



# Burlington Fire Department



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<b>Section: 03 - Safety</b>	
<b>SOG Number: 03.07</b>	<b>Effective Date: Dec. 12, 2019</b>
<b>Subject:</b> Fireground Accountability	
<b>By Order of Fire Chief Steven A. Locke</b>	

## **I. Purpose:**

To establish a comprehensive and functional personnel resource tracking system for the Burlington Fire Department which provides for the accountability of all personnel operating at an emergency scene.

## **II. Scope:**

This guideline applies to all officers and firefighters of the Burlington Fire Department. All personnel will adhere to this accountability system; furthermore, they shall utilize the Personnel Accountability Location System (PALS) in order to ensure everyone’s safety. The PALS system should be utilized by all personnel who are: on-duty, working extra duty and assigned to a vehicle, participating in training, and while operating at an emergency scene.

## **III. Definitions:**

Company: A single tactical unit equipped with tools and equipment, that can be used on an incident.

Crew: A team of individuals with an identified work Supervisor that can be used on an incident. The minimum crew size for the Burlington Fire Department shall be two personnel.

Division: Divisions are used to divide an incident into geographic areas of operation. Divisions are identified by alphabetic characters for

horizontal applications and, often, by floor numbers when used in buildings.

Group: Groups are established to divide the incident into functional areas of operation. Groups are composed of resources assembled to perform a special function not necessarily within a single geographic division (See Division).

IDLH: Acronym for Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health. The presence in the atmosphere of any inhalable agent capable of causing severe injury or death after a brief exposure to it. In operational terms, the presence of any airborne contaminant that people should avoid unless they have access to respiratory protection.

MARC: Acronym for Member Accountability Roll Call. An action point in an incident, where Fire Dispatch notes 20 minute increments, to act as a prompt for the incident commander to elect to conduct a roll call. The roll call will be conducted in an orderly fashion by radio or face-to-face between the IC and each unit or command function/division, after each leader has had positive communication with the persons/crews within their direct span of control. Whenever possible, each division or group should account for personnel within their span without the use of the radio in order to keep operational channels open for emergency traffic.

PALS: Acronym for Personnel Accountability Location System. A tracking system which utilizes vehicle passports and nametags to accurately track personnel operating at an emergency scene.

PALS nametag:

A 3/8" by 2" plastic name tag, assigned to all personnel of the Burlington Fire Department, with a hook and loop backing. Chief Officers will have a white tag, Company Officers will have a blue tag, Senior Firefighters will have a green tag, all other members will have a red tag.

PAR: Acronym for Personnel Accountability Report. A roll call of all personnel who are not assigned to staging.

Passport: A red 2" by 4" plastic tag, with a hook and loop backing. A passport shall be assigned to a vehicle or crew for the purpose of accountability of the personnel assigned.

RTS: Acronym for Riding the Seat. The Fire Officer or Senior Fire Fighter in charge of a fire department company.

#### **IV. Guidelines:**

##### A). PALS Procedure and Usage.

1. The Incident Commander shall maintain an awareness of the location and function of all crews and personnel operating at an incident scene. In order to facilitate this, a Personnel Accountability Location System (PALS) will be used at all times. The PALS system will present an organized and reliable method of tracking personnel operating on incident scenes.
2. All personnel must ensure that crew integrity is maintained at all times. All crews will remain together. Personnel operating in an IDLH environment must operate in at least pairs, while maintaining voice or visual contact with one another at all times as outlined in OSHA [20CFR 1910.134 (g)(4)(i)].
3. All Division and Group supervisors, RTS personnel, and Crew Leaders shall have a working radio. If a radio fails while working within the IDLH environment, all personnel must exit, unless there is another working radio within the group, company, or crew.
4. At any incident where personnel are operating in an IDLH environment, the Incident Commander will use the 20-minute tactical benchmark, . The 20-minute MARC will be prompted by Fire Dispatch. At this point the Incident Commander may conduct a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) of all of the Companies operating at an incident and not assigned to Staging. The PAR should reconcile with the accountability of the PALS passports.
5. PAR benefits and communication:
  - a. For a company officer/RTS and Crew Leaders, a PAR is a confirmation that all personnel assigned to his/her company/crew are accounted for. A PAR within a company or crew is conducted by face to face communication within the single resource.
  - b. For Division and Group Supervisors, a PAR offers accountability of all companies and crews assigned to the Division or Group. A PAR within a Division or group may be conducted face to face or via Radio with the Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief.

c. For the Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief, the PAR offers accountability of the Division or Group Supervisors and those subordinates working under their direction. A PAR requested by the Incident Commander shall be conducted via radio.

d. In order to allow enough time for members to ensure an accurate PAR report, the member initiating the PAR check, should announce via the radio, “all units, stand by for a PAR”. The member should then wait a reasonable timeframe (60 seconds) then initiate the PAR via the radio.

