DEVELOPING AN INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM IN A SMALL COMMUNITY

EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS OF FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program

January 2003
Appendices Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/ to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.
ABSTRACT

The use of one of the model incident command systems has become commonplace in the American Fire Service. The common thread in all of these systems is that they are modular, with the organizational command staff growing as the incident grows. In large-scale incidents an Incident Management Team (IMT) is used to staff the four major areas of concern for the incident commander: operations, logistics, planning and finance.

The problem was that although the Village of University Park has an extensive emergency operations plan there is a lack of available trained personnel to fill all of the positions of an Incident Management Team during a large-scale incident. The purpose of this research project was to determine how to staff an Incident Management Team during a large-scale emergency incident that may affect the Village of University Park. The reason that this research was important to University Park was the fact that University Park has the potential to face a large-scale incident due to natural causes (tornado’s), hazardous materials emergencies, and potential acts of terrorism in the future. The lack of an IMT, and the potential consequences, were realized by the researcher at the conclusion of the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management, which the researcher attended at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

The research used the evaluative methodology to answer the following questions:

1. How have other fire departments staffed an incident management team during large-scale incidents?
2. Should the Village of University Park work cooperatively with surrounding fire departments, civic organizations, private industries, and volunteer organizations to staff and incident management team?

3. What should the qualifications and training be for the staff positions on the incident management team?

A literature review was conducted to evaluate what had been previously published regarding incident management teams. In addition, a feedback instrument was used to gather additional information from other fire departments in the surrounding communities. This feedback instrument was instrumental in formulating several of the recommendations included in this report.

The results of the research showed that other fire departments have been successful in implementing the use of IMT’s on a local basis. The literature review and the feedback instrument were valuable in ascertaining the qualifications and training for team members.

Five recommendations resulted from the research. In summary, they were to: conduct additional research of the local fire departments with operational incident management teams, provide a copy of the research to local officials, recruit team members from within University Park and from outside sources, work cooperatively with surrounding communities to develop a local area IMT, and to approach the Executive Board of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) about instituting a task force card in the statewide plan for the State of Illinois specifically for Incident Management Teams.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROCEDURES</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A (Position Task Book for Area Commander)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B (Feedback Instrument)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

There is hardly a day that goes by without some major, large-scale, catastrophic disaster or crisis that causes much human suffering and property damage being reported somewhere in the world. Kuban (1993, p. 7) defined a disaster as “Situations in which a community’s infra-structure is overwhelmed”. Often, these events require a multi-organizational and/or a multi-jurisdictional response effort to manage. These events are caused by natural phenomenon such as tornadoes, earthquakes, and flooding both on coastal areas and along major streams and rivers. Increasingly, man causes these events either as an accident or some form of terrorism. We all witnessed the horror of September 11, 2001 when multiple acts of terror brought death and destruction to three different areas of the country: In New York, where the World Trade Centers collapsed, at the Pentagon in the greater Washington, D.C. area and in a small community in Pennsylvania where a plane was forced to crash by a group of Americans thereby probably saving a much greater loss of life. Whether a large-scale incident is of natural causes, man-made, or just a simple accident or mechanical failure, communities must be prepared to deal with the consequences in order to protect lives and save property.

Over the past three decades, the use of an Incident Command System (ICS), Incident Management Teams (IMT) and having an Emergency Action (EAP) plan have been encouraged and necessitated by County, State and Federal Agencies in order to deal with large-scale emergencies. The use of ICS was started in the State of California by a group of fire agencies that saw the need to coordinate resources during the many wildland fires that occurred in their state. Subsequently, Chief Alan Brunacini of Phoenix,
Arizona established the Fire Ground Command (FCG) procedures. Both of these systems had many things in common, however the FCG system was primarily targeted towards a single incident in a smaller geographic area where less than 25 companies or resources would be working. On the other hand, the ICS system was geared primarily towards wildland/urban interface firefighting. In the late 1980’s, these two systems were merged into a single set of procedures, which has evolved into the National Incident Management System (NIMS) that has been adopted by the National Fire Academy as the national standard.

The NIMS procedures provide for a uniform incident command system, and designate key positions that need to be staffed during a large-scale incident. These positions are commonly referred to as the incident management team. There is a minimum of 22 staff positions that are identified as potentially needing to be staffed during a large-scale, multi-agency emergency incident. Taking this process one step further, the concept of area command is discussed in the student manual for the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management taught by the National Fire Academy. According to the manual, Area Command is established to: “Oversee the management of multiple incidents, each of which is being handled by an ICS organization.” And additionally, “To oversee the management of a very large incident that has multiple Incident Management Teams assigned to it” (USFA, 2001).

