



Burlington Fire Department



136 South Winooski Avenue
Burlington, Vermont 05401-8378
(802) 864-4554 • (802) 658-2700 (TTY)

Business Fax (802) 864-5945 • Central Station Fax (802) 865-5387

Section: 06 - Communications/Dispatch	
SOG Number: 06.24	Effective Date: Sept. 18, 2017
Subject: Mayday & Urgent Radio Transmissions	
By Order of Fire Chief Steven A. Locke	

I. Purpose:

To establish a guideline that will provide for a uniform method of declaring *Mayday* or *Urgent* radio transmissions while on an emergency incident.

II. Scope:

The scope of this guideline pertains to all uniformed members of the Burlington Fire Department and the Emergency Communications Specialists operating in the Emergency Communications Center.

III. Definitions:

Mayday: The use of the word MAYDAY will indicate that a firefighter has become lost, trapped, seriously, injured, or has exhausted his or her breathing air at the scene of an emergency incident. Specifically, a firefighter is in need of immediate assistance.

Urgent: The use of the word URGENT will indicate that a firefighter on an emergency incident has critical, high priority information to relay to the incident command and all units operating. This information should pertain to a situation that poses a threat to responders or civilians. Specific criteria are established within this SOG.

IV. Guidelines:

A). MAYDAY Operating Guideline

1. A firefighter will transmit a MAYDAY if any of the following conditions exist:
 - a. You become lost, trapped, or disoriented.
 - b. You become tangled, pinned, or stuck and cannot extricate yourself within 60 seconds.
 - c. You become tangled, pinned or stuck and your low air alarm activates.
 - d. You fall through a floor, roof, staircase.
 - e. You are caught in a rapid fire propagation event such as a flashover, backdraft, or smoke explosion.
 - f. You are operating in a zero visibility environment and lose contact with a hose, search line or your means of orientation.
 - g. You discover that your primary exit is blocked by fire or collapse and you cannot arrive at a secondary exit within 30 seconds.
 - h. Your low air alarm activates and you are unable to find an exit door or window within 60 seconds.

2. Transmitting the MAYDAY:
 - a. With a clear, calm voice, transmit, “MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, **FIREFIGHTER NAME**, **FIREFIGHTER LOCATION**, MAYDAY” via portable radio.

 - b. When a MAYDAY transmission has occurred, the Incident Commander must clear the air of all other radio traffic and establish contact with the lost, trapped or injured firefighter(s). The Incident Commander will acknowledge the MAYDAY, by transmitting, “Firefighter with the MAYDAY, go with your MAYDAY message.”

 - c. After the MAYDAY has been acknowledged attempt to convey as much useful information as possible in a short amount of time, remember “Who, What, Where”. As an example:

WHO – “Command from Engine 1-B; Ff. Smith”

WHAT – “I am disoriented and low on air”

WHERE – “I am located on the Second Floor – Charlie Side”

- d. The firefighter transmitting the MAYDAY must pause after each message and then repeat the message until the incident commander acknowledges it. If the transmission goes unacknowledged, the firefighter should activate their SCBA PASS alarm and the portable radio emergency distress button and repeat their MAYDAY transmission. If the firefighter is unable to activate their emergency distress button, the firefighter should try to change to the primary dispatch channel (BFD Channel 1) and repeat their MAYDAY.
- e. The Emergency Communications Center must relay any MAYDAY message that is not immediately acknowledged by the Incident Commander.
- f. Firefighters are required to activate their SCBA PASS alarm between each message and after the MAYDAY has been acknowledged. (Important to note that silencing the PASS alarm while transmitting helps convey the MAYDAY message. The PASS alarm can cause significant background noise, making the transmission unreadable).
- g. It is critical that all firefighters on an emergency incident scene understand that MAYDAY transmissions take priority over all other transmissions, including URGENT messages.
- h. Once contact has been established, the Incident Commander should attempt to obtain more specific information that may assist in the rescue attempt if it proves necessary. The requesting of other or more specific information will be determined by the amount of information provided in the original MAYDAY, layout or location of the incident, and the needs of the Incident Commander and the Rapid Intervention Crew(s) mitigating the MAYDAY.

Other examples of information that may be of value include:

- What are the conditions around you?
- How much air do you have in your SCBA?
- What is the best way to access your location?
- Can you hear anything around you?
- Can you see any building features?
- Are you injured? Can you move?
- What tools will be needed to assist in removing you?

