



**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
FIRE/EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER**

General Order Number: 01-03	Effective Date: July 1, 2016
Division: Administration and Organization	
Chapter: Chain-of-Command	
By Order of the Fire Chief: Marc S. Bashoor <i>[Signature]</i>	Issue Date: June 27, 2016

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

Chain-of-Command – The ranking order of positions in the Fire/EMS Department.

Command Officer – A certified command officer is any career or volunteer chief officer or any career/volunteer member acting as an Assistant Fire Chief or a Battalion Fire Chief.

Duty Chief (DC) – The on-duty career Assistant Fire Chief responsible for immediate oversight of all daily Departmental operations and administrative activities.

Operational Member – A fit-test certified riding member in good standing with the Department and their company. (Volunteers as rostered through the Fire Commission with the Volunteer Services Command.)

Volunteer Battalion Chief (VBC) – A VBC Program will be operated in those Battalions that have certified officers able to run as a VBC where a Career Battalion Chief is not assigned on a 24 – 72 hour shift.

Volunteer Duty Chief (VDC) – The on-duty Volunteer Assistant Fire Chief works directly with the DC to coordinate operations and administration concerns. This includes coordination of scheduling and administration for the VBC program.

PROCEDURES / RESPONSIBILITIES

I. General Guidelines

- A. 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 and conduct/performance matters.



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- B. The individual Volunteer Fire Department 501c3 corporate non-operational activities, that do not interfere with operational readiness or operational activities, continue to be fully under the purview of the individual Volunteer Corporations.

II. The County Fire Chief

Authority

The County Fire Chief, who is appointed by the County Executive, is responsible for providing emergency medical services, fire suppression, special operations services and for providing fire inspection, fire investigation and community affairs services in accordance with Subtitle 11.

A. Delegation of Authority

1. The County Fire Chief may delegate any of his powers or duties to other fire officials to administer the operations of the Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department.
2. 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.

III. Chain-of Command

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

1. County Fire Chief
2. Chief Deputy
3. Deputy Fire Chief
4. Assistant Fire Chief, Career/Volunteer
5. Battalion Chief, Career/Volunteer
6. Volunteer Company Chief
7. Volunteer Company "A" Chief
8. Volunteer Company "B" Chief
9. Captain, Career/Volunteer
10. Lieutenant, Career/Volunteer
11. Sergeant, Volunteer
12. Fire Technician
13. Fire Fighter and/or Paramedic



IV. Chief Officers

A. Common Responsibility

1. All Chief Officers shall adhere to established policy and procedures unless there is compelling and reasonable cause for deviation.
2. 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.
3. 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.

B. Authorized Volunteer Chief Officers

1. Must be certified by the Fire Commission.
2. Must be authorized by the Fire Chief.
3. The Volunteer Chief Officer positions recognized in the chain-of-command are as follows:
 - a) Each volunteer corporation maintaining a roster of five (5) operational members may have one Volunteer Corporation Chief.
 - b) Each volunteer corporation maintaining a roster of ten (10) or more operational members may have one Volunteer Station "A" Chief.
 - c) Each volunteer station maintaining a roster of fifteen (15) or more operational members may have one Volunteer Station "B" Chief.

V. Authorized Positions

- A. Chief Deputy (CD) – Reports to the County Fire Chief and is responsible for the day-to-day leadership and coordination of the Deputy Fire Chiefs.
- B. Deputy Fire Chief (DFC) – Reports to the CD; responsible for the leadership and management of a Command, which is comprised of multiple functional areas.
- C. Career/Volunteer Assistant Fire Chief (AFC) – Reports to a DFC, the CD, or the County Fire Chief depending on their assignment location or area of responsibility; responsible for the leadership and management of a functional area.



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NOTE: Battalion Chiefs or Volunteer Battalion Chiefs who have successfully completed the requirements to be an Assistant Fire Chief or Volunteer Assistant Fire Chief (as certified by the Fire Chief) may act as a Duty Chief or Volunteer Duty Chief.

- D. Career Battalion Chief (BC) – Reports to an Assistant Fire Chief; responsible for the management of a battalion or appropriate assignment within the Fire/EMS Department; provides coordination of career administration and operations and volunteer station operations through and with the company Volunteer Chiefs.

NOTE: Career Captains who have successfully completed the requirements to be detailed as a Battalion Chief may act as a Battalion Chief.

- E. Volunteer Battalion Chief (VBC) – Reports to an Assistant Fire Chief; responsible for the management of a battalion or appropriate assignment within the Fire/EMS Department; provides coordination of career operations and volunteer station operations through and with the company Volunteer Chiefs.

NOTE: Volunteer Captains who have successfully completed the requirements to act as a Volunteer Chief Officer may act as a Volunteer Battalion Chief.