In his research, Chief Berk (2002) of the Flossmoor, IL fire department indicated this need for area wide command not only for his department, but also for the south suburban region of Chicago. The results of this research report were that many of these departments would have a problem staffing and Incident Management Team during a
large-scale incident and that perhaps this issue should be addressed before the concept of area-wide command. The problem was that although the Village of University Park has an extensive emergency operations plan there is a lack of available trained personnel to fill all of the positions of an Incident Management Team during a large-scale incident. The purpose of this research project was to determine how to staff and incident management team during a large-scale emergency incident that may affect the Village of University Park. This research project used the evaluative methodology to answer the following questions:

1. How have other fire departments staffed an incident management team during large-scale emergency incidents?
2. Should the Village of University Park work cooperatively with surrounding fire departments, civic organizations, private industries, and volunteer organizations to staff an incident management team?
3. What should the qualifications and training be for the staff positions on the incident management team?

**BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Village of University Park (VOUP), Illinois is a small suburban community approximately 35 miles south of Chicago. The population of University Park, according to the United States Census (2000), was 6662. The VOUP encompasses 15.5 square miles and consists of a distinct residential/commercial area on the eastern side of the Village and a large industrial base to the west. The Canadian National Railroad that
dissects the village separates these areas. According to the census (U.S., Census 2000) there are a total of 2,380 occupancy units consisting of 1324 owner occupied residents and 929 rental units. There were 127 vacant occupancies at the time of the census. There are five high-rise buildings in the residential area with the tallest building at fourteen stories. The industrial area contains 48 companies with a wide mix of uses. These uses include chemical manufacturing/storage, steel warehousing/distribution, rolled paper storage, plastic bottle manufacturing and general warehousing. The largest single facility has 907,000 square feet under roof. The village has a state university (Governors State), which has an enrollment of approximately 5000 students. Interstate 57 borders the VOUP on the western boundary and there are three lakes within its boundaries. All of these characteristics indicate the many target hazards that exist within the village and the possibility of experiencing a large-scale emergency incident in the future.

The manager/council form of government is used with a strong manager hired by the elected board to run the day-to-day operations. There are eight departments consisting of police, fire, public works, parks and recreation, cable television, community relations, economic development and finance. There are a total of 61 full time personnel in the Village. Chief officer or a department head directs each of these departments.

The University Park Fire Department (UPFD) employs 28 personnel consisting of fifteen paid staff and thirteen paid-on-call personnel. The paid staff includes the chief, deputy chief, three lieutenants, and ten firefighters. All of the paid staff, including the chief officers are cross-trained as paramedics. The paid-on-call staff has an assistant chief and a fire marshal position supplemented by 11 firefighters. The department operates out of two stations: one located in the residential area and the other in the
industrial park. The Canadian National Railroad separates these stations. UPFD responded to 1364 emergency calls in the year 2002. Of the 1364 calls, 743 were for medical emergencies and 621 were fire related (automatic fire alarms, structure and vehicle fires, hazardous material releases, and other miscellaneous calls). The department’s mission includes public education and fire prevention, emergency medical service at the paramedic level, fire suppression, hazardous materials response and rescue services on the emergency side. Other responsibilities include all activities of the building department (review and inspection of all new construction) as well as property maintenance and code enforcement. All of these responsibilities put a strain on the available personnel to accomplish these tasks. The UPFD is a member of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) and is assigned to division twenty-seven. MABAS is the largest organization in the State of Illinois that provides mutual assistance when local resources are not sufficient. According to J. Reardon, who is the President of the Executive Board (personal communication, December 1, 2001) MABAS may be the largest such organization in the United States with over 400 fire departments as part of the system. Membership in the MABAS organization requires that all departments adopt the NIMS system for emergency operations. The department also participates in automatic aid agreements with the Villages of Crete, Park Forest, Richton Park, Steger, and the Crete Township Fire Protection District. This automatic aid provides additional personnel to the scene of structure fires in order to comply with Federal and State mandates.

Over the past fifteen years, the department has seen a dramatic increase in the number of requests for emergency service from 489 calls in 1985 to 1364 calls in the year
2002. This represented an increase of 279% during this period. Subsequently, the department underwent significant change in the organizational structure of the department. In 1985, the department was staffed by two firefighter/paramedic’s Monday through Friday during the day from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. During all other times of the week, emergency responses were covered by the paid-on-call staff that responded to the station after being alerted to the call. The paid staff worked the above hours because that time frame represented when most of the paid-on-call staff were working at their full time employment. Over the next fifteen years until the present time, the department evolved into an organization where most of the emergency calls are handled by the full time staff. The paid-on-call staff currently augments the paid staff on those calls that are manpower intensive, or where there are multiple calls at the same time. The reduced role of the paid-on-call staff has led to fewer and fewer people who are willing to “volunteer” their time. The mandates for increased training, the demands of family life, the myriad of other activities that are available for entertainment in the present society has also played a factor in the decreased participation in the paid-on-call staff.

In June of 2002, this researcher, who is the chief of the University Park Fire Department attended the second year of the Executive Fire Officer class (Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management (EAFSOEM)). At the conclusion of the class, and during the investigative phase of this research project, the researcher came to the realization that University Park was not as prepared to handle a large-scale emergency as previously thought. The two-week EAFSOEM curriculum included the following topics: introduction, emergency operations, incident command system, community risk assessment, incident documentation, capability assessment,
media relations, damage assessment, emergency operations center, and contemporary legal issues for the fire service. Throughout the classroom sessions, table top exercises were used to reinforce the need for incident management teams in order to effectively manage a large-scale incident.

