

# DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

	<h1>GENERAL ORDER</h1> 300.04	
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**SUBJECT: MAYDAY Situations**  
**APPLICABILITY: All Operational Personnel**

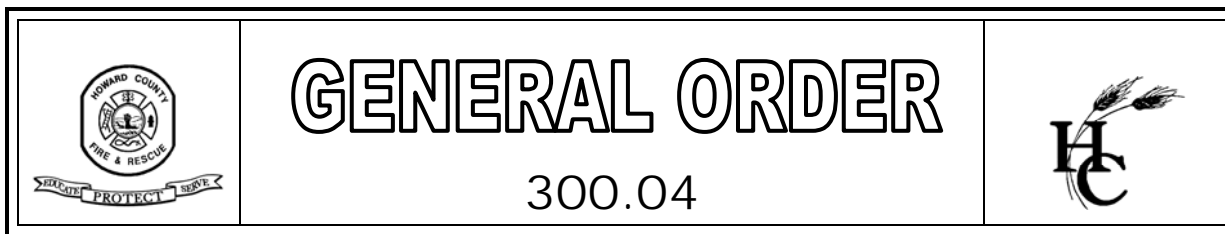
## POLICY

This General Order shall establish procedures to be used when an imminent life-threatening situation exists.

## DEFINITIONS

1. MAYDAY – a term used to alert the Incident Commander (IC) and other individuals that operating personnel are in a life-threatening situation.
2. Emergency Tone – an informational tone broadcast transmitted by emergency dispatchers at Howard County’s Public Safety Answering Point (Howard Communications) for a period of five (5) seconds over all operational radio channels to notify personnel that an emergency has been declared.
3. Channel Marker – A single beep tone that is used once the emergency tone has been activated. This tone will ensure that all personnel utilizing the channel understand that units are operating with an emergency on the fire ground and that transmissions should be limited.
4. Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) – An organized reporting activity designed to provide positive confirmation of the location, assignment, and number of personnel assigned to a division, group, or unit operating within a hazard zone. Being “PAR” signifies that *all personnel assigned to that division, group, or unit operating in the hazard zone have been identified, positively located, and are accounted for*. Example: "Engine 61 to Command, Engine 61 is PAR."
5. Initial Rapid Intervention Crew (IRIC) – a team of at least two (2) qualified personnel who observe the initial entry team entering the IDLH atmosphere and are available, trained and equipped with full protective clothing and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for immediate response to rescue the initial entry team. One (1) of these members must maintain contact with the initial entry team either visually and/or by voice or radio contact. The team can include the IC that is operating in the Tactical Command mode. At least two members of this team must be equipped with a radio, and all members should have a radio if possible.

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6. Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC) – a crew specifically designated by the IC at the scene of an emergency beyond the initial stages, consisting of a minimum of four (4) qualified personnel, one being the RIC Supervisor. The RIC shall be available for the rescue of firefighters should the need arise. Depending on the size and complexity of the incident, the IC may establish one or more RICs. The RIC replaces or enhances the IRIC that is required during the initial phases of the incident. The RIC should be further reinforced with a Special Service company in order to provide the most effective number of personnel and compliment of tools for a potential rescue.

## PROCEDURES

### DECLARING A MAYDAY

7. When personnel operating on the scene of an emergency incident find themselves in a life threatening situation and require immediate assistance, they shall immediately declare a MAYDAY.
8. Declaration of a MAYDAY shall be limited to those situations that demand immediate action by on scene resources to come to the aid of a distressed member.
9. The conditions under which a fire fighter should call for assistance can include (but are not limited to) one in which the fire fighter has done the following:
  - Become tangled, pinned, or struck and cannot extricate self in 60 seconds
  - Falling through a roof or floor
  - Been caught in a “flash over
  - Been in an area with zero visibility, had no contact with a hose or lifeline, and did not know the direction to an exit
  - Had the primary exit blocked by fire or collapse and had not been able to locate a secondary exit within 30 seconds
  - Experienced a low air alarm activation and was not at an exit (door or window) within 30 seconds
  - Experienced a failure of an Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)
  - Been unable to locate an exit (door or window) within 60 seconds
  - Serious medical emergency
10. Personnel equipped with a radio shall declare a MAYDAY by transmitting a verbal message over the fireground channel.
11. Personnel transmitting a MAYDAY shall activate the radio Emergency Identifier button located on top of the portable radio to ensure the MAYDAY is acknowledged.

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- Personnel activating the Emergency Identifier shall provide the verbal LUNAR message listed below and receive acknowledgement from the IC or Howard Communications that your MAYDAY has been received.
12. The message shall begin with “MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY” immediately followed by:
- WHO- is calling the MAYDAY
  - WHAT – is the problem
  - WHERE – is the location of the MAYDAY
13. The acronym LUNAR shall be used to guide personnel in providing important information:
- Location (last known location including floor number, quadrant, etc.)
  - Unit (identification of the crew and their unit assignment)
  - Name (name of the individuals that need rescue or recovery)
  - Assignment/Air (the last known assignment and amount of air left in the cylinder)
  - Resources needed (what equipment is needed to implement the rescue plan)
14. When personnel not equipped with a radio, or with a non-functioning radio, find themselves in a MAYDAY situation they must notify any individual in the vicinity of the situation.
15. The Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) device shall be activated to alert personnel within hearing range that an emergency situation exists.
16. Should a PASS device activation be heard by other operating personnel, the location shall be broadcast and an attempt to establish contact with that individual shall be made, either physically or by radio. If contact is not made, and there is still a PASS activation, a MAYDAY shall be declared and resources will be assigned to locate the activated device.
17. Once a firefighter has declared a MAYDAY, the firefighter shall preface all radio transmissions with “MAYDAY (firefighter name) to Command”. This will ensure all personnel are aware of who is making the transmission.
18. When declaring a MAYDAY for another firefighter, the name of that firefighter shall be used to avoid confusion as to who is in trouble.

## **FIREFIGHTER ACTIONS WHILE WAITING FOR RESCUE**

19. Personnel declaring a MAYDAY shall consider the following:
- Do not remove your facepiece
  - Stay calm to help increase your breathing time
  - Activate your PASS device
  - Do not change radio channels

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- Communicate directly with the RIC once deployed
- Be aware that it may be necessary to “silence” your PASS device while talking on the radio
- Orient yourself to the surroundings
- If trapped or disoriented as a crew, stay together
- **Attempt self extrication, if possible**
- Search for an exit - look for light
- Retreat to an area of safety
- Use your flashlight as a beacon device
- Attempt to make tapping noises using tools or other objects
- Attempt to follow a hose line / life line to safety
- Find your own way out if you are physically able
- Listen for crews and apparatus noise

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS - ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

20. The monitoring of fireground radio channels by the Howard Communications dispatcher is an essential component of firefighter safety. Any time a Howard Communications dispatcher recognizes that an emergency situation exists, they are to immediately notify the IC.
21. At the request of the IC, the Howard Communications dispatcher shall activate the emergency tone on all channels in the zone via the announcement group and notify units on the incident that a “MAYDAY has been transmitted and standby for a message from the IC”.
  - All units operating on the incident shall be notified by Howard Communications to “discontinue any further radio traffic unless an emergency exists”.
22. The channel marker will be activated on the priority channel to ensure all personnel understand an emergency has been declared on the fire ground.
23. In the event that a MAYDAY is transmitted and not acknowledged by the IC, Howard Communications dispatcher shall immediately notify the IC. In the event neither the IC nor Howard Communications acknowledges the MAYDAY, any member may notify the IC/ or Howard Communications of the MAYDAY call.
24. The primary fireground channel shall serve as the “priority” channel for units operating as part of MAYDAY operations. The RIC and IC will remain on the “priority” channel.
25. The Howard Communications shall provide an additional dispatcher for fireground operations and notify the IC when an additional channel is available.

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- The IC will determine if an alternate channel will be utilized and determine which units will remain on the priority channel and those to be assigned to the alternate channel.

26. In the event a radio Emergency Identifier has been activated from the fireground, Howard Communications shall immediately notify the IC and provide any information pertaining to the Emergency Identifier activation.

27. At the conclusion of the MAYDAY event, the IC shall instruct Howard Communications to make an announcement on all radio channels that the MAYDAY has been terminated and fireground operations shall return to the original fireground channel.

## **INCIDENT COMMAND - ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

28. Immediately acknowledge the individual calling upon receipt of a MAYDAY and determine the following information:

- WHO- is calling the MAYDAY
- WHAT – is the problem
- WHERE – is the location

29. Repeat the information back to the individual calling the MAYDAY confirming that the MAYDAY has been received and the accuracy of the information provided.

30. Acknowledge the MAYDAY and request that the Emergency Tone be transmitted by Howard Communications as outlined in section 21. At the conclusion of the emergency tone the IC shall announce that a MAYDAY has been declared:

- WHO- is calling the MAYDAY
- WHAT – is the problem
- WHERE – is the location

31. Deploy the RIC based upon an established action plan (WHO; WHAT; WHERE) and in accordance with General-Order 300.11. Appropriate deployment is generally considered to be to:

- Reported location
- Last known location
- Most hazardous area first

32. Request additional resources as necessary, assuring adequate EMS resources are available for the potential number of victims and sufficient resources for continued suppression efforts.

33. Establish an additional (backup) RIC team.

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34. Maintain and control all fireground communications.

- Non-essential radio traffic is to cease
- Personnel in distress shall not be expected to switch radio channels.
- Assure continuous active monitoring of the radio channel on which the MAYDAY was transmitted. Assign a resource to accomplish this if necessary.
- If the IC determines that MAYDAY communications would be improved, they shall request an additional fireground radio channel for non- MAYDAY operations, from PSCC. The IC must coordinate which units shall remain on the MAYDAY channel, and which units will switch to the added operational channel.
- Face-to-face communications shall be utilized, if possible, within groups and divisions. Group supervisors may relay “important” information if necessary, but radio discipline should be maintained.

35. Expand the Incident Management System as appropriate. The functional management of hazard mitigation operations and MAYDAY operations shall be separated. The IC must quickly:

- Decide if hazard mitigation operations should be moved to a different channel from MAYDAY operations and, if so, initiate the channel move with Howard Communications and incident crews.
- Make clear assignments as to which crews have objectives for which operational area.
- Assure command officers are assigned to manage both operational areas, the original hazard mitigation operations and the MAYDAY operations.
- Assure that both functional areas have a qualified Safety Officer(s) assigned.
- Assure that both functional areas have a RIC team(s) assigned.

36. Additional branches, divisions or groups shall be established as needed based upon the current and anticipated needs of the incident. Consideration may be given to the following:

- EMS
- Staging
- PIO
- CISD
- Family/Survivors Support

37. The IC shall verify accountability for all units operating in the hazard zone as soon as possible. PAR reports should be conducted face-to-face if possible, and in accordance with GO 300.02 Accountability. If an alternate fireground channel has been assigned as a result of the MAYDAY, necessary PAR reports should be performed on that channel and NOT the active MAYDAY channel. Once accomplished, the IC shall transmit that “All units and personnel operating in the hazard zone have been accounted for.”

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38. The IC will conclude MAYDAY operations and return units to normal operations upon confirmation that a MAYDAY operation is completed and after a complete PAR has been conducted.
39. Once the MAYDAY event has been terminated, the IC shall reassesses incident priorities and makes adjustments to the incident action plan, as necessary. Adjustments to the incident action plan and the current operational mode shall be communicated to all branches, divisions, groups, and units.

## **UNIT SUPERVISORS - ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

40. All supervisors operating on the scene of an emergency incident shall ensure that accountability is maintained at all times. Supervisors shall keep the IC aware of their location and any progress being made.
  - Company officers shall indicate that they are PAR when acknowledging radio transmissions from the IC and/or group or division supervisors when they are in direct physical/visual contact with all personnel for which they are responsible.
41. When a MAYDAY has been declared, all supervisors must adhere to operational discipline and keep assigned personnel and units under control. Supervisors must not permit freelancing into the area of the rescue effort.
42. All operating personnel shall listen closely to Howard Communications and be prepared to change to an alternate fireground channel when directed to do so.
  - Supervisors shall ensure that all assigned personnel and units have changed to the alternate fireground channel.
43. All officers operating in the hazard zone shall immediately account for all assigned personnel. This shall be accomplished by face-to-face communications if possible, leaving the alternate radio frequency clear for emergency traffic.
  - If personnel are not accounted for, the IC shall be notified immediately.
  - Confirmation of accountability for assigned personnel shall be provided to the IC when requested.
44. Only crews specifically assigned by the IC or those who are in direct physical contact with the firefighter declaring the MAYDAY may engage in any rescue effort. The IC shall be notified of your location and any resources necessary to assist the RIC.
45. Supervisors shall ensure that all operational assignments continue to be carried out and maintained as directed by the IC.

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46. RIC supervisors shall ensure that any RIC operation authorized and directed by the IC is performed in a coordinated manner.

### **OPERATING PERSONNEL - ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

47. All personnel operating on the scene of an emergency incident shall ensure that accountability is maintained at all times. Personnel shall keep their supervisor aware of their location and any progress being made.

48. When a MAYDAY has been declared each individual shall immediately report to their assigned supervisor for accountability. This shall be accomplished by face-to-face contact when-ever possible, leaving the radio frequency clear for emergency traffic.

49. If an individual's supervisor is unaccounted for, the IC shall be notified immediately.

50. Operating personnel shall listen closely to the IC and Howard Communications and be prepared to change to an alternate fireground channel when directed to do so.

### **REFERENCES**

General Order 300.02 Accountability

General Order 300.07 Incident Command System

General Order 300.11 Rapid Intervention Crew

General Order 310.01 Single Family and Townhouse Structure Fire Operational Guidelines

General Order 410.01 Communications

### **FORMS/ATTACHMENTS**

None

Approved:



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Deputy Fire Chief