

4 PERSONNEL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 Accountability procedures enhance the safety of firefighters operating on emergency incidents by providing the Incident Commander with a system to track the number of members and their areas of operation. This information is vital, especially when an evacuation occurs or a serious event happens that requires immediate accounting for all members involved.
- 4.1.2 The Personnel Accountability System is initiated when the first unit arrives on the scene and continues until the IC determines it is no longer necessary. Accountability responsibilities expand as the Incident Command System (ICS) expands. Accountability procedures shall be strictly followed to ensure the effectiveness of the system and the safety of all members.
- 4.1.3 The Personnel Accountability System in no way reduces the Company Officer's primary responsibility to supervise crew members, provide for their safety, and maintain communication with Command.
- 4.1.4 Passports, unit rosters, and unit command boards shall be considered part of apparatus inventory and shall be maintained as such. Name tags shall be considered an issued item of personal protective equipment. All members are responsible for these items. An inspection of the accountability system components shall be included in the daily check of all apparatus.

4.2 SYSTEM COMPONENTS

4.2.1 Name Tags.

4.2.1.1 Every member of the Fire Department shall be issued six name tags. The tags shall have the rank and department identification number engraved on them. Name tags shall be color-coded as follows:

- White = Officers
- Blue = EMS members. Note that some EMS providers cannot enter an IDLH
- Yellow = Technicians and Firefighters
- Red = Those not yet certified to enter an IDLH environment

4.2.1.2 Members shall store their name tags under the brims of their helmets when not in use.

4.2.2 Unit Designator.

4.2.2.1 A white unit designator shall be placed on each passport as well as each Unit Roster. In addition, command vehicles shall also carry a supply of unit designators for all NOVA fire and EMS vehicles. The unit designator is the same size as the name tags.

4.2.3 Helmet Identification.

4.2.3.1 Every helmet shall be marked with a unit identification designator so as to identify the member's current assigned unit.

4.2.4 Passport.

4.2.4.1 The primary passport will be constructed of flexible Velcro (2" x 4") with one removable and one permanently affixed unit designator tag. The name tags of members who normally will be remaining outside the hazard area, such as vehicle drivers, shall be placed upside-down on the passport. When possible, portable radio cases shall be equipped with a strip of Velcro so a passport can be attached.

4.2.4.2 A portable radio on some companies may also carry a second passport with the unit designator followed by the letter "X". This allows the unit officer the flexibility of having two teams if staffing permits. Command must be notified when a company splits into two teams to work in two distinctly separate areas or functions. The team using the "X" passport shall use the term "X-ray" when communicating by radio, for example, Truck 208 X-ray. X-ray will be used to distinguish reference to a unit's second crew. The leader of the "X-ray" team will then report to the next higher level of supervision in the ICS. Command will often need to assemble a separate passport for the "X-ray" team as this split often occurs once units are operating.

4.2.5 Unit Rosters.

4.2.5.1 Unit Rosters shall be 2" x 4" pieces of hard-backed Velcro that is attached to either the dash or the officer's door of every unit. It will have one unit designator permanently affixed and one removable unit identification tag. The unit roster will contain the names of all members who are assigned to staff that particular unit.

4.2.6 Riding Cards.

4.2.6.1 The riding card is a duplicate of the passport. The riding card stays with the unit officer. It is the officer's responsibility to ensure that the unit Riding Card is maintained as changes occur throughout the day. This card is to be carried in the officer's turnout coat radio pocket. The purpose is to ensure the officer has the names of members riding that unit readily available at all times. This is particularly important when the passport has been given to command or appropriate tracking position in the ICS. Often a member is riding a unit who is not a familiar individual to the officer. If something goes wrong, the officer then has the names of the crew in his or her possession to help account for each member. For these reasons, the riding card must be kept current. The officer always keeps the riding card in his/her possession. It is NOT passed along as is the passport during the accountability process. The riding card is an exact duplicate of the passport and as such, members riding a particular unit must also provide a name tag for the riding card as is done for the passport and unit roster.

4.2.7 Unit Command Board.

4.2.7.1 The Unit Command Board contains the Initial Incident Command Worksheet on the front, and the back will have Velcro strips for the collection of the Passports. Unit Command Boards, which will be carried on all vehicles, are for use when operating as an initial IC or division/group supervisor.

