RESOURCE ALLOCATION
PROJECTING RESOURCE NEEDS

Match Resources to Problem

The ability to predict and forecast reasonably is a trait that every fire officer must develop if they are to become an effective IC. Matching resources to needs in day-to-day operations can be done effectively by almost any experienced firefighter. The residential fire, the vehicle accident, the hazardous chemical release, and the medical response are common occurrences for most fire departments. However, the task becomes more difficult when incidents occur that require interaction with outside agencies or have the potential for rapid escalation. The highrise fire with associated logistical demands, the wildland interface fire requiring enormous and diverse resources, or the hazardous materials spill requiring a massive evacuation are a few situations that can challenge a fire officer. At the World Trade Center incident, on 09/11/01, many resources were needed from various agencies. Most were not from the New York City Fire Department. The proactive IC must consider which type and how many resources are needed to safely handle the situation. When these major incidents develop, it is too late to begin developing the organizational skills required by an IC. If we are to be effective, we must be able to forecast our needs before the actual need arises. This includes support functions such as rehab, planning, demobilization, and providing relief crews. A "rule of thumb" is three support personnel will be needed for each one firefighter actively engaged in suppression activities.

As fire officers, we must be able to digest information from preplans, bystanders, and our own senses and recognize existing problems as well as the probabilities. This will enable us to determine our mode of operation, offensive or defensive, as well as how labor-intensive our tactics can become.

There is a very real danger in responding with insufficient resources. A prudent IC considers the possibility of injuries, relief, building collapse, vehicle stabilization, rapid fire spread and other unforeseen demands on tactical and logistical resources. If resources respond and are not used, the worst case is that a few gallons of fuel are wasted. The apparatus and personnel can remain available from Staging for other emergency calls.

Resource Availability

In evaluating the resource demands of the incident, we must consider availability. Response time is a major concern. Is our second-alarm assignment 10 minutes away or 30 minutes away? Time delays will certainly influence when we might call for an additional alarm. When we
calculate the need for more resources, we must consider not only travel
time, but also the time it takes them to become operationally effective. In
the case of wildland fires and other natural disasters, resources often travel
great distances requiring rest and food before they can be utilized. Major
incidents such as earthquakes, hurricanes, wildland, and airplane crashes
may place such a demand on surrounding jurisdictions that nearby mutual
aid is unavailable. This will greatly influence the IC's strategic decisions.

Whatever incident we may be dealing with, regardless of the magnitude,
we must not neglect the protection of the rest of the community.
Therefore, in developing response procedures, contingencies must be
developed to cope with simultaneous incidents. History has shown that in
the event of a natural disaster, each community probably will be on its
own during the initial operational period.

**Resource Capability**

The capability of responding resources must also be addressed.
Realistically, what can be expected from the personnel and equipment
already committed to the scene? What can be expected from additional
resources that might be summoned? Considerations might include staffing
levels, pumping capacity, laddering capabilities, tools, equipment, and
training levels. This is especially true if automatic aid or mutual aid is
involved. If ICs are going to use resources effectively, they must
understand the capabilities of the personnel and equipment that will be
responding. What is the level of training? Are the personnel EMT-D
certified? What is the level of haz mat training? Is there a standardized
staffing level? Is the equipment compatible? Many of these important
issues can be established through pre-emergency planning and mutual-aid
agreements.

**Weather**

For those departments in mild climates, this may not be a major
consideration. However, for organizations that are faced with extremes in
weather conditions, this is a major concern and often becomes a major
challenge. The extreme heat, of the southwest, increases firefighter
fatigue and the potential for heat exhaustion. The bitter winters of the
northeast expose firefighters to problems associated with the cold such as
frostbite, dangerously icy conditions, difficult driving conditions and
frozen equipment.
Preplan

Sound preplanning policies can enhance operational efficiency and personnel safety at an incident. Response assignments can be matched with the incident potential. For example, occupancies that have been identified as target hazards in your community may have an additional truck added to the standard response. Potential hazardous materials situations may have a hazardous materials unit or technical specialist added to the response card. If a particular district has a poor water supply, large-diameter hose might be issued to the first-due and second-due companies, a tanker added to the response, or a contingency developed to boost water pressure in water mains in the event of a fire in that area. Alternative water supplies, such as water tenders or portable tanks, must also be considered with the initial dispatch.

