



Training Bulletin

Command Function 6-Organization: Divisions and Groups

Use of divisions and groups to support the IC's span-of-control, improve the effectiveness of tactical supervision and provide for the safety of operating companies is an essential element of Command Function 6-Organization.

Organizational Levels

There are 3 operational levels that function at the scene of every hazard zone. They are:

- Strategic level.
- Tactical level.
- Task level.

Each level is distinct, each is managed differently, and they each have their own set of roles and responsibilities.

Strategic Level - This organizational level is designed around the IC (and command team) working from a strategic command position in a stationary command post. The Strategic level involves coordinating the activities necessary for overall operational control, selecting the incident's strategy, and developing an IAP that completes the incident's tactical objectives.

Tactical Level - The first management subdivision of the incident scene is done by assigning division or group responsibilities. Division or group supervisors manage tactical deployment and supervision of all assigned resources in their assigned area (divisions) or function (groups).

Task Level - Is where the work is performed by assigned companies. The strategic and tactical levels are in place to support the task level. Task level activities are supervised by the officers of companies performing the work.

The task level is the most important level on the incident site because it solves the incident's problems while working in an immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) environment. All activities outside the hazard zone are in place to support units working on the task level.

Subdividing the Incident

An IC must have a system where the rate of assigning companies to the emergency scene doesn't exceed their span-of-control. The IC does this by forecasting and making geographic and functional assignments that divide the incident operations into smaller, more manageable tactical sub-divisions.

Tactical Subdivisions: Dividing the incident may be done to keep an effective span-of-control, provide effective tactical supervision, and improve firefighter safety. The IC must correctly name the different work areas and functions to minimize confusion on the fire ground.

- Division is a geographical subdivision of the incident site.
- Group is a functional work subdivision that is not tied to a specific location.

IC's manage strategic level accountability by controlling both the position and function of all hazard zone units using a tactical worksheet. Therefore, **Groups are not used inside of the hazard zone.**

Divisions are names based on location. This generally is based on side (Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta); Exposure (Bravo 1, Bravo, 2, etc.); Floor (one, two, three); or in large buildings; by quadrant (Alpha/Bravo, Bravo/Charlie, etc.).

To minimize confusion, the following conventions shall be used when communicating with divisions and groups via radio.

Table 1. Standard Radio Call Signs for Divisions and Groups

Type	Location	Radio Call Sign
Division	Alpha	Division Alpha
Division	Floor 1	Division One
Group	Water Supply	Water Supply

Forecasting and Establishing Geographic & Functional Assignments

The IC must forecast where the overall event is going, subdivide the hazard zone into manageable tactical units and then assign geographic responsibilities early in the incident to build an effective incident organization. Geographic subdivisions are most effective when they are assigned in anticipation of their need, rather than in a crisis because it is difficult to play catch-up in fast paced, escalating incidents.

Subdividing the incident site provides tactical supervision, direction and support to units assigned and working in a hazard zone. This delegated management also helps the IC to achieve the incident's tactical objectives much more safely and effectively. Using divisions and groups appropriately will:

- Reduce the IC's span-of-control.
- Streamline and provide more effective incident communications.
- Allow the IC to focus on the strategic level of the incident from a stationary command post.
- Matches organization to incident requirements.
- Greatly improves accountability.

- Place strong tactical direction and leadership where the work is taking place.
- Improve firefighter safety by having dedicated supervisors directly manage and control the position and function of the operating companies assigned to them.

Offensive fires usually don't last long. We either put the fire out quickly or shift to a defensive strategy.

Building large incident organizations on offensive fires doesn't happen very often. However, offensive operations requiring an expanded organization include:

- Multi-Unit residential structures where the fire has extended into the concealed spaces or into adjoining units.
- Other highly compartmented structures with fire extension in concealed and common attic spaces
- Sprinkler controlled, large area cold smoke fires.
- Defensive fire situations where we work in offensive positions in the exposed structures.
- Fires with complex or resource intensive water supply requirements (e.g., tender shuttle, multi-engine relays).

The IC must quickly develop and compare incident needs and on-scene and responding resources and then call for the added resources that will be needed to effectively resolve the problems presented by the incident.

