ORGANIZATION

In emergency operations, there may be several lead and support agencies involved. In an incident where one agency has a preponderance of responsibility for abating the problem, a single Incident Commander from that agency shall be appointed.

On an incident where law enforcement and the fire department both have substantial responsibilities, a Unified Command organizational structure should be formed. Establishing a Unified Incident Command structure better integrates incident objectives and the development of Incident Action Plans. This results in a more efficient coordination process of incident operations thereby enhancing the safety of responders and the public.

Incident Commanders should consider establishing an organization element to manage evacuation planning and implementation. For extensive, complex evacuations, an Evacuation Branch may be established. For less complex actions, an Evacuation Group may be more appropriate. Staffing of the Evacuation Branch or Group should be unified to ensure coordination of actions. Re-entry and planning implementation can be accomplished with a similar organizations structure to safely facilitate managing requirements prior to and during the re-entry of evacuees.

Initial Assessment And Notifications:

1. Identify the hazard and risk to the public; determine the immediately affected area.

2. Identify the next potentially affected areas and plot them on a map utilizing an alpha-numeric grid system. Many commercially available map books utilize a .5 mile wide grid. This style map can be quickly utilized to plat an affected area.

3. Ensure that the jurisdictional law enforcement agency is notified of the emergency situation and recommend protective action(s).

4. Ensure the appropriate cooperating and/or assisting agencies are notified with regard to recommended protective action(s). If evacuations are planned, ensure that evacuation centers are identified in safe areas. Note: The management of Evacuation Centers is often delegated to the local Red Cross or other non-government organizations (NGO).

Protective Action Terms

1. **Evacuation Warning** – The alerting of people in an affected area(s) of potential threat to life and property. An Evacuation Warning considers the probability that an area will be affected within a given timeframe and prepares people for a potential evacuation order. Evacuation Warnings are particularly necessary when dealing with a variety of issues such as special needs populations and large animals.

2. **Evacuation Order** – Requires the immediate movement of people out of an affected area due to an imminent threat to life.

3. **Shelter-In-Place** – Advises people to stay secure at their current location. This tactic shall only be used if evacuation will cause a higher potential for loss of life. Consideration

should be given to assigning incident personnel to monitor the safety of citizens remaining in place.

The concept of Sheltering in Place is an available option in those instances where physical evacuation is impractical. This procedure may be effective for residential dwelling in the immediately impacted areas, or for large facilities that house a high percentage of non-ambulatory persons, i.e., hospitals and convalescent homes. Sheltering-in-Place attempts to provide a safe haven within the impacted area.

When using structures, this involves closing all doors and windows, shutting off outside air supply to the facility, and waiting for the hazard to pass. Although the decision to Shelter-in-Place ultimately rests with the Incident Commander, situations may arise where incident personnel must take immediate action to protect civilians.

4. **Rescue** – Emergency actions taken within the affected area to recover and remove injured or trapped citizens. Responders have specific training and personal protective equipment necessary to accomplish the mission, i.e., hazardous material spill, swiftwater rescue, etc. Boundaries of the areas where rescue is planned should be identified on the incident map with notation that entry is restricted to rescue workers only.

5. **Community Refuge Area** – A designated location that is considered to provide a greater level of survivability than Shelter-in-Place. If unable to make it to a designated Evacuation Shelter, civilians should be directed to seek shelter at a Community Refuge Area.

Note: Depending on the size, type and complexity of the emergency, all of the above protection actions could be employed on the same incident.

Evacuation Checklist:

1. Establish and co-locate the Incident Command Post in a safe location with the capacity to include all cooperating agencies, i.e., law enforcement, fire, health department, local emergency management agency to include any NGO's.

2. Establish Unified Command when appropriate. Unified Incident Commanders should jointly assess and report incident potential and request adequate resources to accomplish agreed upon objectives.

3. Consider establishing an Evacuation Branch or Group as appropriate depending on complexity to plan and implement evacuation actions and/or re-entry of evacuees.

4. Jointly develop the Incident Evacuation Plan; ensure that the planning process is conducted under the Unified Command process with input from lead and support agencies as required. Keep in mind that many local jurisdictions have developed emergency evacuation plans for high hazard areas which should be incorporated in evacuation planning.

5. Clearly identify on a map the area(s) that are under an imminent threat and/or a potential threat. Maps should utilize a grid system for easy identification of the impacted area.

6. Identify evacuation routes to nearest safe location. This information will be critical for determining shelter locations and should be shared with the local emergency services agency, Red Cross and other NGO's responsible for shelter identification and management.

7. For planning purposes, approximately 2,500 autos per lane, per hour can be accommodated on most roads with an average occupancy of four persons per vehicle.

8. Planning evacuations for special facilities and populations will require additional time and attention to detail. These may include hospitals, elder care facilities, etc.

9. Evacuation planning should also consider timelines, transportation needs and contacts required for large animal evacuations.

10. Identify on an incident map locations where people are sheltered-in-place. These areas may require verification by the Operations Section Chief and concurrence from the Incident Commander(s).

11. Determine traffic control points. Control points should be located on all sides of the incident and outside the threat area. The perimeter established for traffic control will depend on both the affected population and traffic density.

12. Traffic closure levels - Display on incident and public information maps:

    - Level 4 or color code Red – closed to all traffic, potential life hazard
    - Level 3 or color code Orange – closed to all traffic except emergency responders
    - Level 2 or color code Yellow – closed to all traffic except emergency responders and critical resources, i.e., public works, electrical service, animal rescue
    - Level 1 or color code Green – open to above resources and residents only

    NOTE: Level 1 or color code Green is often referred to as a "soft closure" while Levels 2 through 4 are referred to as "hard closures."

13. The Incident Evacuation Plan should be distributed to all command and general staff members and their subordinates. Additionally, copies should be distributed to all lead and support agencies, local elected officials and the respective county or city emergency operations centers.