

SCHUYLKILL COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE 1-01

MAYDAY SIGNAL

The emergency signal "Mayday" should be used during an emergency where a firefighter finds themselves in a life-threatening situation. This is including but not limited to structure fires, confined space, trench rescue or structural collapse incidents. Firefighters are encouraged to call a "Mayday" as soon as they recognize that they are in a life-threatening situation, rather than delaying the call and delaying a rescue effort.

Procedures for Personnel Declaring a Mayday:

1. When a firefighter recognizes they are in a Mayday situation they must:
 - A. If Possible, inform someone near them of the emergency.
 - B. Declare a Mayday by pressing the Push to Talk button and declaring "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday."
 - C. Explain the situation using the LUNAR acoustic.
 - L=Location and situation of Mayday personnel
 - U=Unit number and assignment
 - N=Name of downed firefighter if known.
 - A=Air Supply
 - R=Resources needed
 - D. Take immediate action to self-rescue.
 - ~~E. Attempt to depress the EB button.~~ Removed
 - F. Activate the Pass Alarm.

2. **Self Help**

- A. Personnel in a Mayday situation must:
 - Remain Calm
 - Not delay self-rescue while attempting to activate the Mayday.
 - Not delay efforts of self-extrication while waiting for the Rapid Intervention Team to deploy.
 - Control air consumption.
 - Control breathing rate and depth.
 - Remain oriented to exits and their locations.
 - Activate the PASS device.

Procedures for Non-Mayday Personnel

3. When a Mayday occurs, non-Mayday personnel must.
 - A. **PAUSE, LISTEN, LOOK, AND LIGHT**
 - i. The first action after a mayday is declared must be to pause all work as reasonable but personnel must not risk complicating the emergency e.g., allowing the fire to grow, or violating crew accountability. The pause is designed to reduce ambient noise.
 - ii. During the pause, personnel must listen. While noise is reduced, personnel must listen to all radio traffic regarding the mayday.
 - iii. They should also listen for the sounds of tapping, yelling, or a PASS device.
 - iv. All personnel must look, scanning their assigned operational area for signs of the personnel calling the mayday.
 - v. Especially at night, personnel must make an effort to get to openings, without violating operational discipline, and shine lights into those openings while they listen and look. The lights can provide a means of orientation for trapped firefighters.
4. Personnel may take immediate action to resolve the mayday if they are able to do so. Any action that requires personnel to leave their assigned area is not immediate action.
5. Personnel that take immediate action to resolve a Mayday must communicate that as soon as possible.
6. Personnel with any direct knowledge of Mayday must report that to their immediate supervisor.
7. In the event of a Mayday, all personnel must continue their assigned work with due consideration for the nature and location of the Mayday.
8. The incident commander should give strong consideration for deploying nearby resources to provide initial rapid intervention assistance.

Small Recon Team

- A. The initial search team should be a small team of three or four personnel whose objectives are to:
 - i. **Locate**- To the extent possible, this search must be focused and directed, meaning crews should seek to identify the last known location of the Mayday personnel, and make some assumptions based on the incident of where they are most likely located.
 - ii. **Mark**- Once the mayday personnel are located the subsequent crews should not have to search for them again. The recon team must mark their location in an obvious way.
 - iii. **Provide Air**- The recon team must carry a RIT pack and be prepared to provide air to personnel. The situation will dictate the best method for completing this task.

- iv. **Prepare**- The recon team should prepare the Mayday personnel for extrication. This may include securing the SCBA waist strap, attaching webbing, rope or other tools to facilitate lifting and moving, and securing the RIT pack to the downed firefighter if appropriate.
- v. **Plan**- The recon team should develop and initial plan for protection and extrication, including the required resources to conduct the extraction and report those back to incident command.

When any of the following conditions are present, personnel must call a Mayday:

- A. A firefighter has become entangled, trapped, or pinned.
- B. Personnel have fallen through a roof or floor.
- C. Personnel are caught in a flashover.
- D. Personnel are off of a hose line or tag line in an open area with zero visibility.
- E. An SCBA low air alarm activates, and personnel cannot immediately find an exit.
- F. A Mayday must be initiated whenever the individual:
 - a. Finds themselves in a situation that meets Mayday criteria.
 - b. Witnesses someone else in a situation that meets Mayday criteria.
 - c. Any personnel fail to respond to three radio calls during a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR).

Command Response to a Mayday Signal

Upon receiving a Mayday signal, the IC will do the following:

- (1) Acknowledge the “Mayday” and declare radio silence.
 - (2) Try to determine the location of the Mayday Personnel if their location is not immediately available.
 - (3) Order crews to PAUSE, LOOK, LISTEN AND LIGHT.
 - (4) Poll units working in the direct vicinity of the Mayday Personnel to see if they can mitigate the Mayday.
 - (5) Develop and communicate a plan for action.
 - (6) Assign the RIT as appropriate.
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- A. If the incident commander does not hear the Mayday, any unit hearing the call must alert the incident commander to the Mayday.
 - B. When a Mayday is declared, the Communication Center will start a 15-minute timer. The expectation is that at the 15-minute mark, the Communication Center will notify Incident Command of the 15-minute mark so they may start to switch out RIT crews.
 - C. A firefighter that is not accounted for in a PAR and who is known or suspected of operating in a hazard area will be considered a Mayday.
 - D. Division/Groups that do not respond after three attempts will be considered a Mayday.
 - E. The incident commander will announce via the radio when a Mayday has been resolved.

- F. Once the Mayday has been resolved, the incident commander will conduct a PAR check beginning with the Divisions/Groups/Units operating in the most hazardous areas.

Upon receipt of a Mayday signal, all fire suppression activities underway should continue, unless suppression crews have a direct visual of the incident with the ability to affect a rescue.

NOTE: The Mayday signal is only to be used to declare that fire personnel are in distress. The term “Urgent” is to be used to transmit any other critical fireground information (i.e.: collapse hazards, victim information, etc.). “Mayday” and “Urgent” are **not** to be used interchangeably.