Building construction, design, and density also may dictate resources. The "lapping" potential in multistory building fires, unprotected openings and voids in renovated properties, and the lack of built-in fire protection systems are just a few examples of design features that can overwhelm the first responders. The composition of a particular facility or section of the community could have a negative effect on firefighters or scene safety. An abandoned warehouse of ordinary construction could dictate a particular mode of operation. Responsible ICs continually evaluate the risk versus benefit of a situation. Strategies will be affected by structural integrity, occupancy, access and fire load.

Finally, we must consider developing prearranged agreements. It cannot be emphasized enough that the time to plan is before an emergency occurs. Planning after an incident is sure to draw community criticism. Mutual-aid and automatic-aid agreements must be developed and sanctioned, including number of apparatus, staffing levels, and training levels that can be expected in specific situations. These agreements may range from auto-aid agreements at the local level to mutual-aid pacts at the state level. Depending on jurisdictional needs, agreements may even be developed with private organizations such as Amtrak or a large industrial facility with fire brigade.

Agreements with local contractors for special equipment, such as lumber, lights and portable toilets, can be useful. Prearranged agreements with 24-hour restaurants or fast food facilities will enhance rehab efforts; reduce stress and confusion during an incident. Lists of equipment, facilities, and contact people should be kept in the Dispatch Center and updated periodically.
ARRIVAL AND ASSIGNMENT

Arrival of Initial Alarm

First-arriving Company Officers (COs) have only two courses of action. They either assume command or pass command. There is a general rule of thumb for deciding which action is appropriate. When the initial arriving officer is confronted with a situation that requires that he/she be directly involved in tactical operations, e.g., a rescue has to be made or the victim will perish, or with the officer's assistance the crew can immediately control or effectively stop the incident from escalating, and there are limited personnel on the first unit to perform the tactical operation safely without the officer being part of it, then “Passing Command” is an option. When command is passed, it should be passed to the next arriving unit rather than a specific company number such as Engine 50, Truck 14.

An IC should begin immediately to build the Incident Command System (ICS) organization upon arrival. This should be done without neglecting to handle the specific problem at the incident. The organization can be developed on paper to meet projected needs. Positions can be filled as additional resources arrive. A good field commander never loses sight of the immediate life-safety and exposure problems.

The staging of personnel and equipment for immediate use also should be addressed through policies or Standard Operating Guideline (SOGs). One option is to use a Level 1 and a Level 2 Staging. In this method, initial/primary Staging refers to where the uninvolved first-alarm assignment units are located in the vicinity of the incident. During primary Staging, apparatus should locate to the best tactical advantage, in relationship to a water source, the fire building, and intersections allowing for complete maneuverability. Level 2 Staging is much more formal. The IC designates a specific location and a Staging Area Manager is appointed. Once there is a Staging Area Manager, arriving resources will be able to check-in and wait for an assignment. At times specialized apparatus may be directed to bypass Staging and report directly to a Division or Group Supervisor.

Assignment of Initial Alarm

Inexperienced fire officers can become overwhelmed by the demands of an incident if they have not been trained properly in size-up procedures, methods for establishing command, and system for giving assignments. Tactical priorities are affected by resource availability and capability. An IC must size up the situation quickly, recognize the needs, and establish priorities based on the responding resources. Planning and organizing are
required skills of an IC. One of the most significant challenges facing IC's is that of quickly gathering valid information as conditions unfold. In reality, some tactical tasks will have to be carried out by personnel and apparatus arriving on the second or third alarms. It is important to establish primary objectives and make assignments in a logical manner. The IC’s job is to provide adequate personnel and equipment to carry out the critical tasks. Trying to stretch resources too thin by piecemeal allocation introduces unnecessary dangers. By calling for help early some risk to personnel and an inability to meet the incident objectives can be avoided. Additional resources must be ordered when the need is forecasted. Waiting until a second alarm is needed before ordering it increases the likelihood of needing a third alarm.

