

Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Association

Model Operating Procedures

May-Day Communications

Purpose

Lost or trapped firefighters require rapid and effective action for survival. Early notification of all personnel on the fireground using clearly understood language is a critical part of those actions for survival. For that reason, the term “*May-Day*” is reserved exclusively to report a firefighter is in trouble inside the *Hazard Zone*. A “*May-Day*” may be transmitted by any member. Typical situations where a “*May-Day*” message would be appropriate include:

- A firefighter reporting that he or she is lost, trapped, or in trouble in the *Hazard Zone*.
- A Company Officer or Division Supervisor who cannot account for an assigned firefighter operating in the *Hazard Zone*.
- Any personnel on the fireground to report a witnessed event of firefighters in trouble in the *Hazard Zone*. (example: the collapse of a part of a structure known to be occupied by firefighters.)

May-Day Message Response

Any “*May-Day*” report will be given immediate highest priority radio traffic status. All other radio traffic that does not directly contribute to the understanding and/or relay of the “*May-Day*” message will be discontinued until the channel is cleared for other traffic.

It is critical that the “*May-Day*” message be relayed to both the IC and to Dispatch. The IC should immediately implement actions under the “*Rescue - Lost or Trapped Firefighter*” standard. Dispatch should implement the following actions:

- Transmit a “*Clear Channel for emergency traffic only*” message over the frequency initially used to transmit the “*May-Day*”
- Confirm that the IC is aware of the “*May-Day*” traffic.
- Call in one or more dispatchers or TROs (Tactical Radio Operator) to assist.
- Monitor all frequencies that could potentially be used by the firefighter(s) in trouble.
- Be prepared for additional alarm and special call requests from the IC.
- Refer all media inquiries to a designated IOF (Information Officer) or to the IC.

Individual firefighters and Company Officers on the fireground should take the following actions:

- Keep radio frequencies clear for emergency traffic
- Keep senses tuned for any sound, sight or other indication that may be related to the “*May-Day*” that might otherwise be lost in fireground activities.
- Be prepared to respond to a PAR request from the IC.
- Follow instructions from supervisor
- Remain committed to your previous assignment unless otherwise directed. Your continued work on your assignment may be crucial to the survival of the firefighters in trouble.
- Keep emotions under control and strongly resist the urge to take unilateral action (free-lancing).