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“MAYDAY” & “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” Declaration Procedure

Purpose

This procedure is intended to insure that all members operating at an emergency scene are aware that an emergency situation exists.

1. This procedure will outline the difference between the terms “MAYDAY” and “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC.”

Policy

The rescue of a firefighter in distress is extremely time sensitive. It is extremely important that a firefighter NOT DELAY in calling a MAYDAY when the circumstances dictate that such action is appropriate. The sooner Command is notified and a RAT team activated, the greater the chances of the firefighter(s) being successfully rescued

System Components:

- **Definitions:**

1. The following definitions are used in these procedures:

“MAYDAY” – The term and radio traffic to be used in ANY situation where a firefighter’s life or safety is in jeopardy and she/he is unable to definitively remove him/herself from the threatening situation or IDLH environment.

“EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” – The term and radio traffic to be used when a priority communication is necessary to address potentially dangerous circumstances that exist.

“EMERGENCY EVACUATION SIGNAL” – The audible signal used on the fireground to alert all present of the need/order to evacuate the structure and regroup outside for safety and accountability purposes. The signal is **three (3) sequential sets of three (3) long air horn blasts.**

“ALERT TONE” — An audible tone of consistent frequency and duration intended to draw attention to radio traffic. This tone is generated by the dispatcher and is often called Alert Tone 3.

“Emergency Button”- A specifically marked orange in color button on the 800 MHz portable radio. When this button is push an signal is sent to alerted dispatchers on their console that of an emergency button activation this also places the radio into a activate open microphone state so that all radio traffic from operator of the radio traffic can be heard. Activation of the Emergency Button sends the alert to the primary dispatch channel and keeps the channel open until the emergency button activation has been cleared by the portable radio operator.

System Components Continued

Situations: The following situations dictate the use of the Mayday, Emergency Traffic, Emergency Evacuation and Alert Tone:

“MAYDAY” - To be used in ANY situation where a firefighter’s life or safety is in jeopardy and she/he is unable to definitively remove him/herself from the threatening situation or IDLH environment.

A firefighter **MUST DECLARE A MAYDAY** when confronted by, but not limited to, the following situations:

- a. Immediately upon a firefighter believing she/he is disoriented or lost and unable to exit any existing IDLH environment;
- b. Immediately upon the sounding or detection of one’s low air alarms and a firefighter not being able to promptly exit any existing IDLH environment;
- c. Immediately upon a firefighter becoming trapped or entangled to the point of requiring assistance;
- d. Immediately upon a firefighter sustaining ANY injury which impairs his/her ability to exit any existing IDLH environment;
- e. Immediately upon discovery of a vital PPE equipment problem which poses a substantial threat of harm and a firefighter unable to immediately exit the IDLH environment;
- f. Immediately upon discovery of another firefighter experiencing any of the above situations.

“EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” - To be used when a priority communication is necessary to address potentially dangerous circumstances that exist:

- a. Any imminent potential for or an actual structural failure;
- b. Rapidly changing fire conditions;
- c. Water supply interruption;
- d. Any circumstance that poses a material risk to firefighter safety;
- e. Immediate evacuation of the building is necessary for any of the above, or for any circumstance the Incident Commander deems necessary;
- f. Request for additional alarm(s).

All firefighters operating at the emergency scene shall refrain from transmitting any messages upon hearing the “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” transmission and remain alert for the emergent command from the Incident Commander until such time that the “all clear, resume radio Traffic” directive is issued by Command for the continuation of normal Traffic.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION SIGNAL: - The Incident Commander will activate the Emergency Evacuation Signal any time a fireground situation exists that warrants the regrouping of all fireground personnel to their apparatus or a staging area for purposes of safety and accountability. A PAR will be taken immediately following the emergency evacuation.

The EMERGENCY EVACUATION SIGNAL shall be:

- **Three (3) sequential sets of three(3) long air horn blasts**

ALERT TONE: -During any situation on the fire ground for which a Mayday has been declared, the dispatcher shall broadcast the “Alert Tone” and echo the Mayday to further insure that all those operating on radio talk groups are aware of the need for the actions outlined in these procedures

System Components –Continued

Fireground MAYDAY Procedure

The following procedure will be used to alert firefighters on the emergency scene of a MAYDAY.