6. A Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) should be initiated by the incident commander in the when:
  - a. There is a report of a missing or trapped firefighter.
  - b. There is a change of tactics from offensive to defensive.
  - c. There is a sudden hazardous event – flashover, backdraft, collapse, etc.
  - d. Anytime the Incident Commander feels necessary.

7. Lost or Missing Members.

If, upon completion of a PAR, personnel are noted to be lost or missing, the Division/Group Supervisor or Crew Leader must immediately notify the incident commander. The incident commander will declare a “MAYDAY” for the lost/missing person. Command should consider activating the Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC) to the last reported working area of the unaccounted for member to begin a search (Reference SOG 06.3)

B). PALS system

1. At the beginning of every shift the Company Officer shall verify their apparatus’ staffing profile (Officer/RTS, Driver, Back-end Firefighters and observing guest riders).
2. The shift commander is responsible for maintaining a printed copy of the on-duty ride list produced by the Aladtec Scheduling Software (Formerly Burlington Fire Department Form A-1 - Daily Personnel Report). This information shall be recorded and kept in the Incident Command vehicle (Battalion 1), and at Fire Dispatch at the start of every shift. Personnel changes shall be updated as staffing changes throughout the shift. All updates shall be completed in Aladtec.

A copy of this web based ride list may be retrieved at any time through the use of the Aladtec software.

3. The Company Officer/RTS shall report any deviation of these assignments to the Incident Commander as soon as possible. Personnel going off duty are responsible to inform their officer that they have been relieved and who their relief is.

C). PALS Passports – Daily Use

1. Personnel Name Tags

All personnel of the Burlington Fire Department shall be assigned two (2) PALS system nametags, which clearly identify the firefighter's name. Each PALS nametag shall be attached to the underside of the rear brim of each firefighter's helmet, when not being used on a vehicle passport for accountability.

2. Passports

Every Burlington Fire Department vehicle shall be assigned a passport. Each vehicle passport shall be attached to the right front dash of the vehicle.

3. Passport Layout

The top name on the passport shall be the Officer or RTS person; the next name tag shall be the driver and subsequent name tags shall be the jump seat personnel. Any company having an observer/rider shall have a yellow tag marked "Rider" at the bottom of the passport.

4. Nametag Transfer

Firefighters: shall place their nametag on the passport in the apparatus either at start of shift or upon arrival at the station (such as covering personal leave). Personnel are to remove the nametag of the person who they are relieving and to place it in the helmet of that person, then place their own nametag on the passport.

5. Personal Leave/Member off truck

If an individual whose name tag is on the apparatus passport leaves the apparatus for personal leave, or other departmental assignment and will be off the truck, they shall remove their nameplate from the apparatus passport. They should store their nametag on their helmet, while they are off the apparatus.

6. Pump/Aerial Driver Operators

If individual personnel of a company are working outside of the hazard area (such as pump operators & aerial ladder operators) their name tags shall be placed upside down on the vehicle passport upon collection. The company officer (RTS) and back end positions will remain in their respective places on the passports.

#### 7. Compliance and Safety

Company Officers/RTS Personnel shall be aware and account for their personnel at all times while working at the incident. They must work to ensure that all personnel assigned on their apparatus have their nametags on the passport in the correct place.

#### 8. Lost Nametag Replacement

Members who lose a nametag and need replacement shall submit a “Helmet Tag Request Form” to the Deputy Chief of Operations. This form currently resides in the Department Computer system

**Fire (R:) drive →Forms→Uniform Request Forms→Helmet Tag Request Forms**

The form is also attached to this document as *Appendix A – Accountability Helmet Tag Request Form*.

#### D). PALS Passport – Apparatus Out of Service – Reassigned.

When a front-line piece of apparatus is going out of service and a reserve piece of apparatus will be operating in its place, the passport can stay in the assigned vehicle.