In the past, it was felt by the Chief that University Park was fairly well prepared to handle any type of emergency incident based on the fact that there was an established Emergency Operations Plan that has been in place for at least ten years prior. This plan was based on the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s model for small communities. After attending the EAFSOEM class, it became very clear to the researcher that University Park is not currently prepared and that unless changes are made, an incident in the future will probably not have the best possible outcome. Kuban (1995) stated, “The need for crisis and disaster planning should be based not on whether these events will occur but rather on when they will occur.” With all of the different types of target hazards that University Park has (railroads, an interstate, chemical manufacturing, etc) it is only a matter of time before a large-scale incident occurs. University Park is only approximately 20 miles away from Plainfield, which was the site of one of the most disastrous tornadoes that occurred in 1990. There were 39 recommendations that resulted from the Plainfield tornado, much of which related to the need for better coordination and control of the incident that was spread across multiple jurisdictions. An IMT would certainly helped to better coordinate the emergency response in that emergency. In fact, University Park responded to this incident with an engine and ambulance crew and witnessed first hand the magnitude of the problem.
Kuban went on to say that the failure to plan would likely lead to greater injury, loss of life and property damage during a large-scale incident.

In a press release (02-210) dated November, 6, 2002 the United State Fire Administration (USFA) announced a joint memorandum of understanding that had been signed in conjunction with the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the National Fire Protection Association. The key component of the memorandum was the creation of metropolitan area Incident Management Teams, with regional overhead capabilities to assist in major operations.

Recent events have demonstrated clearly, the fire service can no longer think of responding to emergencies just in their own communities. Throughout the United States, fire departments are increasingly being asked to assist each other in order to protect the American citizens. When multiple fire departments work together at an emergency scene, issues of command structure, communications and personnel safety must be coordinated, USFA Administrator David Paulison said.

The significance of this research and the impact that any recommendations will have on not only University Park, but the surrounding area, is directly tied to the goals of the USFA: A. Reduce the loss of life from fire in the age group 14 and under. B. Reduce the loss of life from fire in the age group 65 and older. C. Reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters. D. To promote within communities a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan led by the fire service organization. According to Paulison (2002)

One of the cornerstones of the nation’s ability to respond to any emergency is a common Incident Command System that will allow a seamless local, state, and federal operations for incident management. Not only will the fire service be able
to address emerging safety issues, but also the fire service can better reduce the
number of firefighter and civilian deaths due to fire.

It is clear that without the establishment of an IMT in University Park, those large-scale
incidents will not have the best possible outcome. More injuries will occur, loss of life
will be greater, and property damage will increase. Kuban (1995) also identifies that a
secondary effect may be the loss of confidence from the public, which translates into a
loss of political power and because of a failure to plan, the potential for being considered
liable.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review was conducted in order to summarize what had been
previously published in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the history of
incident management teams and to find out how other jurisdictions had formed teams.
The impact of the review led the researcher to understand the need for an IMT in
University Park and how other communities had accomplished this.

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a system that was developed as a
response to several large-scale, wildland fires in California during the 1970’s. The
purpose, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (2001, p. SM 3-7) is
to: “provide common terminology, modular organization, integrated communications,
unified command structure, consolidated actions plans, manageable span of control, pre-
designated incident facilities, and comprehensive resource management”. The ICS
system has become a standard practice in the fire service. In just about every trade
journal for the fire service, where actual emergency incidents have been discussed, the
use of the ICS system is a fundamental part of the operation. Goldfarb (1997, p. 64)
stated “It is the intent of ICS to use age-old management principles to assist the incident commander (IC) in attaining the best possible outcome in an fire or emergency operation.” While the use of IMT’s is an integral part of ICS, the fire service as a whole has been slow to implement the use of the team management concept. Anderson (2002) pointed out that many fire organizations operate under an unofficial fraternity akin to family within the fire service. In New York City, where many generations of firefighters come from the same family, the Federal IMT’s that were sent there initially found great resistance in their efforts to help the fire department organize planning, operations, logistics, communications and finance. Anderson cited the attitude of many of New York’s firefighters that the tragedy of September 11, 2001 was “their” disaster and were very reluctant to accept outside help.

The Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) in Illinois, which has over 400 member fire departments, formally adopted the use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the standard ICS model for its members. The Wilco Fire Chief’s Association (MABAS Division 27) had operated under a modified version of the Fire Ground Command System, which was developed by Chief Brunacini of Phoenix, Arizona before becoming a MABAS division since 1990. These are but a few examples of how widely used the ICS format has become the routine mode of operation during emergencies for the fire service in the United States.

