

# HENNEPIN COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION FIRE SOP WORK GROUP REQUEST FOR ACTION

Date: April 14, 2010

Recipient: Captain Brian Tollin, Hennepin County Sheriffs Communications

Fire SOP Contacts: Co-Chairs, Scott Crandall and Scott Gerber

Action requested: Adopt and implement the Managing the Mayday as outlined in the attached standard document.

Requested  
implementation Date: April 30, 2010

Organization	Approval agreement <sup>1</sup>	Date of agency approval	Fire Chief
Brooklyn Center Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Apr 7, 2010	Lee Gatlin
Brooklyn Park Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dec 7, 2009	Ken Prillaman
Dayton Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Apr 9, 2010	Dennis Young
Excelsior Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nov 23, 2009	Scott Gerber
Hamel Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dec 21, 2009	Brandon Guest
Long Lake Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nov 20, 2009	James Van Eyll
Loretto Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dec 7, 2009	Jeff Leuer
Maple Grove Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Feb 16, 2010	Scott Anderson
Maple Plain Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Apr 7, 2010	Nate Jerde
Medicine Lake Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Feb 15, 2010	Jack Garberg
Mound Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Feb 16, 2010	Greg Pederson
Osseo Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dec 21, 2009	Mark Lynde
Plymouth Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Apr 5, 2010	Rick Kline
Robbinsdale Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jan 18, 2010	Mark Fairchild
Rogers Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nov 20, 2009	Brad Feist
St. Anthony Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nov 5, 2009	John Malenick
St. Bonifacius Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dec 8, 2009	Shane Webber
Wayzata Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nov 29, 2009	Kevin Klapprich
West Metro Fire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nov 5, 2009	Scott Crandall

<sup>1</sup> By checking the approval agreement box I affirm that my agency agrees with and will comply with the Fire SOP Group recommendation.

# **Managing the MAYDAY Communications Protocol**

**FINAL DRAFT**

**July 4, 2009**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this procedure is to identify the roles and responsibilities of all the parties involved at an incident where a “Mayday” has been activated.

## **Background**

MAYDAY is an emergency code word used internationally as a distress signal in voice radio communications. It derives from the French venez m'aider, meaning 'come to my aid'/'come [to] help me. It has also been adopted for use nationally by the fire service for a fighter fighter in distress, should a fire fighter or a crew become lost, trapped, or in trouble and in need of rescue.

There is an expectation that we, as a communications center, assist the incident commander in managing a MAYDAY on the fire ground should it occur.

When it occurs it will be a high intensity incident similar to an officer needs help call. You, as a dispatcher, may be their only lifeline.

When a MAYDAY is called information flow from those in trouble, be it a crew or single fire fighter, may not be specific or clear. During training fire fighters are taught should they get in trouble to air “MAYDAY”, “MAYDAY”, “MAYDAY”, give their unit/crew number, what the situation is and their current or last remembered location. i.e. – “MAYDAY”, “MAYDAY”, “MAYDAY”,” this is Long Lake Engine 11, the first floor of the structure has collapsed and we do not know exactly where we are.” “Our crew is running low on air.”

This may be confusing and will be a stressful time for those in trouble, especially those disoriented. Channel selectors may be bumped or switched in error so the call for help could occur on any talk-group that is programmed into the portable radio, even a police main. Do not ask a crew that is in trouble to change talk-groups. Keep them where you found them so the communication link stays intact.

## *Dispatch/Communications Center Information / Protocol*

### **1) Recognize - Our first responsibility is to recognize the emergency and clear the talk-group:**

Regardless of where a “MAYDAY” call is received, we will clear the channel for emergency traffic allowing only those in trouble to communicate with the Incident Commander. All other radio traffic should be moved elsewhere.

### **2) Repeat – Repeat the crew information:**

When clearing the talk-group for emergency traffic, precede the announcement with an alert tone; repeat the information given by those in distress on the talk-group the crew is currently on, the H-FIRE-1 talk-group, and also the talk-group where the fire operation is underway.

Notes:

- The Alert tone should be used on all talk groups/channels in use on the incident ground.
- Dispatch does not have the capability to use the alert tone or monitor individual fire department talk groups/channels.

Confirm with the IC that you are aware of the MAYDAY – confirm what you have done and will do

### **3) Separate Yourself and Monitor - Monitor the situation:**

This is a critical incident. If you are responsible for this incident stay with the emergency incident passing all other responsibilities off to another dispatcher. When the fire fighter or crew is communicating with the Incident Commander monitor their radio traffic. You will be an additional set of ears that may hear something that is vital in the rescue of those in trouble, especially in a noisy environment. If something is missed by the Incident Commander, let them know.