#### E). PALS Passports – Multiple Alarm Incidents

1. One of the first positions that the incident commander should establish after escalating the alarm, is the role of the accountability manager. This person should preferably be a Lieutenant rank or higher. The accountability manager shall assume the responsibility of maintaining the PALS system. Please note: The accountability manager is not the same person who assumes the role of Staging Area Manager as outlined in SOG 01.20 Multiple Alarms. The Staging Area Manager works to maintain resources in staging.
2. All personnel arriving at the scene of an incident that has escalated to a second alarm or greater shall report to the accountability manager. If no one has yet been identified as the accountability manager, they should report to the incident command post. No multiple alarm call back personnel shall operate at any incident without utilizing the PALS system.

Members operating at an incident scene without their assigned tags, may report to the Staging Manager or designee to receive a numbered tag for tracking themselves during the incident.

3. A PALS accountability board is located in Battalion 1. The accountability manager should deploy the PALS board and collect the passports of initial companies at the scene. These passports will be located on the dash of the apparatus on scene. The accountability manager shall work with the incident commander to identify the location of the companies operating on the incident scene and mark their location on the accountability board.
4. As individuals arrive on scene they must report to the accountability manager. The accountability manager will collect each person's PALS nametag and check them in to the incident using the BFD Multiple alarm callback form. The accountability manager will then assign personnel to crews. The minimum crew size shall be two (2) personnel, where at least one member shall be the rank of Senior Firefighter or above. Each crew shall be assigned a passport with their crew number at the top. The PALS nametag of the Officer/RTS of each crew shall be placed at the top of the PALS passport. This person shall be the crew leader. The other personnel of the crew shall follow below. The accountability manager will then track crews and their location on the accountability board.
5. Individual nametags shall be utilized on the accountability board for personnel who arrive at the scene and are assigned a task for other functions in the incident command system that are not specific to apparatus or a crew (i.e. filling air cylinders, rehab officer, or staging manager).
6. Companies that have completed a task at an incident scene and have been released to rehab and/or staging, shall check in with the accountability manager as soon as practical after exiting the IDLH environment.
7. Companies that are being relieved from the scene, yet are made up from call back personnel as a result of the multiple alarm, are to check out with the staging manager to retrieve their nametags prior to departure from the scene.
8. Companies that are being relieved from the scene and are made up of on duty resources shall retrieve their passports from the staging manager (or incident commander) prior to their departure from the scene.

F). PALS Passport – Mutual Aid Response

1. Companies that respond to requests for mutual aid shall ensure that the vehicle passport in which they are responding reflects the updated staffing profile for the personnel that are on the apparatus.
2. Upon arrival at the Mutual Aid incident, the Burlington Fire Department (BFD) Officer/RTS should attempt to check in with the Mutual Aid incident commander or staging manager, transfer the BFD vehicle passport(s) for accountability and perform a 360 of the building to ensure and adequate size-up by BFD personnel.
3. Upon release at a Mutual Aid incident the BFD Officer/RTS should check out with the Mutual Aid incident commander or staging manager and retrieve the BFD vehicle passport, while confirming accountability of all BFD members listed.

**V. Responsibility:**

- A. The Incident Commander shall be responsible for overall personnel accountability for the incident.
- B. Each Division or Group supervisor shall be responsible for maintaining an awareness of all the crews assigned to them.
- C. All personnel must understand who they report to within the ICS system of an emergency scene, as well as those personnel that they are responsible for. No personnel shall operate outside of direction of their ICS Supervisor. Freelancing will not be tolerated.
- D. Each company officer or person Riding the Seat shall be responsible for ensuring that each firefighter on the apparatus has attached their nameplate on the apparatus passport, at all times.
- E. Each firefighter shall be responsible for ensuring that their nametag is stored on their helmet when not in use, and placed on the passport when reporting for duty.
- F. In the event of a complex incident, that has not escalated to a multiple alarm, the IC shall be responsible for assigning personnel to collect passports and maintain the accountability board, as conditions warrant.

Revision History			
Revision Date	Section	Summary	Principal Author
		Initial Release of Document.	DC Collette

## Appendix A

# *Burlington Fire Department*

## Accountability Helmet Tag Request Form

Use for replacement tags or if new color is needed

Date:12/12/2019

Name:Click or tap here to enter text.

Rank:Choose an item.

Number of tags requested: Choose an item.

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Send via interdepartmental Mail to Station 1, Attn: Deputy Chief of Ops

Received:\_\_\_\_\_ Order Submitted:\_\_\_\_\_ Distributed:\_\_\_\_\_