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| ***REPLACE WITH YOUR MASTHEAD*** |
| **VFIS logo black JPG** | **SOG Title:** |
| **SOG Number:** |
| **Original Date:** | **Revision Date:** |
| **ABC Fire Department General Operating Guideline** |

**May-Day**

***This is a sample of a standard operating guideline (SOG) on this topic. You should review the content, modify as appropriate for your organization, have it reviewed by your leadership team and if appropriate your legal counsel. Once adopted, make sure the SOG is communicated to members, implemented and performance monitored for effective implementation.***

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this guideline is to identify the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved at an incident where a "May-Day" has been transmitted.

**Scope:**

This applies to all personnel.

**Guideline:**

The radio message "May-Day" will be used by firefighters to report their status as being lost, trapped or injured and in need of rescue. Any member may use a "May-Day" to report a lost firefighter. Any report of "May-Day" will receive priority radio traffic. The term "May-Day" will be reserved only to report a lost, trapped or injured firefighter.

**Procedure:**

In the event of a firefighter(s) becoming trapped, lost, entangled, disoriented, and injured or in need of other assistance, the firefighter(s) shall remain calm. The firefighter should call on the operations or dispatch channel and state "May-Day May-Day May-Day" to clear the radio traffic on that channel once the IC has acknowledged the “May-Day”. The member in distress transmits:

1. Radio number
2. Crew's designation
3. Status in regard to any injuries or entrapments
4. Fire and smoke conditions are
5. Point of entry into the structure
6. Last know position
7. Air supply status

Member in distress should move to a safe location if possible and activate their PASS alarm and remain in radio contact with command and the RIT team as long as possible. Stay in one location so that the RIT can find you. Try not to move around they will have to chase you so please remain in one location.

The guidelines outlined on the following pages will be followed at ANY incident involving the use of a "May-Day".

Command Responsibilities

Command will maintain an awareness of the location of firefighters on the fire ground primarily through assignments and the personnel accountability system. In the event that a firefighter cannot be located through a PAR (Personnel Accountability Record), or any other time a firefighter is missing. Any member can announce a "May-Day". The term "May-Day" will indicate a lost, trapped or injured firefighter. Command shall respond to a "May-Day" by implementing a rescue plan for the firefighter(s) through communication with the leader of the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT).

Missing Firefighter

Company Officers and individual firefighters who suspect a firefighter is missing must notify the Incident Commander (IC) immediately. The IC MUST ALWAYS assume that the missing firefighter is lost in the building until the member is located and accounted for. The system must include the ability to identify when a firefighter is going to be delayed beyond their SCBA air supply. The plan should include:

* Fire operations during rescue efforts
* Expanding organization
* Establishing/deploying RIT
* Assign an Officer to manage the rescue I RIT
* Medical Operations
* Safety
* Support Activities

Change the Strategy and Plan to a High Priority Effort

The IC must restructure his/ her strategy and action plan to include a firefighter rescue effort. This may seem obvious to most. However, incident commanders can become overwhelmed by the emotion related to the crisis at hand and may react to tasks rather than looking at the global picture. This can lead to disorganization and delays that can be fatal for the missing firefighter.

Accurate information must be immediately obtained. Rapid commitment of the RIT must occur. These resources must be organized and controlled. The command organization must expand. The strategy, incident action plan, and objectives must be quickly communicated to the command staff and division/group officers. The plan and rescue activities must be continually monitored and revised as necessary.

Conditions and updated information cause changes in plan and objectives. The IC must communicate any changes to the command staff and division/group officers.

Immediately Request Additional Alarms

In many situations, all resources on-scene may already be committed to firefighting positions. Some firefighters may already be approaching physical exhaustion; their SCBA's may be nearly empty. Relocating committed forces is difficult and slow. At least one additional alarm with an EMS unit and an additional RIT should be immediately requested upon report of a lost, trapped, or injured firefighter. Additional resources may be requested based on circumstances and potential. There should be no hesitation in requesting additional resources and this function is included into the May Day policy.

Include EMS when Requesting Additional Resources

Medical personnel will be needed to treat and assist rescued firefighters. The IC must ensure that an adequate number of paramedics are responding as well as an adequate number of ambulances and/or medical helicopters to transport injured firefighters. The IC should understand that the situation is critical, and that firefighters tend to overexert themselves when searching for a missing firefighter, resulting in additional firefighters being injured. Adequate medical resources must be ready and available and on site.

Commit the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT)

All working structure fires will have a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) assigned. This team shall be fully outfitted with protective clothing, SCBA, etc., and monitoring all radio traffic. Upon report of a missing firefighter, the IC has a completely fresh crew fully outfitted, available for commitment to an immediate search and rescue of the last known area of the missing firefighter(s). The RIT must be immediately sent to the rescue are. Once the RJT is mobilized, another RIT must be started to take their position in waiting.

