

# Yamhill Fire Protection District

District Policies, Procedures, & SOG's

## MISSION

*Yamhill Fire Protection District is dedicated to  
serve and protect our community*

# District Procedure

## OPERATIONS

OPS-FIRE – 604.1

## Fire Ground Communications

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Issued: October 28, 2014

### Purpose:

To ensure standardized procedures and terminology are used when emergency radio communications are required.

### References:

NFPA 1500 8.1.9-8.1.11.1, NFPA 1561 4.3, and Oregon OSHA standards for Firefighters

### DEFINITIONS:

#### Abandon:

The term “abandon” is used to direct personnel or crews operating in a hazard zone to immediately exit via escape routes to a safety zone. Example: At a structure fire, the order to “abandon the building” directs all personnel inside to leave as quickly as possible. Personnel will only take equipment needed for emergency egress, or protection from fire.

#### Emergency Traffic:

The phrase “emergency traffic” is reserved for radio communications of critical or emergent importance. Emergency traffic has priority over all other radio communications, with the exception of a **Mayday** message. Example: “Command to YCOM, emergency traffic. We have a collapse with firefighters trapped”.

#### Evacuate:

The term “evacuate” will be limited to discussions regarding the removal of civilians, or other non-emergency personnel, from an area. Example: “Command to E-42, evacuate the school on the exposure ‘C’ side of the fire”.

#### Mayday:

The term “**mayday**” shall be used to indicate personnel in need of emergency assistance. **Mayday** messages have absolute priority over all other radio communications. Example: “**Mayday, Mayday**, this is Firefighter Smith. I’m lost and low on air.

#### Return to Normal Traffic:

This phrase notifies personnel that they may resume normal radio transmissions.

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### Roll Call:

Used specifically by the Yamhill Fire Protection District to determine the status of all personnel on a scene. See YFPD policy and procedures manual OPS-GEN #401.1 page 9, for detailed information. Other departments in the area may use the term **P.A.R.** (Personnel Accountability Report) for the same procedure.

### Safety Zone:

An area of safe refuge located outside the hazard zone.

### Withdraw:

The term “withdraw” is used to order a controlled tactical movement from current operating locations to a safer position. Example: “Command to all companies, withdraw from the building, we are going to a defensive operation”. Personnel withdrawing from an area will remove all tools, equipment, and hose lines if conditions allow.

### Procedure:

#### GENERAL

It is understood that communications are a critical part of any emergency operation. The Incident Commander (IC) shall monitor the assigned radio channel for any emergency and/or mayday traffic until such time he/she assigns a designee. This designee may include, but is not limited to, a safety officer or designated assistant to the IC. The officer of the RIT team may be assigned this task, but must be immediately replaced if the team is deployed.

The IC should be aware of restrictions that limit the effectiveness of radio communications, such as terrain features or specific types of building construction. Alternate means of communications should be established to overcome these restrictions if possible. Personnel should exercise extreme caution when operating outside of radio contact.

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## EMERGENCY TRAFFIC

The signal phrase “emergency traffic” is used to request priority access for communications critical to life safety. Situations in which emergency traffic communications are indicated include (but are **NOT** limited to):

- Abandoning the hazard zone
- Reporting extreme safety hazards such as imminent collapse
- Changing strategy from offensive to defensive
- Requesting additional resources in a critical situation

Emergency traffic has priority over all other radio communications, with the exception of a **Mayday** message. All other radio traffic must cease and personnel must monitor the emergency traffic message. Emergency traffic communications follow the standard communications model as outlined in the following example.

“Command, Engine 42 with emergency traffic”

“Engine 42, Command; go ahead with your emergency traffic”

“Command, the roof over the C/D corner of the structure is sagging”

“Command copies, the roof over the C/D corner is sagging”

## MAYDAY TRANSMISSIONS

The signal word “**mayday**” is used to clearly communicate that personnel are in distress, and require immediate assistance. **Mayday** transmissions have the highest priority on the incident scene, and all other traffic **must cease** on transmission of a **mayday**.