4.2.8 Initial Incident Command Worksheet.

4.2.8.1 The Initial Incident Command Worksheet is designed to track units and assignments throughout an incident.

4.2.9 Consolidated Command Board.

4.2.9.1 The Consolidated Command Board includes areas for tracking units and assignments.

4.2.10 Apparatus Passport Drop-Off Point.

4.2.10.1 The driver's door of every suppression unit shall have an area with Velcro to serve as a passport drop-off point. Responding units shall affix their passports to the drop-off area of the first arriving suppression unit or give them to the IC. Any exception shall be announced by the dispatch center.

4.2.11 Accountability Kits.

4.2.11.1 Accountability kits shall be carried in all Battalion Chief's' vehicles. Items from these kits shall be used for replacement during incidents, if needed. Unit Command Boards from the kit shall be distributed to division/branch officers when necessary. Accountability kits contain the following items:

- Blank name tags (white, yellow, red, and blue)
- Passports (green)
- Appropriate writing implements
- Spare Velcro strips
- Several Unit Command Boards

4.3 **IMPLEMENTATION.**

4.3.1 The Personnel Accountability System shall be implemented on all emergency incidents when members are operating in an IDLH, hazardous area, when using SCBA, or at the discretion of the IC. Members reporting for duty shall take two of their name tags and place one each in the following areas:

- The Unit Roster located on the dash of their assigned apparatus
- The Passport of the assigned unit
- Members shall also ensure the riding card is updated

4.3.2 Members shall remove the name tags of firefighters they relieved.

4.3.3 The unit officer's name tag shall be attached to the top of the Unit Roster and Passport, underneath the unit designator. The driver's name tag shall be placed under the Officer's tag. The name tags of members who will normally be remaining outside the hazard area, such as vehicle drivers, shall be placed upside down on the passport and unit roster.

4.3.4 Members shall place the Unit Identification Designators on their helmets.

4.4 **EMERGENCY OPERATIONS.**

4.4.1 Initial Arriving Officer Responsibility.

4.4.1.1 The initial officer places the passport on the driver's door. This officer shall then voice pertinent command information to other responding units, to include any change to the normal accountability drop-off point.

4.4.2 IC Responsibility

4.4.2.1 The IC is responsible for ensuring the passports are collected from the on-scene apparatus or from the designated drop-off point. Passports will be placed at a designated passport collection area at the Command Post. Unit designators will be utilized on the appropriate command board.

4.4.3 Division/Group Officer Responsibility.

4.4.3.1 The Division/Group Supervisor must maintain accountability of the units assigned to their area of responsibility. Division/Group Supervisors will utilize the Unit Command Boards with passports for the units assigned to that particular Division/Group.

4.4.3.2 It is the responsibility of the division/group officer to advise command when units are moving between divisions/groups.

Example: "Staging to command, Engine 324 is leaving Staging going to Division 2". Command shall advise Division 2 and note the location change on the appropriate Command Board. Command should indicate that the unit is in transition by moving the unit identifier to the destination, in this case Division 2, and place it upside down. The Division 2 officer will advise command when Engine 324 arrives and the unit identifier should then be placed right-side-up.

4.4.3.3 It is the responsibility of the unit officer to collect their passport from the Division/Group Supervisor and take them to the next assignment Supervisor.

4.4.4 Remote Entry.

4.4.4.1 When units must enter a hazardous area (or presumed hazardous area) remote from the initial passport drop-off point, unit officers shall place their passports on the driver's door of the first unit at the remote entry point. This new information needs to be conveyed to dispatch center for a general announcement. Other units entering at that point shall place passports at the designated remote drop-off point.

