

## ***Commanding & Controlling the Vol Fireground!***

### ***Battalion Chief Richard Ray***

- **Purpose of Command**
  - Accomplish Incident Priorities
  - Organization & Structure
  - Meet Strategic & Tactical Objectives
  - Coordinate Resources
  - Ensure fireground safety
- **Command & Control**
  - Is crucial to success
  - Understand the importance
  - Difficult to do at times
  - Ensure appropriate strategy & tactics
  - Tactical & Situational Awareness
- **Command**
  - Established by the first arriving officer or firefighter in the absence of a chief.
  - Make decisions with limited information
  - Big picture Mindset
  - Influence situation
- **Responsibilities of Command**
  - Continually assess the fireground.
  - Communicate changes on the fireground.
  - Control Communications
  - Account for all firefighters
- **Commander's Intent**
  - Purpose – Our Why!
  - Tasks
  - Outcome
- **Command Presence**
  - Decisiveness
  - Clear Communication
  - Confidence
  - Consistency
  - Calm

- **Patience**
  - Difficult
  - Understand reflex time
  - Allow crews to work
  - Be reasonable with expectations
- **ICs that Win**
  - Are poised
  - Decisive
  - Calm
  - Are leaders not managers!
  - Credible & Competent
- **Commander Pitfalls**
  - Fear of making decisions
  - Lack of focus
  - Not reading the fireground
  - Lack of anticipation
  - Doing task level actions
  - Task Level actions
- **Communication**
  - Composure
  - Clear
  - Common vernacular
  - Concise
  - Words matter
  - Most important tool
  - Radio discipline
  - Listen to the radio
  - Multiple channels
  - Every FF must have a radio
  - Auditory exclusion
- **Struggles of the Vol Fireground**
  - Limited Personnel & Resources
  - Failure to understand the fireground
  - Wrong strategy
  - Lack of accountability
  - No situational awareness
- **Commanding the Fireground**
  - Requires quick thinking and decision making.

- Identify problems and develop a plan to address those problems.
- Conditions dictate actions on the fireground
- The fire always gets a vote!
- **Keys to Success**
  - Understand risk acceptance
  - Know the enemy & building
  - Know the tactics
  - Accurate size up
  - Clear communication
- **Tools that Help Command**
  - SOGs
  - PDAs – Pre-Determined Assignments
  - Knowing when to deviate from the above
  - Diagram the incident!
  - I.e. ID alpha side, hose placement, etc
  - Pencil & Paper
- **Decentralized Command**
  - Break the incident into manageable parts
  - Utilize Division/Group Supervisors
  - Their location is critical
  - Allows the IC to see a bigger picture
  - Reactive vs Proactive
  - Helps with secondary events
- **Where do you Command?**
  - Inside a vehicle?
  - Outside
  - Pros & Cons for both
  - Must see the fireground & hear the radio!
  - Near the event, influence the fireground
- **Resource Management**
  - Commit resources early
  - Request resources early
  - Think ahead
  - Big picture mindset
- **Call for Help Early**
  - Have a pro-active posture.
  - Recognize if the available resources are sufficient.
  - Have a bench!

- **How many firefighters do you need?**
  - 6 in 6 minutes?
  - 8 in 8 minutes?
  - What is realistic for your dept?
  - What happens when you do not have enough?
  - Mutual aid?
  - Coordinate & Sequential Tasks
- **Coordinate Resources**
  - Systematic approach
  - Sequence vs simultaneous ops
  - Use SOGs to help with coordination
- **Risk Management Plan**
  - Resources defines limitations
  - Must be able to identify limitations & when they have been exceeded.
  - Avoid task saturation
  - Recognize the problem and mitigate it before any harm is done!
- **See the Big Picture**
  - Occupancy
  - Construction
  - Water
  - Fire Location
  - Progress Report
  - Additional Alarms
  - Continuously Evaluate
  - Incident Duration
- **Have a game plan!**
  - Company officers are key
  - Must know role and responsibilities once on scene.
  - Allows your crew to prepare mentally
  - Helps to reduce the IC's stress level
- **Command's Thoughts**
  - Interior crews – Do I have the resources to get them out?
  - Did they go in the front? Is the rear open?
  - If they are up & in, do I have ladders for their egress?
  - Can I win this fight with what and who I have coming?
  - Division/Group supervisors

