

# VIRTUA FIRE & RESCUE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

## EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

### PURPOSE

To establish standard practices for communicating imminent hazards and threats to personnel operating at emergency incidents.

### COMMON TERMINOLOGY

**Emergency Traffic:** The phrase 'Emergency Traffic' is used in radio communications to indicate a critical life safety related message. 'Emergency Traffic' communications have priority over all other radio communications with the exception of a Mayday message.

**Mayday:** 'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday' is the signal phrase used in radio communications to indicate a missing, trapped, or injured firefighter in need of immediate assistance. Mayday messages have absolute priority over all other radio communications.

**Personal Accountability Report (PAR):** A report designed to provide the Incident Commander with information concerning the identity of individual members of a group or team and their assignments and to account for the assignment of groups.

**Withdraw:** The term 'Withdraw' is used to order the controlled tactical movement from current operating positions to a safer location. Groups or teams who are withdrawing from an operating position will remove tools, equipment, and hose lines. Even if not explicitly communicated by the Incident Commander over the tactical radio, the 'Withdraw' command is included by default as part of the command to initiate a defensive fire attack strategy.

### PROCEDURE

#### EMERGENCY TRAFFIC

1. The signal phrase 'Emergency Traffic' is used to request priority access for communications critical to life safety. The Emergency Traffic phrase must follow the initiation of any Mayday procedure.
2. Emergency Traffic has priority over all other radio communications (with the exception of a 'Mayday' message). All other radio traffic must cease and personnel must monitor the emergency traffic message.

#### ABANDONING THE HAZARD ZONE

1. Rapidly developing hazardous conditions may require the Incident Commander to order all groups and teams operating in the IDLH to withdraw from that area of operation and immediately exit to a safe area. In structure fires, safety zones are predefined at the corners of the structure and outside the collapse zone.
2. The command to change to a defensive fire attack includes, by definition, the command to withdraw from the IDLH.
3. Following the order to withdraw from the IDLH or to change to a defensive fire attack strategy, the Incident Commander must account for all resources operating at the incident by initiating a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR).

## PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT (PAR)

1. A PAR is conducted when
  - A. A Mayday operation has been concluded.
  - B. When changing from offensive to defensive operations.
2. The Incident Commander should initiate the PAR no sooner than 30 seconds and no later than 90 seconds from the change of strategy or conclusion of a Mayday operation.
3. A PAR is initiated by the Incident Commander and responses are required from all supervisors or team leads except for teams in Rehab.
4. PAR radio transmissions should be completed in a rapid and efficient manner. To accomplish this, a standard method of radio response is necessary. When PAR is called for, the appropriate group supervisor or team lead will report whether the PAR is complete and will specify which teams/teams are under their command. Standardized examples of reports are as follows
  - A. If the PAR in the group/team has been conducted and all personnel are accounted for  
*'Command this is Attack 1. We have PAR.'*
  - B. If the PAR in the group/team has been conducted and personnel are missing  
*'Command this is Attack 1. We do not have PAR.'*
5. If a group or team doesn't respond to a PAR in a timely manner, the Incident Commander should follow up with a status check of that specific group or team. If that group or team does not respond to the status report then the Incident Commander should initiate a Mayday operation immediately.

## MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY

1. The signal phrase 'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday' is used to clearly communicate that a firefighter is missing, trapped, or injured and In need of assistance.
2. Firefighters will transmit a 'Mayday' message three times on the tactical channel and report their last known location, and situation.  
*'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday. I'm in a 2nd floor bedroom, Alpha Bravo corner, and low on air.'*

See the [Virtua Fire & Rescue Missing, Injured, or Trapped Firefighter SOP](#) for specific procedures for a Mayday situation.