As the resources needed to bring the incident under control escalate, the strategic level IC and the tactical level division and group supervisors must also be supported. Added command officers on greater alarms provide the necessary level of support for large or complex incident operations.

Company Officers and Tactical Supervision

Company officers (working as part of a company) are not assigned to provide tactical supervision as a division supervisor. There are two essential reasons for this: 1) the company officer cannot work as part of their company and provide effective tactical supervision to other companies, 2) if the company officer does not work with their company this reduces the company's staffing level and may compromise effective company supervision (depending on the experience and qualification of the other members of the company).

IC's who assign two or more companies to a division cannot expect a company officer to appropriately supervise all assigned resources while they are working in their assigned tactical area. ICs should use the rule of thumb that a division should be staffed with a command officer when multiple companies are assigned in the same geographic work area.

Company officers may be assigned to supervise a group (functional assignment outside the hazard zone) if this will not compromise the capability of their company. However, if possible, the function of group supervisor should be staffed by a command officer.

Command Officer-Hazard Zone Tactical Supervision

As the IC assigns later arriving command officers to assume division responsibilities it quickly builds and embeds powerful tactical and safety elements across the entire incident scene. This places the IC in the strongest strategic position to manage the position and function of all assigned resources.

Later command officers arriving on the first alarm must level one stage, notify dispatch they have arrived, and tell the IC that they are Level 1. Command officers on greater alarms report to level two staging. Command officers should avoid face to face communications with the IC when an active hazard still exists (unless reporting to the IC as support officer or senior advisor).

When assigning a command officer as a division supervisor, the IC will need to communicate:

- The location of the division.
- The division designation.
- The tactical objectives to be addressed.
- The units that are currently assigned to the work area.

Command Officers who are assigned division responsibilities. must:

- Park their vehicle out of the way
- Don their full protective gear including SCBA in the ready position (facepiece off).
- Collect the division status board from the apparatus operator at the accountability location.
- Report to their assigned division.
- Ensure necessary rapid intervention equipment has been deployed to their division (i.e., rescue air supply).
- Assume responsibility for accountability and air management within the division.
- Notify the IC that they are assuming responsibility for the division.

When arriving at a geographic hazard zone location, the division supervisor must consider the critical factors in their area of responsibility. If companies are already working within the division, the division supervisor must decide if operating positions match conditions (e.g., working offensively with defensive conditions). If necessary, the division supervisor must take immediate action to correct companies operating position and use priority traffic to tell the IC of this change.

The division supervisor's plan always needs to fit into the IC's plan. They will need to continually size up the division's critical factors and apply the risk management plan, making sure that actions match conditions. Division supervisors must develop an action plan for their division to ensure completion of tactical priorities in the division.

The division supervisor will need to position themselves just outside of the hazard zone in their division. Entering the hazard zone places the division supervisor at the same disadvantage as interior companies working in the division and entry should be avoided. The best position to manage the Division is in the warm zone of the Division at the entry point. This location puts the division supervisor in the best position to manage, coordinate, and account for all the Division resources.

Division supervisors have two main functions:

- **Tactical supervision**
- **Embedded safety**

Division Supervisors perform the following basic **tactical** functions:

- Size up critical factors within the division on an ongoing basis.
- Manage risk by ensuring the division's actions match conditions.
- Develop the division's incident action plan within the IC's overall strategy and overall incident action plan.
- Supervise work in the division.
- Redirect division activities as needed.
- Request added resources from the IC to keep a tactical reserve (on-deck crew(s)) within the division.
- Coordinate with other divisions as needed.
- Provide CAN reports to the IC when asked.
- Monitor personnel safety, accountability, and welfare in their division.
- Demobilize companies within the division as operations are completed.

Deployment of units into an IDLH hazard zone **must** be managed around crew accountability and air management. Division Supervisors perform the following basic **embedded safety** functions for the work area:

- Managing division accountability (using the passport system).
- Track and manage work times of interior crews around SCBA airtimes.
- Rotate companies in and out of the hazard zone.
- Manage on deck companies.
- Manage the recycle and the rehabbing of companies.
- Monitor the division for any significant safety hazards.