During the course of this research project, the first question that had to be answered was how other fire departments had developed a plan or the use of Incident Management Teams for large-scale incidents. Several sources were located, however the researcher was surprised that the information on the establishment of local or area IMT’s
was limited. Miller (2001) reported that the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD) had instituted the use of IMT’s in 1994. This despite the fact that the LACFD was one of the founding agencies that assisted in developing the ICS system and had contributed personnel to state wildland and multi-agency IMT’s for many years. Up until 1994, Miller went on to say that the department had used the traditional hierarchical command structure, under which the “highest-ranking” available officer would take command. The change to pre-determined IMT’s took place following the Northridge quake in 1994. The LACFD has formed four IMT’s for the county under the supervision of a deputy chief. Each team is comprised of the incident commander, deputy incident commander, two operations chiefs, two air operations branch directors, two logistics section chiefs, two service branch directors, two support branch directors, two planning section chiefs, two finance section chiefs, two situation unit leaders, two resource status unit leaders and two safety officers. Each position is two deep to provide for 12-hours operational periods in the event of a multi-day incident. There are no minimum rank requirements for assignment to the IMT and not all of the positions are held by uniformed personnel. LACFD routinely assigns civilian personnel to staff positions in the planning, logistics, and finance areas of the IMT.

Koechlein (1999) described the establishment of an IMT for the Borough of Matanuska Susitna in Alaska. The formation of this IMT was the direct result of after incident reviews that were conducted after three federally designated disasters had hit their jurisdiction. In each instance, an ICS system was used to coordinate the emergencies, but no formal IMT was used. The borough was criticized because they did not have a locally organized IMT, but rather relied on one of the Federally organized
Overhead Strike Teams. In Matanuska Susitna’s case, Koechlein indicated, “Local directed control of the management of the incident is crucial to its success and acceptance by the local community. Having in place a local inter-agency supported IMT supports local control and involvement in major incidents” (p. 19). Koechlein’s research included the following recommendations:

1. The development of a local IMT needs a strong commitment by the lead agency.

2. The IMT must include agencies outside of the fire department in order to provide for technical expertise not available within the department.

3. The task of developing local IMT’s and the improvement of local cooperative agreements should be stressed throughout National Fire Academy coursework for executives and other fire officers.

Koechlein’s research also identified Missoula County, Montana as another agency that had developed an IMT for their jurisdiction, which was very similar to his own. Both Mantanuska Susitna and Missoula County used personnel from outside agencies in the formation of their IMT.

The concept of IMT’s was first used in the west during large-scale wildland fires where hundreds of thousands of area and many structures are burned on an annual basis because of topography and prevailing weather conditions. There are 16 National IMT’s located throughout the nation with the exception of the eastern part of the country. This includes the State of Illinois. These teams are staffed by individuals from many agencies including the National Park and Forest Services, local fire departments, county agencies
and others and are coordinated by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) located in Boise, Idaho. Several of the National IMT’s were deployed during the terrorist attacks at the Pentagon and at the World Trade Center in New York City. This emphasizes the fact that the National IMT’s can be utilized for any type of large-scale emergency incident and not just for wildland fires. Scoppetta (2002) who is the current fire commissioner for the Fire Department of New York referenced the “McKinsey Report” in a recent article in Fire Engineering Magazine regarding recommendations for improvement to the department. Recommendation #3 cited the need for the creation of IMT’s for FDNY. The recommendation included the need for specialized, highly trained personnel with expertise in specific fields such as operations, planning, logistics and planning. The report recommended the formation of two teams with 21 personnel each to staff the various positions of an IMT.

The 2002 Winter Olympics posed some serious operational challenges to the Park City, Utah Fire Department. Park City Fire Department (PCFD) was charged with the responsibility of protecting not only the world-class athletes that were competing in the Olympics, but also hundreds of thousands spectators and many governmental dignitaries from all over the world. Exacerbating the problem was the fact that Park City had less than 60 full time employees and the events were spread over a large geographic area. In an interview with Fire Chief Magazine, Rick Lynsky (2002) who is a Battalion Chief with PCFD described how Park City was handling the situation. Lynsky related that a full ICS system was going to be operational around the clock with the implementation of an Incident Management Team. In order to staff the IMT, Lynsky and others recruited chief officers from throughout the United States that had experience in managing large-
scale emergency incidents. These chief’s were assigned to local in-house Captains who knew the area in order to facilitate decisions. Lynsky was told by several of the recruited chiefs that they were not aware of any other situation like this one where such a small department hosted such a large event. They indicated that this arrangement might be a model for future consideration.

In the private sector, the Record (1989) reported how the Xerox Corporation staffed an Emergency Operations Center during emergencies. The overall goal of this program was to prevent loss of life and the damage to property. Ultimately, these goals was seen as protecting the viability of the corporation and its’ bottom line. While not specifically referring to an Incident Management Team, the Manager’s Emergency Handbook listed the following positions that were to be staffed and a detailed description of the responsibilities; Chief, Assistant Chief/Security Manager, Operations Manager, Security Operations Manager, Site Safety Engineer, Maintenance Manager, Damage Assessment and Recovery Coordinator, Environmental Engineer, Transportation Coordinator, News and Information Coordinator, Communications Manager, and Data Center Disaster Coordinator. Much of the job descriptions of these positions mirror the concepts of the IMT’s responsibilities. The plan also called for backup personnel to staff the center during protracted emergencies.

