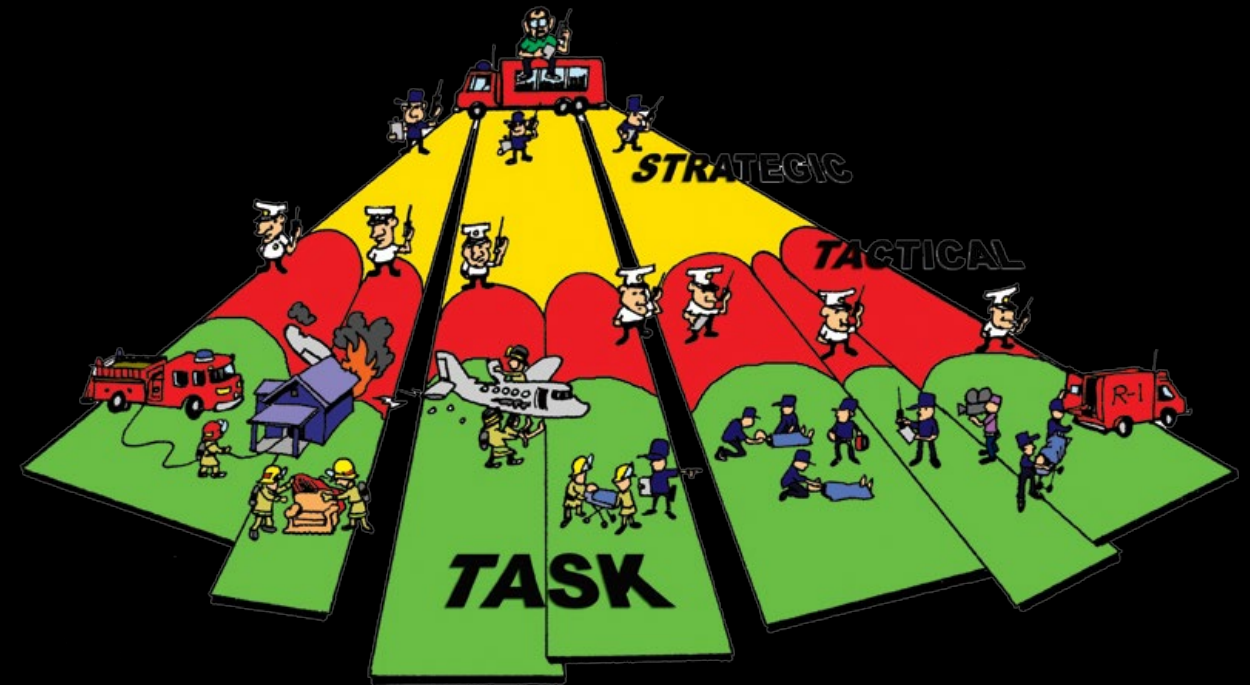
Strategic Level Accountability

1. Who works for you?
2. Where are they?
3. What are they doing?
4. How long have they been working?
5. Are they making progress?



There are 3 Operational Levels on all Incidents that have an IDLH Hazard Zone:

- Strategic Level
- Tactical Level
- Task Level



These levels are often performed by different people:
Working (Task Level) Boss, Walking (Tactical) Boss, Sitting (Strategic) Boss

Functions of Command

1. Deployment
2. Assumption, Confirmation, & Positioning of Command
3. Situation Evaluation
4. Strategy & Incident Action Planning
5. Communications
6. Organization
7. Review, Evaluate & Revise
8. Continue, Support, & Terminate Command





IC #1

**Strategic Level
Risk Management,
Strategy, IAP, &
Command**

**Task Level
Crew Supervision
& Doing Work**

**Tactical Level
Supervising Other
Companies**

IC #1 Functions at all Three Levels



Learning Outcomes



- **Identify an effective command position based on incident size and complexity.**
- **Recognize the importance of standard command transfer.**
- **Identify why a tactical worksheet is essential.**
- **Identify how use of division supervisors, division safety, and support officer reinforces command.**

Learning Outcomes



- **Identify the purpose and function of the senior advisor and other command team functions.**
- **Recognize how a command team is used to escalate command for a large or complex incident.**
- **Identify how all of this can be accomplished in a limited staffing context**

Command Function 6



Organization



Develop an effective incident organization using divisions & groups to decentralize and delegate geographic and functional responsibility

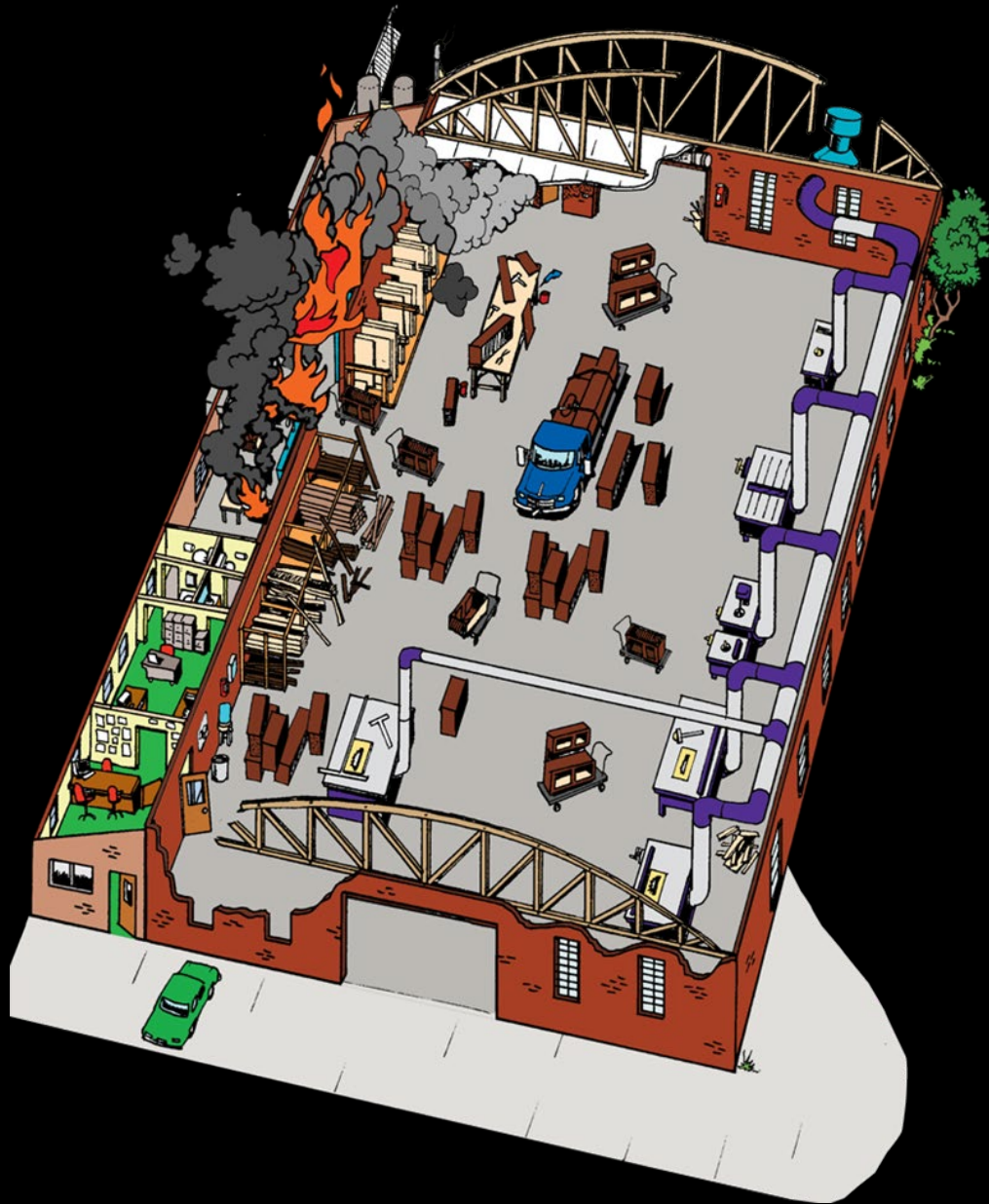
Command Function 8



Continue, Support and Terminate Command

Provide the required duration of command necessary to complete the tactical priorities, standardize command support and to ensure the safety of operations.

