



## HR/LF

### OPERATIONS

POLICY # 13-0320.1

### SAFETY – LOST/TRAPPED FIREFIGHTER

ISSUED 03/20/2013

**Subject:** Lost/ Trapped Firefighter-Command Actions.

**Purpose:** This policy outlines Command procedures for incidents involving lost or trapped firefighters.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all New Salem Fire Department personnel.

#### Policy:

The rescue of lost or trapped firefighters in a burning building is especially time sensitive. There is a **very narrow** “window of survivability” for a firefighter who is out of SCBA air supply or trapped by approaching fire.

**\*\*\*Individual firefighters shall immediately radio Command if they become lost, trapped or in need of assistance.\*\*\***

Company officers and/or Officers in charge shall also not delay the reporting of lost firefighters or inability to account for crewmembers. Command and Division/Group supervisors shall always assume that a missing firefighter is lost in the building until the firefighter can be located. Command shall initiate an action plan to incorporate a high priority rescue effort.

#### **“MAYDAY” radio message**

The radio message “**MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY**” shall be used by lost or trapped firefighters to report their status as being in trouble and needing rescue. Any member shall use MAYDAY to report a lost firefighter.

**\*\*\*Any report of a MAYDAY shall receive priority radio traffic, meaning all non-essential radio traffic shall cease.\*\*\***

The term “MAYDAY” shall be reserve ONLY to report lost or trapped firefighters. The term “**EMERGENCY MESSAGE**” shall be used to report other emergencies or high risk hazards

The term “**MAYDAY**” typically shall be used in the following situations:

- By personnel who are lost, trapped, or in trouble
- By Company officer, Division/Group supervisor or other member who cannot account for an assigned firefighter who is operating in a hazard zone.
- By a member who witnesses or has confirmed that a firefighter is lost or in trouble

Survival actions for the firefighter(s) declaring the “MAYDAY” are included in **S.O.P. Firefighter Self Survival Actions**

Once a **MAYDAY** has been declared, all fire ground companies except the affected companies and the RIT(s) shall be moved to another radio channel. This shall be initiated by the Incident Commander.



## **Command response to a missing firefighter**

The Incident Commander **SHALL ALWAYS** assume that a missing firefighter is lost or trapped in the building until the firefighter is located. Rapid, concise, decisions and actions shall be taken to increase survivability. The following is a list of actions to be taken by Command for a reported missing or trapped firefighter. These are guidelines and need not be accomplished in the order listed. They must however, be accomplished rapidly.

### **1. Change the plan to a high priority rescue effort**

The Incident Commander must restructure the Incident Action Plan to support the firefighter rescue effort. A rescue plan must be developed and the Command organization expanded. The plan and objectives shall be communicated to other Command staff and Division/Group supervisors for implementation.

### **2. Immediately request additional alarm(s)**

At least one (1) additional level of both fire and EMS alarm shall be immediately requested. Upgraded alarms may be requested based on circumstances and potential. Early consideration must be given to heavy equipment resources and Technical Rescue Team (TRT) assistance in structural collapses.

### **3. Fireground Accountability**

A Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) shall be immediately requested from all companies operating on the fireground. In some situations, such as collapse, crewmembers may be separated. The only practical method to obtain an accurate PAR may be to withdraw crews to the exterior. 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, absolute need for an accurate PAR and information on missing firefighters remains a critical priority.

### **4. Commit the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) assign a RIT Chief and Safety Officer**

The RIT shall be deployed to begin the rescue effort typically beginning at the last reported work area. A RIT Chief should be assigned to direct the overall RIT effort and to coordinate with the Incident Commander.

If not already in place a Safety Officer shall be assigned to monitor activity and evaluate the safety of the operation. Other Safety Officer responsibilities will be to conduct an assessment of the hazards, thus allowing the RIT Chief to concentrate on the rescue effort. Division/Group supervisors must coordinate efforts to ensure that a safe effective rescue operation is conducted.

### **5. Confirm with Dispatch that all radio channels are being monitored**

Command shall ensure that Dispatch monitors all radio channels. If a lost firefighter declares an emergency on a channel other than the fireground operations channel, Command must be immediately directed to the lost firefighters channel for direct communications. Contact shall immediately be attempted to determine if an emergency exists.

## **Additional strategic and tactical considerations**

### **Reinforce firefighting positions**

Firefighting operations shall not be discontinued during the rescue operation. Command and fire crews shall take aggressive measures to protect trapped or missing firefighters from the effects of the fire. Efforts shall be concentrated on reinforcing existing positions, keeping the fire out of rescue area, and providing appropriate ventilation and lighting. In some situations it may be appropriate to cease operations in some areas of the building in order to relocate companies to better protect the rescue effort.

### **Open/Unlock all doors**

All doors in the immediate area of the search shall be unlocked or forced open, and the immediate interior area quickly searched. Where practical, doors shall be left open to provide an emergency escape route unless doing so will have negative effects on the fire. **In all cases doors shall remain unlocked.**



**Establish treatment and transportation groups**

The Incident Commander should assign EMS personnel to immediately treat and rescued firefighters. A transportation group should also be in place and coordinating activities with the treatment group.

**Media control**

Command will need to control the media early and throughout the incident. Information on the identities and conditions of lost firefighters shall be restricted until after families are notified. Media film crews shall be restricted to areas which are at a safe distance and that will prevent visual/facial identification of any victims. A Public Information Officer (PIO) should be assigned to assist Command.

**Family needs**

A Family Group shall be established early. This will aid in notification of families and allow Command to stay ahead of the media's release of information. A Chief Officer should be assigned to direct this important function.

By the order of: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, NSFD

Date:

**References:**

**Resources:**

Franklin County Fire Chiefs Association - Lost/Trapped Firefighter Command Actions Guideline