**Additional Resources**

Staging may be established at any time; however, once resources beyond a first-alarm assignment have been ordered, a formal Staging Area should be established. It is important that the location of the Staging Area is broadcast to all units and that the Staging Area Manager is formally designated. The Staging location should be large enough to accommodate personnel and equipment in an orderly fashion and still allow for easy movement in and out of the Staging Area. Large parking lots, schoolyards, or wide streets that have been blocked off are ideal. Under ideal conditions company or crews assigned to Staging would be capable of being operational in three minutes.

Clear policies and procedures should be instituted indicating how Staging should be established and who can request additional resources. The minimum level of resources to keep on standby in Staging should be considered. For example, a policy might state, "a minimum of two engines and one truck will be available in Staging at all times." When it falls below that number, the Staging Area Manager, who works directly for the IC, unless the Operation Section is activated, will request additional resources.

Another important issue for responder health and safety at the incident scene is the establishment of a rest and rehab area. Responder rehabilitation is a function of the Logistics Section. If Logistics has not been established, it remains the responsibility of the IC. R&R becomes critical on labor intensive incidents, under extreme weather conditions, or for incidents of long duration. Again, the location should be broadcast to all units and should be established a safe distance from the incident. This helps prevent injuries from the falling debris of the incident, carbon monoxide or personnel wandering around the perimeter without an
Medics can evaluate emergency personnel and provide necessary rehydration and nourishment.

SOGs should be developed to cover not only the "how" and "where" of establishing responder rehab, but also how personnel will be tracked.

- When do companies go to responder rehab?
- How is the check-in/check-out accomplished?
- Where do company/crews go when they check out of rehab?
- How are units reassigned?

Altering the Incident Action Plan (IAP) may require additional resources.

Strategy determines what will be done to control the incident. Tactics establish how and where the incident will be controlled. An implementation plan specifies who is going to do the work and when it will be done. The planning process cannot be overstated. The IAP designates a definite course of action to address all phases of incident command. An IAP arranges activities ahead of time as tactics are accomplished. The IAP covers all tactical and support activities that will occur at the incident. Having an IAP reduces the possibility of overlooking critical portions of an incident. A proper IAP creates a proactive mode of operation. Components of an IAP would include a diagram of the structure, objectives of the IC, an organization chart, and a summary of resources ordered.

As with any plan, some periodic evaluation is required. You must continually determine whether or not the tasks are reducing the magnitude of the incident. Are tactics being performed as ordered? Are resources sufficient to accomplish tactics? Will the tactics being performed meet strategic goals and tactical objectives?

Evaluation requires accurate information. What does the IC personally observe? What do COs see, feel, and hear? Feedback or progress reports from subcommands keeps the IC aware of current conditions.

Modify the IAP when necessary. "If it's working, don't fix it," but don't live with an intolerable situation. Changes or modifications must be communicated to all affected personnel. Even after the modifications are implemented, the evaluation process continues throughout the incident.
DEMobilization

Throughout the years, the fire service has attempted to improve the delivery of emergency services with only a slight focus on the return of resources. With the emphasis on preparation and training for the escalation and control phases of the incident, it is very easy to neglect the de-escalation phase. However, the de-escalation phase must be coordinated and completed in a cost-effective, efficient, and safe manner.

Definition: Demobilization is the orderly de-escalation of an incident after it is declared under control. This is a systematic process of returning personnel apparatus and equipment in a safe and effective manner. This process takes into consideration the needs of the incident, fatigue factors and the needs of the community.

When Does Demobilization Occur?

The de-escalation phase of the incident begins when the IC, in consultation with the Planning Section and the Operations Section, determines that the incident is under control. The Planning Chief should anticipate a de-escalation phase and start to prepare a written demobilization plan as the incident is being brought under control.

Advantages of Organized Demobilization

There are many advantages to organized demobilization. First, it ensures the orderly, safe, and cost-effective movement of personnel from the scene. If the demobilization plan is effective, there will be very little chaos on the scene. Each unit will leave the fireground systematically. By organizing each unit to pick up separately, there will be less chance to lose equipment or get misdirected information at the scene. We all have seen incidents where equipment is lost or picked up by another unit and it takes a week or two (if ever) before all equipment is back in place.

