	HAMILTON COUNTY STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES		
	Title: Mayday & Emergency Traffic Declaration Procedure		
	Category: Operations		
	Effective Date: 1/1/20	Revision Date: 10/9/19	Original Date: 12/19/07
	Approved By: Hamilton County Fire Chiefs 11/20/19		Page: 1 of 7

PURPOSE

This procedure is intended to insure that all members operating at an emergency scene are aware that an emergency situation exists. 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 and nearby companies are notified and a RAT team activated, the greater the chances of the firefighter(s) being successfully rescued.

DEFINITIONS

MAYDAY – The term and radio traffic to be used in ANY situation where a firefighter’s life or safety is in jeopardy and they are unable to definitively remove themselves from the threatening situation or immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) environment.


EMERGENCY BUTTON (EB) – A button located on mobile and portable radios programmed to assist users in times of distress by providing priority over the entire radio system. The unit that activates their emergency button is granted priority over the entire radio system until the emergency button is reset. The unit in emergency will also bump any unit actively talking on the talkgroup to gain access each time they push to talk.

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

EMERGENCY EVACUATION SIGNAL – The audible signal used on the fireground to alert all personal 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.

ON-DECK – Crews assigned to a forward staging position located just outside the immediate hazard zone, safely distanced from the entrance of a tactical position. These crews can reinforce a tactical position, relieve crews within the division or deploy as a RAT team.

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DESCRIPTION OF USE

MAYDAY - To be used in ANY situation where a firefighter’s life or safety is in jeopardy and they are unable to definitively remove themselves from the threatening situation or IDLH environment.

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

- a. Immediately upon a firefighter believing they cannot safely exit any existing IDLH environment;
- b. Incident Command is unable to reach a unit assigned to and operating in the hazard zone after 3 attempts.

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).

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


The EMERGENCY EVACUATION SIGNAL must be:

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

Fireground MAYDAY Procedure

The following procedure must be used to alert Incident Command and firefighters on the emergency scene of a MAYDAY.

1. The optimal procedure for declaring a MAYDAY is for the firefighter to first activate the EB prior to declaring, **“MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, Firefighter Down.”**

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2. If the firefighter declaring the MAYDAY cannot readily access the EB, they should clear all radio traffic on the fire ground talk group, by declaring **“MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, Firefighter Down.”** The firefighter should then wait for the IC to acknowledge the Mayday.
3. If the firefighter believes it is necessary and while still keying the microphone, the mayday FF or Unit will follow the initial Mayday call with information indicating **Who, Where, What (WWW).**

Example: MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, Firefighter Down – Lieutenant from Engine 15 –Disoriented and Low on air on first floor.

4. Any fire company encountering a firefighter down must declare a MAYDAY and the MAYDAY information must be repeated including the manner of removal from the structure.

Example: MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, Firefighter Down – Found Lieutenant from Engine 15, Low on air –Removing out the Charlie side door.

5. After a firefighter declares a MAYDAY, the PASS device must be manually activated to sound the audible tone. The device must remain on until rescued. If the device interferes with the lost firefighter(s) communicating critical radio messages to the Incident Commander or rescuers, the device may be turned off temporarily. Once messages are completed, the device must again be manually activated.
6. The Incident Commander, upon hearing the MAYDAY declaration, may request the dispatcher activate the Emergency Alert Tone on the fire ground talk group.
7. All operating units will **maintain radio silence** once a mayday has been transmitted. All operating units will **ONLY** transmit Mayday announcements (you’re having a mayday) and priority traffic during a mayday.
8. A **“NO-PAR”** policy will be in effect once a mayday has been transmitted. This means that unless an operating unit DOES NOT have a PAR, PAR information is NOT to be transmitted over the tactical channel. This policy greatly reduces the amount of radio traffic transmitted in the first few minutes of a mayday and it allows the IC the airtime needed to react to the mayday traffic.

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9. Incident Command may notify the dispatcher of the MAYDAY declaration on the primary fire talk group and request that Hamilton County Communications Dispatch assign a dispatcher to the talk group on which the MAYDAY originated.

10. In case of a MAYDAY declaration, the Incident Commander may request an extra alarm be dispatched and that extra alarm companies be assigned to staging unless another assignment is given by the Incident Commander on the scene. The Incident Commander must confirm that the extra alarm has been dispatched.

