

**PHOENIX REGIONAL
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

MAYDAY PREVENTION AND READINESS

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PURPOSE

In firefighting, prevention is the cornerstone of safety, while Mayday readiness ensures we are prepared if prevention measures fail. Readiness is critical for response, but prevention keeps us out of high-risk scenarios. Focusing on prevention reduces the likelihood of a Mayday and enhances safety for all personnel.

Every firefighter must maintain Mayday readiness and adopt a proactive approach to prevention. Prevention requires disciplined decision-making, strict adherence to operational standards, and best practices. Key preventive actions include operating within the Incident Command System (ICS), effective communication for situational awareness, accountability, air management, and resource layering for tactical reserves. These actions are more than protocols; they are critical steps that keep us safe.

Embedding these practices into daily routines and fostering a mindset that anticipates a Mayday builds a culture of safety prioritizing prevention as the first line of defense. Readiness remains essential, but prevention is the key to minimizing Mayday incidents and ensuring safe, effective operations.

SCOPE

This Mayday Prevention and Readiness Member Policy applies to all personnel operating within the Phoenix Regional Dispatch System, including:

- All ranks: Firefighters, Engineers, Company Officers, Command Officers.
- All levels of operation:
 - **Strategic Level:** Incident Commanders and senior command staff responsible for overall incident management.
 - **Tactical Level:** Sector Officers managing crews and resources within assigned sectors.
 - **Task Level:** Individual firefighters and engineers performing hands-on operations in the hazard zone.
- All AHQ personnel involved in supporting fireground operations.

This policy applies to all incidents where personnel operate in a hazard zone, including structure fires, technical rescues, hazardous materials incidents, and any

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environment where conditions present a risk of entrapment, disorientation, or inability to exit safely.

DEFINITIONS

Mayday

A Mayday is defined as anytime a firefighter is in a life-threatening situation and requires assistance because they cannot safely exit the hazard zone or resolve the problem immediately.

Mayday Readiness

The state of being prepared to act promptly and effectively in the event of a Mayday situation. This includes maintaining proficiency in essential survival skills, equipment use, and communication under extreme conditions.

GRAB LIVES

A nationally recognized mnemonic for firefighter self-survival actions during a Mayday:

- **G** = Check Air **G**auge
- **R** = **R**adio for Assistance
- **A** = **A**ctivate PASS Device
- **B** = Control **B**reathing, Conserve Air
- **L** = Stay **L**ow
- **I** = **I**lluminate, Turn Flashlight On
- **V** = Make Loud Noises (**V**olume)
- **E** = Find an **E**xit
- **S** = **S**hield Your Airway (last ditch effort)

Fireground Survival

A comprehensive training program sponsored and taught by the **International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)**. It focuses on firefighter self-rescue techniques, air management, and survival strategies in zero-visibility or life-threatening conditions.

Save Our Own

A set of procedures and skills, also sponsored and taught by the **IAFF**, focused on rescuing firefighters in distress. This includes rapid intervention tactics and specialized equipment use.

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Incident Command System (ICS)

A standardized approach, as outlined in **MP 201.01 Command Procedures**, is designed to enable effective and efficient on-scene incident management by integrating organizational functions, tactical operations, incident planning, incident logistics, and administrative tasks within a common organizational structure.

Strategic Decision Making Model (SDM)

The process of an on-going size-up of fireground factors, assessment of risk, determination of strategy, and development of an Incident Action Plan to complete the Tactical Objectives. This process should be constantly reviewed and revised.

MP 201.01 Command Procedures

Risk Management Plan

A standardized approach for evaluating hazards, assessing risk, and applying strategies to minimize exposure and prevent firefighter injury or death. This plan is based on principles in what exactly firefighters will risk saving and is outlined in **MP 201.01C Risk Management and Safety**.

1. We Will risk our lives a lot, in a calculated manner, to save savable lives.
2. We Will risk our lives a Little, in a calculated manner, to save savable property.
3. We Will Not risk our lives at all for lives or property that are already Lost.