With an effective demobilization plan, there will be sufficient personnel left at the scene to complete any unfinished tasks. If special equipment is needed on the scene, arrangements can be made, in advance, to retain it until it is no longer needed.

During a major incident, many other sections of a community or region are left without adequate fire protection coverage. When planning for demobilization, this must be considered, and units should be released from the scene to cover vacated districts. This is a major concern when mutual-aid departments are involved. Releasing units as soon as possible allows...
them to return to their unprotected jurisdictions. This also helps to maintain interdepartmental rapport, and to ensure long-term cooperation.

**First-in, First-out Policy**

When considering releasing units to cover other jurisdictions, consider the physical condition of the first-arriving companies. Can they continue to perform safely until the incident is terminated? In cases where the first-in crews have worked very hard, they deserve a rest, so it is better to send them back first, even if they must operate in another running district. Avoid the trap of sending back units that have traveled the farthest, or returning units to their own running districts. It would be better to allow them to go into service in their own areas, but releasing the first crews in a reasonable time is more important. For consideration and safety of fire personnel, the "first-in, first-out" approach should be considered. In long and complicated operations, those crews that arrived first should leave first.

It is not logical and can be very disappointing to tired firefighters who were initial responders to see the second and third alarm personnel leaving the scene while the physically demanding and dirty cleanup tasks are left for them to complete. The mindset of "owning" the incident must give way to the rational thinking of personnel care and property conservation.

**Consider Overtime Costs**

Another factor that must be addressed is overtime pay for crews who remain after their normal working hours. The Fair Labor Standards Act affects the limited budgets of the fire service. An IC will consider workers that might have to be paid overtime. This could require holding activities while waiting to exchange personnel. However, the efficiency or safety of the emergency scene should never be comprised.

**Why Demobilization is not Always Effective**

Usually when demobilization fails to be orderly or ends up in total confusion, it is the result of ineffective planning by the IC. Often, demobilization is deemed a low priority. Most firefighters are "action-oriented" enjoy the challenge of mitigating an emergency call, but lack the experience in creating a meaningful demobilization plan.
Accomplishing Demobilization

The saying "If you need them now, and haven't already called them, it's too late," holds true in the demobilization phase. Personnel should be selected before they are needed. Allow personnel enough time to formulate an effective plan is the key to "winding down" or "taking up." The amount of time will vary from incident to incident, depending on the size and complexity, but the demobilization plan must be completed before it is needed.

The demobilization plan must have specific goals with a clear timetable for results. It must be specify the units involved. When the plan is developed it must be distributed to everyone involved or it will surely fail. When companies/crews are not notified of their duties and timetables, the results will be confusion and missed assignment.

The size of the demobilization plan depends on the size of the incident, number of personnel, type of apparatus, amount of equipment, and remaining tasks. At small incidents, the plan can be prepared by the IC and transmitted verbally to other supervisors who need the information. At large incidents, the plan must be extensive, written copies must be distributed, and records of implementation must be kept.

In formulating a demobilization plan, it is important to provide good information and distribution. The individual assigned to the demobilization position should have knowledge of the department's SOGs as they pertain to the release of apparatus, personnel and equipment. Also, a basic knowledge of the SOGs of mutual-aid departments involved in the incident is required. This "background knowledge" will facilitate the release of apparatus, personnel and equipment to their departments in the appropriate method. Acknowledging and following other departments' SOGs will help guarantee future cooperation among departments.

In most instances, the information needed can be obtained from the Planning, Operations, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Sections. Only on larger incidents will the Finance/Administration Section be organized, but if there is one, it will have information concerning which units need to be released as soon as possible to reduce the cost of the operation. Logistics can furnish information on the location of the Responder Rehab area along with a list of specialized equipment such as communications equipment and canteen service. Logistics will be responsible to have a transportation plan for moving apparatus, personnel and equipment around the incident. The Operations Section, which is usually in place after more than 20 companies are operating at the scene, normally will furnish the largest amount of tactical information needed to form a complete demobilization plan. Most of the information needed to
formulate the demobilization plan can be obtained from an accurate status board, which should show all units on the scene, their location, and their latest status. It will indicate if the units are working, in reserve, or in a support function.

