Pleasant Valley Fire District
Standard Operating Guidelines

SOG #31 – CALLING A MAYDAY

PURPOSE: This SOG will outline the MAYDAY guideline for when firefighters become trapped, injured, disoriented, or endangered while operating in an atmosphere that is immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH).

Firefighting operations are inherently dangerous and the Pleasant Valley Fire District does its best to ensure that its members only take calculated risks. These work habits ensure that operations are conducted in such a manner that firefighters are afforded the highest level of safety while operating on the fireground. No matter the scale of an incident, or our agency's dedication to safety, the possibility still exists that firefighters can become trapped, injured, disoriented, or endangered during firefighting operations. The following MAYDAY guideline is intended to be used as a guide for our members to know when and how to alert command in the event of an emergency.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS:

Interior operations place the firefighter at the risk of becoming trapped, injured, disoriented, or endangered. Interior operations should only be conducted after a risk/benefit analysis has been conducted by the Incident Commander who believes the risk of firefighter health and safety are warranted in an IDLH atmosphere. The hazardous environment provides only a narrow window of survivability. Survival depends on a mix of predictable **self-survival actions** by the affected firefighter(s), the Company Officer, Incident Commander, and the Firefighter Assist Search Team (FAST Team).

It is the responsibility of all fire department members to operate in the safest manner possible to minimize the need for calling a "MAYDAY".

GUIDELINES:

1. All officers of the Pleasant Valley Fire District are responsible to comply with and ensure that the personnel under their command are adequately trained, fully understand, and comply with this guideline and that appropriate risk/benefit analysis is conducted ***before*** committing personnel to interior operations in an IDLH atmosphere.

2. Basic Self-Survival Responsibilities
   - The number one Self-Survival responsibility is **DON'T GET LOST/TRAPPED OR IN TROUBLE.**
   - Firefighters must wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as per SOG #2.
   - Firefighters must stay together, as a crew, **NO FREELANCING IS PERMITTED.**
   - All firefighting crews must have a portable radio and appropriate tools for their job task.
   - Do not enter an IDLH environment without an appropriate hose line, safety line, or tools.
   - Constantly survey the IDLH environment for changes.
   - Follow all Pleasant Valley Fire District S.O.G.'s regarding firefighting procedures and safety.

REMEMBER - The rescue of trapped, injured, disoriented, or endangered firefighter(s) operating in an IDLH environment is especially time sensitive because we work with a limited supply of air.

- All firefighting crews entering the IDLH environment must have a portable radio and appropriate tools.
- Minimum crew size is **two (2).**
- Crews are to have an assignment and must be working under the supervision of the senior firefighter.
- Crews will follow SCBA guidelines, and all other SOG's regarding fireground operations.

3. Emergency Procedures & Notifications
   When firefighters(s) become trapped, injured, disoriented, or endangered, the following guidelines should be followed:

   - Call for Help ***IMMEDIATELY*** – Communicate on the portable radio – "MAYDAY – MAYDAY – MAYDAY" and stop. Announce your situation without delay! Firefighters should not delay notification of distress. Notification should occur as soon as the firefighter THINKS they are in trouble. The longer you wait to announce that you are in trouble, the more you jeopardize yourself and any firefighters coming to your assistance.
   - The incident commander will immediately ask for all radio traffic to stop. They will then acknowledge the "MAYDAY" and ask for a **LUNAR** report.

- Trapped, injured, disoriented, or endangered firefighters should give command information using the **LUNAR** acronym:

  L = Location (as accurately as possible)
  U = Unit ID (i.e. 56-11 crew)
  N = Name (names in trapped, injured, disoriented, or endangered**)**
  A = Air
  R = Resources you need