The second question that had to be answered was “Should University Park work cooperatively with surrounding communities, other agencies, private groups, and volunteer organizations to staff an incident management team”? The literature pointed to the fact that based upon it’s small size, that University Park should involve other
communities, agencies, private groups and volunteer organizations in order to staff those positions where they did not have enough personnel or technical expertise.

The last question that needed to be answered was “What should the qualifications and training requirements be for the Incident Management Team Members”? Kuban (1993) states:

Managers must be prepared at three levels prior to serving as crisis managers.

At the basic level they need to know the technical aspects of their job and the jobs, which their subordinates must perform on a daily basis. Then, they need to have a solid grounding in management practices. The third component must focus on the nature of the disaster environment, its impact on management practices and the ways in which these practices must be modified in a crisis.

Kuban goes on to say that managers must be exposed to the unique situations that crisis managers face and that the best way to get this exposure is through disaster simulations which need to be made as realistic as possible. Ross (2002) echoes Kuban’s findings. According to Ross, many fire departments are failing to address the fundamental need to train the person who’s under the greatest stress to manage the incident, the incident commander. “Simulation is fast becoming the first choice for fire departments across the world that have realized the method’s benefits for training and assessment” (p. 1) according to Ross.

The lack of a National Standard for the qualification and on-going training of an IMT team member is certainly a cause for concern in the fire service. Miller (1999) discussed the fact that sports teams, the military and even fire service first responders routinely practice in order to maintain their skill level. He points out that we can’t expect
our incident commanders to maintain a level of efficiency without practice. It is common for command level chief officers in the fire service to stop receiving basic command training once they have received their rank. Daniels (2002) also cites the lack of a National Standard as a problem. He says:

Though there are recommended practices, standards and professional qualifications for many fire service positions, there are no standards for what those members should do once they’re functioning in incident management capacities. This lack of effective incident commanders because of inconsistent standards results from an over-emphasis on experience in lieu of actual command competence.

Daniels also relates that the fire service has traditionally depended on a person’s rank and tenure rather than on an actual set of skill sets. This can often lead to command dysfunction because the very people that are expected to manage a large-scale incident are the same people that probably have not maintained their skills because of administrative duties, a lack of an on-going training program and other responsibilities.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is an organization that issues codes and standards to be used as a model in various aspects of the fire service. Many of the standards are very specific in its requirements. The standards for live-fire training evolutions, fire apparatus, and breathing apparatus are just a few examples where very specific requirements are listed. However, NFPA 1561, Standard on Emergency Service Incident Management Systems is one where the specific requirements for training are general in nature. Section 4.6 Training and Qualifications states that “All personnel who are involved in emergency operations shall be trained in the incident management and
personnel accountability systems.” The code goes on to require periodic refresher training but does not specify how much training, what kind of training and if there should be some type of testing process to ensure competency. Instead the standard leaves it up to the local emergency service organization to define the training and experience requirements for supervisors. This fact only enforces the opinions of Miller and Daniels regarding the lack of a National Standard. NFPA also has very specific training requirements for Firefighter I (entry level) and Firefighter II (senior level) but has chosen not to follow this model for command level positions.

Despite the fact that there is not a national standard for staff positions in an Incident Management Team, the research did reveal a very detailed set of qualifications/training that is used by the National Wildland Coordinating Group (NWCG) for membership in the National Interagency Incident Management Teams. Currently, there are 16 IMT’s on the Federal level throughout the United States. Every region of the country is covered except for the “Eastern” region, which encompasses Illinois. According to NWCG, Position Task Books (PTB) was developed for designated positions within the NIIMS system. A copy of the PTB is attached as Appendix A. In order to become certified in a given position, each trainee must be recommended by their employing agency before they can become a trainee. The PTB’s give each trainee a detailed set of tasks that must be completed under the supervision of an evaluator. These tasks may be completed on wildland fire, prescribed fire, structure fires, search and rescue events or in mock disasters. Each task identifies which event satisfies the requirements of the PTB. Evaluators are given specific instructions as to what is deemed as acceptable performance. This is critical in identifying areas where further training is
needed and insures that personnel are not put into positions during real emergencies where they could fail. Ultimately, their failure could result in a less than favorable outcome in an emergency. The PTB’s also lists the responsibilities of the employing (home unit), the trainee, the evaluator, the final evaluator, and the incident training specialist. The system is built in with a set of checks and balances in order to produce highly competent Incident Management Team Members. According to Miller (1999) the Los Angeles County Fire Department uses this system for qualifying its team members. In addition, all team members receive refresher training every three times per year using all-risk simulations to exercise their skills. In addition, all team members initially receive a weeklong Command and General Staff team exercise provided by the United States Forest Service.