### **4) Patch (If needed) - We may be required to patch radio resources:**

A situation could arise of a crew calling a “MAYDAY” on a talk-group the Incident commander does not have in his or her radio. This could easily occur during a mutual aid response or a channel selector being inadvertently hit switching the radio to a police main. If this happens you may be required to patch resources. (i.e. H-North to F-POOL-2)

# **Managing the MAYDAY** **Fire Department Protocol**

**FINAL DRAFT**

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## **Background**

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## **1) "Mayday" Radio Message**

The radio message "Mayday" will be used by firefighters to report their status as being lost, trapped, or in trouble and needing rescue. Any member may use "Mayday" to report a lost firefighter. Any report of "Mayday" will receive priority radio traffic followed by the emergency traffic tone. The term "Mayday" will be reserved ONLY to report a lost, trapped, or in trouble firefighter(s). The term "emergency traffic" will be used to report all other emergencies.

## **2) Radio Communications**

- All dependent Hennepin County Fire radios are programmed with Hennepin Fire Main in position 1 and Hennepin Fire Emergency in position 16.
- MAYDAY traffic should be directed to position 16 if possible – HFEMERG.
  - This will allow paging or other communications to occur on Hennepin Fire Main for ongoing operations or other operations.
- If the firefighter stays on a tactical talk group / channel - All other radio traffic should be moved elsewhere for ongoing operations.
- Dispatch will issue an alert tone for the emergency traffic.
  
- Portable Radio Emergency Activation buttons are not active in the Hennepin County Dependent fire users.
  - All Operations where auto aid or mutual aid is used should use an F-Pool Talkgroup.
    - i. These talkgroups are monitored by a dispatcher
    - ii. Individual Department operational channels/talkgroups are not able to be monitored by a dispatcher.

### **3) Command Responsibilities**

Command will maintain an awareness of the location of firefighters on the fireground primarily through assignments and the accountability system. In the event that a firefighter cannot be located through a PAR, or any other time a firefighter is missing, the fire officer or any member may announce a "Mayday." The term "Mayday" will indicate a lost or down firefighter. Command shall respond to a "Mayday" by implementing a rescue plan for the firefighter(s).

The plan should include:

- Fire operations during rescue operations.
- Expanding the incident management organization
- Establish/deploy the RIT/Rescue Division
- Assign a chief officer to the rescue effort
- Medical operations
- Family support branch officer
  - ◊ Member support--debriefing, etc.
- Logistics--specialized equipment
- Safety
- Support activities
- Media control--information management

### **4) Firefighter Responsibilities**

Company officers and individual firefighters that suspect a firefighter is missing must notify the incident commander immediately. The incident commander **MUST ALWAYS** assume that the missing firefighter is lost in the building until the member is accounted for. The system must include the ability to identify when a firefighter is going to be delayed beyond his/her SCBA air supply.

### **5) Change the Strategy and Plan to a High Priority Rescue Effort**

The Incident Commander 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 become hooked on reacting to tasks rather than looking at the global picture. This can lead to disorganization and delays that can be fatal to the missing firefighter.

Accurate information must be quickly obtained and acted upon. Additional resources must be immediately obtained. Rapid commitment of the RIT/Rescue Division must occur. These resources must be organized and controlled. The Command organization must expand. The plan, strategy, and objectives must be quickly communicated to Command staff and division officers. The plan and rescue activities must be continually monitored and revised as necessary. Conditions and updated information causes changes in the plan and objectives. The Incident Commander must communicate any changes to the Command and General staff and division officers.

### **6) Immediately Request Additional Alarms or Mutual Aid**

In many situations, all resources on-scene may already be committed to fire fighting positions. Some firefighters may already be approaching physical exhaustion, or the SCBA may be nearly empty. Relocating committed forces is difficult and slow. At least one additional alarm should be immediately requested upon a report of a lost or trapped firefighter. Additional multiple alarms may need to be requested based on circumstances and potential. There should be no hesitation in requesting any additional resources.

### **7) Include a Medical Component When Requesting Additional Resources**

Medical personnel will be needed to treat rescued firefighters. The incident commander must ensure that an adequate number of paramedics are responding as well as an adequate number of ambulances to transport injured firefighters. The incident commander should understand that the situation is critical, and firefighters sometimes tend to extend their risk taking when searching for a missing firefighter and additional firefighters may become injured in the process. Adequate medical resources must be readily available and on site.

### **8) Utilize a Centralized Staging Area**

All additional resources will be sent to a centralized staging area. The incident commander should commit resources from staging based on needs at the site. Staging controls resources and ensures that there is a route in and out of the scene, free of congestion, for rescues to transport recovered firefighters.