Withdraw Companies from the Affected Area, if Appropriate, to obtain a PAR and Reconnaissance Information

In some situations, such as a collapse or explosion, crewmembers 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, routing to victims, debris locations, and the type of rescue equipment that may be needed for extrication. Once the roll call and reconnaissance information is quickly obtained, crews can be re-assembled into a more organized rescue effort.

Withdrawal is a judgment call based on circumstances at the time, information available, and resources. It may not be practical or possible to do so. However the absolute need for an accurate roll call and information on missing firefighters remains a critical priority. If it is determined not to withdrawn, a detailed roll call must be obtained from each division for all crews operating under his I her direction.

Do not Abandon Firefighting Positions – Hold Positions and Prevent Fire Spread

The reasons for the RIT and the immediate request for additional resources, becomes very clear with this critical fire ground need. If a missing firefighter(s) is to survive, the IC must keep firefighters out of the rescue area. With a RIT in place, the IC can initiate an immediate rescue effort without withdrawing or relocating fire combat companies.

In most situations the IC cannot allow fire spread. If anything, these fire combat positions need to be reinforced. Additional companies should be sent to priority positions to keep the fire out of the rescue area.

Individual Responsibilities

* To follow directions from superiors
* To continue with assignment unless otherwise directed
* To keep your cool

Every incident commander and all members on the scene should listen specifically for a "May-Day" as fire ground noise could cover a call for the "May-Day".

Dispatch Center Guideline

When an emergency responder identifies that he/she, or a member of his/her team, is lost, entangled, trapped, disoriented, injured or in need of assistance, he/she shall (if possible) transmit a verbal message on the tactical channel to incident command and state: "MAY-DAY, MAY-DAY, MAY-DAY"

Upon receipt of a "MAY-DAY" from incident command, communication center **shall** immediately transmit alert tone three (3) for three (3) seconds followed by a verbal message stating "MAY-DAY" acknowledged, **all** fire ground operations switch your traffic to **Operations Channel** (e.g., Fire 2, Fire 3, State Fire)". This message shall be transmitted on all dispatch and operations channel for that incident. In addition, the channel marker shall be activated in order to provide an open and clear frequency for which the Mayday was transmitted.

The communication center supervisor shall take over all other ems/fire channels and the ems/fire telecommunicator along with the incident commander or their designee shall monitor the channel that the Mayday was transmitted on. Communication center supervisor shall dispatch one (1) additional EMS unit and one (1) additional fire station, emergency traffic to the staging area, or unless otherwise directed by incident command. In addition, an EMS supervisor and a fire investigator shall be notified.

All fire channels shall be monitored closely for any transmissions by the missing firefighter(s). If the missing firefighter(s) transmits on another channel other than the assigned operations channel, the telecommunicator shall remain in contact with that firefighter and communication center notify incident command. It is essential that once communications have been established, they not be lost.

If companies are providing protection to the downed firefighter(s) or protecting the building occupant(s) the attack positions must be protected, if at all possible. A MAY DAY DOES NOT MEAN THE BUILDING/HAZARD ZOME GETS EVACUATED WITHOUT THE ORDER OF THE INCIDENT COMMANDER.

At the time incident command advises the "MAY-DAY" situation is clear, the telecommunicator shall advise on the dispatch and operations channel (Fire 1, Fire 2, State Fire) **"MAY-DAY CLEAR, ALL UNITS RESUME NORMAL RADIO TRAFFIC"**

***This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review this guideline and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization’s needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm or damage to personnel, property and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your VFIS Risk Control representative.***

**References:**

**Sample May-Day Check List**

1. Confirm “MAYDAY” has been transmitted (identify exact problem)
2. Command makes fireground/incident wide radio announcement
3. Notify Emergency Communication Center (Dispatch) of the event
4. Command requests additional assistance (next alarm)
5. Location of May-Day (Lunar)
6. Unit with May-Day (lUnar)
7. Name of member(s) (luNar)
8. Air status of member(s) (lunAr)
9. Resources needed to rescue distressed member(s) (lunaR)
10. Deploy rapid intervention team – develop rescue action plan
11. Maintain and/or bolster fire attack operations (hold or stop the fire)
12. Conduct toll-call or personnel accountability report (PAR)
13. Assign May-Day Branch Director – works at command post)
14. Assign rapid intervention safety officer (close to the action)
15. Maintain personnel accountability for all others
16. Stage and maintain advance life support transport resources
17. Consider Aero-Ambulance (helicopter)
18. Develop a defensible space to protect lost, trapped or missing members(s)
19. Develop alternate strategies (“Plan B”)
20. Control unassigned resources (no freelancing)
21. Control risks (maintain risk management analysis)
22. Control release of information (notify firefighter families first)
23. Notify all units and communications center when May-Day has been cleared (member(s) rescued)
24. Support transported members and their families

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