



Division 01 Administration and Organization

Chapter 03 – Chain-of-Command

March 2009

POLICY

The delegation of authority, the chain-of-command, is established herein to delineate a clear line of responsibility and accountability for administration of the Department. This shall encompass all non-emergency and emergency activities duly undertaken under the auspices of the Department and any of its instrumentality.

DEFINITIONS

Command Officer – A Command Officer is Career or Volunteer Chief Officer.

Duty Officer - An on duty Career Major responsible for immediate oversight of daily operations and all administrative activities during non-business hours.

Volunteer Battalion Chief - A certified volunteer chief officer within a Battalion operating a Volunteer Battalion Program, which reports to the Duty Chief in the chain-of-command. The Radio designation shall be Battalion Chief followed by Battalion number, i.e., “Battalion Chief 806.”

Volunteer Battalion Program - A Volunteer Battalion Program will be operated in those Battalions that do not have a Career Battalion Chief on a 24 – 72 hour shift.

PROCEDURES

1. General Guidelines

The chain-of-command shall be used when operating, directing, and/or participating on any emergency or operational incident in

Prince George's County, or when involved in mutual aid responses to other jurisdictions. It has been established to ensure authority and responsibility for the routine management of fire stations and facilities, as well as coordinating the administrative duties necessary for fiscal matters.

1. The Fire Chief

Authority

The Fire Chief, who is appointed by the County Executive, is responsible for fire prevention, fire suppression, emergency medical services, fire and rescue communications, research and training activities, and coordination of the volunteer fire companies.

Radio designation – “Fire Chief”

Delegation of Authority

The Fire Chief may delegate any of his powers or duties to other fire officials to administer the operations of the Fire/EMS Department.

The authority of all duly appointed career and volunteer officers to command, direct, or act as an officer or agent of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department is delegated as enumerated herein.

3. Chief Officers

Common Responsibility

All Chief Officers shall adhere to established policy and procedures unless there is



compelling and reasonable cause for deviation.

Chief Officers provide leadership, personnel management, and administration of departmental activities. Chief Officers are responsible for providing incident management in accordance with established standards and guidelines. Moreover, Chief Officers must meet or exceed established minimum qualifications.

While intended to be comprehensive, it is not practical to expect that all possible chain of command situations will be addressed herein; therefore, responsible conduct, sound management, common sense and reasonable judgment, respectively, shall be exercised by all members.

Authorized Number of Volunteer Chief Officers

The number of Volunteer Chief Officer positions allocated by the chain-of-command is as follows:

Each volunteer company may have one Volunteer Chief. Each fire station may have one "A" Chief and one "B" Chief.

2. Authorized Positions

Career Lieutenant Colonel (Deputy Chief) - Reports to the Fire Chief; responsible for the leadership and management to a Command, which is comprised of multiple functional areas; *Radio designation - Deputy Chief- followed by assigned number, i.e., "Deputy Chief 801"*

Career Major (Bureau Chief) - Reports to a Lieutenant Colonel or the Fire Chief; responsible for the leadership and management of a functional area; *Radio*

designation - Bureau Chief followed by assigned number, i.e., "Bureau Chief 801"

Volunteer Major – Appointed by the Fire Chief; reports to the Lieutenant Colonel of Emergency Operations; responsibilities are to coordinate the administration of volunteer personnel and fire companies to resolve operational issues and provide a volunteer perspective for the Department’s leadership on operational matters. *Radio designation – "Bureau Chief 820"*

Career Battalion Chief - Reports to a career Major; responsible for the management of a Battalion or appropriate assignment within the Fire/EMS Department; provides administrative coordination of career operations and volunteer station operations through the company Volunteer Chief.

Radio designation - Bureau of Fire/Rescue Operations Battalion Chiefs will use Battalion Chief, followed by Battalion number, i.e., "Battalion Chief 804," all other Battalion Chiefs will use appropriate Bureau numerical radio designations, i.e., "Battalion Chief 815." If a Career Battalion Chief responds on other than his tour of duty, the radio designation will be Battalion and number, i.e., "Battalion 804A." Or as may be indicated in other policies of the Department.

Volunteer Division Chief - Appointed by the Fire Chief; reports to a Duty Chief; responsibilities are to coordinate the administration and management of volunteer personnel and fire companies and to resolve issues; *Radio designation - Division followed by appropriate number, i.e., "Division Chief 801"*

Volunteer Company Chief - A fire company, corporation, or association elects a Volunteer Chief and reports to a designated Battalion Officer; their responsibilities also



include administrative coordination of volunteer and career operations within their station(s); *Radio designation - Chief and company number, i.e., "Chief 801"*

Volunteer Deputy or Assistant Chief termed "A Chief" - Reports to Volunteer Company Chief or appropriate Major when participating in command of incident or as Company Chief; the Volunteer Company Chief assigns non-emergency responsibilities; *Radio designation - title, company number, followed by an "A" suffix, i.e., "Chief 801A"*

Volunteer Deputy or Assistant Chief termed "B Chief" - The B Chief is responsible to the Emergency Incident Commander for duties assigned; when operating as an Emergency Incident Commander, he/she is responsible to the appropriate officers in the chain-of-command; non-emergency responsibilities involve management of volunteer personnel; *Radio designation - title, company number, followed by "B" suffix, i.e., "Chief 801B"*

NOTE: Captains who have successfully completed the requirements to be a Battalion Chief or "B" Chief may act as a Battalion Chief. Radio designation will be Battalion Chief followed by Battalion number, i.e., "Battalion Chief 804A."

