

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 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 that members L.U.N.A.R. report, via the portable radio.
- 1.5.** 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
- 1.6.** Example transmission of a Mayday: “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, this is Firefighter Smith on Engine 365, I’m lost and disoriented in cold smoke and attempting to search for an exit, my air is 4000 PSI, I have no needs at this time.”
- 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).

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 scenario.
- 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.** The most important factors for Mayday prevention begin with the following operational standards:
 - 3.4.1. Working within the Incident Command System/Risk Management System
 - 3.4.2. Working within the Incident Action Plan (IAP)
 - 3.4.3. Always being accountable to someone within the incident command system (Never freelance)
 - 3.4.4. Understanding and forecasting changes in building construction and fire dynamics
 - 3.4.5. Maintaining individual and crew air management
 - 3.4.6. Managing work cycles
 - 3.4.7. Monitoring distances traveled into buildings (be cautious in traveling beyond 150-175 feet inside a building)
 - 3.4.8. Layering of resources and providing for a tactical reserve
- 3.5.** In order to establish effective Mayday readiness, it is necessary to recognize that Mayday readiness has two components. These components are Prevention and Response.

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

L= Stay Low

I= Illuminate, Turn Flashlight on

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 multiple 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 the Firefighter to Fire West from the assigned Q-Channel. This allows the Mayday Firefighter to communicate the Mayday traffic to both the dispatcher and Incident Commander, who are both on the main dispatch channel.

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 decision making model

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

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. Responding to the Mayday from the inside out

5.2.1.1. 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 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.

5.2.1.2. Managing communications with the down firefighter

5.2.1.3. Ensuring the search and rescue efforts for the down firefighter if necessary

5.2.1.4. Whenever possible, the incident commander should establish a Rescue Group (Supervisor) to oversee firefighter search 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

5.2.1.5. Balance to a 2nd alarm, consider a level 2 staging location, and maintain resources assigned to the incident

5.2.1.6. Improve survivability and tenability

5.2.1.7. Increase exterior access to building (ensuring flow paths are controlled).

5.2.1.8. Soften the building and ensure ground ladders are pre-positioned for rapid exit on multi-level occupancies.

5.2.1.9. 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.

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. A Mayday is initiated by a member in the field communicating "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday" on the radio

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

6.1.4. Upon initiation of a Mayday, the dispatcher shall:

6.1.4.1. Provide Emergency Traffic (wobble tones) over the assigned Q-Channel upon request of the IC.

- 6.1.4.2. Once the IC has made the declaration of the Mayday over the assigned Q-Channel, start channel markers over the frequency as a reminder for all units to maintain radio discipline.
- 6.1.4.3. Since Emergency Traffic is utilized, the dispatcher will begin monitoring the Q-Channel along with FireWest/FireEast.
- 6.1.4.4. Once the emergency has been resolved and emergency traffic has been canceled, the dispatcher can return to monitoring strictly FireWest/FireEast.
- 6.2. If the first company on scene and/or Forward IC of a fire incident initiates the Mayday, the dispatcher shall:
 - 6.2.1. Assure the member that "help is on the way"
 - 6.2.2. Maintain communications with the Mayday initiator until other units arrive
 - 6.2.3. Ensure the communications are necessary and not to fill dead radio time
 - 6.2.4. Remind the member to initiate their "GRAB LIVES" procedures
 - 6.2.5. Ensure all responding units are aware of the Mayday
 - 6.2.6. Upgrade the assignment to a 2nd alarm.
- 6.3. 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.

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!**