- Relay any other information that may be helpful, i.e. (noises) that may direct the FAST Team.
- The term "MAYDAY" will be reserved ONLY to report trapped, injured, disoriented, or endangered firefighters in trouble. If MAYDAY is heard, all other radio traffic should cease on the "MAYDAY" channel, until the MAYDAY operation is complete. Command should request another channel for fireground operations.
- **Activate PASS Device** –Activate the PASS device as soon as you recognize that you are in need of assistance. If the device interferes with subsequent communication of critical radio messages to Command or rescuers, the device may be turned off temporarily. Once messages are completed, the device must again be manually activated.
- **Crews Stay Together** – Members that separate from each other make it difficult for rescuers to find all firefighters. Crew members that stay intact as a crew enhance their chance for ALL being rescued and allow easier, more efficient extrication.
- **Follow the Hose or Lifeline Out** – Crew members should stay with the hose line (or lifeline) and follow it out whenever possible. All firefighters must remember the male couplings point toward the nozzle (fire), the female side of the couplings toward the pump (outside). The hose line should always be treated as a safety line to the outside and the FAST Team may follow the hose line in to locate distressed firefighters. Where lifeline ropes are in use, follow the lifeline to the outside.
- **Searching For an Exit** – A lost firefighter should always attempt to exit 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, they will be able to search for doorways, windows and hallways that generally lead to the outside. Rescuers will first search hallways, around walls and around windows/doors before sweeping large interior areas. For this reason, firefighters must avoid wide-open spaces (wide-open spaces make it difficult for firefighters to know their exact location in a building). Getting to hallways, doors or windows will increase the chances of being rescued early. Breeching walls for escape or fresh air can aid in survivability. These actions will also provide predictable activities that will aid rescuers.
- **Retreat to a Safe Refuge** – Where firefighters cannot find a way out, but there is a safe refuge (protected room or floor) away from the fire that the firefighter can retreat to, they should take advantage of this location. Command and the rescuers should then be advised of the location by whatever means possible.
- **Stay Calm and Conserve Air** – A conscious effort must be made by the trapped, injured, disoriented, or endangered firefighter(s) to **control their** breathing in an effort to conserve air. Unnecessary talking or physical activity must be ceased, unless absolutely necessary. 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, they 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.
- **Rapping Noise** –If able, the firefighter(s) should attempt tapping noises to assist rescuers in locating them (i.e. – hitting a tool against a floor, wall, or metal roll-up door).
- **Company Officers**– who are unable to locate a crew or firefighters assigned to them, must immediately notify Command and use "MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY" to notify all personnel operating on the emergency scene. When possible, the officer should include which members are missing, last known location, and actions being taken. The Incident Commander will activate the FAST TEAM at this time. The IC will provide the FAST Team with all available information to affect a successful rescue. The IC will request an additional FAST Team, as well as ALS ambulances for firefighting personnel. Firefighting positions must not be abandoned during the rescue effort, freelancing must be controlled. Command will initiate a rescue effort. Consideration should be given to an alternative officer taking command of the rescue operations so past roles/responsibilities do not cloud judgment/emotions. The incident commander will consider upgrading to an additional alarm.
- A Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) should occur anytime there is a critical change in an incident (collapse, explosion, following a change from the offensive to defensive operations, following the emergency evacuation tone, etc.). A PAR should occur with the most hazardous areas first, then working outward until all personnel are accounted for. A MAYDAY is to be declared when conducting a PAR and there is no response from a company. All personnel in the immediate vicinity should acknowledge the activation of a PASS device (lasting longer than 5 seconds). This should be done immediately by proceeding to the location of the alarm and confirming the status of the member(s) via radio with the IC.
- DC911 has the capability to send out an emergency traffic tone which should be used in the event of a MAYDAY being called.
- When the missing or injured firefighter(s) have been removed from the Hazard Zone, the Incident Commander should "clear" the MAYDAY, by notifying all fireground personnel and Dutchess County 911 Dispatch. Command will also notify all officers that normal radio traffic and fireground operations can resume.

Note - If an adjacent crew witnesses such a life-threatening event and the victims cannot activate the following procedures, the observing crew should activate the MAYDAY Procedures for the incapacitated crew.

As outlined in the Dutchess County MAYDAY procedure, 911 Dispatch will confirm any MAYDAY notifications with IC, if notifications were made by parties other than the Incident Commander.