- F. Volunteer Company Chief – A fire company, corporation, or association elects a Volunteer Chief and coordinates with a designated BFC; their responsibilities also include administrative coordination of volunteer and career operations within their station(s).
- G. Volunteer Company “A” Chief – Reports to Volunteer Company Chief for corporate and non-emergency responsibilities or the appropriate officer in the chain-of-command/incident command system during emergency/operational incidents.
- H. Volunteer Company “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.
- I. Career/Volunteer Captain/Lieutenant – Career/Volunteer Lieutenants/Captains report to the appropriate officer in the chain-of-command, during emergency incidents. During non-operational periods (which includes Corporate activities), career Lieutenants/Captains report to a career Battalion Chief and Volunteer Lieutenants/Captains report to the respective Volunteer Company Chiefs.
- J. Volunteer Sergeant – Responsible to appropriate officers in the chain-of-command. These are generally fire/EMS station supervisors who supervise personnel during emergency incident operations.



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- K. Technician – May be the supervisor, in the absence of an officer, during emergency incident operations. Generally they are responsible to the Company Officer.
- L. Career/Volunteer Fire Fighter and/or Paramedic – Certified Level III, II, I – May act as supervisor, in the absence of higher ranking personnel, during emergency incident operations. Generally they are responsible to the Company Officer.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

- A. The first arriving unit officer, whether an officer rank or not, shall establish “Tactical Command” of the emergency incident if they are operating in a forward position. They shall establish “Command” if they will be operating in a fixed exterior position. Any tactical unit arriving prior to the 1st engine is expected to establish “Command” or “Tactical Command.” The first arriving Chief Officer may assume command from that first unit without a face-to-face transfer, however a CAN report (conditions, actions, needs) MUST be obtained, and the Chief Officer MUST ensure all appropriate actions have been taken to establish control of the emergency situation.
- B. The first arriving Chief Officer must assume command of an incident and announce the incident command post (ICP). All other Chief Officers will report to the command post and will receive their assignment from the Incident Commander. **After an ICP has been established (not Tactical Command), any subsequent assumptions or transfers of command MUST BE face-to-face and shall only be made to improve the quality, safety and effectiveness of the command organization.**
- C. The first arriving career or volunteer BC is vested with the authority to assume command of any incident and shall report to an ICP. If the BC determines the incident is being properly coordinated and under control, the BC shall assist at the ICP and may observe operations from all sides. However, the first arriving BC shall not assume a subservient role unless assigned by an Assistant Fire Chief or higher. Other arriving Battalion Chiefs shall report to the ICP and shall assume the role they are assigned by the incident commander. Chiefs that are no longer needed at an emergency scene, shall be placed in service to ensure other coverage gaps are minimized.
- D. 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.” To limit radio traffic and ensure systemic continuity, the transfer of command should be limited to as few times as possible.
- E. The Incident Commander must rely on technical expertise provided by: Paramedics, the Technical Rescue Team, the Bomb Squad, the HazMat Team, etc.



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VII. Orders and Procedures

- A. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. The career station officer is responsible for supervision of medic units and paramedic ambulances assigned to the station. The EMS Duty Officers will coordinate supervisory and administrative efforts pertaining to EMS operations with the Station Officer.

VIII. Operations

A. Response

- 1. The County Fire Chief, Chief Deputy, Deputy Fire Chiefs, and Career or Volunteer Assistant Fire Chiefs may respond to any incident within the boundaries of Prince George's County within their areas of responsibility.
- 2. Career or Volunteer Battalion Chiefs shall respond on all calls they are dispatched to; including, but not limited to: 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 as they see fit.
- 3. To ensure adequate command/control and community coverage, Volunteer Company Chiefs, Volunteer Company "A" Chiefs and Volunteer Company "B" Chiefs may respond as command officers:
 - a) On any 1st alarm or less where their company is dispatched.
 - b) To any other incident which their company is the only to respond.
 - c) As authorized by an on-scene incident commander.
 - d) Any incident where the company officer will be the first arriving chief.
 - e) Chief Officers affiliated with Specialty Teams (HazMat, Technical Rescue, Water Rescue, etc.) may respond to all dispatched incidents that require a Specialty Team response, within their areas of responsibility and specialty expertise.



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NOTE: When a company that is alerted to an alarm or incident is understaffed, the Volunteer Company Chief, Volunteer Company "A" Chief, and/or Volunteer Company "B" Chief shall operate as a member of the company to make-up adequate staffing. In this instance, the Volunteer Company Chief Officers will not respond to an alarm or incident as a Command Officer, however, will respond to any incident necessary to "make up staffing."

B. 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.

C. 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.

- D. All career station officers are responsible to maintain their crew integrity whenever possible. The career officer will work with volunteer leadership to establish multiple crews IF appropriately trained and certified operators/staff/officers are available for a minimum of four (4) hours.

IX. Conflicting Orders

A. Emergency Operations

1. 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 out in a safe and expeditious manner.
2. If questioned, the person issuing such an order shall, as 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 supervisor shall document any additional and appropriate comments, and then immediately forward the statement to the County Fire Chief through the appropriate chain-of-command.



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

B. Non-Emergency Operations

1. 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 County 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

X. Compliance

All members of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department shall 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