

**SAN MARCOS POLICE DEPARTMENT
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

Section Title: Incident Command

General Order: 503

Date Issued: January 17, 2004

Date Revised: January 1, 2006

Effective Date: January 14, 2006

**Issuing Authority: *Howard E. Williams*
Howard E. Williams, Chief of Police**

I. POLICY

San Marcos experiences natural and man-made disasters that require the cooperation of public safety, public utility, and state and federal agencies. The Department subscribes to the National Incident Management System, and Incident Command System policies and procedures are in place and are consistent with the national model. Each agency manages its activities based on the standard incident command structure and coordinates priorities and actions jointly through the unified command. All members of the unified command are equal partners.

II. PURPOSE

The Purpose of General Order 503 is to provide guidelines for managing large events, either planned or emergency, that require the coordination of several agencies.

III. DEFINITIONS

The terms used in General Order 503 are defined as follows, unless otherwise indicated:

- A. Incident Management Format – A strategic planning of off-scene support for acquiring specialized resources to assist on-scene tactical operations.
- B. Single Incident – Contained within and affecting a single political jurisdiction in which a single agency has the responsibility for managing the principal hazard of the incident.
- C. Single Incident Management – On-scene incident decision-making vests in a single Incident Commander who is responsible for developing incident priorities, strategic goals and an action plan with key advisors from on-scene agency command and support staff.
- D. Unified Incident – An incident that involves multiple hazards, or one in which the principal focus is within the purview of more than one public safety agency, or an incident that is situated in more than one political jurisdiction or subdivision.
- E. Unified Incident Management – On-scene incident decision-making vests in a command group consisting of public safety commanders who work together to develop incident priorities, strategic goals, and an integrated action plan.

IV. EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC)

- A. EOC Command consists of senior or executive level public safety command staff, which develops strategic plans to address complex, large-scale incidents.
 - 1. Because the incident command focus changes during the management of incidents, all participating public safety agencies within Unified Command / EOC Command will refer to themselves with identifiers such as “Fire Command”, “EMS Command”, “Police Command”, etc.
 - 2. Geographic location can be added to differentiate multiple ICS operations (i.e. “Airport Fire Command”) in the field setting.
- B. The EOC is a central facility, usually housed at the San Marcos Police Department, that facilitates coordinated decision-making and support for major emergencies.
- C. Unified EOC Command will be established at the EOC by senior or executive command staff for fire, EMS and police. Additional EOC participants are integrated into the operation as required by the EOC Chief.
- D. EOC Command is responsible for developing citywide incident objectives, response priorities, operational policies, resource priorities and requesting assistance from the state and federal governments.
- E. Activations are normally progressive and specific to the purpose for the activation. Any agency that reports to the EOC without being officially activated for EOC duty will be staged in a room away from the EOC operations center.
- F. The EOC deploys an ICS structure to manage its strategic responses to the incident, which may include Unified Command, Operations, Plans, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.
- G. The EOC will be the focus for strategic decision-making in Unified incidents involving multiple sites or the community as a whole.
 - 1. Decision-making at this level involves such things as curfews, emergency ordinances, evacuations, government business closures, incident response priorities, external resource requests, and public information releases.
 - 2. Although most strategic decisions will be made by Unified EOC Command at the EOC, decisions involving such things as government office closures, curfews, or emergency ordinances will be made by the City Manager or Mayor.
 - 3. In an emergency that has officially been declared a disaster, the Mayor has legal authority to direct emergency operations within their respective jurisdictions.
 - 4. In single-site emergencies, such as an aircraft crash or bombing, on-site Incident Management will be the focus of strategic decision-making. The EOC will function in a support role.
- H. In Unified Incident Command, the EOC supports tactical field operations and makes strategic decisions. It is indicated for:
 - 1. An incident with community-wide implications, involving multiple public safety, public health or public utility agencies.