- What is your gut feeling?
- Mindset
- Expect fire
- Expect victims
- Expect the unexpected
- Ready for the MayDay
- **What is your mindset?**
  - Engaged
  - Positive attitude
  - Prepared
  - Believe that a serious event will happen today?
- **Reading the Fireground**
  - Fire
  - Building
  - Personnel
  - Conditions
  - Needs
- **Fireground Strategies**
  - Offensive
  - Defensive
  - Are the tactics working?
  - Level of aggression
  - Dept Culture
- **Perform the task that protects the most lives!**
  - Could be fire attack or search!
  - Size-up – both fire & victim
  - Be decisive!
  - How can you reduce the life hazard?
- **Size-Up**
  - Fire location
  - Life Hazards & Locations
  - 360 if possible
  - Identify any abnormalities
  - Be descriptive
  - Ongoing
  - Don't forget the interior!

- **Nailing the Size-Up**
  - Slow down
  - Evaluate
  - Devise a plan
  - Complete the 360
  - Size up + Incident Priorities = Goals & Objectives
  - The 360
- **Fireground Benchmarks**
  - Fire Attack
  - Search
  - Ventilation
  - Water Supply
  - Salvage & Overhaul
  - RIT
- **Supporting the Fireground**
  - Forcible Entry
  - Laddering
  - Tools
  - Personnel
  - Accountability
  - Rehab
  - Ability to make decisions
- **First Due Company Officer?**
  - Makes most critical decisions
  - Builds the incident for the Chief
  - Task saturated
  - Stay outside?
  - Inside with team?
  - Why?
- **Fire Attack**
  - Operational Priority
  - Commit staffing to fire attack!
  - Quick water
  - Preferably from the interior
- **Water on the Fire**
  - What are your target flows for your department?
  - What are your triggers for hose line size?
  - When in doubt choose the larger line

- Overwhelm the fire
- **Fire Attack & Command**
  - Did they get the hoseline right?
  - Size
  - Position
  - Length
  - Is it delayed?
  - Any conversion taking place?
  - Conditions improving or deteriorating
- **Search – Every Building is Searched**
  - Target Areas
  - Bedrooms
  - Family Room
  - Hallways
  - Why?
- **Command & Search**
  - Victim Removal
  - Window
  - Door
  - Needs?
  - Fire Conditions
  - Actions needed to support the search.
  - Continuous patient care
  - Where is EMS located?
- **Ventilation**
  - Must be coordinated
  - Vertical is an effective tactic
  - But so is horizontal
  - Understand the specifics of both
  - Fans – AFTER the fire is extinguished
- **Water Supply**
  - Water is king
  - Booster Tanks
  - Two engines
  - Hydrants
  - Rural Water
  - Supply must meet demand
  - Salvage & Overhaul has meaning!

- **RIT**
  - Do it early
  - Equipment
  - Soften the building
  - Communication
  - Large homes – multiple teams
  - Plan
  - How do we prevent it?
  - What is your policy?
  - Who does what? Mutual aid?
  - What does your communication center do?
  - Have you trained for this type of event?
- **Fireground Tempo**
  - What is it?
  - What affects fireground tempo?
  - How does command impact it?
- **Fireground Accountability**
  - Is a system that tracks the location of firefighters operating on the fireground, specifically in the hot zone of an emergency scene.
  - Monitors and tracks personnel & units for both single and multi-company operations.
  - Assist the IC to identify and locate all personnel operating on the scene of an incident.
  - Organization & structure
  - Accountability
  - Who is on scene?
  - Who is operating & where?
  - How are they?
  - Contact them!
  - FF Responsibility
  - Command Responsibility
  - Accountability Officer
  - Works with MA
- **Personal Accountability Report**  
**“PAR”**
  - When?
  - Why?



- **Accountability Officer**
  - The AO is responsible for monitoring radio traffic and personnel movement.
  - The AO should be established as soon as possible
  - The AO will track where all personnel are operating.
  - Arguably one of the most important fireground functions
- **How we lose!**
  - Fail to understand bldg. construction
  - Fail to assess the fire & building
  - Freelancing
  - Lack of crew accountability
  - Zero risk assessment
  - No command presence
  - Ignoring stupid actions
  - Indecision
- **Richard.Ray74@gmail.com**