

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

PURPOSE

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

COMMON TERMINOLOGY

Abandon: The term 'abandon' is used to direct companies or teams operating in the IDLH to immediately exit via escape routes to a safe place. Companies or teams abandoning the IDLH will take only the tools, equipment, and hose lines necessary to permit the emergency egress.

Cease Operation - All Quiet: Order given by the Incident Commander. Typically used during search and rescue operations when listening for PASS devices or when listening equipment is being used by technical search and rescue teams. This order may be preceded by 'Emergency Traffic'.

Code Zero: A law enforcement term used to request all available officers to respond code 3 to an incident. To be used only when unable to transmit clear text and someone's life is in imminent danger.

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.

Evacuate: The term 'Evacuate' will be limited to removal of civilians who are exposed or are potentially exposed to hazards presented by the incident.

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 company or team and their assignments and to account for the assignment of companies.

Withdraw: The term 'Withdraw' is used to order the controlled tactical movement from current operating positions to a safer location. Companies or teams who are withdrawing from an operating position will remove tools, equipment, and hose lines.

PROCEDURE

1. Any member with an 'Emergency Traffic' or 'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday' message will transmit that message on the tactical channel.
2. If the Incident Commander receives an 'Emergency Traffic' or 'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday' message via dispatch, they will immediately retransmit the message over the assigned tactical channel.

EMERGENCY TRAFFIC

1. The signal phrase 'Emergency Traffic' is used to request priority access for communications critical to life safety. Situations in which emergency traffic communications are indicated include (but are not limited to)
 - A. Abandoning the IDLH.
 - B. Reporting extreme safety hazards such as imminent structural collapse.

- C. Changing strategy from offensive to defensive.
 - D. Request additional resources in a critical situation.
1. 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.
 2. After receipt of an 'Emergency Traffic' message, the Incident Commander will initiate (request through dispatch or personally signal) the 'Radio Warble Tone'. 'Emergency Traffic' messages should be repeated on all appropriate tactical frequencies.

ABANDONING THE HAZARD ZONE

1. Rapidly developing hazardous conditions may require the Incident Commander to order all companies and teams operating in the IDLH to abandon that area of operation and immediately exit to a safe area. In a wildland/urban incident or other incident with a variable perimeter, safety zones must be defined by proclamation (i.e., 'The Safety Zone is located at...'). In structure fires, safety zones are predefined at the corners of the structure and outside the collapse zone (others may be defined by proclamation).
2. Communicating the order to abandon the IDLH is accomplished through first, emergency traffic radio communication and second, an audible signal. An order to abandon the IDLH deviates from the standard radio communications model as it is broadcast to all companies and teams (rather than specifically directed).
3. Upon receipt of an order by the Incident Commander to abandon the IDLH, all engineers close to the IDLH will sound their air horn with one long continuous blast lasting for approximately ten seconds.
4. The Incident Commander will then repeat the emergency traffic message.
5. Following the order to abandon the IDLH, 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 firefighter or team is presumed missing or trapped.
 - B. When changing from offensive to defensive operations.
 - C. A catastrophic change in the incident occurs.
 - D. When the Incident Commander determines that a need exists for a PAR.
2. 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 supervisor 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 division/group has been conducted and all personnel are accounted for
'Division 2, PAR COMPLETE, with Engines 1, 2, 3 and Truck 2, Team B.'
 - B. If the PAR in the division/group has been conducted and personnel are missing
'Division 2, PAR with Engines 1, 2, 3, MISSING Truck 2, Team B, firefighters Smith and Brown, LAST KNOWN LOCATION 2nd floor stairwell.'
 - C. If the PAR in the division/group has not been completely conducted
'Division 2, PAR NOT COMPLETED, Stand-by.'

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. This word is used to differentiate this type of emergency from others that may be communicated using the 'Emergency Traffic' signal phrase.
2. Firefighters will transmit a 'Mayday' message three times on the tactical channel and report their company, last name, last known location, and situation.

'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, Engine 1 Firefighter Smith, with a Mayday, I'm in a second floor bedroom, Alpha Bravo corner, and low on air.'

3. After receipt of a 'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday' message, the Incident Commander will initiate (request through dispatch or personally signal) the 'Radio Warble Tone' and repeat the message on the tactical channel.

CODE ZERO

1. The term 'Code Zero' is the designation used to indicate an immediate need for police. 'Code Zero' should be used only when unable to transmit in clear text and when someone's life is in danger.
2. Dispatch will not request additional Information from the sender.

