

2017-209 MAYDAY Procedure



Westbrook Fire & Rescue Department

Standard Operating Procedure

Section: Emergency Operations	TOPIC: MAYDAY procedure
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Purpose:

To define situations, terminology, radio and other procedures for use when firefighter(s) are in an actual or potentially life-threatening situations.

Scope:

To provide guidelines and procedures to be utilized by emergency responders when emergency assistance is required.

Procedure:

Definitions

Mayday: An actual or potentially life-threatening condition or situation. This would specifically include situations in which a firefighter's egress is blocked. Examples include but are not limited to:

- 1) Trapped by structural collapse or fire extension
- 2) Unconscious Firefighter
- 3) Firefighter with a life-threatening injury
- 4) Firefighter with a non-life-threatening injury in a hazardous area
- 5) Missing Firefighter not found within 60 seconds
- 6) Firefighter lost, trapped or disoriented and not corrected within 60 seconds
- 7) Other similar situations or conditions which are actually or potentially life-threatening

Priority: A situation involving hazardous conditions or situations which need to be rapidly relayed to Incident Command but not rising to the level of Mayday. Examples include but are not limited to:

- 1) Finding a civilian victim
- 2) Non-life-threatening injuries in non-hazardous areas
- 3) Significant fire extension
- 4) Water supply loss
- 5) Imminent collapse
- 6) Interior fire attack being discontinued and changed to exterior attack

Mayday Initiation Procedures:

When a firefighter is involved with a situation which he/she believes to be a Mayday he/she shall immediately transmit this over his/her radio as follows:

Declaring a Mayday:

Unit declaring the mayday shall transmit **“Mayday, Mayday, Mayday this is [radio designation] with Mayday traffic”**. Upon this transmission, **ALL FIREGROUND** radio traffic shall cease immediately. Command shall answer the Mayday traffic. If Command does not immediately acknowledge the Mayday and appears to have not heard the transmission, than other personnel may briefly notify Command of the traffic, in person when appropriate. When answered by Command the unit declaring the Mayday shall transmit the following information to Command, preferably in this order:

- 1) Name
- 2) Location
- 3) Air Supply Remaining/Assignment
- 4) Resources or assistance needed

Actions of Personnel Declaring a Mayday:

After declaring a Mayday and communicating with Command as outlined above, personnel who are in a Mayday situation should take the following steps:

- 1) Activate PASS device. This will make it easier for rescuers to find missing or trapped firefighters, even if they are unconscious. The PASS should be turned off when communicating over the radio. When lost or trapped firefighters are reached by a rescue team the PASS devices should be returned to automatic.
- 2) Stay together as a group. One group of firefighters is easier to find than individuals and the team possesses more ability to accomplish any self-rescue.
- 3) Search for an exit, stay on the walls. Self-rescue is always an option and search crews will be following walls on the way in to you.
- 4) If an exit cannot be found, find a safe location. A room with a door which can be shut to slow the fire is preferable to an open area. Some areas of a collapsed structure are more stable than others.
- 5) If staying put, lay on your side with your head toward the wall and your feet projecting into the room, in a corner if possible. This will improve your chances of being found as well and will put you in the safest spot.
- 6) Attempt to signal by tapping your tools on floor, pipe or hard surface, flashing lights etc.
- 7) Conserve your air supply by controlling your breathing. Reduce physical exertion as part of your air management.

Actions of Command after Receiving Mayday:

After receiving a Mayday and communicating with unit(s) involved as outlined above, Command should take the following steps as appropriate:

- 1) Have Fire Alarm transmit an alert tone and announce that a Mayday is in progress with a brief description of the situation.

- 2) Radio Silence shall be implemented, only radio traffic pertinent to the Mayday is allowed.
- 3) Commit the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) as appropriate.
- 4) Conduct a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) to account for all units.
- 5) Assign a Mayday Officer to oversee the mayday including, as appropriate, communications with the Mayday unit(s). Do not ask Mayday units to change radio channels. Move other units to a different channel such as State Fire.
- 6) Request an additional alarm.
- 7) Assign a second Rapid Intervention Team to stand by.
- 8) Assign an EMS unit to the Rescue Sector for the Mayday firefighter(s) only.
- 9) Assign an Operations Officer to handle the ongoing suppression activities.

Actions of other Personnel when a Mayday is in Progress:

When a Mayday situation has been declared, non-involved personnel shall respond as follows:

- 1) Remain at assigned location and function until reassigned.
- 2) Those not involved in the Mayday, will switch their operating frequency to State Fire.
- 3) Stay off the radio – Mayday radio traffic only, use runners to communicate normal operations.
- 4) Conduct a PAR in your area.
- 5) Reduce high risk operations.

Clearing a Mayday:

Only Incident Command can clear a Mayday situation and only after the following actions:

- 1) Conduct a PAR to account for all units including RIT and Mutual Aid.
- 2) Ensure that a RIT is ready to continue operations.
- 3) Have Fire Alarm sound an alert tone and announce that the Mayday operation is concluded and to resume normal fire ground operations.

IMS note:

It is the intent that Mayday communication initially be handled at the highest on scene level. Normally this will be the Command designation. In larger incidents such as HAZ-MAT incidents this level may be the Operations designation. The intent is to bypass multiple levels of supervisors to achieve rapid results at the highest appropriate level.

Priority Initiation procedures:

When a firefighter is involved with a situation which he/she believes to be a priority situation he/she shall immediately transmit this over his/her radio as follows:

Priority situations:

Unit needing to contact Command or a Sector Officer with the information shall transmit “[radio designation] to Command with priority traffic. Upon this transmission, ALL non-Mayday FIREGROUND radio traffic shall cease immediately. Command or the Sector

Officer shall answer the traffic. If Command or the Sector Officer does not immediately acknowledge the Priority traffic and appears to have not heard the transmission, then other personnel may briefly notify Command or the Sector Officer of the traffic, in person when appropriate. When answered by Command or the Sector Officer, the unit calling with priority traffic shall transmit the needed information. Upon receipt of the information, Command or the Sector Officer may issue further radio traffic to deal with the situation. All other non-mayday traffic will continue to hold until Command or the Sector Officer announces that **“Priority traffic is cleared, resume normal radio communications”**

Additional information:

Other units may exercise their judgement if they have new, pertinent information to add to the information transmitted by the initial unit. In general, other units should only transmit if they have vital new information that will affect the decision process, not just suggestions and “me too” comments.

Multiple problems:

In certain situations, more than one priority situation may exist, or may exist along with Mayday traffic. Units must exercise radio discipline and only transmit if absolutely necessary. Face to face communication is preferable and the value of your input must be considered. Mayday traffic always takes priority over priority and shall be declared whenever appropriate.

Dispatch Responsibility

Studies have shown that a majority of maydays transmissions are not initially heard by those working on the fire scene but are in fact recognized by the emergency dispatcher. Upon recognition of the MAYDAY, the dispatcher shall immediately do the following:

- Transmit the MAYDAY tones.
- Advise all units to hold all radio traffic and that we have a mayday on scene.
- Advise the Incident Commander of the situation and pass any information on the dispatcher may have gathered.
- Monitor additional fire ground frequency that was assigned by the Incident Commander

Preventing the MAYDAY

Training, professional development and practice are the best preventative measures to a mayday situation. Each firefighter has a responsibility to maintain proficiencies in self-rescue, air management, radio communications and fire ground best practices. It is the responsibility of each department officer to assure that members are maintaining these proficiencies.

- It is their responsibility to seek additional training.
- It is the responsibility of the officer to arrange these training.
- It is the department responsibility to hold annual firefighter safety and survival training.