Career Captain and Lieutenant - Reports to a Battalion Chief and Volunteer Company Chief

Volunteer Captain, Lieutenant, or Sergeant - Responsible to appropriate Volunteer Company Chiefs and officers in the chain-of-command; they are fire station supervisors who supervise personnel during emergency incident operations.

Chain-of-Command

The following delineates the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department emergency incident chain-of-command from highest –to lowest rank:

- County Fire Chief
- Career Lieutenant Colonel
- Career/Volunteer Major
- Volunteer Division Chief
- First Due Volunteer Company Chief
- First Due Volunteer Company Deputy or Assistant Chief with "A" Chief radio designation
- Battalion Chief /First Due Volunteer "B" Chief
- Other Volunteer Chief Officers (In order listed on assignment)
- Battalion Chief (Other than dispatched on the assignment)
- Captain (In order listed on assignment)
- Lieutenant (In order listed on assignment)
- Sergeant (In the order listed on the assignment)
- Fire Technician (In order listed on assignment)
- Fire Fighter - Certified Level III, II, I, or Paramedic Certified Level II, I (In order listed on assignment)

The ranking officer (career or volunteer) on the scene may assume command of the emergency incident and may relinquish command of the emergency scene to a subordinate officer after the situation is "under control."

Paramedic Supervisors, when available, are responsible to provide technical advice to the Incident Commander regarding patient care. However, the ranking paramedic supervisor on the scene shall have final authority over patient care and disposition.



The first arriving unit, whether an officer or not, shall establish or pass command of the emergency incident, as per General Order 06-20. The first arriving officer may assume command from that first unit without face-to-face transfer, provided adequate information about actions taken to establish control of the emergency situation has been relayed.

5. Conflicting Orders

Emergency Operations

During an emergency incident, if an order contradictory to standing Department orders and written procedures is issued (by a valid officer in the emergency incident chain-of-command) under emergency conditions, the order shall be carried in a safe and expeditious manner.

If questioned, the person issuing such an order shall, soon as possible, prepare a written statement as to the necessity of the contradictory order. He/she shall then present the statement to his/her immediate supervisor in the chain-of-command. The immediate superior shall take note of the statement, adding any appropriate comments, and then immediately forward the statement to the County Fire Chief through the emergency chain-of-command.

Station officers shall not utilize internal command structures that interfere with ongoing emergency incidents and the established incident management system.

Non-Emergency Operations

At no time during the course of daily administration of the Department, shall anyone issue a standing order that is contradictory to policy and procedures established by the Fire Chief. If a contradictory order is issued, the carrying out

of the order shall be held in abeyance until the immediate supervisor of the issuer is contacted for a ruling.

If the immediate supervisor is unable to determine the propriety of the order, the issue shall proceed through the chain-of-command until the question of propriety is settled.

The person making the final decision shall submit a written statement, through the chain-of-command, to the County Fire Chief. The statement shall clearly define the issue, the parties involved, and the basis for deciding the propriety of the order.

6. Orders and Procedures

The Volunteer Company Chief is the only member of a Volunteer Company who may give orders and direction to the Career Station Supervisor. This does not preclude volunteer officers from relaying directions from the Volunteer Company Chief.

If a Volunteer Company Chief desires to delegate his/her supervisory responsibilities to another officer from his/her station, they shall forward the name of such officer, in writing, to the County Fire Chief for approval. The designee would then take the place of the Volunteer Company Chief in the chain-of-command.

Where a Paramedic Unit is assigned to a fire station, the fire officer will be the Station Commander. The Paramedic Officer is directly responsible for the supervision of the Bureau of Advanced Emergency Medical Services' personnel and will coordinate his/her efforts with the Station Commander.

7. Operations

Response



The Fire Chief, Lieutenant Colonels, or Bureau Chiefs may respond to any incident within the boundaries of their areas of responsibility.

Volunteer Company Chiefs and "A" Chiefs may respond as command officers on any alarm or incident to which their companies respond. Multi-station "A Chiefs" may respond with first due authority within the company's response area, i.e., Chief 820A may respond with "A Chief" authority in 845's area.

Volunteer "B" Chiefs may respond as a command officer on any alarm or incident to which their station responds.

During their hours of duty, Volunteer Division Chiefs will be alerted to respond to any multiple alarm incidents within their division, when requested by an on-scene unit, or when a command officer is indicated but not responding to an incident. In addition, they may respond on any alarm in their division which, in their judgment, warrants their response.

The Battalion Chief shall respond on all structural fires, box alarms, gas leaks, multiple alarms, vehicle accidents with entrapment, and extra response rescue incidents. In addition, the Battalion Chief, at his/her option, may respond to any other alarms or incidents within the bounds of their responsibilities.

Emergency Incident Operations

All emergency incident operations will be conducted in accordance with Departmental Policies and Procedures as outlined in the General Orders. Once the incident management system has been established, the Incident Commander will authorize radio returns. Command officers not on the scene shall refrain from making operational

decisions or transmissions about the incident unless there is a demonstrable safety concern.

Investigation of an Emergency Incident

Fire investigators and bomb technicians will coordinate with the incident commander when conducting an investigation. Incident commanders shall support the investigation efforts, and provide the resources necessary to do so.

8. Compliance

All members of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department will comply with this General Order. Failure to do so may result in removal from the chain-of-command and/or appropriate disciplinary action.

REFERENCES

Charter of Prince George's County Schedule of Legislation, Section 13, and pursuant to the authority of the Prince George's County Code, Subtitle 11

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

N/A