



Hey,

Last week we had a old friend visit our region to do training. Don Abbott is a well respected, retired Chief Officer who is truly one of those "just the facts maa'm" people. You may remember his from Abbottville, Command School, FDIC, Firehouse and so many other programs.

Unfortunately I was out of town spending time with Firefighters in New England, but thanks to some friends, including neighboring Chief StevieP, I want to share with readers of The Secret List WHAT Don spoke about. These are just a few highlights of what Don has discovered as FACT related to Firefighter Maydays-in no particular order (Don reviewed this TSL and we are sending it out with his blessings) and I added a few thoughts as well.

If nothing else, this Secret List is a helpful checklist to determine how "ready" your training and response plans are for a first alarm assignment, and in in the event of a MAYDAY.

These statistics are from approximately 1,000 significant Mayday events that have been studied and evaluated in-depth across the United States.

FIREFIGHTER AGES:

-50% of firefighters who are the victim in a Mayday are between 32 - 40 year old, and they had between 6 - 15 years experience: It's not our newest people, and it's not the senior Firefighters who are getting into trouble.

EMOTIONS:

-During a Mayday event, yelling on the radio becomes an epidemic: Once the first person yells everyone seems to feel the need to yell as well, This re-enforces the importance of calm, clear radio messages all the time-and training under as realistic scenarios as possible.

TIME OF DAY:

-Most maydays occur between midnight and 0300 hours, 50% of all maydays occurred between Midnight and 0600 hours

Why? most residential/civilian fatal fire occur at night, firefighters are typically at the end of their shift, they are asleep or tired, may be fatigued etc and all this consciously and subconsciously effects our decision making.

SHIFT?

-73% of Maydays occur during the second half of (24 hour) shift...the second half of the shift is when we are tired, fatigued or asleep ...and when the run comes in it effects our awareness through fatigue.

SIZE-UP & REPORT:

-Size up is key....bad (or no) size up = higher opportunity for a mayday: When no on scene radio size-up was given by the first unit, the incidence of mayday at scenes grew exponentially.

What is your on scene report policy?

What must be transmitted when doing that initial report?

Consider:

-Unit ID

-Structure description/size/stories?

-Whats showing?

-Whats your strategy?

-Wheres the Water?

-Establish Command: Where is command located? -Who has command?

CONDUCT A 360:

-#1 issue is the lack of a 360 view: 50% of mayday events had no 360, another 23% or 73% of all maydays had an

incomplete 360: Completing a 360 and announcing the results of that 360 is a critical foreground factor and should be department policy.

(When a 360 cannot be immediately conducted by the initial arriving officer either due to size or related challenges, determine who will conduct it and how long will that take)

-40% of 360's that were performed confirmed smoke/fire in a **different location** than what was initially presented with on the front of the building. What we see on side alpha is not necessarily what will see on side charlie.

WHERE IS COMMAND?

-67% of maydays occur where command is mobile (walking around, running around) vs in a fixed location: Many maydays are happening early before a formal/fixed ICS / IC is in place so the Captain or Lieutenant of the first truck is command and operational. This has shown to be detrimental because the crew is now operating unsupervised and the incident isn't getting the incident commanders full attention either. This also re-enforces the importance of a fixed command post where someone(s) can watch the incident, track resources and monitor radios in a controlled environment.

COMPANY OFFICER IN COMMAND?

-71% of maydays, the company officer had stayed outside to be IC: This highlights the importance of having supervision for the crews and the fire ASAP. Fire department command level response should be designed to address this and provide an IC early in the incident so company officers can be company officers. Departments should consider multi-chiefs on the first alarm of a reported fire, and consider auto-aid command officers as well.

FIRST DUE

-54% of maydays occur to a member of the crew from the first arriving unit: First due crews get in trouble the most, then 2nd due, then 3rd etc: This happens because conditions are normally worse (and/or least known) for the first due company than the 3rd or 4th arriving, later arriving companies, who typically arrive to a different fire ground-with hopes that ventilation has started, water may be on the fire etc. The first due company doesn't have all these advantages and therefore needs to conduct a good size up...and determine a clear understanding of what they have and what they are doing.

-78% are the first two companies: So again first due company is 54% and the second due adds another 24% of ALL maydays recorded.

OVERTIME SHIFT?

-A Firefighter is 62% more likely to have a mayday on an OT shift: A lot of factors play into this, the firefighter may be working with an unfamiliar crew, unfamiliar company, unfamiliar area, in a job or position they don't usually work i.e. they ride the medic normally but today they are on the ladder, and finally: fatigue, lack of sleep , etc.

FALL THRU THE FLOOR

-61% of falls into basements were in finished basements with multiple rooms:

-67% of all maydays are some kind of "fall" event: This includes stair collapses, slips, trips, through the floor, through the roof, off the roof , etc.

-Only 11% sounded the floor or roof before walking on it: Before you take a step know what you are stepping onto...make sure you have a light, tools, TIC etc as all are required in 2016.

-Types of Maydays:

#1 lost,

#2 fall from roof,

#3 fall into basement:

A lot of documentation proves that crews get into trouble when they leave the hose line and become lost, trip, slip or simply walk off a roof, floor collapse, usually on the first floor where a firefighter falls into the floor below.