2. An incident requiring broad strategic executive level public safety, public health or public utility agency planning as needed.
 3. An incident requiring specialized resources to support the tactical activities of field operations incident management.
- I. The EOC brings together representatives from all agencies involved with the incident, whether on-site or off-site
 1. EOC representatives communicate with their personnel in the field and at DOCs (communications or control centers) and feed information to the EOC during regular briefings.
 2. A variety of problems, including confused directives, rumors, miscommunication, duplications and omissions, can be detected. In some cases, these can be resolved in the EOC, while in others the EOC advises the Incident Management so that the issue can be corrected at the site.
 - J. The EOC can identify and mobilize resources not available at the scene through other government agencies, disaster relief agencies, and private businesses. Requests for extensive assistance from the state or federal governments must come through the local Emergency Operations Center.
 - K. The EOC is the coordination point for public information activities in area-wide or multiple site incidents.
 1. Public information should be coordinated from the scene in single-site incidents; the EOC can assist Incident Management and the PIO in disseminating information.
 2. On-site warning activities that require the use of door-to-door notifications, emergency vehicle PA systems, or automated telephoning systems are controlled by Incident Management.
 - L. The primary communication between the EOC and field incident sites is with the Incident Management, particularly concerning response policies, incident objectives, and resources priorities. However, there may also be direct communications of a coordination nature, between comparable sections in the EOC and at the scene. For example, the field Logistics Section may communicate directly with the Logistics Section in the EOC regarding specific resource availability. The Plans Section at the scene may get a weather forecast from the Plans Section at the EOC. The Operations representatives at the EOC will need regular activity updates from Operations representatives in the field

V. INCIDENT MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. On scene incident management is responsible for managing the event in the field.
- B. Incident Management will establish a single Command Post for operations.
- C. The command post will be responsible for the following:
 1. Ensuring that all public safety agencies representatives and their positions are easily recognized by the appropriate identifying incident management vest,

2. Ensuring that each agency uses its agency type (i.e. fire, police, EMS) and the term “command” to identify themselves within the Unified Command structure,
 3. Establishing an overall incident management organization,
 4. Identifying strategic incident objectives,
 5. Establishing and maintaining safety programs including safety officers familiar with or experienced in specific tactical operations,
 6. Conducting and leading planning meetings with Command and General Staffs, and
 7. Developing a single, written, joint Incident Action Plan.
- D. Agency Incident Management personnel must be sensitive to and understand that turf issues are not trivial and must be managed as part of an integrated incident management system. Agencies have legal roles and responsibilities, which they cannot legitimately relinquish.
- E. Incident Management personnel must delegate tactical decision-making to the Operations Section.
- F. Incident Management must focus on overall incident problems; they must not focus on one part of the problem to the exclusion of others.

VI. UNIFIED COMMAND

- A. Members of the Unified Command will assist other members of the command in determining overall strategic objectives, priorities, and needed resources from the perspective of their discipline.
- B. The Unified Command will:
1. Determine objectives, priorities, and needed resources pertaining to their areas of responsibility,
 2. Assure that Incident Management responsibilities listed above are carried out, and
 3. Stop actions that the agency’s command staff feels are dangerous to its personnel.

VII. STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

- A. Strategic decision-making is normally a process of facilitating group decision-making and coordinating among agencies.
- B. Decisions need to involve all public safety agencies regardless of their apparent involvement in the incident.
- C. In any major incident, representatives from the jurisdictional Fire, EMS, and Police agencies should have representatives assigned to the Command Section at the command post as part of Unified Command.
1. Other agencies may be asked to assign representatives if needed.
 2. Agency representatives who are not part of Unified Command report to a Liaison Officer.

- D. Incident Management should hold regular briefings involving the Command Section and General Staff (Section Chiefs from Operations, Plans, Logistics, and Finance). These briefings should entail reports from key agencies operating at the scene and review of Action Plans developed by the Incident Management and Plans Sections.