Considerations for Demobilization

When preparing a demobilization plan, the first and most important consideration is the safety of personnel. Tired firefighters are more susceptible to injury. Adequate personnel and equipment must remain on the scene to accomplish remaining strategic goals and tactical objectives in a safe manner.

Provision must be made for changes of the Command and General Staff throughout the demobilization procedure. Command must be maintained at the scene until the fire department leaves the scene. It is unrealistic to believe a fire chief or any one individual can be an effective decision maker for more than one operational period.

Personnel safety is the most important consideration throughout an incident. During demobilization, the IC has more effective control of the scene and can concentrate on safety aspects. The IC always must consider the effect of weather conditions on personnel. In extreme heat and extremely high or low humidity, firefighters must be relieved more often. Fluids and a nearby shelter must be available. Extreme cold, or low chill factors because of wind, rain, or snow will affect the need for relief personnel. Whenever possible, use "first-in, first-out," policy when relieving personnel.

During the cleanup or demobilization period, personnel may disregard safety SOGs. Keep the Incident Safety Officer (ISO) position filled until physical hazards are reduced. If air monitoring equipment is available, the scene should be monitored for carbon monoxide and other toxic gases. Often carbon monoxide levels are highest during cleanup and breathing protection must be provided for all personnel. Personnel must not work in contaminated areas without self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) until the areas are no longer dangerous.

If the fire building must be assessed for structural stability, a structural engineer with the proper survey equipment could be required. Most building inspection departments have qualified personnel available, or know where to obtain this outside resource.

The incident scene must be kept safe and secure during the investigation, to maintain the proper chain of custody for evidence. When an investigation is conducted, fire personnel must remain at the site until the investigative process is completed. If occupancy on the scene is not
continuous, any evidence will not be admissible in court, or a search warrant will be required to return to the scene. If fire personnel leave the scene and return later with a search warrant, any evidence will be questionable in court. Law enforcement officers or security agencies should be used as much as possible to secure the incident site during demobilization.

**Termination Report**

During the demobilization phase, the termination status report will be made. The IC is responsible for making the termination report. Departmental SOGs vary from requiring the termination status report when the first units are released from the scene after the fire is under control, to giving the termination status report as the last unit on the scene leaves and terminates command.

Department SOGs determine when the termination report will be given and what information it must contain. Some departments require a full report containing status of all units on the scene, while others cover just the last unit clearing the scene, and report that the incident is clear of all fire personnel.

The termination report will contain

- The status of all units still on the scene when command is terminated. This includes all units available for service and units unavailable, such as those going to a repair shops for maintenance.

- All department equipment that are left on the scene such as fans, pumps and salvage covers.

- Any remaining activities at the scene such as investigation or media coverage. One fire department has a policy that all members of the department will visit the scene of a line of duty death to get a "first-hand" observation of conditions and circumstances. This policy can dispel rumors before they begin to destroy department morale.

- Status of security at the scene, if needed. Includes report of any fire personnel left at the scene for security reasons, or to whom the security was turned over (owner, security agency, law enforcement).

- All information needed for department to return to normal activities.
INTERAGENCY RESOURCES

Recognizing the Need

The need for interagency assistance exists, to some degree, at almost every incident to which fire departments respond. This assistance can be traffic control by a law enforcement officer, resources from other fire departments under mutual-aid agreements, or support from government or private agencies with special equipment and expertise. Regardless of what the form for interagency assistance, it can have a dramatic effect on the incident. Outside agencies allow fire department's personnel to carry out the specific tasks that they are trained to perform. Failure or unwillingness to recognize the need and to obtain assistance can overload the IC and reduce operational effectiveness. Interagency communication and cooperation is the cornerstone of a diverse special operation. In order to be successful, disaster planning must involve public and private organizations involved in the emergency services field.

Each jurisdiction needs complete and approved plans. These plans must clearly delineate the chain of command and functional responsibility. Whoever has a specific function on a day-to-day basis would, in almost all cases, have the command function at the time of a natural or man-made disaster. During an emergency the IC cannot get bogged down in turf battles. Not only is getting interagency cooperation our responsibility, but it is the fire departments duty.