### **9) Commit the Rapid Intervention Team**

All significant fire fighting operations will have a rapid intervention team (RIT)/Rescue/On Deck Division assigned. This team should be fully outfitted with protective clothing, SCBA, etc., and monitoring all tactical radio traffic. Upon report of a lost, trapped, or firefighter in trouble, the incident commander has a crew/crews fully outfitted, available for commitment to an immediate search and rescue of the last known area of the missing firefighter(s). The RIT team, or any crew(s) in on deck/staging, may be immediately sent to the rescue area. The commitment of additional crews, however, must be controlled and organized.

The significance of the routine use of RIT teams to firefighter survivability on the fireground is substantial. National Fire Protection Association studies reveal that a majority of firefighters are killed while operating on the fireground at residential fires. To combat this risk we will automatically assign a company on the scene to RIT/on deck duties upon the report of a working structural fire. Once the fire is declared under control, the incident commander has the option to release the company from RIT/on deck duties, utilize the company as a crew for relief, or to conduct overhaul if needed. At multiple alarms, additional companies will be assigned to RIT/on deck functions as needed and given the designation "Rescue Division".

**10) Withdraw Companies from the Affected Area, if Appropriate, to obtain a Roll Call and Reconnaissance Information- “no PAR” from a crew with missing personnel**

In some situations, such as collapse or explosion, crew members can 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 needed. Crews will notify Command/IC that they DO NOT HAVE PAR. Once the no PAR and reconnaissance information is quickly obtained, crews can be re-assembled into a more organized rescue effort. The attempt to get a PAR during a MAYDAY or Firefighter lost situation will create radio congestion and result in essential radio traffic being lost or impeded.

Withdrawal is a judgment call based on circumstances at the time, information available, and resources. It may not be practical or possible to do. However, the absolute need for an accurate roll call and information on missing firefighters remains a critical priority. If it's determined not to withdraw, a detailed roll call must be obtained from each division for all crews operating under their direction as soon as the firefighter MAYDAY/rescue has been resolved.

**11) Do not Abandon Fire Fighting Positions--Hold Positions and Prevent Fire Spread**

The reasons for a rapid intervention team/Rescue Division, and the immediate request for additional resources, becomes very clear with this critical fireground need. If a missing firefighter(s) is to survive, the incident commander must keep the fire out of the rescue area. Without rescue teams, the incident commander is in a fatal catch 22 dilemma. Does he/she relocate company's committed to fire combat to the rescue effort and allow the fire to spread? Or does he/she hold the fire positions and wait for additional resources for the rescue effort? With a RIT team in place, the incident commander can initiate an immediate rescue effort without withdrawing or relocating fire combat companies.

Fire companies in the immediate rescue area can assist in the rescue effort. If companies in the immediate area can assist it is important that the company officer relay this information to Command/IC so that the rescue, fire attack, and accountability plans can be adjusted.

In most situations the incident commander cannot allow the fire to spread. If anything, these fire combat positions need to be reinforced. Additional companies from the multiple alarms or mutual aid should be sent to priority positions to keep the fire out of the rescue area. Large caliber handlines and master appliances should be employed. Adequate water supply must be obtained for this reinforced response.

### **12) Assign a Chief Officer to the Rescue Division**

The incident commander is faced with a time critical crisis. Correct decisions and strong management of rescue operations is essential. A chief officer must be assigned to direct the rescue division and rescue operations. Depending on the size of the rescue area and the complexity of operations, more than one chief officer may be needed to fill additional support positions or divisions.

### **13) Assign a Safety Officer to the Rescue Operation**

Rescue operations are high risk. The operation may be taking place in a post-collapse environment. Flashover may have occurred. Firefighters will tend to want to freelance and take chances that they would not normally take if it were not for fellow firefighters that are missing. The incident commander must avoid additional injuries. Each additional injury requires a resource commitment that will draw away from the priority rescue effort. A safety officer in the affected area will help control the risk taking. The officer will be able to conduct an assessment of the hazards allowing time for the rescue division supervisor to concentrate on the critical rescue effort. These division supervisors must work hand in hand to insure that a safe and effective rescue operation is conducted.

### **14) Individual Responsibilities:**

- Follow directions from superiors
- Continue with assignment unless otherwise directed
- Keep your cool

Every fire officer on the scene should listen specifically for a "Mayday" as fireground noise could cover a call for the "Mayday."

### **15) Training**

1. Fire Departments are encouraged to involve the Communications Center in training exercises that involve MAYDAY training.