

November 12, 2008

Provincial Incident Management System Update

The following update on the Incident Management System (IMS) is jointly provided by Emergency Management Ontario, the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario, and the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs.

The “final draft “of the IMS doctrine for Ontario is in its final review. The Fire Service stakeholder groups have participated in the development process throughout. This has resulted in several submissions identifying Fire Service concerns, which in turn have resulted in adjustments to the doctrine and clarification of language used within.

The proposed implementation process is dependent upon the strong, ongoing leadership of the Ontario Fire Service in Incident Management Systems. The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) envisions an opportunity to champion a turnkey approach to function specific expertise. The O AFC is committed to partnering with EMO, MNR, OFM, EMS, AMEMSO, OACP, OPP and other ministries, agencies, and stakeholders in future IMS endeavors.

Clarification of the key issues submitted by the Fire Service is to be found below:

Safety Principles

The Provincial Incident Management System does “**not**” replace or change the ICS/IMS taught and endorsed by the Ontario Fire College that has been adopted and is widely used on a daily basis by responding emergency fire crews throughout Ontario.

The Provincial IMS builds upon the ICS/IMS principles in place. The incident size dictates the required need for control and accountability of personnel and resources. The Provincial IMS is based upon management by objectives in order to maximize the safety of personnel and efficient, effective use of resources.

Safety of all emergency responders is paramount. Implementing sound organizational management principles and practices through “Span of Control” enhances safety and eliminates freelancing.

Usage

Usage of the Provincial IMS is “**optional**”, allowing for the flexibility required to address the diverse make up of Ontario, from the GTA to small rural communities.

The size and severity of an incident will dictate the need for IMS implementation. As allied and outside agencies/resources are required, the incident becomes more complex, and the need for a common IMS will be apparent.

The system is designed to be an all encompassing doctrine available to all levels, as required, during a large scale event. This includes the relationship and functions of the Province (PEOC), Cities/Municipalities (EOC), and the actual Site (ICP).

Terminology

Although the terminology contained within the doctrine is based on ICS/IMS, as already practiced by the fire service, and was developed in order to be flexible and easily adopted by all stakeholders regardless of their individual disciplines, some of the terms are not widely used on smaller incidents. It is however “**optional**” and the Incident Command, through the Incident Action Plan, may elect to identify squads, crews, teams, tasks forces, and/or strike teams and give them service specific names such as Search and Rescue 1, 2 ,3 etc..

What is critically important is that all agencies recognize that the Provincial IMS terminology is common in most neighboring Incident Management Systems in order to facilitate interoperability.

Training

Training for the Provincial IMS is being developed. Presently the (100) awareness level and the (200) IMS concepts level are near completion. The Ontario Fire College is in review of the learning outcomes and conducting a comparison against the OFC Company Officer Diploma Program. This will identify if there is to be acknowledged standing status through equivalencies for fire service officers.

Incident Management System training for function specific and large complex incidents is being developed and intended for officers above the Operations Level.

This aligns with the “Ontario Fire Service Standards” for Company Officer, Senior Officer, Deputy Fire Chief and Fire Chief.

Interoperability

Functional interoperability will be achieved through the adoption and implementation of the Provincial Incident Management System. The system will allow all agencies and stakeholders, regardless of discipline, to function under a common management system.

Technical Interoperability (radio communications) is currently in a stalled state due to the identification and realization of the enormous cost factor for the Municipal Fire Services however, Emergency Management Ontario is willing to reconstitute a Provincial Working Group on telecommunications interoperability once the functional interoperability doctrine is resolved. This supports the recent interest in investigating new communication technology that would enhance interoperability.

In conclusion it is our belief that this update, submitted on behalf of Emergency Management Ontario, the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario, and the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, clearly reflects the changes that have been made to the IMS doctrine in response to the concerns submitted by the Fire Service of Ontario.

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