Since interagency assistance can be vital to the final outcome of an emergency, Command Officers must be aware of which agencies are available and what specific help they can provide. Identifying capacity ahead of time can minimize confusion at the incident scene.

Fire departments and other agencies that might work together at emergency incidents should plan together to identify roles and responsibilities when resources are shared, and to ensure a smooth interface during large-scale operations. Training should, when possible, include other agencies that are expected to provide support as a means of testing readiness and compatibility.

Effective response to a large-scale emergency or disaster situation will require commitment and cooperation from a variety of agencies. Usually, the need for interagency assistance increases with the size or complexity of the incident. In some cases the need for outside help may extend to state and federal resources. Many times, because of the nature of the emergency, the fire department may be in charge of the incident initially, but later may transfer command to another agency and assume an appropriate support role.
Even though a mutual agreement has been reached with other agencies to provide support assistance, at the time of an incident they may not be available. This can occur when the emergency directly affects several agencies or a region. They must commit their resources to problems within their own areas of responsibility. Because this may occur, contingency plans should be developed to identify alternate sources of critical assistance needs.

**Developing Interagency Interface**

Interagency cooperation must be planned in order to reduce conflict, confrontation, and confusion during an emergency. It is negligent to wait until an incident occurs before determining what roles outside agencies will play or what services they can provide. Effective cooperation requires research, cross-training, and most importantly, drills. Joint training exercises are the best method to familiarize and evaluate each agency's preparedness.

**Mutual Aid/Automatic Aid**

Mutual aid is a system where organizations share resources in time of need. Some of the issues that this system must consider are

- Formal agreements--Written or unwritten, between two or more agencies.
- Initiation--Who has the authority to request mutual aid?
- Response--What is the commitment (i.e., two engines, three trucks, one medic unit, hazardous materials team, water rescue boats, mass decontamination unit, etc.)?
- No response--What conditions would allow a participating agency to deny aid when requested?
- Liability--Establish prearranged determination of legal issues, i.e., hold-harmless clause.
- Communication--Establish a workable communications system, i.e., common terminology and common frequencies.
- Command--Who is in charge of what aspect of the incident?
Today, nearly every community in the country has some form of mutual aid or automatic aid. Some of these pacts are simple verbal agreements between two neighboring fire chiefs. Others are so extensive that they encompass hundreds of communities and thousands of personnel. They range from one-page agreements to massive legal documents.

**Formal Agreements**

Whether you have a written, formal agreement will depend on the requirements or constraints of your particular area or governmental entity. Many regions have agreements for setting up Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC) and designated Emergency Operation Centers (EOC).

When drafting written agreements, it usually is prudent to have the assistance of legal counsel to assure that issues of liability, risk, legality, and in some cases, reimbursement, are written properly to avoid future conflict.

Before entering into a formal agreement, all parties must understand, accept, endorse, and approve all provisions contained in the document.

The agreement should contain provisions for withdrawal by any parties with proper notice (usually 60 to 90 days).

**Liability**

Liability issues usually cause the most concern when drafting the agreements. Questions of which party is responsible for lost or damaged equipment, injuries, deaths, food, fuel, supplies, and repairs should be spelled out clearly in the document. Special provisions are needed when either party is negligent. The negligent party is usually liable, regardless of the jurisdiction.

**Operations**

It is critical that emergency operations are a well-thought-out agreement on roles, relationships and responsibilities. The IC will need to know the type of support that is available beyond the boundaries of the community. Responding units should report to a Staging Area for assignment and not the Command Post (CP). "Who's in charge?" problems are nonexistent, when command responsibilities are predetermined and SOGs are followed. SOGs for commanding a hazardous material incident, mass casualty incidents, terrorism event, and water relay operations should be adopted, enforced, and used in joint training exercises.
Also important for effective incident management are standardized equipment. Equipment such as hose thread sizes, nozzles, and air cylinders should be interchangeable between mutual aid companies.

**Communications**

Communications for units responding to a mutual-aid incident range from hand signals, runners on bicycles, to multi-frequency radio networks. Good communication is an extremely critical element of effective mutual-aid operations.

