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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** | | |

**Recommended Procedure for a Mayday Activation**

***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 procedure is to identify actions that should be taken by every firefighter when endangered beyond normal firefighting operations.

**Definitions:**

Mayday - a radio term used to alert the incident commander or other persons on the emergency scene and the communications center that personnel are in an imminent life threatening situation.

Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) or Roll Call - a term used to determine the location, status and welfare of personnel assigned to a given task.

Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) - a team of firefighters specially trained and equipped to perform a rescue of a firefighter in distress.

Emergency Dispatch Services (EDS), a division that provides dispatch deployment communications and technology services to first responder agencies.

**Operational Guidelines:**

**Thirteen Survival Steps for Firefighters Initiating a "Mayday"**

1. **Declaring a MAYDAY – When a firefighter identifies that they, or a member of their team are:**

* Lost, trapped, disoriented, or injured and in need of assistance
* Become tangled, pinned, or stuck and the low-air alarm activates
* If you fall through the roof
* If you become tangled, pinned, or stuck and do not extricate yourself in 30 seconds
* If you are caught in a flashover
* If you fall through the floor
* If there is zero visibility with no contact with the hose or lifeline and you do not know which direction the exit is located
* If your primary exit is blocked by fire or collapse and you are at the secondary exit in 30 seconds
* If your low-air alarm is activated and you are not at an exit or window in 30 seconds
* If you cannot find the exit door or window in 60 seconds

1. **Emergency "Mayday"/Activate Emergency Distress Button**

The lost or trapped firefighter should immediately initiate a "Mayday" request to notify the incident commander of their situation by broadcasting: "Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!" over their portable radio. In addition and if accessible, the firefighter should activate the emergency distress button on their portable radio.

1. **Declare a MAYDAY in the following format:**

"MAYDAY , MAYDAY, MAYDAY", and provide the following information:

**L**ocation (Where are You?)

**U**nit (Engine 3, etc.)

**N**ame (FF Smith)

**A**ssignment (What were you doing?)

**R**escue (What help do you need?)

1. **Command Response to a MAYDAY :**

* Upon receipt of a MAYDAY, Command should advise EDS that a MAYDAY event has occurred and that all radio traffic should cease. Command should acknowledge the MAYDAY and give orders to deploy the RIT.
* Command should immediately conduct a PAR if the identification and location of the lost or trapped firefighter is unknown. Units that are not PAR should report to Command and advise their situation. All other units should maintain radio discipline.
* Only radio traffic pertinent to the MAYDAY should be permitted on the tactical channel.
* A chief officer should be assigned to communicate with the firefighter and direct rescue operations. The incident commander should continue with incident operations.
* Commit the Rapid Intervention Team to the most appropriate location to initiate a rescue.
* Provide a brief report to EDS and request an additional tactical channel for incident operations. EDS will make the announcement on the new fireground channel.
* Command should notify EDS to announce the conclusion of the MAYDAY event.
* EDS will advise the incident command on what additional units have been automatically deployed, per MCDPS Communications Policy Manual.

1. **Stay Calm, Preserve Your Air Supply**

A conscious effort should be made by the lost or trapped firefighter to control their breathing. Unnecessary talking or physical activity should be ceased, unless absolutely needed. Firefighters should control and pace their physical exertion activities in order to extend their air supply. Trapped or disoriented members should understand that this is their most critical limitation absent of direct trauma or flame impingement.

1. **Activate PASS**

As soon as a firefighter recognizes he/she is lost or trapped, the PASS device should be manually activated to sound the audible tone. The device should remain "ON" until rescued. The lost or trapped firefighter should attempt to silence the PASS when communicating on the radio. Once radio transmissions are completed, the PASS device should be reactivated.

1. **Situation/Problem Reporting**

Firefighters lost or trapped should attempt to communicate their exact location, if unknown; members should attempt to describe their surroundings (e.g., "Captain 20 to Command, I'm trapped on the second floor, in a bedroom near the rear of the structure.") Following each transmission on the radio, if possible, the firefighter should reactivate their PASS alarm and place their portable radio near their ear to ensure additional communications are not missed.

1. **Stay Together - If Lost or Trapped as a Crew**

As a general rule, it is much easier to find a group rather than individuals. Members that separate from each other make it difficult for rescuers to find them. Crew members that remain intact, as a crew, enhance their chance of being rescued and allow for an easier, more efficient rescue operation.

1. **Search for an Exit**

A lost firefighter should always attempt to get out of the building by whatever means necessary. Where doors, windows, or other means of egress are not available, firefighters should next attempt to reach an exterior wall. Once at the wall, they will be able to search for doorways, windows, and hall ways, which generally lead to the outside. Rescuers should first search hallways, around walls, and around windows and doors, before sweeping large interior areas due to prior training and standardized firefighter actions. For this reason, firefighters should avoid large open spaces. Getting to one of these areas (exterior wall by window or doors) increases the chances of being rescued early. These actions provide predictable activities that will aid rescuers.

1. **Attempt to Follow a Hose Line/Life Line to Safety**

Crew members should stay with a hose line (or lifeline) and follow it out whenever possible. The hoseline should be treated as a safety line to the exterior. As an additional means of orientation when using/deploying lifelines, a standardized knot system should be initiated to provide an immediate direction to safety.

1. **Retreat to an Area of Safety**

Where the firefighter cannot find a way out, but there is a safe refuge (protective room or floor) away from the fire that the firefighter can retreat to, he/she should take advantage of this location. Lost or trapped firefighters should consider breaching walls or closing doors to isolate themselves from potentially being overrun by fire.

*CAUTION: Lost/trapped firefighters must make every effort to advise rescuers of their actions to assist in locating them – situation reporting, sounding, etc.*

1. **Flashlights/Tapping**

If incapacitated (pinned by debris, immobilized, etc.), the firefighter should attempt to position their flashlight toward the ceiling and/or continue rotating the beam side to side (acting as a beacon) to signal potential rescuers. This effort will enhance the rescuer's ability to see the light and locate the downed firefighter. If able, the firefighter should attempt to make tapping noises to assist rescuers on locating him/her, (e.g., hitting a tool against a metal roll-up door, floor or hard surface within the immediate area.)

1. **As a Last Resort**

If a firefighter cannot self-extricate, they should assume a position on the floor that maximizes the audible effects of the PASS device. The firefighter should attempt to take this position at an exterior wall, doorway, or hallway that maximizes quick discovery by rescue units. Proper positioning is dependent on the surrounding conditions.

**OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

There is a narrow window of survivability for a firefighter who is out of SCBA air supply or trapped. Individual firefighters must not delay reporting to command if they become lost, trapped, or otherwise in need of assistance. Company officers must not delay reporting to command that they cannot account for members of their crew. Command officers must always assume that the missing firefighter is lost or in distress inside the building until they can be accounted for.

If a fire company does not issue portable radios and/or PASS devices to all its firefighters then appropriate procedures should be in place to address the possibility of a firefighter becoming lost or in distress inside a structure.

Lastly, all firefighters should be aware of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Radio Standard Operation Procedure. An updated version of the procedure will be disseminated along with the "Mayday" procedure.

***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:**

Montgomery County Department of Public Safety Recommended Practice 2009-2