- i. Options available to the Incident Commander for managing the MAYDAY include:
 - (1) Use of multiple Rapid Intervention Crews.
 - (2) Transmitting an additional alarm. This is an option for the Incident Commander at any time during the incident, but is advisable when the fire is still not under control and insufficient units are in reserve or in staging.
 - (3) Designating a separate radio channel for the rescue and/or fire operations.
 - (4) Conduct a personnel accountability report (PAR) to determine who or how many are missing.
 - (5) Collect the Apparatus Accountability Passports to determine who may be unaccounted for.
 - (6) Establish a Rapid Intervention Group within the current Incident Management System structure.
 - (a) The Rapid Intervention Group Supervisor must monitor both the MAYDAY frequency and the fireground radio frequency if it was re-assigned.
 - (7) Verify that fire suppression activities are continuing.
 - (8) Remove all nonessential personnel.
 - (9) Eliminate freelancing and maintain control.
 - (10) Request additional resources or equipment that may be necessary.
 - (11) Refer to the attached MAYDAY checklist as a guide.

B). URGENT Operating Guide.

1. A firefighter or fire officer will transmit an URGENT message if any of the following conditions exist:
 - a. A serious, deteriorating change in fire conditions.
 - b. An interior attack is going to be abandoned and firefighters are being forced to evacuate.
 - c. Discovery of a structural problem in the building indicating a potential or imminent collapse.
 - d. A fire has entered an exposure building to the degree that any delay may considerably enlarge the fire problem.
 - e. A loss of water, which could endanger firefighters.

- f. An excessive wind condition exists that may rapidly extend the fire and endanger firefighters.
 - g. A downed electrical line on the fireground.
 - h. An unconscious, trapped, or disoriented civilian has been located.
 - i. Any message that warrants priority that may prevent injury or death on the incident scene.
2. Transmitting the “URGENT”.
- a. Firefighters who transmit an “URGENT” message should attempt to send out as much information as possible in the same message format as for a MAYDAY.
 - b. With a clear, calm voice, transmit, “**Command from (Unit Radio ID) - URGENT**”, via portable radio.
 - c. The Incident Commander will acknowledge the URGENT.

Example:

“Unit with the URGENT – go ahead with your message”

- d. After the URGENT has been acknowledged attempt to convey as much useful information as possible in a short amount of time, remember “Who, What, Where”. As an example:

WHO – Unit Designation (ex. Engine 1 – Pump)

WHAT – Give your situation (be specific).

WHERE – Give the location of the event (floor, division, other)

Example:

“Command from Division 2 – Lt. Smith, we have lost water in our hose line on the second floor”

- e. The firefighter transmitting the URGENT must pause after each message and then repeat the message until the incident commander acknowledges it. It is critical that all members at the emergency scene understand that the URGENT transmission takes priority over other transmissions. When the URGENT transmission has been transmitted, the Incident Commander must clear the air of all other radio traffic and establish contact with the member transmitting the URGENT message. Once contact has been established the Incident

Commander should attempt to obtain more specific information about the situation if necessary.

- f. The request for more specific information will be determined but the information originally transmitted in the Urgent message. Further information requests could include:
 - (1) If a change in fire conditions has occurred – what location did it occur in?
 - (2) If a structural compromise is noted – what location is effected?
 - (3) What interventions are necessary to mitigate the situation? i.e. Evacuate the building, Place a back-up line in operation, etc.
 - (4) If an unconscious patient has been located, what route will the companies be utilizing for the patient removal.
 - (5) What other resources will be needed

V. Responsibility:

1). Incident Commander:

The incident commander is responsible for managing the MAYDAY situation. Ideally, the Incident Commander should designate a Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC) group supervisor who will be directly responsible for managing the rescue of the injured, trapped, or lost firefighter(s) involved in the MAYDAY. This would allow the Incident Commander to continue to manage the overall emergency incident.

2). Fire Officer and Firefighters:

It is the responsibility of all firefighters to read, understand, and practice the procedures as outlined in this SOG. All members operating at an emergency incident must exercise extreme discipline and ensure that assigned tasks are completed, especially those directed at fire suppression, despite the simultaneous efforts of other companies.

Revision History			
Revision Date	Section	Summary	Principal Author
July 19, 2017		Initial release of document	



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MAYDAY / RIC ACTIVATION CHECKLIST

- WHO is in trouble? (name and # of FF's)
- WHAT is the problem?
- WHERE are they located?
- Deploy the Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC)
- Announce that a MAYDAY exists: “ _____ Command to all units, a MAYDAY has been declared by _____ (who, what, where); requesting radio silence unless you have an emergency.
- Call for additional alarm(s) for rescue and suppression support.
- Request additional Fireground Channel
- Conduct a PAR of all units in the IDLH.
- Assign Rescue Group Supervisor (Should be a Command level officer)
- Request additional EMS resources
- After rescue is accomplished, conduct a PAR of all units.
- Notify the Chief Engineer
- Staff a PIO position
- Call CISD/Take affected units out of service