Assigning a command officer to work for the division supervisor in the role of division safety provides significant incident management and safety advantage. When the IC assigns a division safety officer to aid a division supervisor, the division supervisor is still responsible for **tactical** functions and division safety will assume the **embedded safety** responsibilities for the division.

A Command Officer can routinely manage both the **tactical and embedded Safety** requirements when resources are limited to three to four working and on-deck companies. If the number of resources is likely to grow beyond this level, the division supervisor should be reinforced with a later arriving command officer.

When assigning resources to an established division, the IC must include:

- The location of the assignment.
- The tactical objectives to be addressed (this ensures that the company brings the correct tools and equipment for the assignment).
- The division supervisor that they will be reporting to.

The IC must then contact the division supervisor and inform them what added resources have been assigned to their area. The company will need to deliver their passport and check in directly with their assigned division supervisor before going to work.

Division Communications

Communications flow should reflect the organization the IC has implemented. The IC gives orders and makes assignments to build the organization and to implement an effective IAP. After the organization is in place, the IC should shift from primarily ordering units into position, to asking, listening to, and reacting to critical division CAN reports.

Division communications involves communication between companies in the division, between the division supervisor and assigned companies, between the division supervisor and other tactical supervisors (division or group supervisors), and between the division supervisor and the IC.

- Company Officers will communicate with their individual crew members face to face.
- Company Officers will communicate with other company officers in their work area face to face whenever possible.
- Company officers should communicate with their division supervisor face to face whenever possible.
- There will be occasions when company officers will need to communicate with their division supervisor over the assigned hazard zone tactical radio talk group.
- Division supervisors will communicate directly with the IC over the assigned hazard zone tactical talk group.

Companies assigned to a division will not communicate directly with the IC unless they have a mayday.

A division supervisor may be initially assigned to an area to evaluate and report conditions and inform the IC of needed tasks and resources. The assigned command officer will go to the division area, evaluate critical factors, and provide a CAN report to the IC, and assume responsibility for directing resources and operations within the division.

Communications between the division supervisor and the IC are critical to supporting a common operating picture and ensuring that the strategy and IAP match incident conditions. Division supervisors should format their communications with the IC as a CAN report. The division supervisor's CAN reports to the IC should include the following information:

- The conditions in their assigned area.
- Their current actions.
- Any tactical objectives that have been met.
- A needs assessment in their assigned area (or no needs).
- Any significant safety concerns in and around their work area.

Division CAN reports provide the IC with the information needed to:

- Forecast and stay ahead of the incident conditions.
- Adjust the overall strategy (e.g., a strategic shift from offense to defense).
- Adjust the IAP.

Offensive Tactical Level Supervision General Guidelines

Division supervisors must continually evaluate the incident's critical factors and the position of companies working within their division based on incident conditions. Division supervisors must make an early resource size up and call for the resources that will be needed to complete necessary work in the hazard zone while ensuring safe and effective air management.

The goal of three-deep deployment and incident organization is to always have enough companies **assigned to perform the work**, enough workers **assigned to on-deck**, and then have adequate tactical reserve **staged and waiting to be assigned**.

The IC must use the three-deep deployment model to supply a steady, adequate stream of companies to divisions. This approach to deployment places ready-to-go resources in all the key operating positions around the incident site while greatly enhancing firefighter safety and effectiveness.

As working companies manage their air supplies and cycle out of the hazard zone, on-deck companies should be positioned within the Division to quickly take their place. This deployment model also allows

existing companies to have a face-to-face briefing with the division supervisor and the companies that are relieving them. This reduces the amount of radio traffic on the tactical channel and streamlines the communication process for the entire incident.

The IC should avoid automatically assigning more resources to divisions. Once the organization is implemented, these division supervisors should report to the IC on the conditions in their area, the actions they are taking and any necessary resources or support (needs). This allows the IC to function at a strategic level, serving as a resource allocator to the divisions based on each tactical area's needs.

Division supervisors along with company officers are responsible to always check the welfare of their personnel and decide if companies can recycle within the division or if they will need to be assigned to rehab. Division supervisors may need to request added resources to replace on-deck companies, recycling companies or companies that have been assigned to rehab.