The literature review made it clear that the use of IMT’s is a growing trend for any type of large-scale emergency incidents including terrorist attacks, natural events such as tornadoes and hurricanes, and accidents whether man-made or mechanical failures. The emphasis that the EAFSOEM training, taught at the National Fire Academy also underscores the need for IMT’s on the local, regional, state and federal levels. The research clearly indicates that other fire service organizations, both large and small have formed Incident Management Teams. If large county organizations can use outside civilian personnel to staff IMT’s, then certainly University Park should pursue this avenue as well. The lack of a National Standard for the qualification and training of staff members, while a hindrance, should not deter any organization from forming an IMT.
PROCEDURES

After returning from the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management class at the National Fire Academy, the researcher came to the realization that the Village of University Park was not as prepared to handle a large-scale emergency event. This was due to the lack of personnel to adequately staff an Incident Management Team. Although the Emergency Operations Plan for the Village of University Park had recently been updated and revised, the researcher realized that qualified personnel to man an IMT was still lacking.

The purpose of this research project was to identify how other fire departments staff and IMT, to determine if University Park should use personnel from outside the fire department to staff the IMT, and also to determine what the qualifications and training should be for IMT team members.

In order to complete this research project, a search was conducted of existing written materials including journals, books, and national standards relating to Incident Management Teams. This included a search of materials available at the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center through the Interlibrary Loan System, the library at Governors State University, via the Internet and finally those materials in the training library for the University Park Fire Department.

In addition, a feedback instrument (attached as appendix “B”) was used to determine whether or not other fire departments in University Park’s MABAS division had an IMT. If they did, they were asked how they staffed their team, and if they didn’t, they were asked how they would during a large-scale emergency. Finally, they were asked what the qualifications should be for team members and what kind of training team
members should receive. All of this information was used to formulate the recommendations included at the end of this research project. University Park’s MABAS division is comprised of 16 fire departments with a mix of paid, combination (paid/paid-on-call), paid-on-call, and volunteer staffing many of which are similar in nature to University Park. 15 of the member departments responded to the feedback instrument for a response rate of 94%. The researcher attributes this high rate to the fact that the instruments were handed out during the Division’s chief meeting and the respondents were asked to return their answers at the end of the meeting. These departments were chosen based on their geographic location to University Park and the fact that these departments provide mutual aid and automatic aid to one another. In the event of a large-scale emergency event, these are the departments that would be first to assist University Park. It was the intention of the researcher to influence the other departments in the hope that they would see the need to form IMT’s both on the local and state levels thereby making the process easier on University Park.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations that were noted by the researcher: First, the researcher could only locate four sources of written materials that discussed how other fire departments had seen the need for an IMT, and how they went about staffing/implementing the team. However, there was an abundance of material available on the need for IMT’s. Secondly, the research realized that other command/chief officers who answered the feedback instrument might not have as good and understanding of an IMT and the ICS system. The researcher felt that this was important to emphasize not because the researcher is more qualified or expert in the field, but because the researcher
realized how much had been learned during the EAFSOEM class taught at the National Fire Academy. And last, the researcher felt that given more time to reflect on their answers, that the respondents might have thought of other qualifications and training requirements other than those that were listed on the feedback instrument.

**RESULTS**

The results of this research project concluded with answers to all of the original research questions. This was accomplished through a review of the available written literature as well as the use of a feedback instrument.

The first and second questions were answered simultaneously during a review of the literature. Miller (1999), Koechlein (1999), and Lynsky (2002) all reported that their respective agencies had formed Incident Management Teams in order to manage large-scale emergency incidents. Common circumstances dictated their approach: Each had experienced a large-scale emergency where the outcome should have been better. This was due in part to their department’s operating under the traditional fire service model where the senior officer assumed command and attempted to manage the incident with little or no additional input from other officers. Their respective organizations were too small to be able to staff IMT’s on their own, so they included personnel from other agencies that had technical expertise in specific areas and the end result is a functioning local Incident Management Team.

The McKinsey Report, as cited by Scopetta (2002) recommended that the Fire Department of New York create their own Incident Management Teams to deal with large-scale incidents. This point emphasizes the fact that if the largest fire department in the world, with over 12,000 personnel and a vast amount of resources needs to form
IMT’s to better handle disasters, then certainly University Park, its’ MABAS division, and the State of Illinois itself should look at forming IMT’s. Reese (1999) reinforced this point in an article that appeared the NFPA journal. Reese’s article discussed the 16 national teams that are available throughout the United States and the number of deployments that each team is assigned to annually. She indicated that at any given time that all 16 teams could be deployed and that “local governments should not rely totally on federal assistance”.

NFPA 1201 “Standard for Developing Fire Protection Services for the Public” states that “A comprehensive response plan shall be prepared in writing describing the fire department role and providing for management and coordination of all public and private services called into action in natural and technological (man-made) disasters” (section 2-6 Disaster Planning).

