

The San Jose Fire Department Incident Dispatcher Team

Established for rapid deployment to localized major alarms, the San Jose (CA) Fire Department Incident Dispatcher Team (IDT) provides an on-scene communications support group, releasing fireground units to resume tactical operations while providing command post assistance to an Incident Commander. The concept integrates the dispatcher's unique skills of multi-tasking, attention to detail, hearing-and-repeating information accurately, right into the command post.

In April, of 1995, San Jose's Incident Dispatchers began responding into the field. After several months of trial and error, the official response protocols were entered into the department's Offi-

hostile environments, it is recognized that working at the command post can involve a small degree of risk, and safety gear is required. IDT personnel carry city pagers and portable radios for rapid notification and response to a fire scene. When the program began, field commanders and fire personnel were briefed in the role and responsibilities of IDT through the department's close-circuit TV training channel and through a portion of the Communications class at each firefighter's recruit academy.

Automatically deployed at 3rd alarm structure, Level-2 High Rise, or 2nd-alarm vegetation fire levels (or whenever specially requested), two or more dispatchers will respond to the command

post and operate out of battalion chief's van or a mobile command vehicle. Optimum response is one

Incident Dispatcher per alarm level. One recent major incident – a wind-whipped wildland-urban intermix fire in the city's eastern foothills last October requiring the equivalent of seven alarms to control generated the response of four San Jose IDs plus three mutual aid IDs from neighboring agencies to support the 15-hour incident.

With the development of San Jose's Command Post Support Vehicle ("Com26"), which went on line in Autumn of 1997, the IDT provides an enclosed work area for an Incident Commander and support staff. Equipped with three radio positions, two MDT/PCs, color printer/scanner/fax, cell phone, a 20' antenna mast, generator, battery chargers, and a portable repeater, the CPSV is maintained and deployed by the Incident Dispatcher Team.

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cial Action Guide. Standardized Training for San Jose's IDT dispatchers includes a 24-hour State Fire Marshall's Office-certified ICS (Incident Command System) class, a 24-hour Incident Dispatcher course developed by the California Fire Chiefs Association, Communications Section, and additional training in Resource Management provided by San Jose Fire. Once trained, dispatchers are outfitted with wildland safety gear for both protection and identification. Although they are never expected to approach



San Jose Fire's IDT got a 15-hour workout in their Comm Van during a large multiple alarm wildland-urban intermix fire in October, 2000. Four SJFD dispatchers rotated positions with mutual aid IDTs from Gilroy and Palo Alto to support the high-profile incident.

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