Defensive Tactical Level Supervision General Guidelines

A defensive situation is where the incident problem has evolved to the point that lives and property are no longer savable, and offensive tactics are no longer effective or safe. The entire defensive strategy is based on protecting firefighters.

Firefighter safety is the highest defensive priority. No firefighter should be injured on a defensive fire.

Arrangement becomes a major critical factor with defensive fires. The way the main fire compartment/area is arranged to its neighboring exposures will dictate operating positions on a defensive emergency scene.

Recognize if exposures are threatened. Threatened exposures must be searched for occupants and protected. The priority in defensive operations is personnel safety. The second priority is exposure protection.

The defensive perimeter and collapse zone must be defined, and all operating units will remain behind those defined boundaries. **This perimeter must not be crossed.** Division supervisors must be vigilant in preventing firefighters creeping into the collapse zone.

Water supply becomes a critical factor when managing defensive operations. Division supervisors need to coordinate setting up uninterrupted water supplies with sufficient flow for fire control and/or exposure protection with the IC.

Division supervisors should also shut down all small-diameter handlines (unless they are being used to directly protect exposures). This diverts that water into master-stream devices to apply a high flow of water directly on the fire and the exposures. These actions also reduce creeping into the collapse zone.

No member shall enter the hazard zone of a defensive fire area. Any structure that has defensive fire conditions shall not be entered by any personnel to perform any overhaul or loss control of any kind. If

defensive fire conditions have been mitigated and there is no collapse hazard, closely supervised companies may perform overhaul in areas that previously have had defensive fire conditions.

On defensive fires with exposures, the IC may, if conditions allow, specify an offensive strategy in the exposures. When using different strategies for the main fire occupancy and exposures, this must be clearly communicated and understood at the strategic, tactical, and task level.

Functional Non-Hazard Zone Tactical Supervision

Just as the IC assigns geographic responsibilities to divisions to improve the quality of tactical level supervision and streamline communications in the hazard zone, groups should be used to manage functional responsibilities requiring multiple resources working outside the hazard zone.

When two or more units are working on the same function outside the hazard zone (e.g., water supply, medical treatment), the IC should generally assign a group supervisor. Assignment of a group prevents two companies working on the same function from reporting the same information to the IC. Company officers may be assigned as group supervisors if this assignment will not compromise the capability of their company, but the use of command officers in this role is preferred.

When assigning a group supervisor, the IC needs to specify:

- The function assigned.
- The group designation.
- The tactical objectives to be addressed.

If possible, resources working in groups working outside the hazard zone will be assigned to communicate on a talk group other than the tactical talk group used by resources working in the hazard zone. Use of a different talk group supports maximum communications capability for the IC and resources in the hazard zone.

When given a functional assignment, the group supervisor must size up the critical factors in their area of responsibility. The group supervisor's CAN reports to the IC should include the following information:

- The conditions in their assigned area.
- Their current actions.
- Any tactical objectives that have been met.
- A needs assessment for their assigned function (or no needs).
- Any significant safety concerns in and around their work area (while this differs considerably from divisions in the hazard zone, there may still be safety issues such as the impact of traffic on water supply operations).

When assigning resources to an established group, the IC must include:

- The location of the assignment.
- The tactical objectives to be addressed.
- The group supervisor that they will be reporting to/working under.

The IC must then contact the group supervisor and inform them what added resources have been assigned to their area.

The IC should avoid automatically assigning more resources to groups. Once the organization is implemented, these group supervisors should report to the IC on the conditions in their area, the actions they are taking and any necessary resources or support (needs). This allows the IC to work on a strategic level, serving as a resource allocator to the groups based on each function's needs.

Group Communications

Group communications may involve communication between companies in the group, between assigned companies and the group supervisor, between the group supervisor and other tactical supervisors (division or group supervisors), and between the group supervisor and command. Face-to-face communications will be used within the group if possible. If radio communications are necessary:

- Company officers or apparatus operators (e.g., engines or tenders) will communicate with the group supervisor using the assigned (non-hazard zone) tactical talk group as needed.
- Group supervisors will communicate directly with command over the assigned hazard zone tactical talk group.