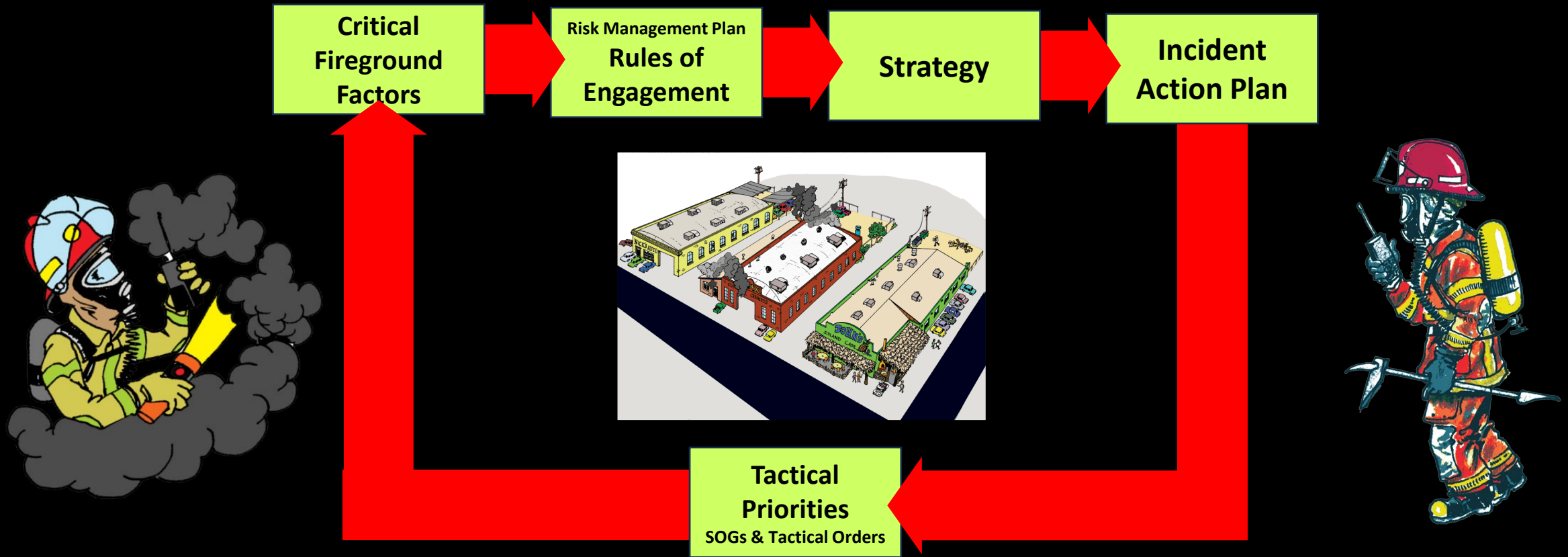




IC #1 is typically working with their company in the fast attack position.

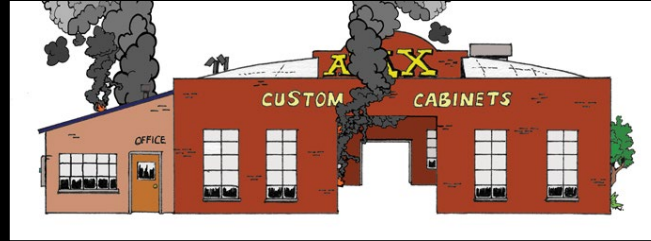


Operating in a burning building = diminished strategic capability



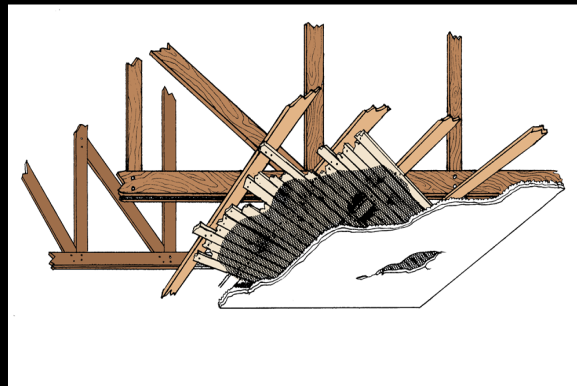
The strategic decision-making model allows a fast-attacking IC #1 to quickly get the operation up and running. It also satisfies most of their strategic responsibility for initial operations.

Critical Factors



Good Access
Adequate Water Supply

Well Maintained
Type III Construction-Truss Roof
High Fire Load Occupancy



Fire on Bravo
No Extension to Truss Loft

Critical Factors



Adequate resources and
overhead to manage them.



Consider Fixed Factors & Manage Variable Factors

Fixed Factors

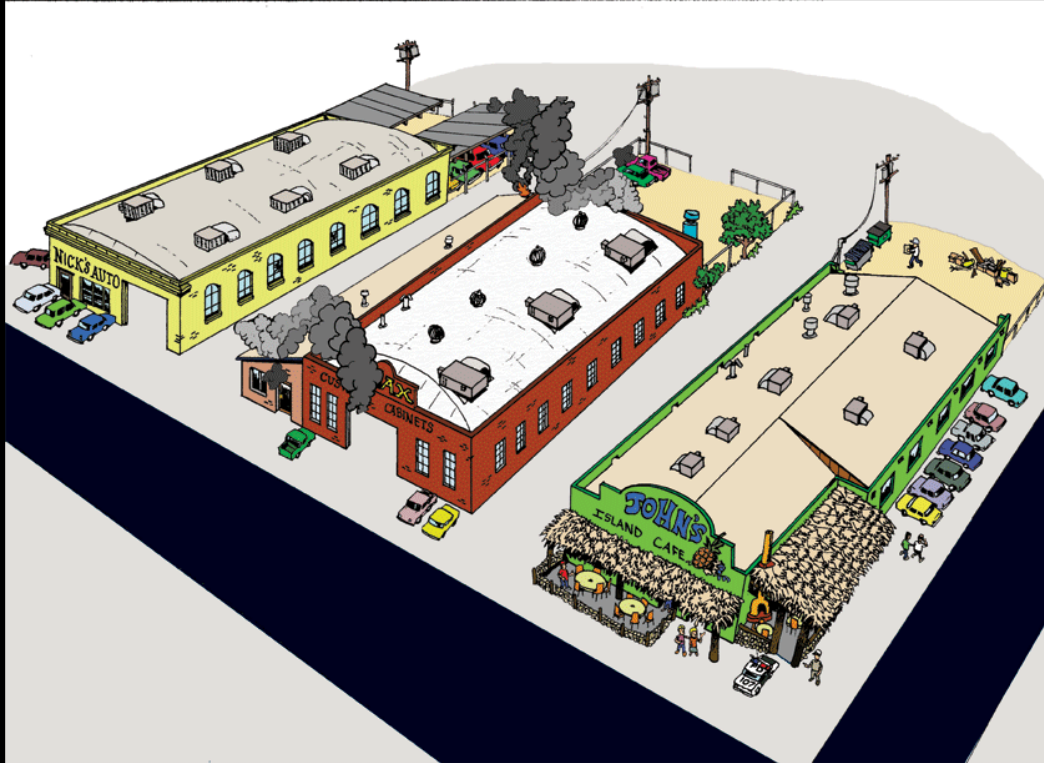
- Building
- Occupancy
- Arrangement

Variable Factors

- Fire
- Life Hazard
- Resources
- Action
- Special Circumstances



Risk Management Profile



We operate in a deliberate and calculated manner!

- We will not risk the lives of our members for lives or property that is already lost.
- **We will accept limited risk to save savable property.**
- We will accept a greater level of risk to protect savable lives.

The IC uses the critical fireground factors and risk management plan to determine the overall incident strategy



Offensive Inside



Defensive Outside

Initial Radio Report



On-scene of a large one-story cabinet shop with a bowstrung roof. Working fire on Side Bravo. Forward lay, stretching an attack line through Alpha for fire control and primary search. Offensive strategy. Give me a second alarm with Level 2 Staging at 2nd and Main Streets. Engine 1 is Main Command.

- Establishes and confirms command.
- Identifies incident strategy and IAP
- Implements staging (Level 1 & Level 2)
- Places the IC in charge of incident communications

The Initial Radio Report fulfills the majority of the fast-attacking IC's strategic level responsibility.



Follow-Up Report



No 360 due to size, one story all sides, no basement.
Engine 1 is accountability on Alpha.

- Identifies the number of stories on all sides and if there is a basement or not (a pertinent negative).
- Identifies the accountability location for the initial attack position.

IC #1 develops the IAP prior to making entry and adjusts the plan based on interior conditions.



- E1 – Attack line through Alpha FC/PS**
- E2 – Attack line through Charlie FC/PS**
- L1 – Roof report & check for extension attic**
- E3 – On Deck in Alpha**

Implementing the IAP



Forward lay from a second hydrant to Charlie. Stretch an attack line off your apparatus through Charlie for fire control and primary search.

Go to the roof for a roof report, check for extension in the attic.



IC #1



Park out of the way, go on deck Side Alpha

The IAP describes how the tactical priorities will be completed. The IC implements the IAP by giving orders to later arriving companies.

Seamless Command Transfer



That's correct, applying water with good effect, need an additional attack line through Alpha for fire control

I understand E1 is operating through Alpha for fire control and primary search, E2 is through Charlie for fire control and primary search, L1 is on the roof for a roof report, confirm and CAN. I'll take it from out here.

Battalion 1 is now Main Command, Command is located on the Alpha/Delta Corner, continuing offensive, continue the second alarm with Level 2 Staging at 2nd and Main Street.



Your procedures must be simple
because the fire will provide all the
complications you could ask for.