The ability to identify quickly whether a responding unit is a pumper, truck, ambulance or staff vehicle will assist the IC in developing strategy and tactics without wasting time trying to figure out the type of unit that is expected on the fireground. All units in a mutual-aid plan should be identifiable by a simple numbering system. An example is a four-digit number assigned to each unit. The first two numbers signify the city, the third number would be the station assigned, and the fourth would be the type of unit. For example, 1 = pumper; 2 = truck; 3 = haz mat, etc. The ability of the IC to communicate with all working units will enhance operations, increase firefighter safety, and improve overall fireground management.

**Training**

Training is unquestionably the backbone of an effective mutual-aid system. Realistic and timely practice will allow coordination to attain peak performance levels. Without training, you will have only a "paper" system. Training develops skills and teamwork that is critical in maintaining community confidence in the delivery of emergency services.

**Concerns**

Mutual aid has many advantages. It can provide savings for taxpayers by not duplicating apparatus and equipment that is available from a nearby community. It also can provide specialized resources and additional staffing that otherwise would not be available to the IC.

It is important to request aid only when needed and to release units from other jurisdictions as quickly as feasible so the system remains viable.
The priority is the protection of the community that you serve. If a community is vacated, the plan must provide for move-ups into unprotected areas.

Mutual aid is not a giveaway program. It should not be used as a crutch for departments with insufficient staff, inadequate equipment or lack of commitment by elected officials. Each department must strive to provide quality, first-level, day-to-day protection at home. It is only after this responsibility is met that mutual aid agreements will be successful.

Mutual aid gives us advantages in liability protection, operations coordination, communications clarification, and training support. Mutual aid must be implemented through a formal agreement. These rules, regulations, and SOGs must be updated to be effective. Mutual aid plans are applied and refined through practice.

RESOURCE AND SITUATION STATUS

Readily Available Information

Effective incident management requires accessible information. Incident conditions must be assessed.

• What are the significant problems?
• Where are they located?
• Are problems being solved?
• What resources are committed to the incident?
• Where are resources located or assigned?
• What does my command organization resemble?
• What command, tactical and logistical assignments have been made?
• What responsibilities have been delegated?

The Decision Making Process

A resource and situation status system is a tool that can assist in the decision making process. It can help us determine strategy and select tactics. It can provide a visual picture of the overall incident, as well as
apparent problems and possible solutions. If used correctly, it can show the structure of the command organization. It will identify the geographical and functional assignments that have been made or may be required.

It can help with determining the level of resources required. It provides a record of resource status. It shows resources on scene, resources that have been assigned, and resources that have been requested and are responding.

It allows for a systematic evaluation of the IAP and facilitates modification or changes. It provides accurate information needed during the Transfer of Command process. It minimizes the need for verbal exchanges and reduces the opportunity to overlooking critical information.

It is useful in developing and monitoring the demobilization plan. And, finally, it provides a historical record for "after actions" such as incident reports, documentation on overtime and post-incident analysis (PIA).

**Sample Resource and Situation Status System**

There are many different resource status systems in use throughout the fire service. Individual systems are developed to fit the needs of the particular departments.

This sample system is presented as an example of how a system can be structured. It provides for a record and status of resources committed to the incident, displays command and staff assignments, and serves as a visual display of incident conditions, and functions as a checklist of various resources or activities that may be applicable to the specific incident.

At a large-scale or complex incident, the maintenance of system records should be delegated. The IC has many responsibilities and other duties that could suffer if he/she becomes involved with recordkeeping. Many departments delegate the responsibility for maintaining status records to a chief's aide or another trained individual assigned to CP duties. The recording of resources and status is a Planning Section function. It is important that the Planning function is adequately staffed to fulfill this responsibility.

Most systems provide for:

- record of resources committed to the incident;
- assignments that have given to responding or on-scene units;
- resources available on scene at Staging;
• an area for creating a visual display of incident conditions; and
• functional checklist of various resources and/or activities that may be applicable to the incident.

Some systems use the same form in two different sizes:

• A smaller form is used for small incidents, carried in the command vehicle, and initiated during response.

• The larger form is used for large-scale or complex incidents, and the information is transferred from the small form.

Some departments have separate forms that have been designed for and are used on specific categories of incidents, i.e., highrise, mass casualty, hazardous materials, wildland, and special operations.