Cooperation and coordination are the keys to preventing the breakdown of communications, failure to effectively allocate scarce resources, disjointed operational tasking, and the inability of these agencies to effectively meet their respective response objectives during multi-organizational and multi-jurisdictional disasters according to Kuban (1993). The research clearly indicates the need for Incident Management Teams to coordinate response, allocate resources, plan for all possible problems, to get the resources where they need to be, and to support the resources in order for them to do their job.

The last question that needed to be answered was “What should the qualifications and training be for the staff positions on the incident management team”? While no national standard exists, Miller (1999) indicated that the LACFD uses the “Position Tasks
Books’ as developed by the National Wildland Coordinating Group. Each member of LACFD’s Incident Management Team also receives a one-week “Command” training class provided by the United States Forest Service.

In the Matanuska Susitna Borough, Koechlein (1999) indicated that their agency also used the PTB for staff positions. In addition, he identified a manual (3000) issued by the American Red Cross known as the “Disaster Manual”. This document is similar to the NWCG’s in that this is the document that provides operational guidance to the Red Cross. The Red Cross manual is also based on the premises that the majority of its personnel will be volunteers rather than full time employees.

Given the lack of a National Standard, the research indicated that organizations that are trying to establish an Incident Management Team should probably review and evaluate the NWCG and Red Cross manuals as a starting point for establishing qualifications and training requirements.

**Feedback Instrument**

The feedback instrument included 12 questions (attached as appendix “B”) in order to determine if other fire departments in University Park’s MABAS division had established Incident Management Teams. If so, how did they staff the team and if not, how would they staff the team during a large-scale incident? Questions relating to qualifications, training and the need to incorporate IMT’s into the State of Illinois statewide emergency plan were also asked. The results of the feedback instrument were useful in that the information gathered supported recommendations to be included later in this report. Fifteen of the sixteen departments in the MABAS division responded to the
feedback instrument. The results of the questions are listed below in order from the highest percentage to the lowest.

**Question #1** Which best describes the personnel makeup of your department?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination (paid/paid-on-call)</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid only</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid-on-Call only</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question shows the relevance of the survey. The University Park Fire Department is a combination department. 73% of the respondents have the same type of department.

**Question #2** How many personnel do you have that are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel Type</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief/Command Officers</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Line Officers</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighters</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This data was important to ascertain the number of personnel that might be available to serve on an Incident Management Team both on the local level and on a task force in the statewide plan.

**Question #3** Does your jurisdiction have a written emergency operations plan for large-scale incidents?

- No 54%
- Yes 46%

**Question #4** Who is responsible for providing Emergency Services Disaster Agency or Emergency Management Agency (EMA) functions in your jurisdiction?

- County 46%
Fire Department  40%
Separate Agency  13%

**Question #5** Does your jurisdiction have an Incident Management Team designated for large-scale incidents?

No  54%
Yes  46%

This question was extremely important to determine what other departments in University Park’s immediate area. University Park might be able to learn from these departments rather than trying to reinvent the wheel.

**Question #6** How do you, or how would you staff the Incident Management Team positions? (check all that apply)

- Mutual Aid  73%
- County EMA  73%
- Volunteers  54%
- Private Agencies  40%
- MABAS Statewide Plan  27%
- Other  13%

This question gives insight in to how IMT’s are or could be staffed. The data reinforces the literature review and how departments outside University Park’s region had staffed their positions.

**Question #7** The Statewide Emergency Plan for the State of Illinois provides various resources, which can be accessed during a large-scale event. The task force card provides
2 engines, 1 truck, 1 heavy rescue, 3 ambulances, and 1 chief officer. How would your jurisdiction use these resources during a large-scale incident?

- To accomplish tactical operations and strategic objectives 60%
- To accomplish tactical objectives only 40%
- To accomplish strategic objectives only 0%

**Question #8** Do you feel that it would be beneficial to establish a card in the statewide plan that would provide personnel to staff Incident Management Teams during a large-scale incident?

- Yes 93%
- No 7%

Should we develop Incident Management Teams within our local area?

- Yes 86%
- No 14%

The results showed that members of the MABAS Division 27 felt it important to staff the IMT’s both in the statewide plan and also on a local area basis. Because others see the need, the researcher felt that there would be a greater level of cooperation in making the IMT’s a reality.

**Question #9** Should educational/experience guidelines be developed to be a member of an Incident Management Team?

- Yes 93%
- No 7%

**Question #10** If yes, check all that apply below:

- Incident Command Training (Firescope or NIMS) 86%
Supervisory Line Officers and Chief Officers 60%
National Standards (NFPA, NWCG, etc) 40%
Fire Officer I Certification 33%
Fire Officer II Certification 20%
Fire Officer III Certification 20%
Chief/Command Officers only 13%
Red Cross Training 7%

# of Years of Experience 73%

5 Years 6
10 Years 6

Questions 9 and 10 showed that the majority of the respondents felt, to a varying degrees, that there should be some minimum qualifications and training for the IMT personnel.

**Question # 11** Do you feel that members of an Incident Management Team should receive ongoing training in order to maintain their skills?