Commissioner Leo Stapleton
Boston Fire Department



Match and balance command with the size, structure, complexity, and duration of the incident



5522 James Blair Drive, Brownsburg, IN

May 28, 2018, at 06:30

Main Fire
Occupancy

Delta 1
Exposure



06:30

Armstead Ave

5522

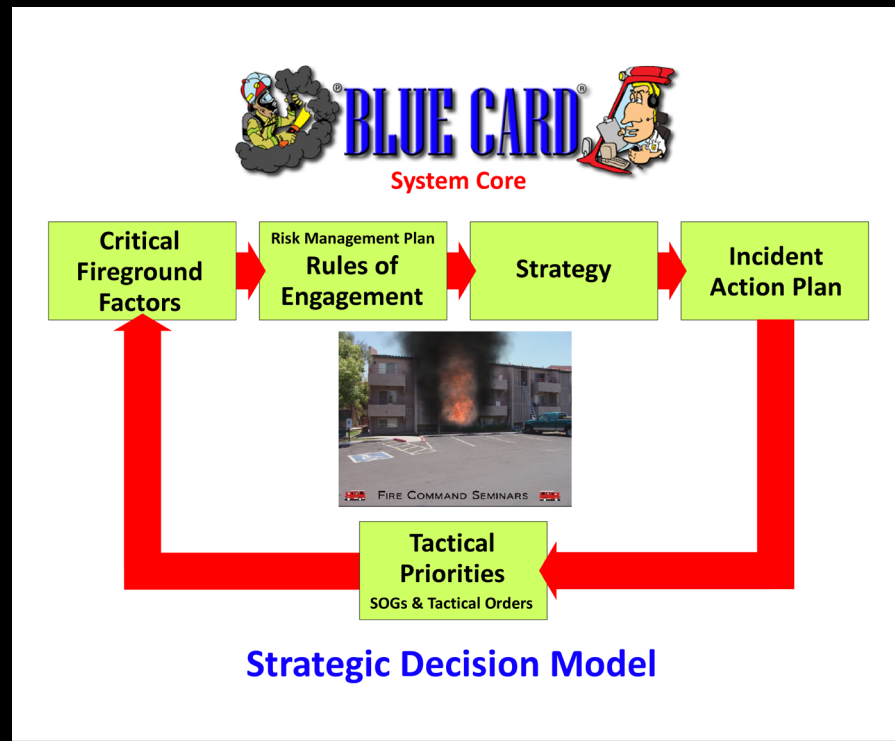
5534

450'

James Blair Dr



Strategic Decision-Making Model



Critical Factors



Fixed Critical Factors

- Two, two-story houses
- Likely lightweight construction
- Normal fire load for occupancy
- Good access on alpha
- Water Supply

Variable Critical Factors

- Working fire
- Extension to Bravo 1
- Time of day
- Life hazard in both houses

Not necessarily a comprehensive list!



Risk Management Profile



We operate in a deliberate and calculated manner!

- We will not risk the lives of our members for lives or property that is already lost.
- We will accept limited risk to save savable property.
- We will accept a greater level of risk to protect savable lives.

Offense or Defense



Strategy is based on current and projected:

- Fire behavior
- Structural stability
- Resources

Consider variations in conditions and searchable vs. “survivable” space!

Tactical Priorities

Offense

1. Fire Control
2. Primary search
3. Tactical ventilation
4. Secondary search
5. Loss control
6. FF Decon

Defense

1. Collapse Zone
2. Cutoff Points
3. Protect Exposures
4. Search/Evacuate Exposures
5. Fire Control
6. FF Decon



Tactical Assignments



Tactical Assignments (X2)

- Water supply (Forward Lay)
- Quick hit on exterior fire
- Fire control & primary search
- Primary search & check for extension
- Tactical ventilation
- Secondary search
- Utility control
- Property conservation

How many companies will be required to fulfill these tactical assignments?



Initial Command
Working IC #1



Reenforced Command
Strategic IC #2

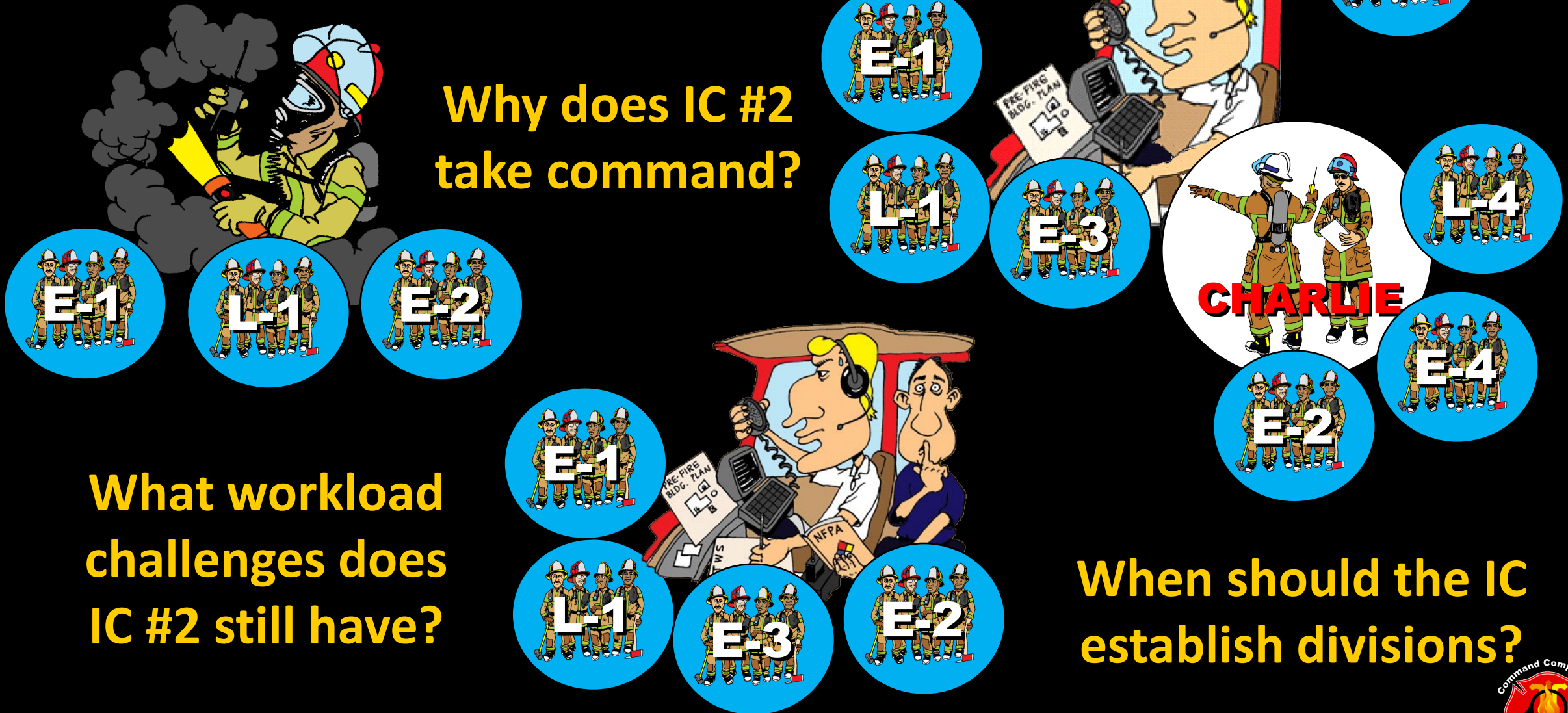
**Increased incident complexity and size
requires escalation of command.**

Reinforcing Command

Why does IC #2 take command?

What workload challenges does IC #2 still have?

When should the IC establish divisions?



Strategic Level

Responsibilities

- Perform 8 Functions of command
- Evaluate critical fireground factors
- Develop and manage the strategy
- Manage completion of the tactical priorities
- Overall safety boss
- Manage risk
- Coordinate the IAP with divisions and groups
- Manage resource ordering & allocation

Tactical Level

60'

Responsibilities

Tactical

- Risk management
- Positions match Conditions
- Tactical priorities
- Division action plan
- Coordination
- Match IC's intent

