

SCOPE: This procedure applies to all organizations operating within an IDLH atmosphere where the risk of a firefighter mayday is possible.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this procedure is to define a mayday situation, ensure companies are consistently in a readiness state for a mayday situation, and ensure that firefighters have the tools and appropriate training to prepare themselves for a mayday situation.

1. DEFINITION OF A MAYDAY SITUATION

- 1.1.** 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**.
- 1.2.** Any member is empowered to call a Mayday when the above conditions exist. This can be during a response, on scene of any incident, or any time when a member becomes in trouble and a portable radio is available.
- 1.3.** 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.
- 1.4.** A Mayday is initiated by any member communicating “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday”, immediately followed by a member’s who, what, where, air report, via the portable radio.
- 1.5.** The who, what, where, air report is described below and will be utilized in place of the previous LUNAR acronym.
 - 1.5.1.** Who: Provide your unit and name (Engine 201, Firefighter Smith).
 - 1.5.2.** What: Description of the emergency. What is happening on the fireground that is prompting you to call a mayday. (i.e. roof/floor collapse, PPE malfunction, disoriented, separated from your crew, or calling a mayday for another FF.)
 - 1.5.3.** Where: describe the location you think you are in the building. Try and maintain some sense of situational awareness to narrow down your current location or last known recent location.
 - 1.5.4.** Air: Lastly, finish off your mayday traffic with your current air supply. Determine this based on your actual digital reading or the color gauge on your Heads Up Display (HUD).
- 1.6.** Example transmission of a Mayday: “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, this is Firefighter Smith on Engine 201, I’m trapped in a ceiling collapse on the delta side of the 1st floor, and my air is 4000 PSI.”
- 1.7.** 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 (IC). After two attempts are made and the Mayday firefighter is still unable to successfully reach the Incident Commander, the Mayday firefighter shall utilize their Emergency Alert Button (EAB) button. Reference section 4.6 of this document for further guidance on the use of the EAB.
- 1.8.** Be prepared to deliver a needs report following the mayday acknowledgement from the IC. Requesting specific tools such as additional air bottles, SCBA mask, ground ladders, or extrication equipment is important information to deliver before the deployment of rescue crews.

2. THE RULE OF MAYDAY READINESS

- 2.1.** 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 situation.
- 2.2.** Mayday procedures and actions are perishable for all levels of an incident organization.
- 2.3.** 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.
- 2.4.** Mayday preparation should be ingrained into everyday activities and practiced at the company level.

3. DEFINITION OF MAYDAY READINESS

- 3.1.** 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.
- 3.2.** Additionally, NFPA 1500 defines mayday readiness as the ability to "don, doff and manipulate the SCBA in zero visibility while wearing firefighting gloves."
- 3.3.** Effectively preventing Mayday situations involves multiple factors. Command Officers, Company Officers and Firefighters must reinforce the prevention of scenarios that lead to a Mayday.
- 3.4.** In order to establish effective Mayday readiness, it is necessary to recognize that Mayday readiness has two components. These components are Prevention and Response.
- 3.5.** The most important factors for Mayday prevention begin with the following operational standards:
 - 3.5.1. Working within the Incident Command System/Risk Management System
 - 3.5.2. Working within the Incident Action Plan (IAP)
 - 3.5.3. Always being accountable to someone within the incident command system (Never freelance)
 - 3.5.4. Understanding and forecasting changes in building construction and fire dynamics
 - 3.5.5. Maintaining individual and crew air management
 - 3.5.6. Managing work cycles
 - 3.5.7. Monitoring distances traveled into buildings (be cautious in traveling beyond 175 feet inside a building)
 - 3.5.8. Layering of resources and providing for tactical reserve

4. TASK LEVEL MAYDAY READINESS AND RESPONSE

- 4.1.** 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:
 - 4.1.1. Understanding their role in the Incident Command System
 - 4.1.2. Disciplined behavior against freelancing
 - 4.1.3. Maintaining SCBA proficiency
 - 4.1.4. Practicing individual air management
 - 4.1.5. Use and care of personal protective equipment
 - 4.1.6. Portable radio proficiency and use

- 4.1.7. Practiced crew communications
- 4.1.8. Recognizing change in hazardous conditions
- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. Company Officer responsibilities for Mayday prevention include:
 - 4.3.1. Integrating a daily SCBA check into the crew routine
 - 4.3.2. Practicing crew communication in the hazard zone
 - 4.3.3. Effective integration of TDY or OT firefighters into crew
 - 4.3.4. Maintaining knowledge of portable radios and practicing their use
 - 4.3.5. Ensuring Company Officer responsibilities and expectations are clear to the entire crew
 - 4.3.6. Practicing and maintaining crew integrity/accountability
- 4.4. 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.
- 4.5. Individual firefighter responsibilities for Mayday response include:
 - 4.5.1. Maintaining preparation and reaction skills
 - 4.5.2. Early communication of Mayday situation utilizing the above standard
 - 4.5.3. Controlling an emotional response to the situation
 - 4.5.4. Once the Mayday situation is recognized and reported, each firefighter should remember:
 - 4.5.4.1. B.O.A.- Breath, Organize, Act
 - 4.5.4.2. Utilization of fire ground survival training
 - 4.5.4.3. GRAB LIVES
 - G= Check Air Gauge
 - R= Radio for Assistance
 - A= Activate PASS Device
 - B= Control Breathing (Reilly Emergency breathing Technique or box breathing)
 - L= Stay Low
 - I= Illuminate, Turn Flashlight on at a 45 degree angle
 - V= Make loud noises (Volume)
 - E= Find an exit
 - S= Shield your airway (last ditch effort)
- 4.6. Emergency Alert Button (EAB)
 - 4.6.1. Every effort should be made to transmit the Mayday over the assigned frequency to the Incident Commander. In situations where the Mayday firefighter cannot broadcast after **two attempts** or is on the wrong radio frequency and cannot physically change to the right channel, the Mayday Firefighter is encouraged to utilize the EAB which will automatically shunt radio communications to Fire TG1. This allows the Mayday firefighter to communicate the Mayday traffic to the dispatcher, who will be able to promptly relay the emergency to the Incident Commander.

5. STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL LEVEL MAYDAY READINESS AND RESPONSE

- 5.1.** 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:
 - 5.1.1. Working within the overall incident action plan
 - 5.1.2. Continual assessment of the strategic decision making model (SDM)
 - 5.1.3. Management of tactical objectives
 - 5.1.4. Air management
 - 5.1.5. Work/rest cycles
 - 5.1.6. Distances into building
 - 5.1.7. Accountability
 - 5.1.8. Maintain adequate resources assigned to the incident
 - 5.1.9. Layered resources in position to manage tactical objectives and prepared to respond in the event of a Mayday (3-deep deployment).
 - 5.1.10. Maintaining effective and appropriate communications
- 5.2.** The responsibilities of the strategic and tactical levels in response to a firefighter Mayday include:
 - 5.2.1. Utilizing the yellow Mayday Tac Sheet to assist with the Mayday management
 - 5.2.2. Responding to the Mayday from the inside out
 - 5.2.2.1. 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 crew 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.
 - 5.2.3. Manage the communications with the down firefighter
 - 5.2.3.1. Keep it personal. Use first names to attempt to lower the stress of the situation as much as possible.
 - 5.2.3.2. If the situation is applicable, consider walking the Mayday firefighter through the GRAB-LIVES procedures over the radio
 - 5.2.4. Whenever possible, the incident commander should establish a Rescue Group (Supervisor) to oversee firefighter search and rescue or utilize an existing Division Supervisor to manage the mayday and rescue. It is preferred that the IC maintain oversight of the overall incident, rather than trying to manage both the scene and the mayday on his or her own
 - 5.2.5. Balance to a 2nd alarm, consider a level 2 staging location, and maintain resources assigned to the incident
 - 5.2.6. Improve survivability and tenability. Consider deploying additional handlines to the area of the mayday.
 - 5.2.7. Increase exterior access to the building (ensuring flow paths are controlled).
 - 5.2.8. Soften the building and ensure ground ladders are pre-positioned for rapid exit on multi-level occupancies.
 - 5.2.9. Maintain awareness of fire and smoke conditions, as well as building conditions, as rescue efforts are initiated.
- 5.3.** There is no greater time for a clear and concise utilization of the Risk Management System than during a Mayday event.
- 5.4.** It is not acceptable to create further Mayday situations when resolving an existing Mayday.

- 5.5. Conditions must be continuously communicated to the Incident Commander especially as they deteriorate and have an immediate impact upon the rescue efforts. These conditions should be communicated in the form of Priority Traffic.
- 5.6. In the event that a Mayday is initiated from the only unit on scene (1st arriving unit), the responding Command Officer is encouraged to take Command of the incident and manage the Mayday while responding to the scene. This is certainly not ideal, however given the complexities of the emergency, we believe this would be the best course of action to work towards a successful outcome.

6. DISPATCH CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1. 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:
 - 6.1.1. Upon initiation of a Mayday, the Incident Commander will make contact with dispatch and request the following assistance:
 - 6.1.1.1. Provide Emergency Traffic (wobble tones) over the assigned tactical channel upon request of the IC. Hold down the Emergency Traffic button for a minimum of 2-3 seconds.
 - 6.1.1.2. Immediately following the emergency traffic tones, the dispatcher shall state on the tactical channel: **"We have a Mayday on the scene, all units hold your traffic"**
 - 6.1.1.3. Once the IC has made the declaration of the Mayday over the assigned tactical channel, start channel markers over the frequency as a reminder for all units to maintain radio discipline.
 - 6.1.1.4. Since Emergency Traffic is utilized, the dispatcher will continue monitoring the tactical channel along with Fire TG1.
 - 6.1.1.5. 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 and notate information in the call card.
 - 6.1.1.6. Balance the incident to a 2nd alarm. Prompt the IC before doing so.
 - 6.1.1.7. The dispatcher shall make contact with the Fire Chief of the affected department and advise of the Mayday. Attempts will be made to get a chief officer into the dispatch center to assist.
 - 6.1.1.8. Once the emergency has been resolved and emergency traffic has been canceled, the dispatcher can discontinue the channel markers.
 - 6.1.2. A Mayday can be initiated by anyone, at any time, that is working in the field and has access to a portable radio
 - 6.1.3. Mayday is not just a fire ground term, it can be used in any hazard zone

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. 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!**
- 7.2. Mayday prevention and preparedness requires action at all levels of an incident command system
- 7.3. The ultimate goal for any Mayday response is to successfully resolve the Mayday and at the same time not create any further Mayday situations.
- 7.4. A Mayday situation will elevate the emotional levels of all involved.
- 7.5. All members, at all levels of the incident involving a Mayday should remember **B.O.A., Breathe, Organize and Act!**