


Title:	Mayday Emergencies			
Section:	400 Fire Operations			
SOG #:	412	Page:	1 of 4	
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Authorized By:	Fox River Fire District Chiefs			

A. PURPOSE

The rescue of lost, trapped or missing firefighters in a burning building or collapsed building is especially time sensitive. There is a very narrow window of survivability for a firefighter(s) who is out of air supply, trapped by an approaching fire or by heavy structural collapse. Therefore, rapid, concise decisions and actions must be taken to increase survivability. The mayday program is designed to prepare all personnel for any sudden life threatening occurrence that may injure, trap, disorient or distress any emergency response personnel during an emergency incident.

B. SCOPE:

MAYDAY will be the radio signal used for any distressed fire fighter needing assistance for any reason. No other term shall be substituted.

C. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS:

- 1) RIT: A Rapid Intervention Team is a dedicated rescue team whose duties are to assist and/or rescue firefighters in trouble on the fire ground. The RIT shall be on standby, fully prepared for emergency rescue. Fully donned protective clothing, including SCBA is necessary.
- 2) Area of Refuge: An **area of refuge** is a location in a building when evacuation may not be safe or possible. Firefighters can wait there until rescued.

D. GUIDELINE:

The first and most important factor in the Mayday process is the decision to call a Mayday. Firefighters should understand that the decision to call a Mayday must be made before entering the hazard area. You should firmly establish in your mind under which circumstances you will call a Mayday.

If a firefighter encounters any of the following situations while operating in a hazardous environment, he or she shall call a Mayday:

- 1) Fall: May include falling down stairs, falling through a floor or roof, or falling through any other opening.
- 2) Collapse: May include ceiling collapse, floor collapse, roof collapse, collapse of large or heavy materials, or the collapse of any other structural member.

- 3) Activation of alarms: May include low air alarm activation, personnel cannot locate an exit immediately, or PASS device activation.
- 4) Entanglement: May include becoming entangled in wires or any other debris that restricts or limits movement.
- 5) Lost: May include off a hose line or search line in a large/open area with zero visibility, an inability to locate a door or window for exit, or disorientation.
- 6) Trapped: May include inability to move or cannot exit due to structural or other problems.
- 7) Significant fire event: May include a flashover, backdraft, or “smoke explosion.”
- 8) At any time a firefighter believes the safety of a crew or crewmember is or may soon be at risk.
- 9) Unable to locate crew member(s).
- 10) SCBA failure.
- 11) Experiencing a personal medical issue.
- 12) At any time any of the above are experienced.

When an emergency responder encounters any of the following situations while operating in a hazardous environment they shall (if possible) transmit a verbal message on the tactical channel to Command and state, “MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY”.

If a firefighter(s) is unable to communicate verbally they should activate the ORANGE EMERGENCY button on their portable radio. This will immediately lock the portable radio and transmit a signal to the Communication Center. Dispatch will immediately contact command on the original assigned tactical channel and provide as much information as is known in reference to the emergency. The firefighter(s) shall activate their PASS device.

1) Firefighter Responsibilities

- a) **Call for help immediately.** The “Window of Survivability” closes rapidly in these situations. This should occur as soon as the firefighter thinks they are in trouble.
 - i. The firefighter shall issue over the radio “MAYDAY, MAYDAY. MAYDAY.”
 - ii. The firefighter will transmit a “who, where, why, what” report
 - (a) Who – who you are and what unit you are assigned to?

- (b) Where – where are you in the hazard zone are?
- (c) Why – What is the nature of your emergency?
- (d) What – what resources do you need?

b) **Activate PASS Device.** As soon as the firefighter realizes they are lost or trapped, the PASS Device must be manually activated. If the device interferes with radio communications, it may be turned off temporarily. Once messages are completed, the device must again be manually activated.

c) **Crews should stay together.** If more than one firefighter is lost, they should stay together to increase the odds of all being found and rescued together.

d) **Locate an area of refuge.** Find a room or floor of the building not involved in fire and take advantage of this location. Report the new location to Command immediately.

e) **Search for an exit.** A lost firefighter should always attempt to get out of the building by whatever means possible.

- i. Locate exterior walls to search for doors and windows. At a minimum, firefighters should try to get near a wall or in a hallway, as these areas will be searched first by rescue personnel.
- ii. Locate a hose line or lifeline and follow it out of the area. Remember that the female end of the couplings lead to the pump (outside).

f) **Stay calm and conserve the air.** A conscious effort should be made to control breathing.

- i. Cease any unnecessary physical activity.
- ii. If SCBA air is depleted, the firefighter may use the protective hood as a particulate filter. The hood should be placed over the opening of the face piece.

g) **Assume a horizontal position.** If a firefighter cannot get out, they should assume a horizontal position on the floor that maximizes the audible effect of the PASS device. In a high heat situation, consider assuming a position to protect the SCBA high-pressure regulator and low-pressure hose. This should be done near an exterior wall, doorway or hallway to ensure quick discovery by rescue crews.

h) **While awaiting rescue,** the firefighter should attempt to position a flashlight in such a way as to enhance the rescuers ability to see the light. If equipped with a hand lantern place the switch to the strobe position.

i) **Make noise.** Use any tool to make tapping noises to assist rescuers in locating the firefighter.

2) Command Responsibilities, per FRFD/MABAS Tactical Worksheet

Mayday Procedure

1. Acknowledge the MAYDAY. Announce EMERGENCY RADIO TRAFFIC ONLY.
2. Announce who is missing.
3. Announce the last known location/assignment.
4. Deploy the R.I.T.
5. Assign a R.I.T. Group Supervisor.
6. Request the higher alarm. DO NOT special call. Full alarms only.
7. Move Fire Operations to a separate TAC Channel.
8. Attempt to make contact with MAYDAY Firefighter/Company.
9. Instruct the Firefighter to activate their PASS Alarm and make noise
10. Assign Fire Operations to another senior officer on the scene. Assure fire ops continue.
11. Assign additional company(s) to perform Back Up R.I.T. and Support Functions.
12. Conduct a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) to confirm number of missing/trapped firefighters
13. Assess Building and Fire Conditions (Collapse Potential). Risk Assessment.

Additional Considerations:

- Make contact with missing/trapped firefighter/company. Assess and reassure member(s).
- Once received, information must be repeated back to the firefighter. This is the only way the firefighter calling the MAYDAY will know their message was received correctly.
- Assess Air Consumption and R.I.T. deployment time.
- Build a Command Staff capable of assisting the Incident Commander.
- Consider additional EMS for MAYDAY Firefighters and RIT Members.

Reference

SOG 412a, MABAS Division 112 Mayday Dispatch Policy

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