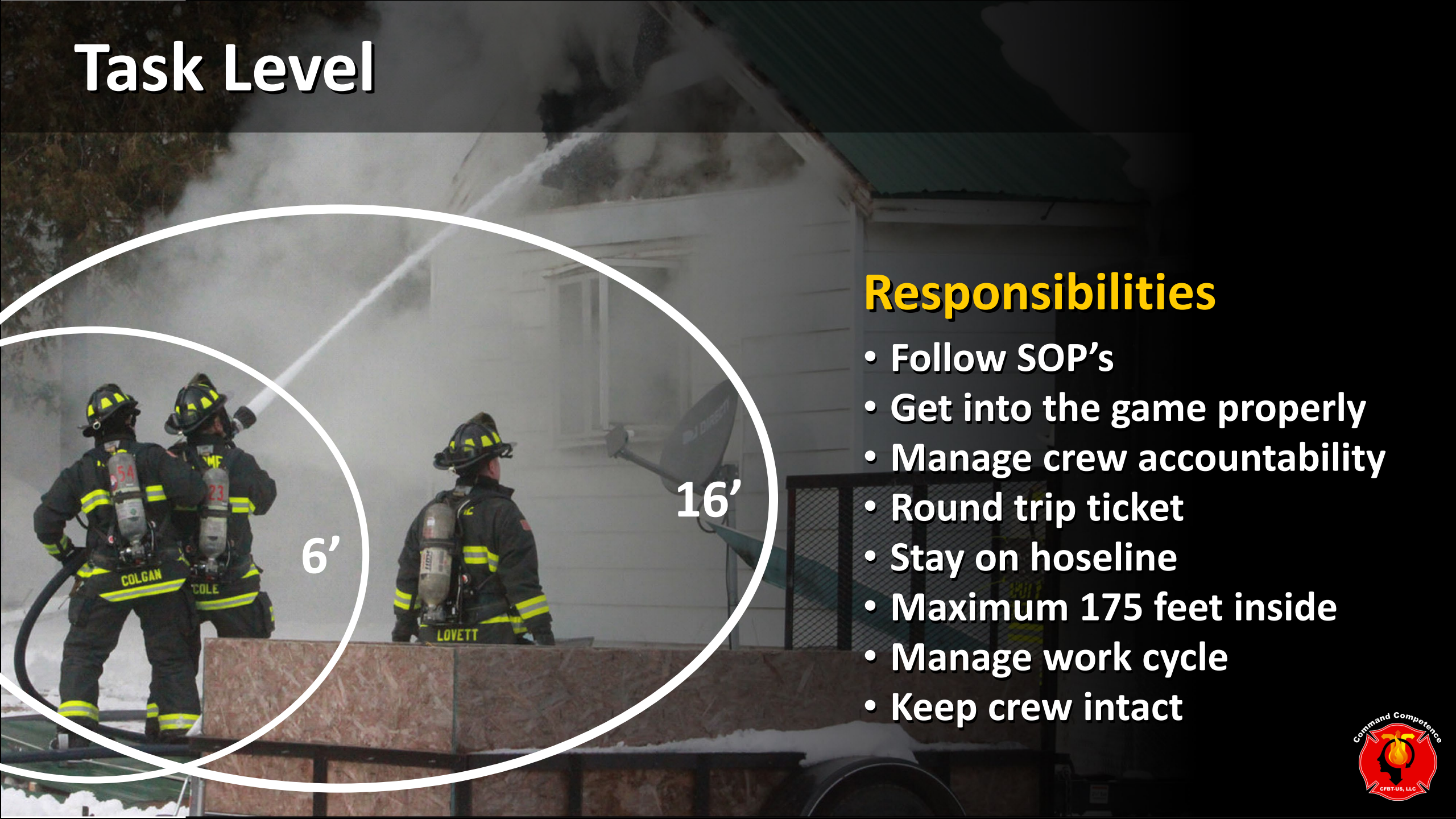
Safety

- Accountability
- Air management
- Work-rest cycles
- On-deck, recycle & rehab

Division Supervisor/Division Safety Work as a Team



Task Level



Responsibilities

- Follow SOP's
- Get into the game properly
- Manage crew accountability
- Round trip ticket
- Stay on hoseline
- Maximum 175 feet inside
- Manage work cycle
- Keep crew intact

Organizational Truth

ICs should divide an incident to manage their span-of-control.

ICs should avoid re-naming companies based on their function.



**Forecast and establish divisions when
2 to 3 companies are required in one work area**



Naming Divisions

Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta (Sides)
1, 2, 3, 4 (Floors)

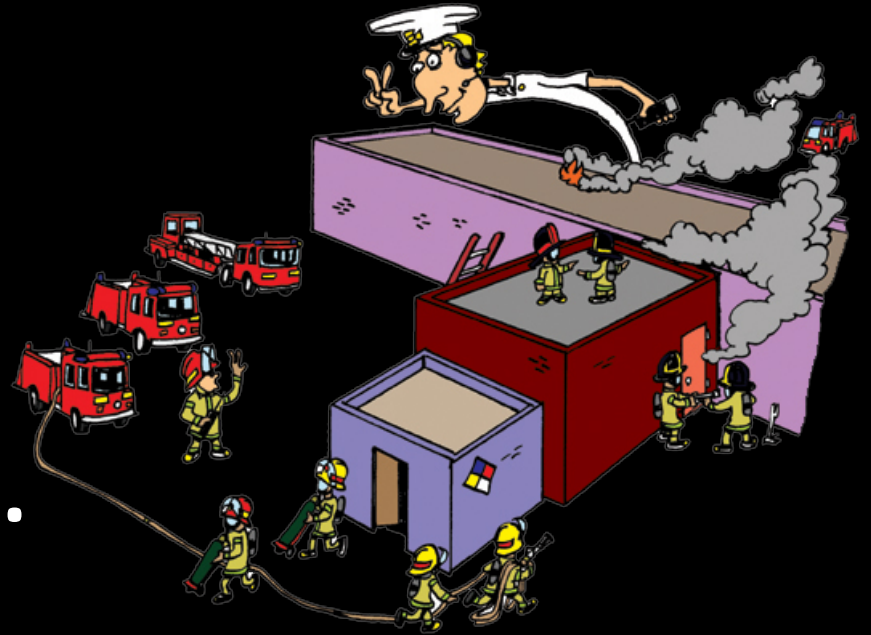


Blue Card does not use Groups Inside the Hazard Zone

Divisions are responsible for completion of all tactical priorities in their assigned division.

Divisions simplify tracking resources by position and function.

Groups are used outside the hazard zone for functions like Water Supply & Medical.





Division Supervisor

Hazard Zone Job Description

Division Supervisors have two Major Responsibilities

**Tactical
Supervision**



**Embedded
Safety**

If the division supervisor does not have a safety officer assigned,
they are responsible for both tactical supervision and safety

Personal Protective Equipment



Division supervisors & division safety officers should work in the warm zone and avoid entering the hot zone.



Division Tactical Level Supervision

- Division IAP matches IC's Plan
- Division risk management (positions match conditions)
- Entry control
- Manage resources & complete tactical priorities





**Task Level
(Company)
Supervision**

**Tactical Level
(Division)
Supervision**

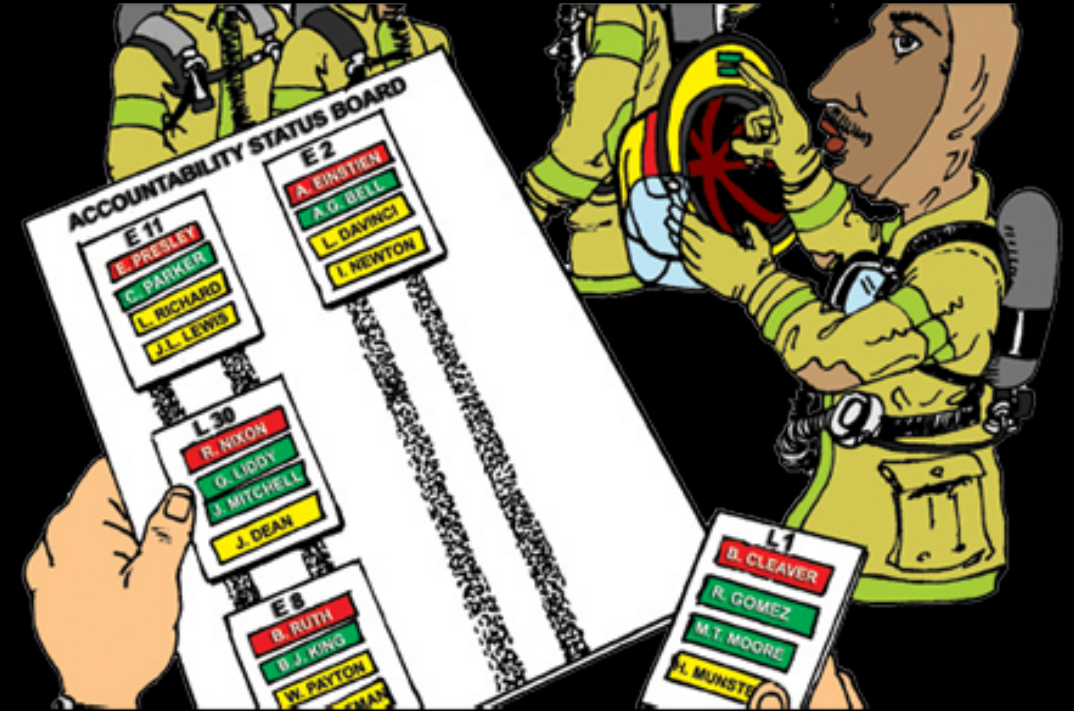
You can't ride two horses with one ass!



Working alone limits a division supervisor's span of control (limit companies to no more than four)

Division Embedded Safety

- Accountability
- Air management
- Rotation of companies
- On-deck companies
- Recycling
- Sending companies to rehab



The division safety officer works with and for the division supervisor.

Safety must be integrated into the task, tactical, and strategic levels of incident operations; not addressed as a separate component in addition to our normal response



Task



Tactical



Strategic

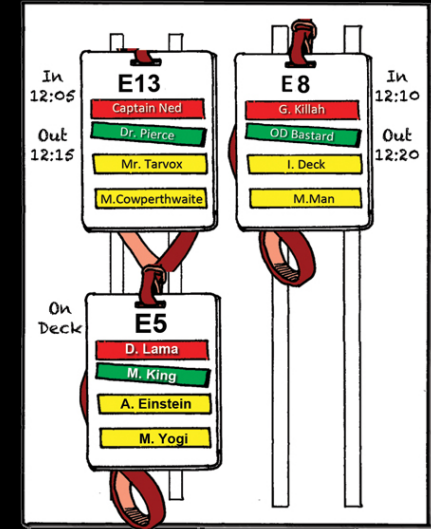
Division Accountability Routine



The engineer of the attack position provides initial accountability.



When upgraded, division safety officer will collect the passports at the original accountability location.



Once upgraded, passport accountability will occur at the entry point and will be managed by division safety officer.

The division safety officer ensures that companies are ready to go to work before entering the hazard zone.



- **Protective clothing**
- **SCBA**
- **Thermal imager**
- **Radio (on the right frequency)**
- **Crew integrity**



Division Safety Manages Rapid Intervention Equipment



Establishing a Division

1. Division supervisor assigned
2. Division picks up passports
3. Division advises when in place and assuming the division
4. Companies in the division notified that they work for the division.
5. CAN reports to division supervisor
6. Division safety assigned (2nd command officer)



Working together...

- Leave your rank in the fire SUV.
- It doesn't matter what agency you work for.
- You can't define their own division boundaries.
- The division supervises the division safety officer.
- The division supervisor & division safety are a team.
- You can't supervise companies from your agency if they are not in your division.

