



Standard Operating Guidelines  
Section 190.0

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190.0		Mayday	
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## MAYDAY

The nature of fire fighting places the firefighter at risk for becoming lost, trapped or imperiled with equipment malfunctions. The toxic environment where work is performed provides only a narrow window of survivability. Survival depends on a mix of predictable self-survival actions by the affected firefighter(s), the Incident Commander and the Rapid Intervention Team. The purpose of this procedure is to provide action steps to be taken by the trapped/lost firefighter(s) and the Incident Commander. Specific procedures provided in this document include how to activate the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) and remove those in danger to a safe location in a quick and efficient manner.

### Definition:

The term Mayday will be designated solely for when a firefighter is in immediate distress. Specific examples include when a firefighter or firefighters become trapped, lost, disoriented or experience equipment malfunctions.

### Procedures:

The number one basic self survival responsibility is to avoid getting into situations where a firefighter or fire company gets trapped, lost or low/out of air.

The rescue of trapped or lost firefighters within a burning building is extremely time sensitive due to our SCBAs providing a limited supply of air.

- A. All companies entering the hazard zone shall have at least one portable radio and rescue tools. If it is possible, all members on the team should have individual portable radios.
- B. Minimum entry crew size is two members. These members must remain intact and together.
- C. Crews must also be working on a specific assignment and be working under the direct supervision of a Division Officer or Command.
- D. Crews will follow all SCBA guidelines, including, but not limited to PASS device usage.

### Emergency Procedures:

When a firefighter(s) become lost, trapped or experiences an equipment malfunction, the following procedures must be followed.

- A. Call For Help Immediately – Report on a portable radio “Mayday – Mayday – Mayday”. Announce your situation while continuing to find your way out. Firefighters should not delay notification of distress. The Mayday announcement should occur as soon as the firefighter thinks that he/she may be in trouble. The longer the delay of notification, the smaller the window of survivability will become.
- B. Lost/trapped firefighter(s) should give Command information: LUNAR

- L = Location (as accurately as possible)
- U = Unit ID (i.e. Engine 64, 61, 686, etc.)
- N = Name (names of lost or trapped crew members)
- A = Assignment (assignment crew was working on or assigned to prior to trouble)
- R = Resources you need (any special needs or information that may assist the RIT in locating and removing affected crew(s)).

**C. THE TERM “MAYDAY” WILL BE RESERVED ONLY TO REPORT LOST OR TRAPPED FIREFIGHTERS. THE TERM “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” WILL BE USED TO REPORT ALL OTHER FIRE GROUND EMERGENCIES.**

**D. If a Mayday is heard, all other radio traffic on that channel will cease, until the Mayday operation is complete. The Incident Commander will then designate a new radio frequency for all unaffected fire ground units to switch to. The IC will also notify dispatch of the change in fire ground channels, and have dispatch announce this change.**

**E. Radio Channels –**

1. Crews or personnel declaring a Mayday should remain on the assigned operations channel. Once contact is made with the IC, affected crew shall remain on that channel.
2. After a Mayday is broadcast, the stricken firefighter(s), the Rapid Intervention Team, and the Safety Officer will stay on the designated channel, until resolution of the incident is achieved.
3. All communications will be directed to the RIT officer. All non-affected companies shall switch to another channel as assigned by the IC and the communications center.
4. All companies shall continue to operate in their originally assigned Division/Group.

**F. Activate PASS Device –** As soon as a firefighter recognizes he/she is lost or trapped, the PASS device must be manually activated to sound the audible tone. If the device interferes with radio communications it may be turned off temporarily. Once messages are completed, the device must again be manually activated.

**G. Crews Stay Together –** Members that separate from each other make it more difficult for rescuers to locate all members of the crew. Crew members who stay together enhance their chances for all to be rescued and allows for easier, more efficient extraction

**H. Follow Hose or Lifeline Out -** Crew members should stay with the hose line and follow it out whenever possible. The hose line should always be treated as the safety line to the outside. The RIT team may follow the hose line into the structure to locate distressed firefighters. Where life line ropes are in use, follow the life line to the outside.

**I. Searching For an Exit –** A lost firefighter should always attempt to exit out of the building by whatever means possible. Where doors, windows, or other means of egress are not available, firefighters should next attempt to reach an exterior wall. Once at an exterior wall the firefighter can try to locate windows, doors, or hallways that generally lead to the outside. Rescuers will first search hallways, around windows and doors before sweeping large areas if victim location is unknown. Getting to hallways, doors, or windows will greatly increase the chances of being rescued early. Breaching walls for escape or fresh air can aid survivability. These actions will also provide predictable activities that will aid rescuers.

**J. Retreat to a Safe Refuge –** Where firefighter cannot find a way out, but there is a safe refuge (protected room or floor) away from the fire that the firefighter can retreat to,

he/she should take advantage of this location. Command and the RIT team must then be notified of this location as soon as possible.

- K. Stay Calm and Conserve Air – A conscious effort must be made by the firefighter(s) to control breathing. Unnecessary talking or physical activity must cease, unless absolutely necessary. Firefighters must control and pace their activities and breathing to extend their SCBA supply.
- L. Horizontal Position – If a firefighter cannot get out, he/she should assume a horizontal 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 crews.
- M. Flashlight / Tapping Noise – In assuming a position to await rescuers, the firefighter(s) should attempt to position their flashlight towards the ceiling. This will enhance the rescuers ability to see the light and locate the downed firefighter. If able the firefighter should attempt tapping noises to assist in location by rescuers, (hitting a tool on a metal door, tapping on the floor).
- N. Company or Division / Group Officers – Company officers who are unable to locate a crew or firefighters assigned to them, must immediately notify command and use Mayday to notify all personnel operating on the scene. When possible the officer's report should include who is missing, their last known location, and the actions being taken. Fire fighting positions must not be abandoned during the rescue effort, the officers must control free-lancing. Command will initiate a rescue effort. On-going fire suppression and ventilation must continue to afford the victims increased opportunity for survival.
- O. Personal Accountability Report – Immediately following declaration of a Mayday, a PAR shall be taken. This is important to confirm if additional personnel are safe and accounted for. With the exception of the RIT and Safety Officer, the PAR shall be conducted on the alternate radio channel assigned by the IC and communication's center, as to not interfere with direct communication between RIT and effected crew(s).