1. To clear all radio traffic on the fireground talk group the firefighter requesting the MAYDAY shall precede the message by repeating the word “MAYDAY” three (3) times followed by “FIREFIGHTER DOWN”

i. Example: “MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, firefighter down.”

2. If the firefighter believes it is necessary, she/he may follow the initial MAYDAY call with information indicating the **nature of the MAYDAY such as location, identification and company number of the firefighter(s) involved if possible and what, if any, plans they have to remove themselves from the situation.**

i. Example - “MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, Firefighter Down,

ii. Second Floor, Firefighter Doe from Engine 15.

3. Any fire company finding a firefighter down shall declare a MAYDAY and the MAYDAY information shall be repeated including the manner of removal from the structure.

a. Example – “MAYDAY – MAYDAY – MAYDAY – Firefighter Down – Lieutenant from Engine 15 – We will be coming out Side C door, first floor.”

4. At this time the Incident Commander will direct all companies to switch to the designated alternate **fireground MAYDAY talk group (FG 11 or FG 27) for continuation of routine fireground communications.** The original fireground talk group will only be used for the MAYDAY and (RAT) Rapid Assistance Team(s).
5. Incident Command will assure radio talk group switch by operating companies to the designated talk group which will be referred to as the “MAYDAY” Talk Group
6. Accountability will immediately take a PAR subsequent to units switching to the new channel/talk group. Emergency response procedures of the department will be implemented.
7. Request that Hamilton County Communications Dispatch assign a dispatcher to the talk group on which the MAYDAY originated.
8. In case of a Mayday or Emergency Traffic transmission, an extra alarm
 - a. will be automatically dispatched by the dispatcher and extra alarm companies assigned to staging unless another assignment is given by the incident commander on the scene.
9. After the MAYDAY is cleared, the Incident Commander will decide how talk group re-assignment will be handled.

System Components –Continued

Fireground EMERGENCY TRAFFIC Procedure

The following procedure will be used to clear radio traffic for priority communication when necessary to address potentially dangerous circumstances.

1. To clear all radio traffic on the fireground talk group, the firefighter requesting exclusive use of the talk group shall announce his/her unit ID and declare “**EMERGENCY TRAFFIC**”. At this time no other radio traffic shall be transmitted until the **nature, location and type of emergency** is identified. The “**EMERGENCY TRAFFIC**” declaration shall be reserved for situations on the fireground presenting imminent danger to firefighters. (e.g. potential building collapse, energized electrical wires posing electrocution hazard, loss of water supply with firefighters inside the structure, etc.

The Incident Commander, upon hearing the EMERGENCY TRAFFIC declaration, shall immediately repeat the EMERGENCY TRAFFIC as well as the issuance of orders to rectify or retreat from the situation. The Incident Commander upon hearing the Emergency Declaration shall immediately request the Emergency Alert Tone and repeat the emergency traffic as well as orders to rectify or retreat from the situation.

Example: Alert Tone - "Emergency, Emergency, Emergency - All companies operating at 123 Main St. retreat!"

2. If the building is to be evacuated, Incident Command is to authorize activation of the Emergency Evacuation Signal. “**Which is followed by radio talk group announcement to “Evacuate.”**”
3. Subsequent to evacuation, a PAR is to be immediately taken and appropriate action taken based on the result.

Note:

The "MAYDAY" declaration is reserved for only those situations when a firefighter is in peril as described above. When a hazardous condition exists, the "Emergency Traffic" declaration shall be utilized.

Addendum A contains the DISPATCH COMPONENT of the MAYDAY and EMERGENCY TRAFFIC procedures

Addendum A
Dispatching Protocol
Mayday, Emergency Traffic & use of Alert Tone

Mayday Transmission

Fire dispatchers must be familiar with Mayday procedures in the event of transmission on the main dispatch talk group.

A "MAYDAY" is a special type of "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC", one in which a firefighter is currently at risk, rather than, might be at risk.