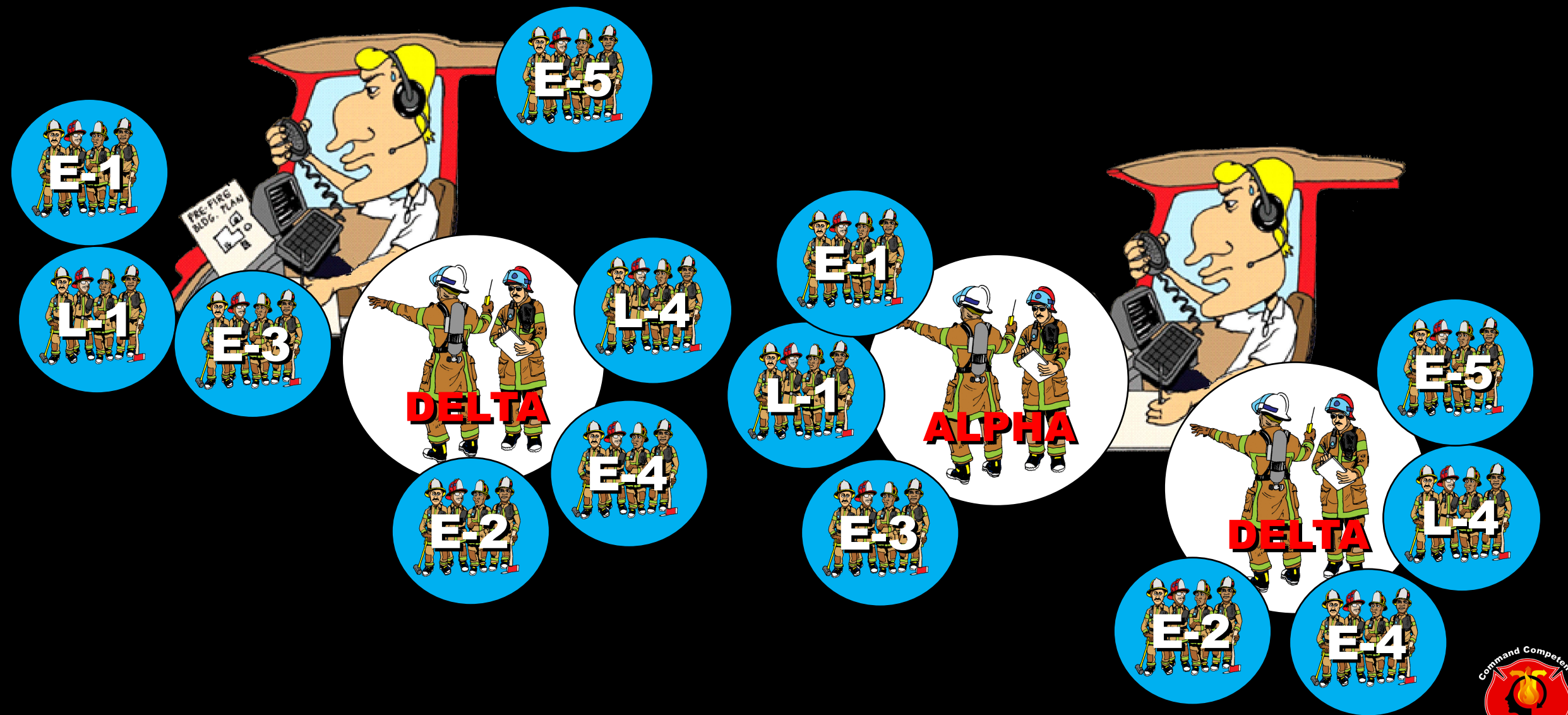
Back to the Incident



Incident Organization



Incident Organization



Tactical Decision Game

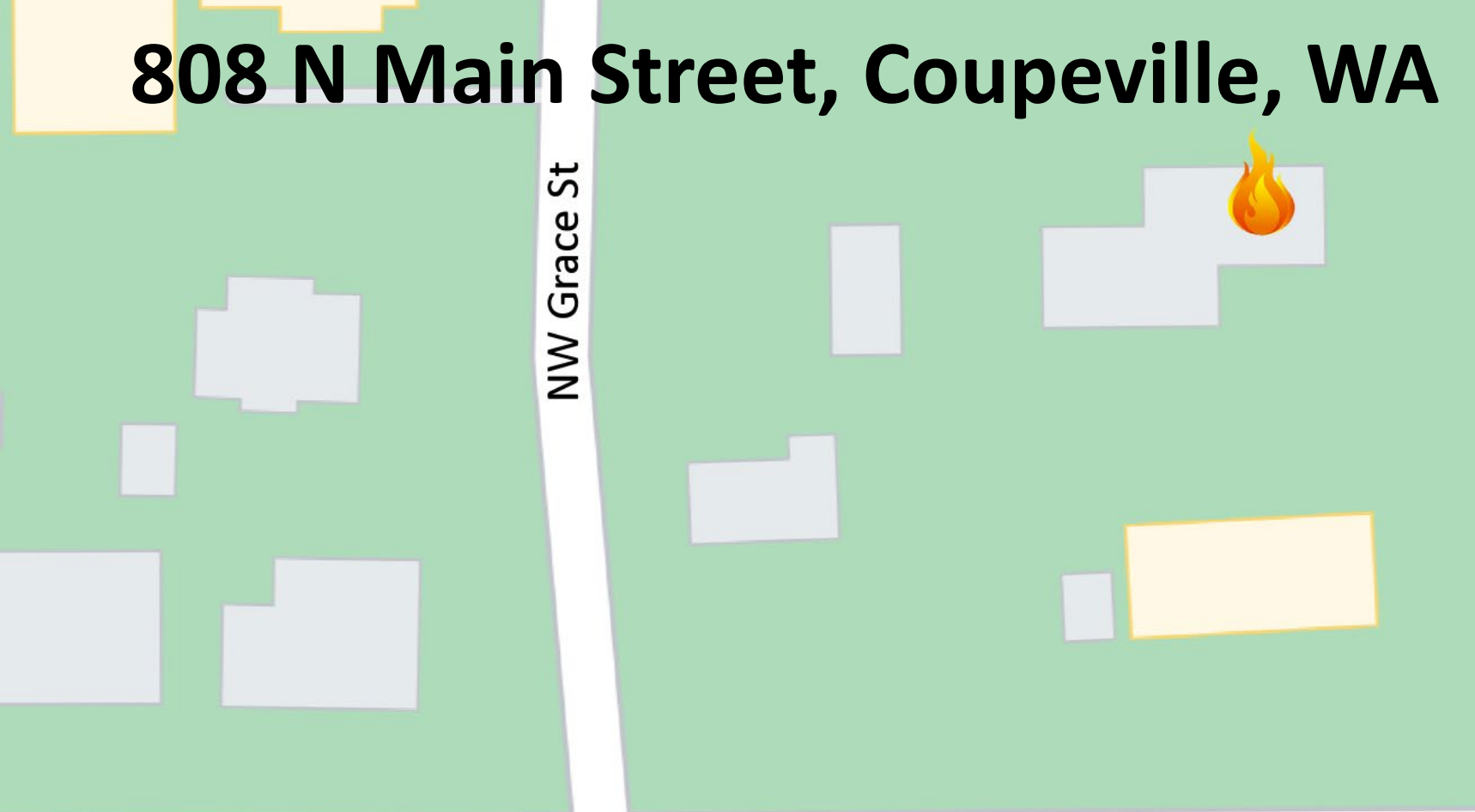


Confirmed Residential Fire
808 N Main Street

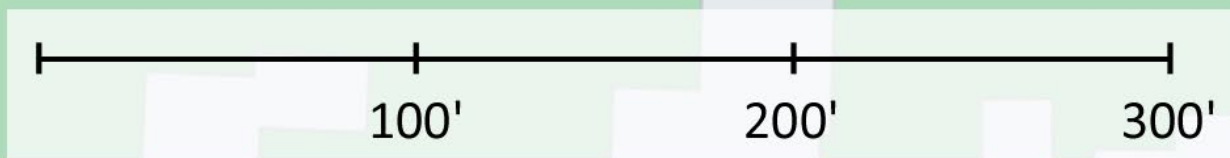
Decide first then discuss!



