ROGUE VALLEY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

Document:	**Emergency Communication**
Section & #:	Model Operational Guidelines #3.04
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Purpose

To establish standard practices for communicating imminent hazards and threats to personnel operating at emergency incidents.

Common Terminology

1. **Abandon**: The term "abandon" is used to direct companies or crews operating in the hazard zone to immediately exit via escape routes to a safe place. Companies or crews abandoning the hazard zone will take only the tools, equipment and hose lines necessary to permit their emergency egress.

2. **Emergency Traffic**: The phrase "emergency traffic" is used in radio communications to indicate a critical, life safety related message. Emergency traffic communications have priority over all other radio communications with the exception of a Mayday message. When a person has declared "Emergency Traffic," that person shall use clear text to identify the type of emergency, change in conditions, or tactical operations. The member who has declared the "emergency traffic" shall conclude the condition by transmitting "all clear, resume radio traffic" to end the emergency situation or to reopen the radio channels for communication after announcing the emergency message.

3. **Evacuate**: The term evacuate will be limited to removal of civilians who are exposed, or potentially exposed, to hazards presented by the incident.

4. **Mayday**: "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday" is the signal phrase used in radio communications to indicate a missing, trapped, or injured firefighter in need of immediate assistance. Mayday messages have absolute priority over all other radio communications.

5. **Safety Zone**: An area of safe refuge located outside the hazard zone.

6. **Withdraw**: The term withdraw is used to order the controlled tactical movement from current operating positions to a safer location. Personnel withdrawing from an operating position will remove tools, equipment and hose lines.

7. **PAR**: A Personnel Accountability Report is a report designed to provide the Incident Commander with information concerning the identity of individual members of a company or team and their assignments and to account for the assignment of companies.

8. **Cease Operations- All Quiet**: This order is given by the incident commander. The order is typically used during search and rescue operations when listening for personal alert safety system devices or while listening equipment is used by technical search and rescue crews. This order may be preceded by emergency traffic.

9. **Code 13**: Code term used when a First Responder's life is in imminent danger from a hostile person (i.e.: taken hostage), when clear text or attempt to abandon the area is not an option. Code 13 is a non-questioned request for immediate response from closest available Law Enforcement unit/agency.

Procedure

A. Any member with an "emergency traffic" or "mayday" message will transmit that message on the Operations channel.

B. If Command receives an "emergency traffic" or "mayday" message via dispatch, he or she must immediately re-transmit the message over the assigned operations channel.

C. A First Responder that transmits a "Code 13" should attempt to provide a relative UCAN report as soon as reasonably possible. Dispatch Centers and respective agency supervisors will treat all Code 13 announcements as a worse-case situation, and facilitate the deployment of appropriate Law Enforcement resources, even if information is limited.

Emergency Traffic

A. 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 structural collapse
- Changing strategy from offensive to defensive
- Requesting additional resources in a critical situation

B. 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.

Abandoning the Hazard Zone

A. Rapidly developing hazardous conditions may require Command to order all companies and crews operating in the hazard zone to abandon that area of operation and immediately exit to a safe area. In a wildland / urban interface incident or other incident with a variable perimeter, safety zones must be defined by proclamation (i.e., the safety zone is located at…). In structure fires, safety zones are pre-defined at the corners of the structure and outside collapse zone (others may be defined by proclamation).

B. 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). The unit requesting all units to abandon the hazard zone will request dispatch to send the abandon tones along with the specific message.

C. Upon receipt of an order to abandon the hazard zone, all apparatus close to the hazard zone will sound their air horn with one long continuous blast lasting for approximately ten (10) seconds. The audible signal provides a backup to radio communications.

D. Following the order to abandon the hazard zone, Command must account for all resources operating at the incident by initiating a personnel accountability report (PAR).

Mayday

A. The signal word "mayday" is used to clearly communicate that a firefighter is missing, trapped, or injured and in need of assistance. This word is used to differentiate this type of emergency from others that may be communicated using the "emergency traffic" signal phrase.

B. Firefighters will transmit a "mayday" three times on the tactical channel. *If unable to contact command on the tactical channel and you are able to scroll your radio to the command frequency (or another monitored frequency), then attempt on this frequency. If unable to manipulate your radio, or if no reply, depress the emergency button on your radio.