MAYDAY READINESS

To achieve Mayday readiness, all firefighters must consider every incident from the standpoint of "What if I or another firefighter gets into trouble?" and "Am I prepared to respond to a Mayday scenario?" All firefighters must be prepared to act promptly in the event of a Mayday situation. The NFPA 1500 Standard defines Mayday readiness as the ability to "don, doff, and manipulate the SCBA in zero visibility while wearing firefighting gloves." All firefighters must be proficient in "Fireground Survival and Save our Own" procedures. These skills should be practiced and trained on regularly to ensure Mayday Readiness.

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The Rule of Mayday Readiness

Under the “Rule of Mayday Readiness,” all fire department personnel operating in or around a hazard zone are responsible for maintaining a high level of readiness in the event of a Mayday situation. This includes the ability to communicate and respond effectively in a Mayday scenario, as well as everyday preparation and prevention. Every member must carry their assigned functioning radio and be proficient in its use—even in low-visibility or zero-visibility conditions—since effective communication is critical to survival and rescue efforts. This diligent approach ensures Mayday readiness, instilling a sense of preparedness and confidence in our abilities.

“Mayday” procedures and actions are perishable for all levels of an organization. Personnel should regularly train and simulate them. The perishable nature of these procedures emphasizes the need for continuous training and improvement, which should be developed into everyday activities and practiced at the Strategic, Tactical, and Task levels.

MAYDAY PREVENTION

Effectively preventing Mayday situations involves multiple factors. Command Officers, Company Officers, Engineers, and Firefighters must reinforce the prevention of scenarios that lead to a Mayday. One of the most effective ways to prevent a Mayday is to extinguish the fire quickly and aggressively, while operating in a safe and calculated manner. Rapid fire control reduces hazards, limits fire growth, and minimizes the exposure of crews operating inside the hazard zone.

The most critical factors for Mayday prevention begin with the following operational standards:

- Working within an Incident Command System
- Continual use of the Strategic Decision Making Model,
 - Using knowledge, skills, experience, and reconnaissance to continually size up the hazard zone
 - i. A component of a thorough size-up includes an early 360 report to gain a full understanding of the fire conditions,

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building construction, tenable space, ventilation profile, and
best positions to achieve fire control

- Applying Risk Management, ensuring all actions are in a “calculated manner”
- Working in the correct fireground strategy.
- Adequate layering of resources
- Working within the Incident Action Plan
- Maintaining fireground discipline
- Following the hazard zone communication order model
- Always being accountable to someone within the Incident Command System (***Never Freelance***)
- Maintaining individual and crew SCBA proficiency and air management
- Proper personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Proper hose line selection based on Size-up and Critical Fireground Factors
- Management of work cycles
- Monitoring distances traveled into buildings
- Layering of resources and providing for a tactical reserve
- Planning and acting out an exit plan
- Maintaining par tags, Hose tags, and Rosters

Mayday Readiness and Prevention – Strategic and Tactical Level

Every incident's Strategic and Tactical level is responsible for actively and routinely working toward Mayday prevention and Readiness; this encompasses the Incident Commander and Sector Officers.

- Working within the Incident Command System
- Continual assessment and revision of the strategic decision-making model; Size-up, Risk Assessment, Strategy, and Incident Action Plan
- An effective and thorough size-up consists of a 360-degree evaluation of the hazard zone and the findings reported back to Command
- Management of tactical objectives for the sectors through the position and function of crews working within the sector
- Sector-level air management
 - Managing geographic working area
 - Work/rest cycles

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- Distances into building
- Accountability
 - Account for and maintain adequate resources assigned to sectors
 - ParTags, Hose line tagging, Roster accuracy
 - Layer resources in a position to manage tactical objectives and prepare to respond in the event of Mayday
 - Activation of the Safety Channel
- Maintaining effective and appropriate communications with Command
 - Sector C.A.N. reports (Conditions, actions, needs)
 - Sector to Sector communication
 - Requesting or de-committing resources
- Elapsed Time Awareness

Readiness and Prevention - Company Officers

The Company Officer is responsible for Crew development and practice. Consistent training and practice in Mayday prevention are crucial for a rapid and appropriate response in an actual Mayday situation. This involves establishing a consistent attitude and setting clear expectations for all crew members regarding Mayday readiness. It also consists in developing routines that the company officer encourages and participates in. The Company Officer must be prepared and consider their strategic, tactical, and task actions.