808 N Main Street, Coupeville, WA

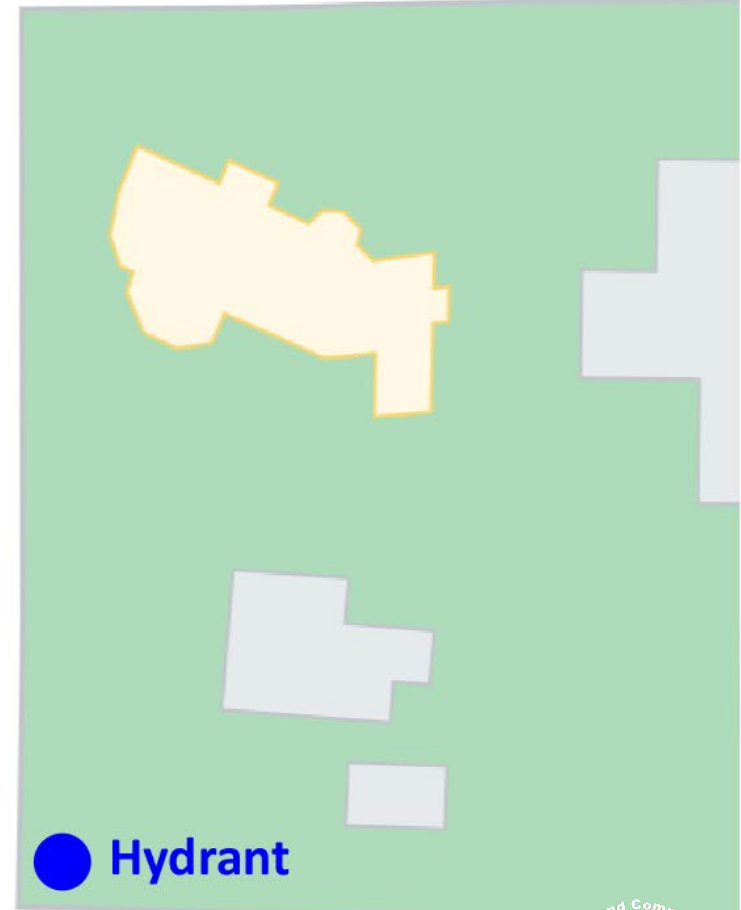


NW 8th St



NE 9th St

N Main St



NE 8th St





Initial Command
Working IC #1



Reenforced Command
Strategic IC #2



Escalated Command
Strategic IC #2
Command Team

**Increased incident complexity and size
requires escalation of command.**



Support Officer

Job Description

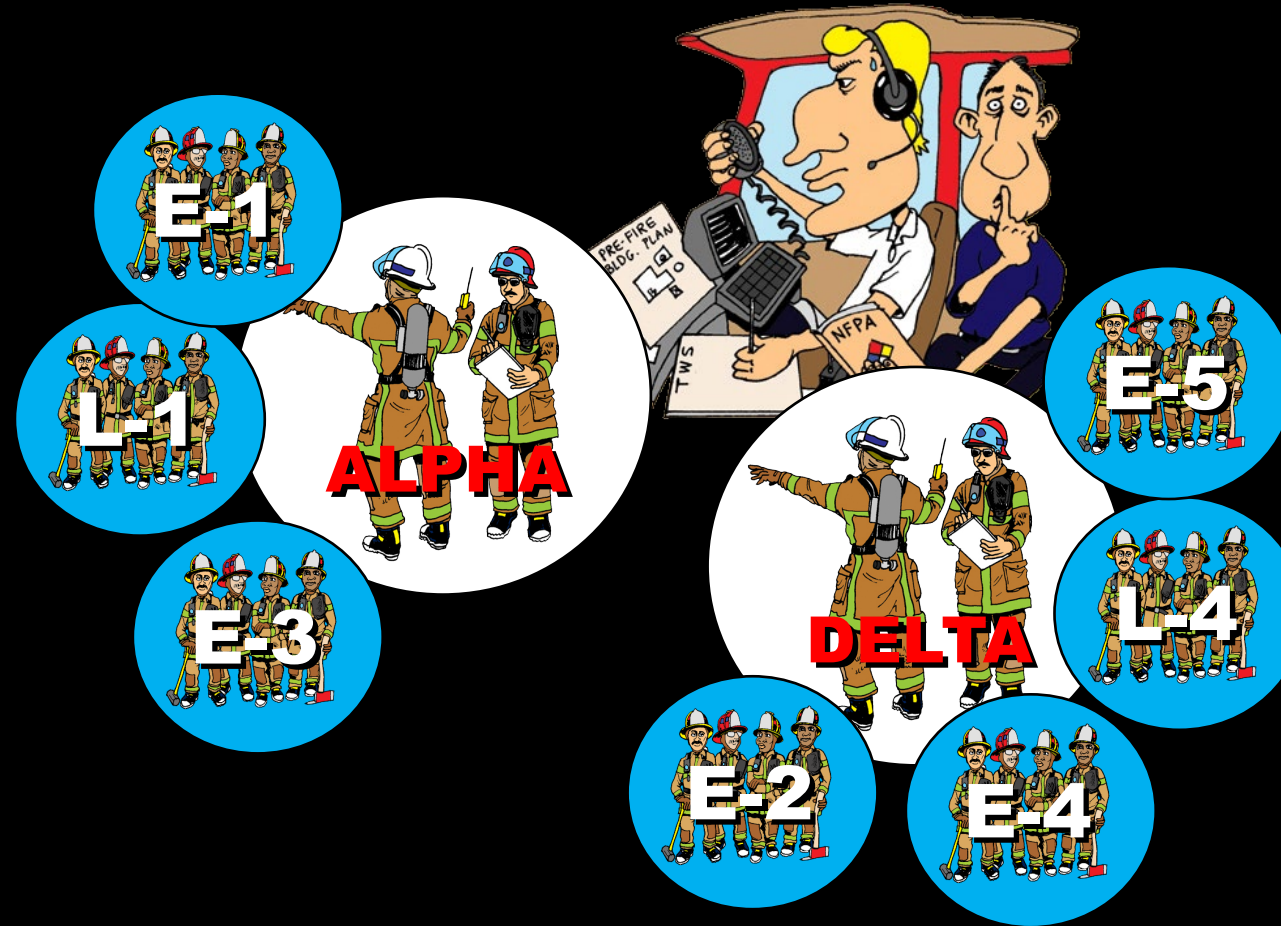
How can a support officer improve the effectiveness of IC #2?



- Positions match conditions.
- Situation evaluation never stops.
- IC inside the vehicle monitoring conditions.
- Completion of the tactical priorities.
- Manage the functions of command.
- Put tactical supervision in all required attack positions.

The support officer performs strategic level accountability by managing the tactical worksheet.