VIII. COMMAND STAFF

A. Public Information Officer

- 1. The Public Information Officer (PIO), with guidance from Unified Command, will develop an incident media policy that includes specifying what information may or may not be released.
- 2. The PIO will establish a media briefing area, which should be near the Command Post, but isolated from it.
 - a. All media interviews will be conducted at or near this area unless cleared by the Unified Command Group.
 - b. Media briefings are conducted with the PIO present.
- 3. The PIO will act to promote a unified public information strategy by coordinating the release of accurate, timely, and consistent information.
- 4. In the event of a major disaster such as a bombing or aircraft crash, the PIO is to establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) in a nearby location to accommodate intensive, long-term local and network media coverage.

B. Liaison Officer(s)

- 1. The Liaison Officer will be assigned by Incident Management.
- 2. The Liaison Officer is responsible for coordinating agency representatives from local, state, federal, and private agencies that have responded to the command post.

C. Safety Officer(s)

- 1. Incident Management will identify a ground Safety Officer and will identify an air Safety Officer if helicopter operations are part of the incident.
- 2. Safety Officers must be selected based on their expertise with the tactical operations being conducted. Depending upon the extent of the operation, duties may need to shift from one safety officer to another.
- 3. Safety Officers are authorized immediately to suspend operations that may be dangerous to response personnel, patients, or the public.
- 4. If Incident Management does not appoint a Safety Officer, each agency's commander retains the responsibility for safety of everyone on the emergency scene.
- 5. More than one Safety Officer may be identified, depending on the complexity of the operation.

D. Operations Section

- 1. The Operations Section is responsible for developing tactics and plans to meet the incident objectives established by Incident Management.

2. The Operations Chiefs become the key tactical decision-makers in large complex operations.
3. There may be one or more sections, depending on the incident, to avoid becoming a bottleneck for decision-making or communications.
4. The Operations Chiefs are not required to authorize all requests for resources from below, but need to be aware of the need and the request.
5. All activities associated with providing emergency response services should be part of Operations; they should not be delegated to other sections such as Logistics and Plans.
6. The Operations Section is managed by one or more Chiefs depending on the complexity of the incident and the number of agencies on-scene.
 - a. The Operations Chiefs must maintain close coordination even though they may physically be located in different places.
 - b. Each Operations Chief will direct branches responsible for related functions or focus or as assigned by the Incident Management Group.
 - c. No branch will report to more than one specific Operations Chief.

IX. INCIDENT ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

- A. Incident organization below the General Staff level may take many forms depending on local procedures and the nature of the incident. Standard ICS models allow substantial latitude in organizational terminology.
- B. Branches
 1. Branches are major components within Sections (Operations, Logistics, etc.)
 2. Branches may be established to maintain acceptable span-of-control when the number of groups or sectors becomes too large for the Section Chief.
 3. Branches may be established to manage major functions such as medical, law enforcement, evacuation.
 4. Branches may be geographical if there are too many sectors or there are distinct geographical areas within a single incident.
 5. Branches are supervised by Directors.
- C. Sectors
 1. Sectors are Operations elements assigned to specific horizontal geographical areas such as sides of a building or areas of land.
 2. Sectors are designated by letters of the alphabet or the military phonetic alphabet (alpha, bravo).
 3. Building sides are designated clockwise when viewed from above beginning with the front of the building as determined by the street address.

4. Sectors are supervised by Supervisors.

D. Divisions

1. Divisions are Operations elements assigned to specific vertical geographical areas such as floors of a building.
2. Divisions are designated by numbers. In buildings, Division numbers correspond to the building numbering scheme. Division 1 is the ground or main level as viewed from the main entrance of the building. There is no Division 13 if the building does not designate a 13th floor. Levels below Division 1 are termed Subdivision 1, Subdivision 2, etc.
3. Divisions are supervised by Supervisors.

E. Groups

1. Groups are responsible for specific functions.
2. Groups are not limited to specific geographical areas.
3. Groups are generally designated in the Operations Section
4. Groups are supervised by Supervisors.