Yes 100%

**Question # 12** If yes, indicate the types of training that you feel would be appropriate.

(check all that apply)

Command School 100%
Participation in Mock Disasters 100%
Table Top Exercises 80%
Computer Simulations 66%
Classroom Lecture 66%
Round Table Discussions 66%
Questions 11 and 12 also indicated the opinion by the respondents that IMT team members should receive ongoing training in order to maintain their skill levels. The researcher felt this very important, because activation of the team, based on the history of the area, would be of a low frequency. However, the impact that the team could have during an actual large-scale event would be significant as the research showed.

**DISCUSSION**

Today’s fire service is facing a myriad of problems, with ever expanding roles, greater expectations by the public, and increasing dangers brought on by the prospects of terrorist activities. This point could not be reinforced to a greater extent than the events of September 11, 2001. On that day, the nation at large realized what many in the fire service had been saying for years: That there is an ever-increasing threat from terrorism, not to mention natural occurrences that can have drastic consequences. Kuban (1993) pointed out that the need for disaster planning should not be based on whether a disaster would occur, but when it would occur. It is clear that the literature that was researched showed a clear need to have an Incident Management Team as part of any disaster response, that the personnel must be qualified and have technical expertise to function within the system, and that ongoing training is necessary in order to maintain skill proficiency. In an interview regarding the collapse of the World Trade Center with Firehouse Magazine, John Norman (2002) who is the Chief of Special Operations for the Fire Department of New York said:

We had a great resource later on into the incident after a couple of weeks into the incident, the federal government brought in these interagency incident
management teams, basically wildland firefighting logistics teams. These are people who have a lot of experience running these campaign-type operations, which we never do. If we have a fire that goes beyond one shift, something’s wrong, so we don’t do this. We didn’t require relief. We provided our own relief. We didn’t require a large quantity of tools or equipment. This was very difficult for us. The incident management team took over our logistics operation, handling it, setting it up for us, maintaining inventory controls and tracking. They were an excellent resource. Norman went on to say that …If you had told anybody on September 10th that you would have people from the United States Park Service and the United States Forest Service helping us run an incident this heavily involved in our command structure, everybody would have said you’re out of your mind, it could never happen. And here they were and they did a great job.

This point was also made by Charles Blaich (2002) who was a Deputy Chief for the FDNY in charge of the logistics section during the World Trade Center response. Blaich related that the IMT organized the logistics section and did a great job at it. He also said that no officer of the FDNY had ever been involved with an IMT or how it could be used. He commented that the team got everyone organized under “one sheet of music to try to get everyone to sing from”. These comments are significant for several reasons: First, Norman indicated that it took several weeks for the Federal IMT to get into and organize the logistics section. Secondly, it showed that IMT’s work, can integrate with any department (including FDNY), and that they had a positive effect on their operations. Last, if there had been a locally sited IMT team, the planning, logistics and operations might have functioned better and under one incident action plan.
The research made it clear that an Incident Management Team would have a positive impact on any future large-scale emergency incident that University Park could face. The literature review showed that other departments in the Country had implemented IMT’s within their departments and that outside agencies that have specific technical expertise could be an important asset to the team. Both the literature review and the feedback instrument results indicated a need to qualify team members and that they should receive ongoing training in order to maintain their skill level.

The implications for University Park, as a result of the research was that the fire department should be the lead agency in attempting to institute an Incident Management Team for the Village. Failure to take action to correct the deficiency would certainly have a negative effect on any future large-scale incident. Team members should be recruited, based on technical expertise, from within its own organization as well as from outside agencies. The feedback instrument indicated that 93% of the respondents also saw a need for an IMT and that this team should be formed on a statewide basis. 86% of the respondents felt that a local team should also be formed in the local MABAS division.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are five recommendations that can be made as a result of the research based upon the literature review and the feedback instrument.

1. University Park should conduct further research to evaluate how the other local agencies staffed their Incident Management Team as indicated on the feedback instrument. This further evaluation may result in other findings not included in this project.
2. This research project should be given to local officials for review. This will make civilian, part-time politicians aware of the problem in order to gain their support.

3. A recruitment effort should be undertaken within the Village of University Park to identify personnel with technical expertise that would benefit an IMT. These personnel should receive training in the Incident Command System.

4. University Park should work cooperatively with surrounding communities to work towards the implementation of a local IMT consisting of multi-agency/multi-jurisdiction personnel. This will alleviate a burden on any one community where personnel are needed to function on the task level during large-scale incidents.

5. The Executive Committee of the MABAS organization should be provided with a copy of the research report. They should be approached about implementing a task force card for Incident Management Teams in the State of Illinois statewide plan. This task force card system would make multiple IMT’s available anywhere in the state using personnel from various agencies.

All of these recommendations would serve to move in the direction of implementing an Incident Management Team for use during large-scale emergency incidents experienced by the Village of University Park. Ultimately, with an IMT, the Village will be better prepared, and this would lead to better cooperation and coordination between the various agencies that would be involved.
REFERENCES


