**PIERCE COUNTY**

**TACTICAL OPERATIONS MANUAL**

**OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE**

**MAY-DAY / LOST FIREFIGHTER PROCEDURE**

**Purpose**

This procedure identifies individual, company, command level and dispatch procedures in the event of a May-day or firefighter rescue. The goal of this guideline will focus on responsibilities to initiate, maintain, and control an effective incident scene. When a May-Day occurs on the fire ground it is critical that ALL members assigned or supporting the incident understand their role.

**Lost, Trapped or injured Firefighters “May-Day” Procedure**

The radio message **“May-Day – May-Day – May-Day”** will be used by firefighters to report their status as being lost, trapped, or injured and needing rescue. Any report of a “May-Day” will receive priority radio traffic followed by an Emergency Traffic Tone from the appropriate dispatch center at the request of the IC. The term “May-Day” will be reserved ONLY to report a lost, trapped, or injured firefighter(s). The term “Emergency Traffic” will be used to report all other emergencies.

Any member may use “May-Day” to report a lost firefighter. The term **“May-Day – May-Day – May-Day”** typically will be used in the following situations:

1. By the member who is lost, trapped, or in trouble and is unable to exit the structure
2. By a company officer, division officer, or other member who cannot account for an assigned firefighter operating in the hazard zone. This “May-Day” would generally occur following a PAR report that fails to locate/account for the suspected lost member.
3. By any member that witnesses or has confirmed that a firefighter is lost or in trouble.

ALL NON-EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD BE DISCONTINUED UNTIL THE MAY-DAY IS RESOLVED.

**The May-Day Communications Order Model**

1. A member operating on the fireground transmits a May-Day by stating the words May-Day three times and then identifying their unit, e.g., **May-Day – May-Day – May-Day, E 17.”**
2. Incident Command will transmit the unit ID and ask them to explain the May-Day situation, e.g., E 17 go ahead with your May-Day.
3. The member with the May-Day needs to respond by transmitting their A-S-L-I-P.

800mhz Procedure:

A. Broadcast on operational channel first attempt, if this fails:

B. Activate EMIR (orange) button: automatically switches channel to A16, if this fails:

C. Turn off radio for 30 seconds allowing EMIR to reset, switch to direct air A15 and broadcast

D. **Failure is defined by a lack of acknowledgement or a “bonk” upon broadcasting**

1. Incident Command acknowledges the members May-Day message.
2. Incident Command directs rescue efforts.
3. At the request of the Incident Commander, and when appropriate, the dispatch center will transmit an emergency traffic tone followed by “All units on the fire ground we have a May-Day; all units hold your radio traffic”. The dispatch center will then wait for confirmation of the May-Day by the Incident Commander and upon his/her direction upgrades the incident to the agencies May-Day response package.
4. Once the firefighter has been safely removed from the hazard zone, Command will announce “May-Day Resolved” and request a PAR.

**NOTE: The Incident Commander should always attempt to operate from a mobile radio as opposed to a portable radio. With some allowance for the fast-attacking Incident Commander, using a mobile radio provides the IC with the best ability to send and receive communications.**

**Responsibilities**

The Incident Commander MUST ALWAYS assume that a missing fire fighter is lost or trapped in the building until the fire fighter is accounted for. Rapid, concise, decisions and actions must be taken to increase survivability. The following is a list of actions that should be considered by Command for a reported missing or trapped fire fighter. These are guidelines and do not necessarily need to be accomplished in the order listed. The first five (5) must be accomplished and done so very quickly.

1. EMERGENCY TRAFFIC

Immediately upon a report of a missing or trapped fire fighter and by direction of the IC Emergency Traffic will be sounded to alert all personnel working on the fire ground of the situation. Following the emergency traffic tone, "May Day" will be announced to alert all operating units of a lost or trapped fire fighter (example: "We have a 'May-Day' in Division Alpha.").

1. CHANGE THE PLAN TO A HIGH PRIORITY RESCUE EFFORT

The Incident Commander must restructure the plan to include a high priority fire fighter rescue effort. A rapid, well thought out, rescue plan must be developed and the Command organization expanded. The plan and objectives must be communicated to other Command staff and division officers for implementation.

