



Scarborough Fire Department Scarborough, Maine



Standard Operating Guidelines

Book:	Emergency Operations
Chapter:	Rescue Operations
Subject:	3640 - Mayday Procedures
Revision Date:	3/22/2011
Approved by:	<i>B. Michael Thurlow</i>

PURPOSE

To establish the fireground parameters which would require a Mayday along with procedures for transmitting and mitigating it. To identify the roles and responsibilities of all personnel involved at an incident where a Mayday has been transmitted.

POLICY

The radio message "Mayday" will be used by firefighters to report their, or another firefighters status as being low on air, lost, or trapped, and needing rescue. Command should deploy the RIT/MIT to the last reported location of the lost or trapped (i.e. can not self-extricate) firefighter(s) and implement a rescue plan. If a RIT/MIT is activated for a Mayday, a second RIT/MIT should be established.

SCOPE

The Incident Commander will maintain an awareness of the location of firefighters on the fire ground primarily through assignments and the accountability system. In the event that a firefighter cannot be accounted for, any member should announce a Mayday and must notify the Incident Commander immediately. The rescue of lost or trapped firefighters in a burning building or other IDLH is extremely time sensitive. There is a very narrow window of survivability for a firefighter who is out of SCBA air supply or trapped by approaching fire. Command shall respond to a Mayday by implementing a rescue plan for the firefighter(s). The Incident Commander must assume that the missing firefighter is lost in the building or in the IDLH environment until that firefighter is accounted for.

DEFINITIONS

- A. **PAR** – Personel Accountability Report. PARs should be conducted on a regular schedule (i.e. every 20 minutes) but can also be used anytime the need arises to assure all firefighters are properly accounted for.
- B. **RIT** – Rapid Intervention Team
- C. **MIT** – Medical Intervention Team

- D. **LUNAR** – Acronym for - Last known location, Unit, Name, Assignment, and Resources needed.
- E. **IDLH** – Immediately Dangereous to Life and Health
- F. **Radio Channel Assignments** – The following list of radio frequencies are the routine assignments used for the associated tasks. However, changes may be made as necessary:
 - a. Fire Primary is used for communications from the incident scene to Dispatch
 - b. Fire Tactical (channel 3) is used for communications on the incident scene for on-scene operations. During a Mayday this channel is likely to be used as the Mayday frequency.
 - c. State Fire is used for mutual aid apparatus staging.
 - d. Chief's "280" is used for Water Supply operations. This may be changed to the fire ground operations channel during a Mayday.
 - e. Chief's "265" is used for another operations channel. This may be changed to the RIT operations during a Mayday incident
 - f. EMS 1 is an EMS operations channel.
 - g. EMS 2 is second EMS operational channel.

PROCEDURE

A. Parameters Requiring a Mayday

The initiation of a Mayday is required in the following situations:

- a. By members who are lost or trapped, have fallen through a roof, floor, or in some other hazardous situation where they can't self-extricate especially with a low air supply.
- b. By a company officer, sector/division officer, or other member who cannot account for a firefighter who was assigned to their crew and is operating in the hazard zone. The Mayday would generally occur following a PAR check that fails to locate/account for the suspected lost member.
- c. By a member who witnesses or has confirmed that a firefighter is lost or in trouble.

B. Procedures for Transmitting and Mitigating a Mayday

- a. Call for help (transmit a Mayday) immediately upon recognizing the situation meets a Mayday parameter, while continuing to attempt to extricated the lost or trapped firefighter from the IDLH.
- b. Any report of a Mayday will receive priority radio traffic. Command will:
 - i. Request that dispatch transmit the emergency traffic tone over the operational radio frequency in use at that time (generally Fire Tactical channel 3) and declare the Mayday.
 - ii. Identify and move all other fire ground radio traffic not directly associated with the Mayday (now the designated Mayday channel) to a different radio frequency. (For example, The Mayday frequency remains Fire Tactical, Operations moves to CHF 280).
- c. The term Mayday will be reserved **ONLY** to report a lost or trapped firefighter that is unable to self-extricate or is low on air. The term "Emergency Traffic" will be used to report all other emergencies.

