



# Orange County Division of Fire Service



## MAYDAY/URGENT POLICY

### Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide a uniform countywide procedure for both MAYDAY situations and URGENT situations and to clearly define the differences between both.

### Intent:

1. Establish operating guidelines to assist in the event of a MAYDAY or URGENT situation.
2. Establish a uniformed method for giving priority to emergency radio communication messages.
3. Provide a guideline to be used by all Orange County Fire Departments. These procedures may be modified by the Fire Department Incident Commander, or officers as emergency conditions dictate.

### Scope:

This guide applies to all emergency fire personnel operating in Orange County, New York.

### Definitions:

**MAYDAY:** MAYDAY is used to signal a LIFE THREAT to any FIREFIGHTER. This could involve any presently occurring or an imminent situation. This term is **not** used for a life threatening situation involving a civilian. If a member's life is in danger, you **MUST** transmit a MAYDAY. Some examples are **M**issing or lost member, **U**nconscious or severely injured member, **S**tructural collapse is imminent or has occurred, or member(s) is **T**rapped. The MAYDAY needs to be transmitted immediately.

**URGENT:** URGENT is used to signal a serious situation that has the potential to either endanger the safety of operating members, or significantly impact fire ground operations. Some items that could be considered as an URGENT are: Severe change in conditions, Loss of water, Injury to a member (non – life threatening), Danger of collapse, or Evacuate structure. Firefighters unsure of whether the situation dictates an URGENT or MAYDAY situation should transmit a MAYDAY.

**Evacuation Signal:** When an immediate evacuation of a structure is warranted, in addition to a radio transmission, the signal shall be 3 blasts of an air horn of one apparatus on scene with each blast being 2 seconds in duration. At the request of incident command this may be done by multiple apparatus for specific situations such as a large commercial structure.

**It is of extreme importance that all crews continue to operate at their pre-designated assignment.**

## **Standard Policy for a MAYDAY or URGENT Situation**

- The signal for a missing, lost member, unconscious or severely injured member, a structural collapse is imminent or has occurred, or trapped member(s) is **MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY**.
- The signal for a serious situation that has the potential to endanger operating members or fireground operations is **URGENT, URGENT, URGENT**.
- The MAYDAY or URGENT transmission shall continue until acknowledged by the incident commander.
- Upon transmission of a MAYDAY or URGENT, all other radio traffic shall clear the channel until the MAYDAY or URGENT has been identified.
- The MAYDAY signal may be transmitted by any fire department personnel who become lost/injured/trapped or in imminent danger and in need of immediate assistance.
- Any personnel that are made aware of a missing/injured/trapped member or a structural collapse must declare a MAYDAY.
- Any personnel that observe or are made aware of a serious situation must declare an URGENT. Firefighters unsure of whether the situation dictates an URGENT or MAYDAY situation should transmit a MAYDAY.
- Individuals who transmit a MAYDAY should provide: Who you are, Why you called the MAYDAY, Where you are located, What you need to rectify the situation. The same applies to an URGENT situation.
- Upon acknowledgement of a MAYDAY, Command shall immediately deploy a FAST/RIT/Rescue team. repeat the MAYDAY situation, notify dispatch and activate the MAMA's MAYDAY plan.
- Dispatch will announce the MAYDAY situation and dispatch requested MAYDAY resources.
- Only the Incident Commander may cancel a MAYDAY once it has been given. Normal operations may then resume.

### **Transmitting a MAYDAY:**

The message should be transmitted in such a way that commands attention of all members. First say "MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY" followed by identifying WHO is transmitting the MAYDAY. At this time no other radio traffic shall be transmitted until the nature of the MAYDAY is identified.

### **Transmitting a URGENT:**

As with a MAYDAY situation, the message should be transmitted in such a way that commands attention of all members. First say "URGENT, URGENT, URGENT" followed by identifying WHO is transmitting the URGENT. At this time no other radio traffic shall be transmitted until the nature of the URGENT is identified.

### **After the MAYDAY is transmitted:**

If a MAYDAY is transmitted and command doesn't acknowledge it, then the MAYDAY should be acknowledged by anyone hearing it and relayed to command. Once the MAYDAY is acknowledged, the member shall announce WHY they are transmitting the MAYDAY, WHERE they are located and WHAT they need. Command shall repeat the MAYDAY situation on the fireground channel and notify the dispatch center of the MAYDAY situation. Dispatch shall transmit, on the countywide communications channel, that a MAYDAY situation is in progress, repeat what the MAYDAY situation is and implement the MAMA'S MAYDAY plan if requested. The FAST/RIT/Rescue team shall be deployed and a Roll Call/PAR shall be conducted to determine if all members are accounted for. If the 911 center hears a MAYDAY transmitted that is not acknowledged, dispatch will transmit the situation on the countywide communications channel and request radio silence.