The word "MAYDAY" shall be used to INDICATE DISTRESS. Operators of radios on fireground talk groups hearing this signal will refrain from transmitting and remain alert for a message following the signal. This signal would be in order under the following conditions:

- a firefighter believing she/he is disoriented or lost and unable to exit any existing IDLH environment;
- a low air alarm and firefighter is not able to promptly exit any existing IDLH environment;
- a firefighter becoming trapped or entangled to the point of requiring assistance;
- a firefighter sustaining ANY injury which impairs his/her ability to exit any existing IDLH environment;
- a firefighter discovering a vital PPE equipment problem which poses a substantial threat of harm and firefighter unable to immediately exit the IDLH environment;
- a firefighter discovering another firefighter experiencing any of the above situations.

All members will wait for the incident commander to direct them to the MAYDAY Fireground Talk Group (11 or 27) that has been assigned.

DISPATCH DUTIES IN THE EVENT OF NOTIFICATION OF MAYDAY BY INCIDENT COMMANDER

1. Repeat transmission of Incident Commander
2. **Transmit Alert 3 tone and dispatch an extra alarm complement**
Units that come on the radio with non-emergency traffic should be advised to standby unless they have emergency traffic.
3. Dispatch next extra alarm complement on main dispatch talk group
4. Make any notifications as directed by the Incident Commander
5. Clear "Emergency Traffic" on the main dispatch talk & fireground talk group assigned on the initial alarm.

DISPATCH DUTIES IN THE EVENT OF A MAYDAY ON THE MAIN DISPATCH TALKGROUP

1. Attempt to identify unit if not already identified by radio number designation.
2. **Immediately dispatch an extra alarm complement.**
3. Notify the Incident Commander.
4. Keep radio traffic to a minimum.
5. Clear 'MAYDAY' on radio when instructed by Incident Commander by using the Alert 3 tone and stating, "unit and/or location MAYDAY cleared per Incident Commander."
Example: Engine 15 MAYDAY cleared per 122 Main Street Command.

EMERGENCY ALERT TONE FOR MAYDAY & EMERGENCY TRANSMISSION

The following procedure will be used to alert firefighters on the emergency scene of a Mayday.

1. To clear all radio traffic on the **fireground** talk group the firefighter requesting the Mayday shall precede the message by repeating the word **"MAYDAY"** **three times** followed by the **nature of the mayday, location, identification and company number of the firefighter(s) involved if possible and what, if any, plans they have to remove themselves from the situation.**

Example - "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, - Firefighter Down - Second Floor - Firefighter Doe from Engine 15"

2. At this time the Incident commander will activate the emergency fire ground declaration and will order all companies to switch **to the alternate assigned fireground**. The original fireground talk group will be used for the MAYDAY and Rapid Assistance Teams.

3. The Incident Commander upon hearing the Mayday or Emergency Traffic Declaration shall immediately request the Emergency Alert Tone 3 and repeat the emergency traffic as well as orders to rectify or retreat from the situation.

Example: Alert Tone - "Emergency, Emergency, Emergency - All companies operating at 123 Main St. retreat!"

- Dispatch will have to place the ALERT 3 Tone over the Fireground talk group leaving primary dispatch talk group.
- Once the tone has been sent with the emergency, the Dispatcher will return to primary talk group.

4. If the **Rapid Assistance Team**, upon finding a firefighter down, declares Mayday, the Mayday information shall be repeated, including the manner of removal from the structure.

Example - "Mayday - Mayday - Mayday - Firefighter Down - Lieutenant from Engine 15 - We will be coming out the rear door"

5. The "Emergency" declaration shall be reserved for situations on the fireground presenting imminent danger to firefighters.

Example: Potential building collapse, energized electrical wires posing an electrocution hazard, catastrophic loss of water supply with firefighters inside the structure, etc.

This procedure shall be used to alert firefighters on the fireground of an emergency condition.

To clear all radio traffic on the fireground talk group the firefighter requesting the emergency shall **repeat the word "Emergency" three times**. At this time no other radio traffic shall be transmitted until the **nature, location, and type of emergency** is identified.

*****Special Note*****

It is strongly recommended that use of the Emergency Button on the portable radio be discouraged. It is furthermore encourage that all personnel be instructed not to use of the Emergency Button; but only in a last resort situation only!!!