

## CAPITAL FIRE MUTUAL AID STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

### NUMBER

SUBJECT: "MAYDAY" PROCEDURE

PURPOSE: The rescue of trapped, lost, injured or distressed firefighters in a burning building is a stressful and time sensitive event. There is a very narrow "window of survivability" for a firefighter that is lost, trapped, or out of SCBA air supply. It is critical that firefighters understand the importance of reporting the "MAYDAY" to command if they become lost, trapped, or in need of assistance. The accountability of our members on the fire ground is a critical objective for Command. Following a report of a "MAYDAY" on the fire ground the Incident Commander must restructure the incident to include a high-risk rescue effort.

The purpose of this guideline is to identify the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved at an incident in which a lost, trapped, or distressed firefighter has initiated a "MAYDAY" call. It will define the procedure of initiating a "MAYDAY" and the procedures to be followed by others on the fire ground responding to the "MAYDAY".

AUTHORITY & RESPONSIBILITY: It is the responsibility of all members to operate in a safe manner to minimize the need for a "MAYDAY" incident to occur.

I. Officers are responsible to comply with and ensure that the personnel under their command are adequately trained, fully understand, and comply with this guideline and that appropriate risk/benefit analysis is conducted before committing personnel to interior operations in an IDLH atmosphere.

2. All members of this department have the responsibility to learn and follow this guideline.

I. Basic Self-Survival Responsibilities:

- A. The number one Self-Survival responsibility is DO NOT GET LOST, TRAPPED, OR DISTRESSED
- B. Firefighters must wear all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). C. Firefighters must activate and use the PASS device on the SCBA.
- C. Firefighters must stay together as a crew. NO FREELANCING
- D. All firefighters must have a portable radio and rescue tools.
- E. Do not enter an IDLH building without a hose line or safety line and appropriate tools.
- F. Constantly survey your environment for changes (good and bad).
- G. Follow all firefighting and safety SOG's.

**Rescue** needs generally falls into two (2) categories. Either the firefighter is trapped by a collapse or lost in a smoke filled and burning building. The most significant problem and difference between the two categories are that the search area can be substantially larger for a lost firefighter than that encountered in a collapse situation. On the other hand, a collapse may present a major extrication situation. In some cases, lost or trapped firefighters may be able to radio to Command that they are lost or trapped and in need of rescue, prior to being incapacitated. Other problems may include: a possible

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secondary collapse, separated and scattered crews, and confusion of the last known location of the crew (or member). Early PAR'S and information as to the number of missing firefighters, identities, and whereabouts are critical.

II. MAYDAY RADIO MESSAGE:

- A. Any report of "MAYDAY" will receive priority radio traffic.
- B. The term "MAYDAY" will be used ONLY to report a lost, trapped, or distressed firefighter.
- C. The term "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC" will be used to report all other emergencies on the incident ground.

III. INDIVIDUAL PROCEDURES:

- 1. Member(s) that become lost, trapped, injured, or in distress and require rescue by others on the fire ground should execute the following procedure:
  - A. The radio message "MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY" will be used by firefighters to report their status as being lost, trapped, or in distress and in need of rescue.
  - B. Activate the Emergency Button on your portable radio.
  - C. Activate the PASS device on your SCBA pack.
  - D. Activate the emergency traffic button on the portable radio. This will alert Dispatch and Incident Command that a firefighter is in trouble.
  - E. Wait for the radio channel to be cleared, and the "MAYDAY" acknowledged by the Incident Commander. If "MAYDAY" is not heard, retry to give it over the Dispatch channel.
  - F. The firefighter will notify Command of the following:
    - L - Last known location.
    - U - Unit number.
    - N - Name
    - A- Assignment and air amount.
    - R- Resources needed.
  - G. Relocate to a wall (if possible) and try to orient yourself to your surroundings.

Remember that rescuers will begin their search along walls, hallways, around doors, and windows so the ability to position yourself along these search routes will increase your chances of being located.

H. Communicate to Command any noises, voices, or visual clues that you encounter.

I. Attempt to locate a hand line if possible. Remember that male couplings lead towards the fire (nozzle) and female couplings lead towards the truck (outside).

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J. If you are unable to move due to injury, position yourself in a horizontal position and place your flashlight facing towards the ceiling. Any noise that you can make (tapping on SCBA, wall, or floor) may be helpful for rescuers.