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**After the URGENT is transmitted:**

If an URGENT is transmitted and command doesn't acknowledge it, then the URGENT should be acknowledged by anyone hearing it and relayed to command. Once the URGENT is acknowledged, the member shall announce WHY they are transmitting the URGENT, WHERE they are located and WHAT the problem is and what they need. Command shall repeat the URGENT situation on the fireground channel. Incident command could consider having the county transmit a message over the county communications channel for all incoming units to be made aware of the situation.

**MAYDAY Communications**

In most MAYDAY instances, changing channels is not recommended, however it may be instituted at the discretion of command. In the event that the incident commander deems it necessary to establish the emergency fireground channel, all members not directly involved with the rescue operations of the firefighter(s) in distress shall switch to the Emergency Fire Ground channel and continue their assigned operations. The firefighter(s) in distress shall never be asked to switch channels and the FAST/RIT/Rescue team will be on the same channel as the distressed firefighter(s).

**Examples of a MAYDAY transmission:**

*Note: Members shall utilize their department guideline/SOP as to their position/assignment/identifier or name when transmitting a MAYDAY.*

Engine 234 Officer: *"MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, Engine 234 Officer to Command, MAYDAY."*  
Command: *"Command to Engine 234 Officer, go ahead with your MAYDAY."*

Engine 234 Officer: *"MAYDAY, Engine 234 Officer to Command, we have a member who fell through the first floor into the basement and is trapped on the 3 side of the building, Need the Rescue team with ropes."*

Command: *"Copied, Engine 234 officer MAYDAY, has a member who fell thru the first floor into the basement and is trapped on the 3 side of the building, Need the Rescue team with ropes."*

Same situation as previous example with the member calling it:

Firefighter Jones: *"MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY, FF Jones to Command, MAYDAY."*

Command: *"Command to FF Jones, Go ahead with your MAYDAY."*

Firefighter Jones: *"Command, I have fallen through the first floor into the basement on the 3 side of the building and need the Rescue team with ropes."*

Command: *"Command to FF Jones, Copy you are located in the basement on the 3 side and need Rescue team with ropes."*

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### **Examples of a URGENT transmission:**

*Note: Members shall utilize their department guideline/SOP as to their position/assignment/identifier or name when transmitting a URGENT.*

Engine 234 Chauffeur: *“URGENT,URGENT,URGENT, Engine 234 Chauffeur to Command, URGENT.”*

Command: *“Command to Engine 234 Chauffeur, go ahead with your URGENT.”*

Engine 234 Chauffeur: *“Engine 234 Chauffeur URGENT, I have lost my water supply, Hydrant line was run over by a vehicle, need to shut down hydrant and replace broken supply hose.”*

Command: *“Command to Engine 234 Chauffeur, copy that you have a loss of water supply caused by a broken supply hose and you are shutting down hydrant and making replacement.”*

### **MAYDAY Dispatch Procedure**

In the event of a MAYDAY situation, the dispatcher will perform the following:

- Ask for Radio Silence, except for emergency traffic, on the county communications channel to allow for command to make requests for assistance.
- Dispatch shall transmit, on the countywide communications channel, that a MAYDAY situation is in progress and repeat what the MAYDAY situation is.
- At the request of the Incident Commander, activate the departments MAYDAY box or the Orange County MAYDAY Box.

### **Orange County MAYDAY Box**

The Orange County default MAYDAY BOX assignment shall consist of the following

- Dispatch an additional FAST/RIT/Rescue team to the scene.
- Dispatch the next box alarm. If the department doesn't have a pre-planned MAYDAY MAMA's box, dispatch the nearest 2 Engines.
- Dispatch an ALS Ambulance to the scene.
- Put a Helicopter on standby.
- Dispatch an EMS Coordinator and additional Fire Coordinator to the scene.

*Departments are encouraged to create specific Mama's MAYDAY boxes for their individual districts.*

### **Other consideration for Incident Commanders should be given to the following needs:**

- Collapse/Technical Rescue Team
- Additional Alarms
- Additional Equipment (ie: Ladders, Rescues, etc.)
- Specialized Equipment (ie: Backhoes, Loaders, Crane, Tow Truck, Vacuum Truck, Quads/4 wheelers etc.)
- HAZMAT
- Rehab
- Law enforcement or additional EMS

**Remember a MAYDAY isn't always in a structure. It could be a brush fire, wildland search, apparatus accident, overhaul etc.**

### **After conclusion of the MAYDAY**

Make sure the victim(s) that are rescued are identified and **ALL** Rescue personnel are accounted for.

Transmit that MAYDAY has concluded and resume normal operations.