**Chapter 5: Incident Management System**

**Chief Concepts**

* An IMS provides a standard, professional, and organized approach to managing emergency incidents. This standardized approach provides common objectives and helps to coordinate resources from multiple agencies.
* Several characteristics are critical to an IMS:
  + Organized approach—An IMS imposes order and discipline on the emergency scene and enables a safer and more efficient operation than would be possible if personnel and units worked independently of one another. In short, the IMS breaks down a large, complex situation into more manageable units.
  + Terminology—An IMS uses a standard terminology for effective communications.
  + All-risk—An IMS can be used at any type of emergency incident.
  + Jurisdictional authority—An IMS enables different jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations to work cooperatively on a single incident.
  + Span of control—An IMS maintains a desired span of control through flexible levels of organization. Span of control ranges from three to seven, with five being the preferred maximum number of resources managed by a single individual.
  + Everyday applicability—The IMS should be used at every single incident.
  + Modular—An IMS is based on standard modules that are activated as needed to manage an incident.
  + Interoperability—Everyone responding to an incident can communicate up and down the chain of command as needed.
  + IAP—Every incident has a plan that outlines the strategic objectives. Large incidents will have formal written plans, whereas smaller incident plans may be mentally formulated.
  + Designated incident facilities—Standardized facilities (such as an ICP, staging area, and rehabilitation area) are established as needed.
  + Resource management—A standard system is used for assigning and keeping track of incident resources.
* Five major functions are part of IMS:
  + Command—Responsible for the entire incident. This is the only function that is always maintained until command is terminated.
  + Operations—Responsible for most fire-ground functions, including suppression, search and rescue, ventilation, salvage, and overhaul.
  + Planning—Responsible for developing the IAP.
  + Logistics—Responsible for obtaining the resources needed to support the incident.
  + Finance/Administration—Responsible for tracking expenditures and managing administrative functions at the incident.
* The command staff assist command at the incident as follows:
  + The safety officer is responsible for the overall safety of the incident. He or she has the authority to stop any action or operation if it creates a safety hazard on the scene.
  + The liaison officer is responsible for coordinating operations between the fire department and other agencies that may be involved in the incident.
  + The PIO is responsible for coordinating media activities and providing the necessary information to the various media organizations.
* An example of a single resource would be a pump company or a ladder company.
* Single resources can be combined into task forces or strike teams and/or sectors.
* Other organizational units that can be established under an IMS include divisions, groups, sectors, branches, task forces, and strike teams.
* The IMS can be expanded infinitely to accommodate any size of incident. Branches can be established to aggregate similar functions, such as suppression, EMS, or hazardous materials.
* Five basic components always apply when working within the IMS:
  + At every incident, command must always be established.
  + Each fire fighter always reports to one supervisor.
  + Risk-management principles should be applied at all emergency incidents.
  + Spans of control should be applied in an escalating situation.
  + The company officer reports to command.
* As the incident grows or continues, it may be necessary to transfer command to another officer. Transfer of command must be done in a seamless manner to ensure continuity of command.