Incident Organization



Tactical Decision Game

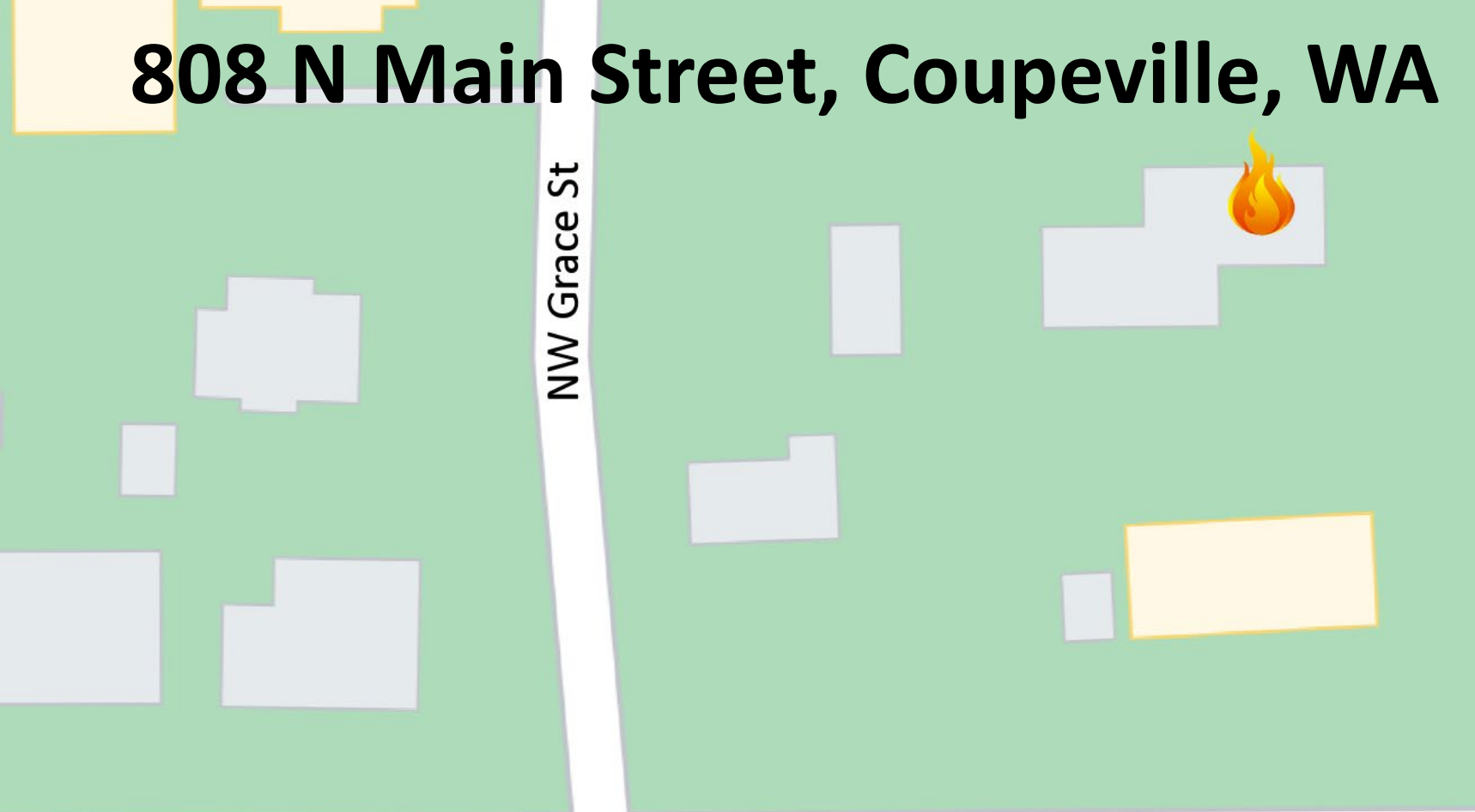


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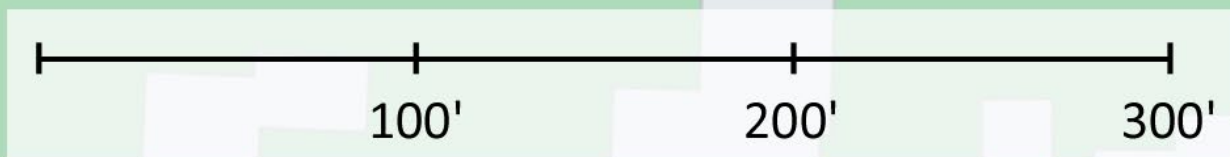
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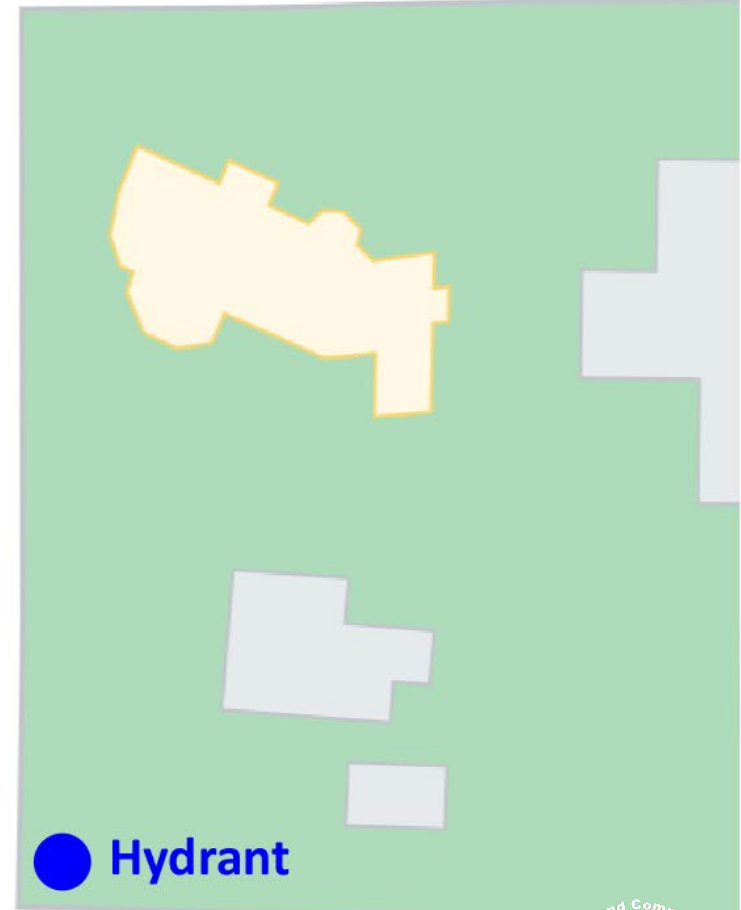


NW 8th St



NE 9th St

N Main St



NE 8th St





Escalating Command



Initial Command
Working IC #1



Reinforced Command
Strategic IC #2
Support Officer



Escalated Command
Strategic IC #2
Command Team



+ Senior Advisor

Escalating Command



How do we manage this
without a command van?

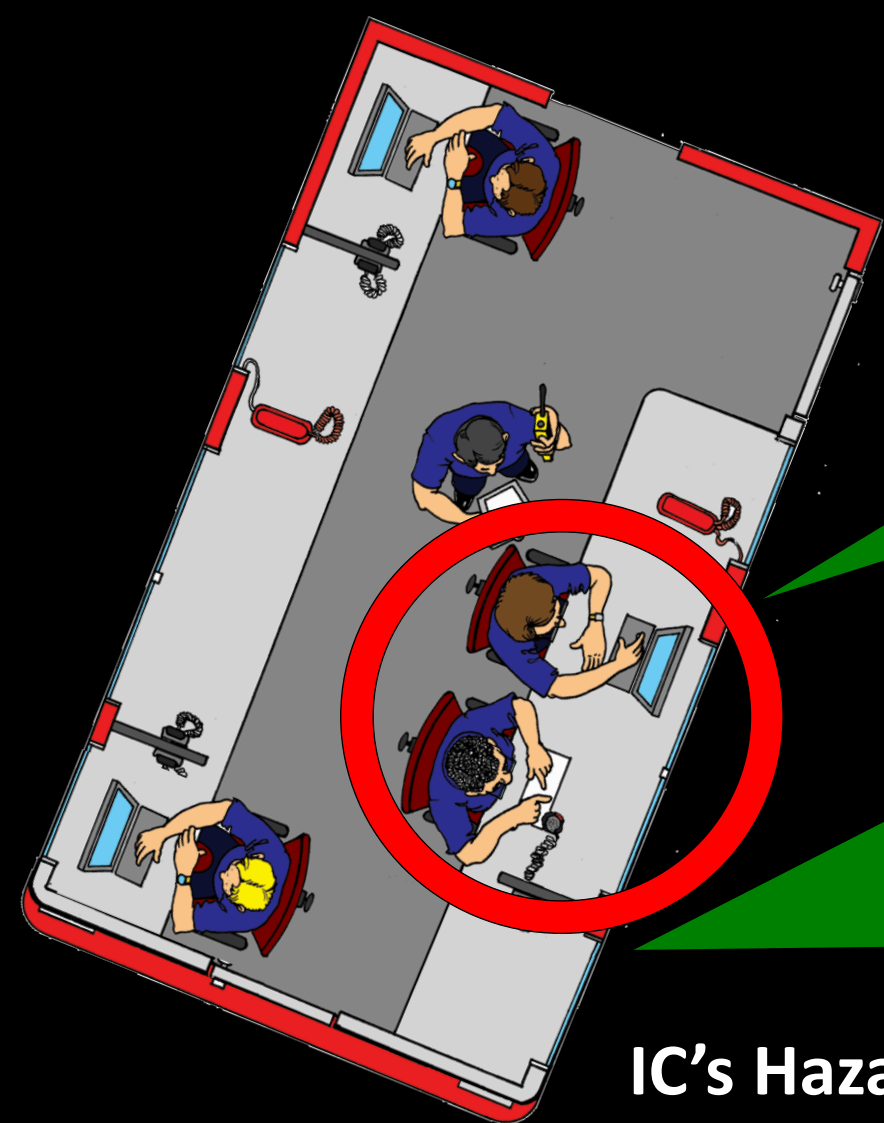


- Can manage multiple radio channels required for larger-scale operations
- Keeps all hazard zone companies and the IC on the same, single channel.
- Logistics channel is where Level 2 Staging and Rehab operate.
- Safety channel for the safety officer and division safety officers.

Escalating command is **not** another transfer of command.

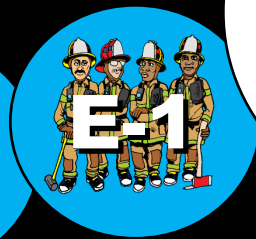
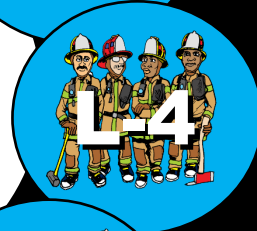
It is providing additional support to the current IC and support officer.

