

REGIONAL STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Firefighter Mayday

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Definition of a Mayday Situation

Any situation where a firefighter is unable to safely exit the hazard zone, or other dangerous event that cannot be resolved by that individual within 10 seconds.

Any member is empowered to call a Mayday when the above conditions exist. This can be during response; on scene of any incident, or any time when a member becomes in trouble and a portable radio is available.

Early identification of a Mayday situation is critical. The longer it takes to declare a Mayday situation the less likely a successful resolution is possible.

A Mayday is initiated by any member communicating "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday", *immediately* followed by that members L.U.N.A.R. report, via the portable radio.

The acronym L.U.N.A.R. is a training mnemonic for the following information:

L - Location

U - Unit

N - Name

A - Actions and Air Supply

R - Resources Needed

Example Transmission:

"Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, this is Firefighter Smith on Engine 202, I'm lost and disoriented in cold smoke and attempting to search for an exit, my air is four-thousand psi, I have no needs at this time".

Statistics have shown that oftentimes Mayday transmissions are not initially heard on the fire ground. This is the reason for the continuous transmission format above. Additionally, the member calling a Mayday must be prepared to repeat the transmission until he or she is heard and acknowledged by the incident commander.

The Rule of Mayday Readiness

It is every individual firefighter's responsibility to maintain a high level of Mayday readiness at all times. This includes everyday preparation and prevention as well as the practiced ability to communicate and respond to a Mayday scenario.

Mayday procedures and actions are perishable for all levels of an incident organization.

The strategic, tactical and task levels of incident scene management should consistently and regularly be exercised for Mayday procedures and practices. This includes the Dispatch component.

Mayday preparation should be ingrained into everyday activities and practiced at the company level.

Definition of Mayday Readiness

In order to reach a level of Mayday readiness, a firefighter must adopt an attitude and preparation to look at every incident from the standpoint of "*what if I or another firefighter gets in trouble?*" prior to the occurrence of a "Mayday" situation.

Additionally, NFPA 1500 defines mayday readiness as the ability to "don, doff and manipulate the SCBA in zero visibility while wearing firefighting gloves."

Effectively preventing Mayday situations involves multiple factors. Command Officers, Company Officers and Firefighters must reinforce the prevention of scenarios that lead to a Mayday.

The most important factors for Mayday prevention begin with the following operational standards:

- Working within the Incident Command System/Risk Management System
- Working within the Incident Action Plan
- Always being accountable to someone within the incident command system (***Never Freelance***)
- Understanding and forecasting changes in building and fire dynamics
- Maintaining individual and crew air management
- Managing work cycles
- Monitoring distances traveled into buildings
- Layering of resources and providing for a tactical reserve

In order to establish effective Mayday readiness, it is necessary to recognize that Mayday readiness has two components. These components are **Prevention and Response**.

Task Level Mayday Readiness and Response

Every firefighter has the responsibility to actively and routinely prepare for the prevention of Mayday situations and the response to Mayday situations. Individual firefighter responsibilities for Mayday prevention include the following:

- Maintaining SCBA proficiency
- Practicing individual air management
- Use and care of personal protective equipment
- Portable radio proficiency and use
- Practiced crew communications
- Floating firefighter integration into crew (Individual firefighters have to be responsible to ask if not initiated by Company Officer)

The Company Officer is responsible for Crew development and practice. Consistent training and practice with regards to Mayday prevention is critical for rapid and appropriate response in a true Mayday situation. This involves setting a consistent attitude and expectations for all crew members regarding Mayday readiness. This also involves developing routines that are encouraged and participated in by the Company Officer.

Company Officer responsibilities for Mayday prevention include:

- Integrating a daily SCBA check into the crew routine
- Practicing crew communication in the hazard zone
- Floating firefighter integration into crew
- Maintaining knowledge of portable radios and practicing their use
- Ensuring Company Officer responsibilities and expectations are clear to the entire crew
- Practicing and maintaining crew integrity/accountability

Mayday Readiness and Response

The individual firefighter's response to a Mayday situation should be focused on increasing the chances of survival. The development of these skills truly begins at the Probationary level and should continue throughout a firefighter's career on a daily basis.

