

Operating Guideline # 703

Assigning Sectors or Groups

December 9, 2019



**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to describe the method by which tactical work assignments are made and carried out at emergency incidents.

**ISSUE/RATIONALE:**

A foundational element of the incident command system is that one person cannot effectively supervise a large number of individuals (or groups of individuals), and therefore “dividing” the supervision of work amongst several supervisors is critical to efficient operations. This “span of control” for any one person should not exceed seven, with the optimal number being five. Organizing and assigning individuals to perform tasks in clusters (sectors or groups) is an efficient way of organizing incident assets.

NOTE: For the purpose of this OG, the terms “Sector” and “Group” can be used interchangeably.

**GUIDELINE:**

1. Command may choose to divide the emergency scene into sectors based upon function (tasks to be performed) or geography (where the tasks are being done) or a combination of the two. Examples of “task” assignments commonly used include:
  - a) Accountability/Entry Control
  - b) Staging
  - c) Safety
  - d) R.I.T. (Rapid Intervention Team)
  - e) Fire attack (1, 2, 3 etc.)
  - f) Rescue (1, 2, 3 etc.)
  - g) Ventilation
  - h) Water Supply
  
2. Each sector shall be assigned to a Company Officer or senior firefighter for supervision purposes. This person effectively becomes the “Sector Officer” and he/she must be able to communicate with the personnel under their control and the IC. Sector Officers shall be able to account for the location and welfare of all crewmembers under their control at all times.
  
3. Sector Officers shall insure that all of their crew members are operating in their assigned sectors only. Crew members will not leave their sector assignments unless approved by their Sector Officer.
  
4. When crews are operating within a sector, Sector Officers shall keep Command informed of changing conditions within their sector and particularly those conditions, which may affect the safety of personnel.
  
5. Personnel who arrive on scene, but are not assigned to a sector will gather in the designated staging area and await deployment to a sector or work assignments.

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**RESPONSIBILITY:**

It is the responsibility of all members to comply with the provisions of this OG and particularly that Company Officers (supervisors) and firefighters (workers) ensure that they adhere to their duties in accordance with the provisions of this document and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

**REFERENCES:**

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (RSO 1990, c. 0.1)
- MLFD OG 701 Role and Responsibilities of the Incident Commander
- MLFD OG 207 Accountability
- MLFD OG 208 Rapid Intervention Team