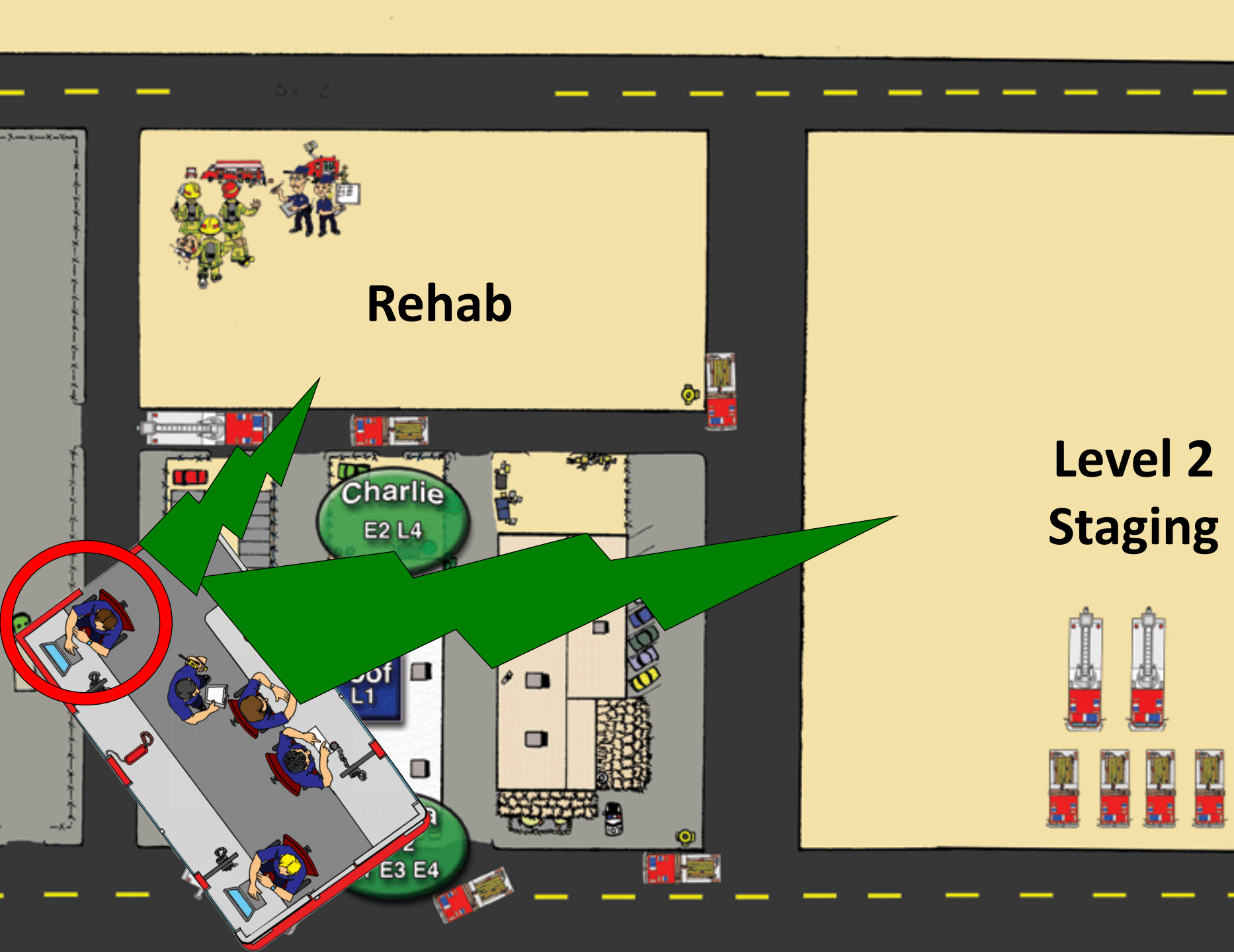




IC's Hazard Zone
Radio Channel

Mayday Channel





Logistics Radio Channel



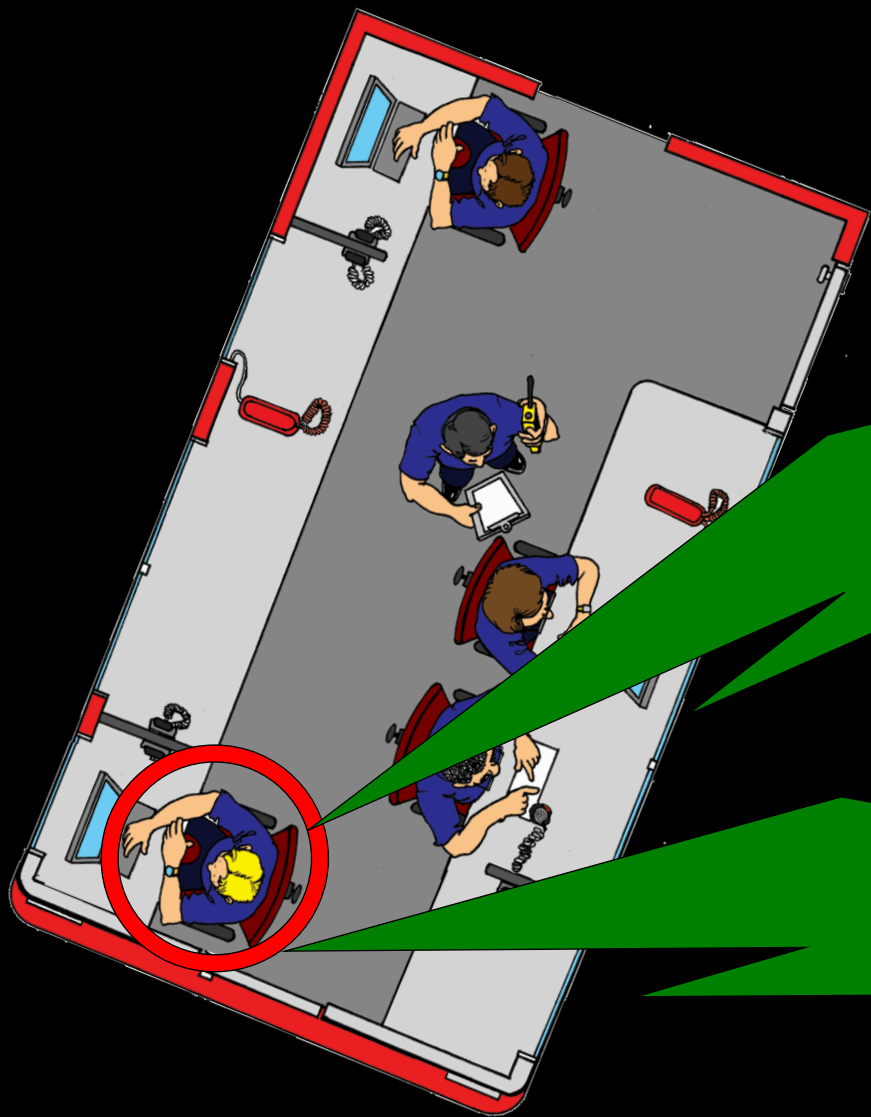
**What happens if
the IC listens to
multiple
channels at the
same time?**

Ops 51 (Tactical)

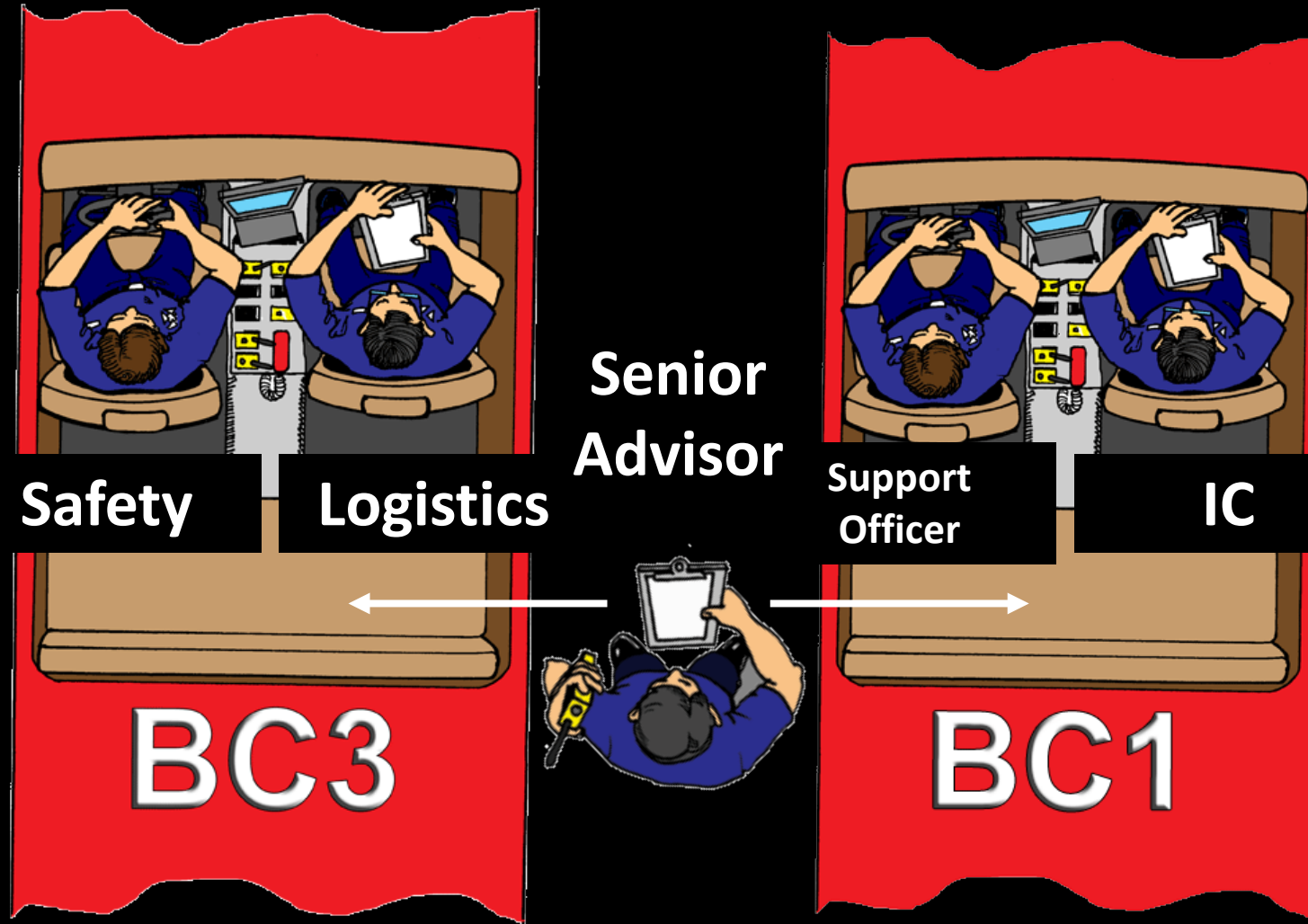
Ops 52 (Logistics)

Mayday





Safety Radio
Channel



The same command team
operating with two SUVs

**Match and balance command with the size,
structure, complexity, and duration of the incident**



**How would you organize
to manage this incident?**



Limited Staffing

- Limited staffing for task level action.
- Lack of task level supervisors (company officers).
- Lack of tactical level supervisors.
- Lack of staff to provide the IC with a support officer.
- Lack of staffing for a command team.

Who has these problems?



March 25, 2025, at 04:37 East County Fire & Rescue

14,000 ft² House

Multiple Vehicles

4 Acre Vegetation Fire

Spot Fires

Multiple Exposures

20+ mph Wind

Hydrant >6 mi Away

1st Arriving Engine Staffing of 2

IC #1 Engine 91 Captain

IC #2 Vancouver BC 2

Division Alpha ECFR Chief 91

Water Supply Group Camas Washougal BC 41

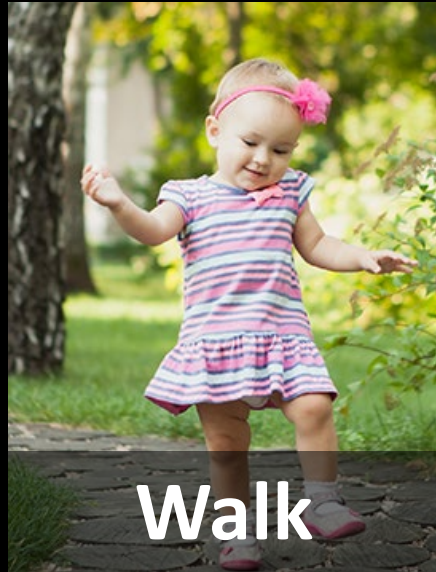
Structure Protection Group Vancouver BC 1



Escalating Command



Crawl



Walk



Run



Run Faster

"If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." - Martin Luther King, Jr.



Questions?

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<https://commandcompetence.com>

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