

Interboro Mutual Aid Group

Operations Guideline

Subject: Emergency Radio Traffic

Effective Date: January 1, 2010

Review Date: July 2014

Purpose: This guideline is to aid and assist fire departments in complying with the regulatory requirements of NJAC 5:75-2.6 and to ensure that a methodology is established for giving priority to the transmission of emergency messages and notification of imminent hazards to all levels of the incident command structure over that of routine radio communication. Further, that when firefighters encounter conditions that pose a non-routine threat to their life or safety or that of others, they shall convey that situation via two-way radio to incident commanders and/or rescue crews utilizing clear text.

Scope: This guideline shall be utilized at all emergency incident.

Responsibility: This guideline shall apply to all members and all other emergency responders at the scene of a significant emergency regardless of their unit, agency or affiliation.

Procedure:

- (a) An incident commander, safety officer, division or group supervisor, or any member who is in trouble or sees an emergency condition can declare emergency traffic or mayday by announcing it over the radio communications system in use at the scene of an emergency.
 1. Radio tones may also be used to draw attention to an "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" message.
- (b) Examples of emergency conditions that warrant emergency radio traffic or mayday include:
 1. A firefighter down or has fallen;
 2. A firefighter missing;
 3. A firefighter trapped;
 4. A firefighter lost;
 5. A firefighter "stuck";
 6. The need to immediately evacuate the building or area;
 7. A building or structure collapse or imminent collapse;
 8. A wind direction shift, such as from north to south;
 9. Changing from offensive to defensive operations;
 10. Equipment failure posing an imminent danger;
 11. Fire discovered entering an exposure to a degree that any delay may considerably enlarge the fire problem;
 12. Necessity to change from an interior to an exterior attack mode; or
 13. Loss of water or other extinguishing agent that would endanger members.

- (c) Whenever "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" is transmitted via two-way radio, all communications on that frequency shall cease except those between the firefighter initiating the emergency radio transmission and the incident commander and/or the fire department dispatch center. Normal two-way radio use may be resumed upon completion of the emergency message, unless the incident commander orders otherwise.
- (d) When a member has declared an emergency traffic or "mayday" message, he or she shall use clear text terms, such as "firefighter down," "firefighter missing," etc.
1. The term "mayday" shall not be used when operating with aviation or marine personnel.
- (e) The procedure for the use of "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" is as follows:
1. Firefighters in life-threatening situations shall immediately contact the incident commander via two-way radio stating "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" and then identify themselves;
 2. The incident commander, upon hearing the "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" radio transmission, shall acknowledge the person issuing the "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" via two-way radio **by stating "emergency traffic, clear the channel"**;
 3. The person making the "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" call shall respond to the incident commander by repeating "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**", shall identify themselves, their unit and assignment, shall report the nature of the situation including resources needed and shall give their location (LUNAR-location, unit, name or number, assignment and resources needed). Repeating the "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" radio transmission shall give any emergency personnel monitoring the radio frequency that may have missed the first transmission an opportunity to hear and react to the "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" call accordingly;
 4. A person in distress who initiates an "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" call shall first activate their personal alert safety system (PASS) device and, if applicable, their radio's emergency button.
 - i. A person in distress who initiates an "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" call shall coordinate his or her radio transmissions with the activation of his or her PASS device;
 5. "Emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" transmissions that are not acknowledged shall be repeated until they are acknowledged.
 6. Any fire officer or firefighter hearing an "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" signal and realizing that it is not being acknowledged shall acknowledge the radio transmission, ascertain its nature and promptly relay all information to the incident commander;
 7. Upon receipt of an "emergency traffic" or "**mayday**" radio transmission, the incident commander shall be responsible for determining appropriate actions to mitigate the situation at hand; and
 8. At the conclusion of the emergency condition, an "all clear for emergency traffic" shall be transmitted to allow a return to normal operations.
- (f) Fire departments shall assure that their **communication systems are appropriate** for emergency radio communications.
- (g) Fire departments shall assure that all emergency response personnel receive training adequate to ensure proficiency in the procedures as set forth in this section.