Mayday Readiness and Prevention for Company Officers include:

- Ensure all members perform a daily SCBA operational check at the beginning of their shift.
- Practicing crew communication in the hazard zone
- Integrating rovers and constant staffing members into the crew
- Maintaining knowledge of portable radios and practicing their use
- Ensuring Company Officer responsibilities and expectations are clear to the entire crew
- Practicing and maintaining crew integrity/accountability
- Maintaining contact with a hoseline is a primary method of preventing a Mayday and is a required practice during interior fire operations. In certain residential incidents, operating off the hoseline may be appropriate;

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however, this is only acceptable when the Company Officer maintains full awareness of the position and function of all crew members.

- Being familiar with and recognizing Mayday Communication clues or red flags
 - Communication issues
 - Deteriorating conditions
 - Air management and SCBA issues
 - Elapsed Time Notifications

Mayday Readiness and Prevention – Firefighter/Engineer

Every firefighter is responsible for actively and routinely doing their part to prevent Mayday situations and be ready to respond to one. To increase their chances of survival, members should focus on improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The development of fireground discipline and survival skills begins at the recruit level and should continue throughout a firefighter's career.

Individual firefighter responsibilities for Mayday prevention include the following:

- Keeping current and invested in "Fireground Survival" techniques
- Perform daily SCBA operational check
- Maintaining SCBA proficiency
- Complete annual SCBA Mask fit test (MP 110.19)
- Practicing individual air management (task level of M.P. 202.05C)
- Use and care of personal protective equipment
- Maintaining portable radio proficiency and use
- Practicing crew communications
- Exercising fireground discipline
- Maintaining crew integrity
- Individual rovers and Constant Staffers are responsible for asking if expectations are not explicitly discussed at the beginning of a shift.
- Engineers shall Tag hose lines and provide tools at ingress points

Alarm Room Personnel

Alarm Room personnel are essential in supporting Mayday prevention and readiness by ensuring accurate, timely, and clear communication during all phases of an incident. Their responsibilities include:

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- **Monitoring and Managing Communications**
 - Maintain constant awareness of radio traffic for signs of distress or Mayday indicators.
 - Immediately recognize and prioritize Mayday transmissions.
 - Activate the designated Safety Channel and ensure all sectors are informed.
- **Resource Coordination**
 - Rapidly deploy additional resources upon Mayday declaration.
 - Confirm resource assignments and communicate clarifications to Command if necessary.
- **Elapsed Time Notifications**
 - Provide regular elapsed time benchmarks.
- **Support Accountability**
 - Track unit assignments and locations in real-time.
 - Assist Command in verifying crew integrity and resource status.
- **Training and Familiarity**
 - Maintain proficiency in Mayday protocols and communication procedures.
 - Participate in drills and simulations to reinforce readiness.

Key Role: Alarm Room personnel serve as the communication hub during hazard zone operations, ensuring rapid response, resource deployment, and accurate information flow to support incident stabilization and Mayday Prevention.

Key Takeaways

- Every member is responsible for Mayday Prevention and Readiness at all times.
- Prevention is the first line of defense—it reduces the likelihood of a Mayday and keeps firefighters safe.
- Readiness is essential because Mayday procedures are perishable skills and must be practiced regularly.
- Continual learning from Maydays, near misses, and firefighter injuries and fatalities across the fire service helps identify critical lessons and reinforces a culture of safety.

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- Regular training, incident reviews, safety stand-downs, and organizational communications all support operational readiness and strengthen Mayday prevention efforts.
- The only way to guarantee a successful outcome of a Mayday situation is to **Prevent It!**