Individual firefighter responsibilities for Mayday response include:

- Maintaining preparation and reaction skills
- Early communication of Mayday situation utilizing the above standard
- Controlling an emotional response to the situation
- Once the Mayday situation is recognized and reported, each firefighter should remember:
 - B.O.A. = Breath, Organize and Act
 - Utilization of Fire Ground Survival training
 - GRAB LIVES

- G = Check Air **G**auge
- R = **R**adio for Assistance
- A = **A**ctivate PASS Device
- B = Control **B**reathing, Conserve Air
- L = Stay **L**ow
- I = **I**lluminate, Turn Flashlight On
- V = Make Loud Noises (**V**olume)
- E = Find An **E**xit
- S = **S**hield Your Airway (last ditch effort)

Strategic & Tactical Level Mayday Readiness and Response

The strategic and tactical levels of every incident have the responsibility to actively and routinely work toward Mayday prevention and preparedness. The responsibilities of the Incident Commander and company or Division and/or Group (D/G) Supervisors include:

- Working within the overall incident action plan
- Continual assessment of the decision making model
- Management of tactical objectives
- Air management
- Work/rest cycles
- Distances into building
- Accountability
- Maintain adequate resources assigned to the incident
- Layered resources in position to manage tactical objectives and prepared to respond in the event of a Mayday
- Maintaining effective and appropriate communications

The responsibilities of the strategic and tactical levels in response to a firefighter Mayday include:

- **Responding to the Mayday from the inside out**
 - Meaning: What resources can we get to the down firefighter the quickest, while maintaining control of the overall incident, within the allowable parameters of the risk management profile? This may be a nearby company or it may be the on-deck or RIT. If utilizing nearby companies, the IC must be prepared to immediately reinforce the functions previously being performed by those companies. This is one reason that maintaining an adequate tactical reserve is so critical.
- Managing communications with the down firefighter
- Ensuring the search and rescue efforts for the down firefighter if necessary
 - Whenever possible, the incident commander should establish a Rescue Group (Supervisor) to oversee firefighter search and rescue with he or she maintaining Command of the overall incident, rather than trying to manage both on his or her own
- Increase and maintain resources assigned to the incident

- Improve survivability and tenability
- Increase exterior access to building (ensuring flow paths are controlled)
- Maintain awareness of fire and smoke conditions, as well as building conditions, as rescue efforts are initiated

There is no greater time for a clear and concise utilization of the Risk Management System than during a Mayday event.

It is not acceptable to create further Mayday situations when resolving an existing Mayday.

Conditions must be continuously communicated to the Incident Commander especially as they deteriorate and have an immediate impact upon the rescue efforts.

Dispatch Center Responsibilities

It is critical to acknowledge the role the dispatch center will have in the resolution of a Mayday. A significant component of the overall incident management system, to include firefighter safety, is the contact between the incident commander and the dispatch center, no matter the incident size. The dispatcher responsibilities for a Mayday response are as follows:

- A Mayday is initiated by a member in the field communicating “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday” on the radio
- A Mayday can be initiated by anyone, at anytime, that is working in the field and has access to a portable radio
- Mayday is not just a fireground term, it can be used in any hazard zone
- Upon initiation of a Mayday, the dispatcher shall:
 - Allow for the Incident Commander to speak to the Mayday initiator
 - Upon request of the IC, transmit the emergency traffic tone

If the first company on scene and/or Forward IC of a fire incident initiates the Mayday, the dispatcher shall:

- Assure the member that “help is on the way”
- Maintain communications with the Mayday initiator until other units arrive
- Ensure the communications are necessary and not to fill dead radio time
- Remind the member to initiate their “GRAB LIVES” procedures
- Ensure all responding units are aware of the Mayday
- Upgrade the assignment to the next alarm level

The entire dispatch center provides redundant monitoring of the Mayday radio traffic. Upon the initiation of a Mayday, the dispatch center shall initiate the monitoring of all *possible* hazard zone channels.

Conclusion

It is every member's responsibility to maintain their preparedness for a Mayday situation. The only way to guarantee a successful outcome of a Mayday situation is to **PREVENT IT!**

Mayday prevention and preparedness requires action at all levels of an incident command system

The Ultimate goal for any Mayday response is to successfully resolve the Mayday and at the same time not create any further Mayday situations.

A Mayday situation will elevate the emotional levels of all involved.

All members, at all levels of the incident involving a Mayday should remember **B.O.A., Breathe, Organize and Act!**