

San Mateo County Fire Service
Policy & Guideline Manual

P-200

Use of ICS

P-200.1 PURPOSE & SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a standard procedure for Incident Command designators.

P-200.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the San Mateo County Fire Chiefs that all fire companies/Chief Officers involved in establishing command shall follow the procedures for command designation call signs outlined in this policy.

P-200.3 REFERENCES

N/A

P-200.4 PROCEDURES

The following radio procedures shall be used by agencies conducting operations on Public Safety Communications frequencies:

When multiple companies are assigned to an incident, an Incident Command (“IC”) designator shall be established. The Incident Commander will use the street name as the command designator, or when the use of the street name is not effective, the building name / number may be used in the designator.

Compliance with this Policy shall not preclude individual agencies from directing their personnel to insert the name of the officer assuming command when they establish the IC designator.

Upon arrival of the IC, the command designator shall be established and should, when possible, remain consistent throughout the incident. The establishment of the command designator also defines the “Alpha,” or “A,” side of the incident. When the scene does not allow the effective use of the street name in the command designator, the complex name / building number / building name, may be used as a substitute.

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When arriving at a structure fire or gas leak, for example, at a single family dwelling on “Elm Street,” the command designator shall be “Elm Street IC,” or “Elm IC.”

When arriving at a building on a large campus, it may be more effective to use the building number than to use the business name. The use of “building 200 IC” is more descriptive than using “Oracle IC.” Oracle has many buildings on the campus and also has a street named “Oracle” that can cause confusion when trying to identify a specific building. When no alignment can be made with a command designator and the building’s “Alpha” side, use the point of public entry (such as the lobby) as the “A” side.

When establishing command at a vehicle accident that multiple companies are responding to, the command designator will be the name of the street that the incident is located on. For example, “Hillsdale IC.” You may choose the largest of the streets in the intersection, or the street that you were dispatched to, if still accurate.

It is the choice of the IC to make the designator as useful as possible. Streets in San Mateo County may run through many jurisdictions, such as El Camino, Alameda and Highway 101. If multiple incidents occur on a roadway of the same name, the IC may wish to inform the dispatcher and responders that the designator will be changed to a cross street or an overpass in the area in order to avoid confusion.

When operating at a vegetation fire that aircraft resources are responding to, it is critical to use the IC designator that has initially been provided to, or provided by, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal-Fire). The IC designator is provided to Cal-Fire resources upon dispatch and if it is changed it has safety implications for responding aircraft and resource tracking impacts that can be prevented by using the previously assigned IC designator.