When transmitting a **mayday** message, personnel should provide as much information as possible. Any additional information will assist command with determining the most appropriate response to the emergency. An example of a **mayday** transmission is as follows:

“**Mayday, Mayday**, Rescue 4 to Command”

“Rescue 4, this is Command, do ahead with your **Mayday**”

“Command, there has been a flashover in the basement, Firefighter Smith is missing, his last known location was the A/B corner”

“Command copies...”

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Upon hearing a **mayday** message, the Rapid Intervention Team (or the Back up Crew), should be prepare to deploy. **Teams should not deploy until ordered by command.**

**NOTE:** *More specific operational information is contained in the Rapid Intervention Team guideline Fire #602.1.*

## ABANDONING THE HAZARD ZONE

Rapidly developing conditions may require Command to order all personnel operating in the hazard zone to abandon that area of operations and immediately exit to a safe area. In a wildland fire or other incident with a variable perimeter, safety zones must be identified by proclamation (i.e. the safety zone is located at...) in structure fires, safety zones are pre-defined as being outside the structure and clear of collapse zones. Any changes to the location or number of safety zones must be relayed to all personnel operating at the incident.

Communicating the order to abandon the hazard zone is accomplished through both emergency traffic radio communication, and an audible signal. An order to abandon the hazard zone deviates from the standard radio communications model as it is broadcast to all companies and crews (rather than specifically directed).

Command should use the following procedure to give an abandon order.

- Broadcast the order using the “Emergency Traffic” phrase.
- Request YCOM transmit a 3-tone beep and repeat the order.
- All apparatus operators should sound their air horns steady for one minute.
- Request a roll call from all companies.

The following is an example of an abandon order:

“All Companies, Command, emergency traffic. Abandon the building, abandon the building.

“YCOM, Command, sound the abandon tones and transmit the abandon order”

Apparatus operators begin sounding their air horns

“All companies, Command, give me a roll call”

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## ROLL CALL

Command should follow the Passport System and Rapid Intervention Team guidelines for determining when to initiate a roll call. In situations involving a sudden change in conditions, or those of a life-threatening nature, the “emergency traffic” phrase should be used.

When a roll call has been requested, supervisors will report one of the following:

Roll Call is complete and the resources present.

“North division to Command, all personnel accounted for.”

Roll call with resources present, those missing, and the missing resources last known location.

“West division to Command, Brush 4 present, Brush 44 missing, last known location was at 20915 NW Adcock road.”

Roll Call not completed, stand-by.

“East division to Command, Roll Call not completed, stand by.”

## WITHDRAW ORDERS

When ordering personnel to withdraw from a hazard area, Command should specify where the units are to report. For example:

“Command to Brush 4, withdraw to the west safety zone, retardant drop approaching”

If conditions are severe enough, command may elect to use the “emergency traffic” phrase when giving a withdraw order.

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## EVACUATE ORDERS

The word “Evacuate” is reserved for situations involving the removal of non-emergency services personnel from a hazard area. Command should specify who is to be evacuated, and where they should be taken. Personnel may also use “evacuate” when giving situation or progress reports. For example:

“Engine 42 to Command, the fire is moving rapidly to the west. I recommend that we evacuate the homes on Bishop-Scott Road”

“Command to Engine 42, copy, evacuate Bishop-Scott Road.”

“Engine 42 copies, we are evacuating Bishop-Scott Road

Note that in the previous example, it is the **civilians** that are being evacuated. The terms “abandon” and “withdraw” are used when referring to emergency personnel. Personnel should become familiar with these terms, as they may be used together. For example:

“Engine 42 to Command, we have finished evacuating Bishop-Scott Road.”

“Command to Engine 42, copy, you have finished evacuating Bishop-Scott Road.”

“Command to Engine 42, emergency traffic, abandon Bishop-Scott Road, you have fire approaching the road behind you.”

“Engine 42 copies, we are abandoning Bishop-Scott Road.”

## RETURN TO NORMAL TRAFFIC

This phrase is used to notify personnel that they may resume normal radio traffic after an emergency. Command should be sure that the emergency has been addressed before releasing the channel back to normal traffic.