- d. If a lost firefighter can not contact Command, dispatch, or any other units on the assigned operational radio channel, the firefighter should try Fire Primary, then other radio channels to attempt contact and declare an emergency.
- e. It's important to find any channel that works. Once communication is established, remain on that channel, which becomes the Mayday channel. Do not attempt to have the lost or trapped firefighter change radio channels. All other fireground operations will switch to a different channel. In the event of no communication with the lost or trapped firefighter, the RIT will be on a separate channel from the fire ground operations channel.
- f. If after conducting a PAR, a firefighter is discovered missing, a Mayday will be called. Command must immediately assign someone on the fireground and in the dispatch center to monitor all possible fire ground radio frequencies for a radio transmission from the missing firefighter on any channel.
- g. Lost or trapped firefighters should give Command information based on the acronym: **LUNAR** (**L**ast known location, **U**nit, **N**ame, **A**ssignment, **R**esource needed).
- h. Command must confirm with the person calling the Mayday that he/she is in receipt of the Mayday and its details.
- i. Once a Mayday has been called, Command must request a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) immediately from all companies operating on the fire ground on the newly assigned Operations channel. This is especially important in situations of structural collapse.
- j. Command should prepare for additional Maydays and upon commitment of the RIT, assign additional RIT/MITs. This must be repeated each time an additional RIT is activated.
- k. Additional resources must be immediately obtained. At least one additional alarm should be immediately requested upon a report of a lost, or trapped, firefighter. These additional companies may be sent to a staging area until needed.
- l. Rapid commitment of the RIT must occur. Command will immediately send the Rapid Intervention Team(s) to the most appropriate location to initiate search and rescue efforts (typically the last reported work area). A chief officer should be assigned to direct the RIT Division.
- m. The Incident Commander must ensure that a complete, coordinated and controlled search is conducted
- n. A Safety Officer must be assigned to each RIT operation to monitor activity and evaluate the safety of the operation. Freelancing will not be allowed under any circumstances.
- o. Early consideration should be given to heavy equipment resources and special equipment for structural collapse. All additional resources should be sent to a staging area.
- p. In some situations, such as collapse or explosion, crew members may get separated. The only practical method, to obtain an accurate PAR of effected crews, may be to withdraw them to the exterior. In addition, withdrawal may be the only way to quickly obtain accurate information and reconnaissance on exactly where trapped members may be. Once the PAR and reconnaissance information is quickly obtained, crews can be re-assembled into a more organized rescue effort.

- q. Prevent fire spread if possible. If a missing firefighter(s) is to survive, the incident commander must keep the fire out of the rescue area. With a RIT team in place, the incident commander may initiate an immediate rescue effort without withdrawing or relocating fire attack companies.
- r. All firefighters must follow directions from superiors and continue with initial assignments unless otherwise directed.
- s. Command will need to establish a PIO in order to control the media early and throughout the incident. Information of the identities and conditions of lost firefighters must be restricted until after family members are notified. Media film crews should be restricted to areas that are safe and at a distance that will prevent visual/facial identification of any victims.
- t. If a family notification and reunification sector needs to be established, a chief officer should be assigned to this sector. This will aid in notification of family and allow Command to stay ahead of the media's release of information.
- u. When a declared lost or trapped firefighter has been found, dispatch will sound a tone on all channels being used and state the firefighter has been located.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. It is the responsibility of all Scarborough Fire Department personnel to adhere to this policy.
- B. It is the responsibility of Command to maintain an awareness of the location of all firefighters on the fireground primarily through assignments and the accountability system.
- C. All members are empowered to initiate a Mayday in the event that a firefighter cannot be located, or any other time a firefighter is missing.
- D. Command is responsible for implementing a rescue plan for the firefighter(s) in trouble that triggered the Mayday.
- E. It is the responsibility of company officers and individual firefighters who suspect a firefighter is missing to notify the incident commander immediately. The incident commander must assume that the missing firefighter is lost in the building until the member is accounted for. This system must also include the ability to identify if a firefighter has been delayed beyond his/her SCBA air time.
- F. It is the responsibility of the RIT/MIT to follow the appropriate related SOPs.
- G. It is the responsibility of the dispatcher to monitor, select, transmit the emergency tone, and announce the appropriate frequencies to be used on the fire ground during a Mayday situation (see definitions).
- H. It is the responsibility of the PIO to communicate information to the media, after it is authorized by the incident commander. Notification of the family of any victim must have been made prior to this information being released to the media.

REFERENCES

- A. NFPA 1407 Standard for Fire Service Rapid Intervention Crews
- B. NFPA 1500 Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program
- C. NFPA 1561 Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System
- D. NFPA 1670 Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents