



HR/LF

FFCC—Policy/SOG Program

Operations

**Safety—Lost/Trapped Firefighter-
Self-Survival Actions**

Policy # 09-05

Issued: 05/31/09

Subject: Lost/Trapped Firefighter—Self-Survival Actions

Purpose: This policy outlines self-survival procedures for firefighters who are lost or trapped.

Scope: This policy applies to all personnel of the Fire Department.

Policy:

The nature of firefighting places the firefighter at risk of becoming lost or trapped. The toxic environment provides only a narrow window of survivability. Survival depends on a mix of predictable self-survival actions by the lost firefighter and the Incident Commander.

- All crews entering the hazard zone must have a portable radio and personal rescue tools
- Minimum crew size is two and crews must stay intact
- Crews must have an assignment and work under the supervision of a Division/Group Supervisor
- Crews must follow air management guidelines

The following are basic guidelines for firefighters to follow if they become lost or trapped.

Call for help immediately

Firefighters who find themselves lost/trapped must immediately use "MAYDAY" to announce their situation while they continue to attempt to find a way out. Firefighters shall not delay notification of distress. Notifications must occur as soon as the firefighter THINKS he or she is in trouble. The acronym LUNAR is used to provide information that will assist in rescuing the firefighter:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. What is your location? | L |
| 2. What is your unit? | U |
| 3. What is your name? | N |
| 4. What is your air supply? | A |
| 5. What rescue/resources do you need? | R |

Activate portable radio emergency button (if so equipped)

The lost/trapped firefighter must activate the emergency button on the portable radio. This will notify Dispatch that the firefighter is in trouble

Other radio channel

If a lost firefighter cannot contact dispatch, or any other units on the assigned radio channel, the firefighter should go to another channel to attempt contact and declare an emergency. While the primary radio channel (dispatch) is preferred, it's important to find any channel that works.

Activate PASS device

As soon as a firefighter recognizes he/she is lost or trapped, the PASS device must be manually activated to sound the audible tone. The device must remain on until rescued. If the device interferes with the lost firefighter(s) communicating critical radio messages to the Incident Commander or rescuers, the device may be turned off temporarily. Once messages are completed, the device must again be manually activated.

Crew stays together

Members that separate from each other make it difficult for rescuers to find all firefighters. Crews that stay intact enhance the chances for ALL to be rescued and allows for easier, more efficient extrication.

Follow the hoseline or lifeline out

Crewmembers should stay with a hoseline (or lifeline) and follow it out whenever possible. The hoseline should always be treated as a safety line to the outside. Where lifeline ropes are in use, follow the lifeline to the exterior.

Search for an exit

A lost firefighter should always attempt to get out of the building by whatever means possible. Where doors, windows, or other egress is not available, firefighters should next attempt to reach an exterior wall. Once at the wall he/she will be able to search for doorways, windows, and hallways which generally lead to the outside. Rescuers will first search hallways, around walls, and around windows and doors, before sweeping large interior areas. For this reason, firefighters must avoid large open spaces. Getting to one of these areas (exterior wall by windows or doors) increase the chances of being rescued early. These actions also provide predictable activities that will aid rescuers.

Retreat to a safe refuge

Where the firefighter cannot find a way out, but there is a safe refuge (protective room or floor) away from the fire that the firefighter can retreat to, he/she should take advantage of this location. The rescuers should be advised of the location by whatever means possible.

Stay calm and conserve air

A conscious effort must be made by the lost firefighter to control breathing. Unnecessary talking or physical activity must be ceased, unless absolutely needed. Firefighters must control and pace their physical exertion activities in order to extend their SCBA air supply.

Horizontal position

If a firefighter cannot get out, he/she should assume a horizontal position on the floor that maximizes the audible effects of the PASS device. The firefighter should attempt to take this position at an exterior wall, doorway or hallway that maximizes quick discovery by rescue crews.

Flashlights/tapping noise

If assuming a position to await rescuers, the firefighter should attempt to position his/her flashlight toward the ceiling. This will enhance the rescuer's ability to see the light and locate the downed firefighter. If able, the firefighter should attempt tapping noises to assist rescuers in locating him/her (i.e., hitting a tool against a metal roll-up door).

Company or Division/Group Supervisors

Company officers or Division/Group Supervisors who are unable to locate a crew of firefighters assigned to them, shall immediately use “May Day” to notify the Incident Commander and all personnel operating on the fireground. When possible the company officer or Division/Group Supervisor should include who is missing, last known location, and actions being taken. Firefighting positions must not be abandoned during the rescue effort and freelancing must always be controlled by the company officers and Division/Group Supervisors while the Incident Commander initiates a rescue effort.

By the order of: _____
Fire Chief

Date:

References:

- NFPA 1500, *Fire Department Occupational Safety & Health Program*, 2007 edition, section 8.2
- NFPA 1561, *Emergency Services Incident Management System*, 2005, section 6.3
- Phoenix Fire Department—SOP # M.P. 202.03, *Lost/Trapped Firefighter Basic Self-Survival*
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), *Executive Summary of OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard*, 29 CFR 1910.134, August 1999

Resources *(click title to access resource)*:

- [Case Study—“Firefighters Trapped”](#)
- [Firehouse.com – February 2005 WebCast “Firefighter Safety: Calling the MAYDAY” \(also includes articles by Dr. Burton Clark, NFA\)](#)
- National Near Miss Reporting System—Special Report—““Lost or Trapped Firefighters”