

**C. NIMS**  
**Essex Fire Department**  
**National Incident Management System (NIMS)**

1. Intent and Purpose

- To address the use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) for all calls within the Town of Essex. To establish guidelines for Fire Department personnel when functioning at an incident on behalf of the Essex Fire Department.
- NIMS standardizes incident management processes, protocols, and procedures for use by all responders. NIMS mandates the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) for all calls. NIMS is a comprehensive, national approach to incident management and is applicable at all jurisdictional levels and across disciplines.
- Using Management Best Practices, NIMS-ICS helps to ensure:
  - i. The safety of responders and others.
  - ii. The achievement of tactical objectives.
  - iii. The efficient use of resources.

2. Definitions

- Incident – an occurrence, either caused by human or natural phenomena, that requires response actions to prevent or minimize loss of life, or damage to property and/or the environment.

3. Scope

- The Essex Fire Department and the Town of Essex have adopted NIMS for use at all incidents within the Town of Essex. An Incident Commander will be established for all incidents that the Essex Fire Department responds to. The Incident Commander may be an officer, a firefighter, EMT, Safety Officer, or even a member of an outside organization including, but not limited to the Essex Town Office, Village of Essex Junction Office, Essex Emergency Management, Essex Police Department, Essex Jct. Fire Department, or Essex or Essex Jct. Public Works. The Incident Commander has the overall responsibility of the management of the incident from the onset through termination.

4. Guidelines

- The Incident Command System
  - i. The Essex Fire Department will establish **COMMAND** at all incidents.
  - ii. The first arriving unit will establish **COMMAND**, and the ranking officer or member of that unit will serve as the initial **Incident Commander** to establish **COMMAND**.

- Passing Command
  - i. Circumstances may arise which require the initial commitment of the first arriving company (primary search, interior firefighting, etc). In these situations the Officer or senior member may “Pass Command”. Even if command is passed to a later arriving unit, the first officer or senior member is not relieved of the responsibilities relating to initial size-up and command decisions. The first arriving EFD Officer or senior member is responsible for identifying the nature of the problem and directing all resources until command is established.
  
- Establish Command
  - i. If command is passed, the second arriving EFD Officer or senior member is expected to establish command and assume all responsibilities of the Incident Commander.
  - ii. The Incident Commander should perform a 360 view of the incident. When this is not feasible, the Incident Commander should direct others to perform this for Command, and request updates and information from other personnel.
  - iii. The initial Incident Commander shall remain in command and direct activities until command is transferred or the incident is stabilized and terminated.
  - iv. The Incident Commander will advise Dispatch of the command name. The command name will not change throughout the Incident.
  - v. All communications with Dispatch are directed through the Incident Commander.
  - vi. The Incident Commander is responsible for determining the incident priorities, conducting the on-going size up, initiating incident objectives and assigning tactical operations.
  
- Transferring Command
  - i. The first arriving Chief Officer may assume Command, work in an advisory capacity with the IC, or perform another function as assigned by the IC.
  - ii. The arrival of a ranking officer on the incident scene does not mean that Command is automatically transferred to that officer. Command is only transferred when the Transfer of Command process has been completed. If a higher ranking officer wants to effect a change in the management of the incident, he/she must be present on the scene and then utilize the formal Transfer of Command procedure.

- iii. Transferring Command can be done via radio but should be done after a face-to-face briefing if possible. The transfer should include the current situation, current unit locations, assignments, a review of the command board, and a review of the Incident Action Plan (IAP). The IC will notify dispatch / 1500 Base when the transfer of command is complete. It may be advantageous to have the officer being relieved to remain with the new Incident Commander, in the role of Deputy IC, Operations Section Chief, or Planning Section Chief since this officer established the incident action plan.
  - iv. The Transfer of Command should be utilized both as the emergency escalates and also in the demobilization process as the situation is being brought under control.
- Unified Command
    - i. Unified Command allows agencies with different legal, geographic and functional authorities and responsibilities to work together effectively without affecting individual agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.
    - ii. The Essex Fire Department supports the use of Unified Command for incidents involving multiple agencies who may have jurisdiction over an event.
- Area Command
    - i. A major incident or incidents involving multiple sites and/or command posts may dictate the use of an Area Command structure.
    - ii. An Area Command structure may be set up at the Essex Fire Station or another location to manage emergencies that have spread to multiple regions, towns, or sites. (Example: Public Health Emergencies, Flood with multiple hazard areas, ice storm).
- Termination
    - i. Command should be terminated when the incident has de-escalated to a point where all units have returned to service.
    - ii. The Incident Commander should survey the incident scene to ensure that Command can be terminated safely and effectively.
    - iii. The same standard used to establish Command applies to terminating Command. As long as a unit or units are still on scene, Command should remain in place.
    - iv. The Incident Commander is responsible for ensuring that the necessary paperwork is completed that documents the incident and the actions taken. For hazardous materials incidents, the IAP must be written down and included with the incident paperwork.

## 5. Critical Functions

- Responsibilities
  - i. The Incident Commander is responsible for the following functions as required by the circumstances of the situations:
    1. Assume Command
    2. Initiate and Monitor personnel accountability
    3. Evaluate the situation (size-up)
    4. Initiate, maintain and control the communication process
    5. Develop the overall incident objectives, strategies, and assign resources
    6. Develop an appropriate organization
    7. Coordinate the Transfer of Command if needed
    8. Request and assign additional resources as required
    9. Provide periodic updates
    10. Return resources to service
    11. Terminate Command

## 6. Command Post

- The Command Post should be located in an area that is close enough to the scene to manage resources, but away from the “hot zone”.
- A green light may be used to signify the command post.
- For incidents involving mutual aid response, the Incident Commander should don the appropriate reflective vest and ensure other Command and General Staff do as well.
- Communications between the Incident Commander and 1500 Base / Dispatch should take place on Tac 2, unless circumstances dictate otherwise (example: multiple calls at same time, repeater on back-up power, etc.)

## 7. Resource Tracking

- The Incident Commander should establish an appropriate accountability system based on the needs of the incident.
- The Incident Commander may assign a Safety Officer to perform Accountability of the incident.
- The Incident Commander or Safety Officer may use the tactical command board to track resources and situation status.

## 8. Assignments

- Unless a Safety Officer is established, the Incident Commander is responsible for the safety of all personnel.
- The Incident Commander should appoint Command Staff, General Staff, Branch Directors, and Division/Group Supervisors as needed to maintain a manageable span of control throughout the incident.

## 9. Mutual Aid Response

- When the Essex Fire Department responds to an incident outside the jurisdiction of the EFD, the senior officer / firefighter should report to the command post upon arrival on scene. If **COMMAND** is not yet established, the senior EFD Officer / Firefighter will establish **COMMAND** and function as the IC until a transfer of command has been completed to an officer / firefighter from the authority having jurisdiction.
- When other agencies respond to assist the Essex Fire Department, a senior officer / firefighter may report to the command post to assist the EFD IC.
- A senior officer / firefighter from another agency may be needed at the Command Post to assist in communications via a frequency different from those used by the EFD.

## 10. Training

- All members of the Essex Fire Department should complete IS700 (an introduction to the National Incident Management System) and IS100 (an introduction to the Incident Command System) within one year of joining the EFD.
- All Officers of the Essex Fire Department should complete the National Fire Academy NIMS – ICS for the Fire Service (NIMS 100/200 equivalent) within 1 year of their appointment as an officer.
- The Chief of the Essex Fire Department should complete ICS300 (Intermediate ICS) and IS-800 (an introduction to the National Response Plan).