1. ADDITIONAL ALARMS

A ‘May-Day” alarm package will be dispatched by the dispatch center upon direction from the IC. Additional multiple alarms may be requested based on circumstances and potential. Level two staging should be implemented by the IC. Early consideration should be given to heavy equipment resources and TRT assistance in structural collapses.

1. FIREGROUND ACCOUNTABILITY

A Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) by the IC must be requested from all companies operating on the fire ground as quickly as possible when appropriate to do so. This is especially important in situations of structural collapse. Command cannot develop an effective rescue plan until accurate information is available on the number of missing fire fighters, their identity; their last reported work area, and which companies are affected.

1. COMMIT THE RESCUE TEAM (Stand-by, RIC/RIT and/or other crews in area)

Deploy the Rescue Team to initiate search and rescue efforts (typically the last reported work area). When resources allow, back up the rescue team keeping a tactical reserve for additional problems. Additional available resources in staging or On-deck may also be committed to rescue efforts.

1. WITHDRAWAL OF COMPANIES FROM AFFECTED AREA

In some situations, such as collapse, crewmembers can get separated. The only practical method to obtain an accurate roll call for a PAR may be to withdraw crews to the exterior. Withdrawal is a judgment call based on circumstances at the time, information available, and resources. It may not be practical or possible to do. However, the absolute need for an accurate roll call (PAR) and information on missing fire fighters remains a critical priority.

1. DO NOT ABANDON FIRE FIGHTING POSITIONS, PROVIDE REINFORCEMENT

Abandoning firefighting positions during the rescue effort should be avoided. Command and crews should take aggressive measures to protect trapped or missing fire fighters from the effects of the fire. Efforts should be concentrated on reinforcing existing positions and keeping the fire out of the rescue area and providing appropriate ventilation and lighting. In some situations it may be appropriate to write off some areas of the building in order to relocate companies and crews to better protect the rescue effort.

1. ASSIGN CHIEF OFFICER TO THE RESCUE GROUP SUPERVISOR POSITION

A chief officer should be assigned to direct the rescue group and rescue operations. Depending on the size of the rescue area and the complexity of operations, more than one chief officer may be needed to fill additional support positions. The Rescue Group officer will assign specific areas or grids of the building to each rescue team (company) to conduct searches before entering the building. Search efforts must be closely coordinated between the Rescue Group and Command. Command will continue to run the fire operations.

1. ASSIGN A SAFETY OFFICER TO THE RESCUE EFFORTS

Rescue operations are high risk. The rescue operation may be taking place in post-collapse conditions or a flashover environment. Emotions may be high and fire fighters will tend to want to free-lance and take chances. A Safety Officer must be assigned “Rescue Safety” to the rescue effort to monitor activity and evaluate the safety of the operation. An available chief officer should assume this position as soon as possible. Other incident safety responsibilities should remain with an ISO. These safety officers must work hand in hand to insure that a safe and effective rescue operation is conducted.

1. EXPAND THE COMMAND ORGANIZATION

With additional resources en-route, along with the critical rescue needs, the Command organization must expand ahead of the demand. The incident may eventually escalate to a Group or Branch level operation. The incident Commander must be proactive and aggressive in developing and expanding the Command organization.

1. SPECIAL CALL CHIEF OFFICERS

Additional chief officers will be needed to fill Command team positions and key positions. Command should consider calling for an Overhead Team through dispatch as needed.

1. EARLY ESTABLISHMENT OF A TREATMENT AND TRANSPORTATION GROUP

The Incident Commander must have treatment personnel in a position to immediately treat any rescued fire fighters. A transportation group must also be in place and coordinating activities with the treatment group officer.

1. OPEN / UNLOCK ALL DOORS, IF APPROPRIATE

All doors in the immediate area should be unlocked or forced open, and at least the immediate interior area quickly searched. Where practical, the doors should be left open to provide an emergency escape route, unless doing so will have negative effects on the fire. In all cases, the doors must remain unlocked.

1. VENTILATE, MAINTAIN TENABILITY / LIGHTING

Reducing smoke conditions, through effective ventilation, improves the air quality for any victims, and will enhance search and rescue capabilities through increased visibility of the interior. Ventilation should be aggressively employed. Early lighting of the operation (both interior and exterior) needs to be included.