11. The Incident Commander has the option of requesting additional fire grounds.

Portable Radio Emergency Button Activation

All portable radios are equipped with an emergency button. Visual and audio cues will be received at the Hamilton County Communications Center when a unit activates their emergency button. The unit that activates their emergency button is granted priority over the entire radio system.

If the FF is on another unmonitored FG, the emergency button activation will clearly indicate an emergency on that talkgroup and provide the unit ID of the unit declaring the emergency to the dispatcher.


If the unit is on an unmonitored talk group (outside of fire grounds and mutual aid talk groups), the radio will automatically revert to the primary fire talk group of the assigned unit.

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 must announce their unit ID and declare “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC”. At this time no other radio traffic must be transmitted until the nature, location and type of emergency is identified. The "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC" declaration must 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.)

2. All firefighters operating at the emergency scene must 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,

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resume radio traffic” directive is issued by Command for the continuation of normal radio traffic.

3. The Incident Commander, upon hearing the EMERGENCY TRAFFIC declaration, may immediately request the dispatcher activate the Emergency Alert Tone on the fire ground talk group. The Incident Commander will then repeat the EMERGENCY TRAFFIC as well as the issuance of orders to rectify or retreat from the situation.
4. Example: Alert Tone - "Emergency, Emergency, Emergency - All companies operating at 123 Main St. retreat!
5. If the building is to be evacuated, Incident Command is to authorize activation of the Emergency Evacuation Signal and make an evacuation announcement on the fire ground talk group.
6. Immediately following an evacuation, a PAR must be conducted and the appropriate action taken based on the result.

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APPENDIX

Dispatcher Protocol for 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.

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

1. Upon request of Incident Command, transmit Alert tone 3 on the fire ground talk group.
2. Repeat the transmission of the Incident Commander on the primary fire talk group. Units that come on the radio with non-emergency traffic should be advised to standby unless they have emergency traffic.
3. Dispatch an extra alarm complement when requested by the Incident Commander.
4. Make any notifications as directed by the Incident Commander.
5. When Incident Command clears the MAYDAY situation, announce "MAYDAY cleared, per Incident Commander, resume normal traffic" on the primary fire and fire ground talk groups.

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. Notify the Incident Commander.
3. Dispatch an extra alarm complement when requested by the Incident Commander.
4. Keep radio traffic to a minimum.
5. When Incident Command clears the MAYDAY situation, announce "MAYDAY cleared, per Incident Commander, resume normal traffic" on the primary fire and fire ground talk groups.

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MAYDAY CHECKLIST EXAMPLE

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain Composure – Controlled Calm Voice
<input type="checkbox"/> Announce to ALL crews a Mayday has been declared – Radio Silence (Discipline, Face to Face)

<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge the Mayday
○ Who? _____
○ What? _____
○ Where? _____

<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with Mayday Firefighter(s)-----
<input type="checkbox"/> Can they or their own company rescue them?
<input type="checkbox"/> Can another company inside rescue them?
<input type="checkbox"/> Can the On Deck company rescue them?
<input type="checkbox"/> All companies remain on the same channel
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain strong supervision and control of crews
<input type="checkbox"/> No PAR unless IC needs (Collapse, Extreme Fire, etc) | Activate Emergency Button
Check Air Level
Control Breathing
Conserve Air
Activate PASS Device

Turn on Flashlight
Make Loud Noises
Look for an Exit
Any Window or Door
High Low Wall Breach
Disentanglement
Ladder Bail
Window Hang |
|---|---|
-
-
- Request HCCC assign a dispatcher to the fire ground channel for Mayday
-
-
- Consider requesting Dispatcher to set off ALERT Tones and IC will echo the Mayday traffic
-
-
- Consider dispatching extra alarms, include the words Mayday Situation in the dispatch
-
-
- Extra alarm companies to staging unless assigned by IC
-
-
- Monitor structural stability
-
-
- If building collapse – consider the need for CFD HR 9 or USAR
-
-
- Reinforce firefighting positions to protect Mayday area if needed.
-
-
- If FF self-rescues – Mayday radio traffic should be called off the same as it was initiated
-
-
- The end point of the Mayday Bench Mark is “Mayday Resolved”. This is used when
-
- Individual (s) in the Mayday are out of the hazard zone
-
- All personnel involved in the rescue are out of the hazard zone
-
- The IC has a confirmed PAR of the entire hazard zone