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- 4.4.4.2 The tracking of those units at a remote entry point shall become the responsibility of the IC until a Division/Group is in place.
- 4.4.4.3 An example would be units entering a shopping mall at the opposite side of the command post.
- 4.4.5 PAR Check Procedures.
- 4.4.5.1 To ensure the safety of members, the dispatch center will announce the duration of the incident every ten minutes. The event timer will be started when the first unit arrives on the incident scene. This timer announcement shall be made on the command channel once that channel is operational.
- Example: "Alexandria to King Street Command, you have been operating on the scene for ten minutes". This shall continue until command advises that the timer is no longer necessary.
- 4.4.5.2 The IC shall determine the welfare of all members operating in the hostile environment at the first 20-minute PAR check. This may be done visually or via radio if necessary.
- 4.4.5.3 **40-minutes into the incident, all** members on the incident scene including those operating in non-hostile areas will be PAR checked by the appropriate division supervisor or incident commander. This shall be repeated every 40 minutes thereafter. An example would be checking on the driver of a water supply engine that is out of sight of the incident scene.
- 4.4.5.4 **60 minutes into the incident, and every 20 minutes thereafter,** command must account for those members who are operating in the hostile environment.
- 4.4.5.5 The IC shall acknowledge the 20-minute notification and initiate a PAR check. Example: "Command to all units, stand-by for PAR check". If Divisions or Groups have been established, the Division or Group Supervisor accounts for the units working under his/her command. Divisions and Groups should conduct their PAR check face-to-face with their units as much as possible. The results of the PAR check are then reported up the chain-of-command. The IC must be aware that the PAR check done by a Division or Group will take a few minutes before the results are reported.
- 4.4.5.6 Officers shall account for all members under their command and be prepared to report this when called.

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4.4.5.7 The Unit Officer shall report the total number of members assigned to their unit, the area they are operating in, and indicate the number of people operating outside of the hazard zone.

Example: Engine 208 responds to a scene with a total of three people. The officer and bucket person enter the hazard zone while the driver remains outside with the engine. At each PAR check the unit officer will respond, "E-208 is operating on the second floor, quadrant B, two in, driver is outside".

4.4.5.8 Divisions must report which units are operating under their command.

4.4.5.9 The IC shall be responsible for the welfare of units/members not assigned to a Branch/Division/Group, outside truck person, or engine driver.

4.4.5.10 After all elements of the command structure have been PAR checked, the IC shall document the time and note on the command board that all members were accounted for, or which members were not accounted for.

4.4.5.11 **If any units were not accounted for during the PAR check, the IC, Branch Director, or Division/Group Supervisor, as appropriate, shall recall the missing unit(s). This shall be done on the assigned tactical channel as well as on the Safety Channel which is channel "O" throughout Northern Virginia. If there is no success in contacting the missing unit(s), the RIT shall immediately be deployed. Operations shall be conducted in accordance with the R.I.T. book.**

NOTE: An unaccounted member or crew shall not stop PAR check from other elements of the command structure. The IC can assign a resource to check on the unaccounted crew but PAR check must continue to determine if more than one person or crew is unaccounted for.

4.4.5.12 Branch Directors or Division/Group Supervisors shall attempt to locate "missing" members or units within their own areas. All units operating in the command structure shall maintain their current positions and assignments unless otherwise directed.

4.4.5.13 The IC may initiate a PAR check to check the status of members at *anytime* that he or she deems necessary. Some situations in which this shall be done include, but are not limited to:

- Report of a member or crew missing or trapped
- When a unit/crew cannot be contacted in the Hazard Zone after three consecutive attempts at radio contact
- Sudden hazardous change on the incident scene
- Incident conditions deteriorate to a point that evacuation is ordered
- A change from an offensive to a defensive mode
- When the incident is declared under control

4.5 COMPLIANCE

- 4.5.1 A mechanism to quickly account for members must be available to the IC at any point during the incident. In order to ensure the effectiveness of this system and the subsequent safety of all members, accountability procedures shall be strictly followed at all times.
- 4.5.1.1 The name tags shall be considered an issued item of personal protective equipment.
- 4.5.1.2 Unit rosters and passports shall be considered part of apparatus inventory and shall be maintained as such.
- 4.5.1.3 If name tags, unit rosters, or passports are lost or misplaced, replacement items shall be obtained as soon as possible from the jurisdiction's appropriate resource. Temporary items shall be obtained from the battalion chief's accountability kits. Company officers shall ensure that replacements are ordered as soon as possible.
- 4.5.1.4 Each member's name tags shall be inspected when the member's personal protective equipment is inspected.
- 4.5.2 Fire department members shall always operate as a crew of two or more people when functioning in a hazardous environment. A minimum crew shall be considered two people and a portable radio.
- 4.5.2.1 No one shall operate alone in the hazard zone.
- 4.5.2.2 No crew shall operate without a portable radio.
- 4.5.2.3 Crews shall always go in and come out together
- 4.5.2.4 Members operating as a crew shall be in contact with the crew "leader" by voice, touch, or sight.
- 4.5.2.5 Each team member of a crew must be able to:
- Provide direct help
 - Call for help
 - Go get help for an injured team member