1. COORDINATE AND CONTROL THE SEARCH EFFORTS

The Incident Commander and Rescue Group officer must insure that a complete, coordinated and controlled search is conducted. Close coordination of all search efforts is a must in order to eliminate duplicate searches that waste time. All areas must be thoroughly searched.

1. RIC/RIT - SCBA RESCUE KIT

Each rescue team should enter the building with at least one RIC/RIT-SCBA Rescue Kit for each reported lost/trapped fire fighter. Missing fire fighters may have exhausted their SCBA air supply or may be trapped and cannot be quickly extricated. In each case the fire fighter must be provided clean air to increase survivability. The kits have a quick refill capability.

1. TECHNICAL RESCUE TEAMS

Technical Rescue Teams (TRT) and other specialized equipment should be requested at all structural collapses that have trapped fire fighters.

1. WATCH FOR STRUCTURAL STABILITY OF THE BUILDING

Command and all personnel must watch the structural stability of the building throughout the rescue effort. Where a structural collapse has occurred, or the fire or other event has compromised the structural integrity of the building, a structural specialist should evaluate the structure. Structural specialist should be requested through DEM Duty Officer. Technical Rescue Teams (TRT) may be called upon to assist with shoring the rescue area, or for the use of other specialized equipment.

1. STRONG SUPERVISION REQUIRED

Strong supervision and control of activities will be required by all officers. Emotions will be very high. Fire fighters in this situation will tend to want to free-lance or take higher risk. Treatment personnel will need to be restricted to only those needed. Crowd control of our own non-essential personnel may be required.

1. MEDIA CONTROL

Command will need to control the media early and throughout the incident. Information on the identities and conditions of lost fire fighters must be restricted until after next of kin are notified. Media film crews should be restricted to areas that are safe and at a distance that will prevent visual/facial identification of any victims. A PIO should be requested early.

**Dispatch & Deployment**

May-Day events are low frequency – high stress events. Dispatch must realize that Command may respond to the May-Day calling for emergency traffic and managing the May-Day before the Dispatch center can react to the May-Day radio message. Dispatch must be flexible and provide Command with the support as requested. In the event of a May-Day, the Dispatch Supervisor shall call all dispatchers to their stations if they are not already there. All non-emergency activities in the alarm room will be suspended and ALL Radio Frequencies will be monitored for any transmissions from the missing, trapped, or injured firefighter(s).

**May-Day is Declared on a Different Tactical Channel**

Anytime a hazard zone has been established, all Dispatchers must be alert to the possibility of a May-Day being transmitted on their channel. The process of locating the individual’s radio in high stress – low visibility situations with bulky gloves could result in the radio channel being switched to a channel other than the tactical channel assigned. The Dispatcher must immediately sound Emergency Traffic, have all units on the channel hold their radio traffic and document the information provided to Command by the May-Day Firefighter. If Command is unable to communicate with the firefighter, the Dispatcher shall be ready to identify the May-Day firefighter, request their location, Conditions, Actions and Needs and then relay that information back to Command. It is essential that once communications have been established they not be lost. May-Day operations should remain on the frequency that the May-Day firefighter is operating on. It may be necessary to move fireground communications to another frequency to avoid unnecessary or overlapping communications.

The Dispatcher will:

1. Contact Command and declare that a May-Day has been transmitted on a different frequency.
2. Advise Command which frequency the May-Day firefighter is on.
3. Provide the firefighter’s Location, Conditions, Actions and Needs if known.

**Portable Radio Emergency Activation**

When activated, the portable radio emergency button transmits an audible signal to all consoles in the dispatch center, along with numerical data identifying who the portable is assigned to.

Should the Alarm Room receive an emergency activation from the portable radio (button), Dispatch will first identify the company which activated the alert. Dispatch will attempt to contact the unit on all radio channels until they have contact with the unit to determine if an emergency exists.

When the activation occurs during an incident where Command has been established, Dispatch will contact Command directly. Command will contact affected companies to determine if an emergency exists.

Once the firefighter has been recovered, or at the conclusion of the incident, all personnel and outside agencies will be notified that the Dispatch Center is back to normal operating conditions.

The safety of everyone on the scene of an emergency incident is the ultimate responsibility of the Incident Commander (IC). All responders have the responsibility to follow their individual fire departments operating instructions. These guidelines are to be used in addition to your individual operating polices and should only be used to enhance operational safety.