IV. TEAMS' RESPONSIBILITIES:

Each team operating on the fire ground must maintain their assigned positions following the report of a "**MAYDAY**". The ability to remain disciplined and perform the tasks necessary to support the search will be critical to the success of the rescue efforts. It will be necessary to report **PAR'S** to Command rapidly to assist them in the development of a detailed rescue plan.

V. COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Incident Commander **MUST ALWAYS** assume that the missing firefighter is lost or trapped in the building until the firefighter is accounted for. Rapid, concise decisions and actions must be taken to increase survivability. The following is a list of actions to be taken by Command for a reported missing or trapped firefighter. These are guidelines and do not necessarily need to be accomplished in the order listed. The first five (5) must be accomplished very rapidly.

A. **EMERGENCY TRAFFIC** -- Immediately after receiving the "MAYDAY" radio traffic, the Incident Commander must request the Emergency Traffic tones through Dispatch. All personnel operating on the fire ground will be advised of the situation and PAR'S will be requested. Command must have all other units operating on fire ground switch to another channel to keep "MAYDAY" channel open to Command, RIT, and the lost or trapped firefighter only.

B. **CHANGE THE PLAN TO INCLUDE A HIGH PRIORITY RESCUE** -- The Incident Commander must restructure the Incident Action Plan (IAP) to include a high priority firefighter rescue effort. A rapid, well thought out rescue plan must be deployed based on information gathered from the trapped or missing firefighter. The Incident Command organization must be expanded and the plan communicated to all teams operating on the fire ground. Fire attack positions must remain engaged to support the rescue effort.

C. **IMMEDIATELY REQUEST ADDITIONAL ALARMS** -A minimum of one (1) additional alarm should be immediately requested including a medical component. Additional alarms may be requested based on the circumstances and consideration of a technical rescue team response in the event of a structural collapse.

D. **FIREGROUND ACCOUNTABILITY**- a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) must be immediately requested from all teams operating on the fire ground. This is a critical element in situations that involve structural collapse. Command cannot develop an effective rescue plan without accurate information pertaining to the number of missing firefighters, their identities, teams assigned to, and their last known location.

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E. COMMIT THE RAPID INTERVENTION TEAM(S)- Deploy the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) to initiate search and rescue efforts. It will be necessary to immediately assign another team to back up the initial RIT team. This will be a labor-intensive assignment that may require a large number of personnel. Deploy one (1) RIT bag for each reported lost or trapped firefighter.

F. Expand the Command organization. An incident of this magnitude will require Branch Level Management. The Incident Commander should be proactive and aggressive in their actions.

1. Assign an Officer to the Rescue Branch.
2. Assign a Safety Officer to the Rescue Branch.
3. Establish a Welfare Branch to assist with any family notifications.
4. Maintain strong supervision this will be a very emotional event.
5. Maintain firefighting positions to support the rescue efforts.
6. Incident command should include opening secondary means of egress
7. Soften the building, which should include opening a secondary means of egress, breaching of safe havens parallel to the involved area(s) in all cases doors that we encounter must remain locked.
8. Aggressive ventilation should be initiated to increase tenability and visibility.
9. Employ lighting both interior and exterior to support the efforts.
10. Assign Treatment and Transportation to the Medical Branch.
11. Coordinate and control rescue efforts.
12. Closely monitor the structural stability of the building. Consider the use of a structural engineer to evaluate the structure.
13. Call upon the technical rescue team to shore up the structure where necessary.
14. Control the media. Assign a P.I.O. immediately and control access to assure their safety as well as preventing the photographing of and identification of any victims. Never release names of injured firefighters to the media.
15. Confirm that Dispatch monitors all radio channels in the event that the lost or trapped firefighter(s) attempt contact on another channel other than the Channel the incident is being worked on.

Possibly the most important task that RIT team(s) can do following their assignment is to get a 360 of the building, remove any structural barriers that would prevent escape, and report construction

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features to Command. The tracking of team assignments and their likely locations within the structure provides a detailed idea of where potential issues may occur. The assignment of multiple RIT teams may be necessary when the incident involves large structures. RIT teams should size-up the structure as it relates to the resources needed to perform a rescue and relay these observations to Command.

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