ROADWAYS

-80% roadway incidents victims were not wearing a reflective vests.

MANAGING YOUR AIR/SCBA

-Air Management Emergencies-firefighters took too long to exit and waited until their bell was going off ..or even longer. Crews who ran out of air didn't retreat or exit when their low air alarm was going off and as result got in trouble. "Gimme just another minute, Chief"
When the bell is sounding-it may be too late.
Manage your air and exit **before** the alarm sounds
If the alarm sounds-notify command-urgent traffic.

THE ROOF.

-78% of roof maydays are peaked roofs, 61% the victim used or was using a ground ladder.

THE FIRE IS OUT, BUT....

-40% of MAYDAYS occur during salvage and overhaul. This is where we typically let our guard downthe time when the fire is out but the best chances of collapses and other events occurring because of the weakened structure and **weakened fireground discipline.**

PROTECTION OF A HOSE LINE

-48% of lost firefighters are with crews operating without protection of a hose line (truck or rescue company searching ahead of engine company/fire attack).

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

-Poor or no communication,

40% were on the wrong channel:

In Maydays where there was no communication from the victim themselves, 40% of them were found to have been on the wrong radio channel.

-Emergency buttons are for when you can't talk...however, when you CAN talk, talk!...don't press the button if you can talk. Depending upon how your radio and system is programmed, pushing the button may cause the mike to be keyed (among other features) essentially shutting down the channel. Research, evaluation and aggressive training/drilling helps determine what is best-and not-when your FD (and your mutual aid partners) experience a mayday.

-60% had difficulty transmitting on the radio because of radio traffic: **Stay off the radio** during a Mayday unless your radio traffic is extremely critical. The study recommends switching the crews who are continuing to fight the fire and not involved in rescue to switch to a second channel. NEVER try to move the mayday firefighters to a different channel.

Generally speaking, our boss has been pushing us hard to minimize radio traffic in all cases. One thought is "no good news" - in other words, think before transmitting "good news" so the radio is clear for a potential emergency situation. Remember DIM-WIT:

Does It Matter What I'm Transmitting? If not, stay off the air.

THE FISCAL COST OF A MAYDAY

-20% of mayday events resulted in permanent disability or death. Most are spinal cord or head injuries. Cost of these permanent disabilities (182 maydays in 2015) cost the communities 614 billion dollars. 614 Billion.

WHO CAN WE BLAME?

-Of 182 maydays with permanent disability, 97 have pending lawsuits against the Fire Department, naming Officers, IC etc.

It's 2016: when things go bad, people get sued.

WHO RESCUED THE MAYDAY FIREFIGHTER?

-Who rescued them?

22% self rescue by the Firefighter them self.

25% same crew that was with the Firefighter.

30% adjacent interior crew (another company inside),

10% RIT, RAT/ FAST TEAM

The preconceived notion in the fire service is that the RIT team rescues firefighters has proven to be untrue. 90% are rescued by someone(s) already operating inside the structure. This fact highlights and re-enforces the importance in every firefighter being trained and drilled in "saving their own" procedures.

WHERE DID THE MAYDAY OCCUR?

-38% maydays occur in vacant/abandon structures.

Know what structures are abandoned and pre-plan or mark them. In several mayday events the firefighters had to force entry and then fell directly into the basement as they made entry because the floors had been removed by scrappers.

-Bigger structure = more maydays:

More square footage creates more challenges, distance to reach the fire, more rooms to search, more twist and turns, etc.

-Majority of maydays occurred in single story residential structures with basement:

WHAT TIME DID THE MAYDAY OCCUR?

-Most maydays occur between 15 - 17 minutes into incident, or 7 - 9 minutes after arrival of first company: Most maydays occur during initial firefighting operations, this matches a nearby study that the Cincinnati FD did after implementing their RAT (Rapid Assistance Team)...most maydays occurred before the team was on scene.

-Do firefighter mayday training at night, since most maydays occur at night: FD's typically train during the day, but most maydays occur at night when its dark, darkness effects our ability to see and work. Do training at night/in the dark.

WHEN DID IT OCCUR?

-36% maydays occurred when RIT was on scene and established: Again supports the data above that many maydays occur before RIT is even established or on the scene, therefore the initial crews have to be trained for and able to conduct the rescue.

-30% *thought about* calling the mayday long before they actually did: This part of the study gets into the social and psychological part of the mayday, many firefighters knew they were in trouble long before they called the mayday for fear of being "that person" needing help, being embarrassed, etc. If you are thinking MAYDAY, transmit the MAYDAY-*it's a pleasure* to CANCEL MAYDAYS.

TOOLS

-49% of MAYDAY firefighters were not carrying a tool: Everyone should have a tool whether that is the nozzle, TIC, bar, hook etc and a flashlight. About flashlights-don't be cheap-buy your own so you ALWAYS have a flashlight. Seriously.

MAYDAY TRAINING

-Don't make every mayday drill a rescue event, have a body recovery, pull everyone out, do a par, regroup etc: Some Mayday's are tragically, recoveries, so if all our training results in a successful rescue you will never be trained or prepared for the transition from rescue to recovery efforts. This is by far one of the hardest decisions incident commanders have had to make at incidents.

SLEEP AND REST ISSUES

-Restful sleep vs stressful sleep.

Most firefighters get stressful sleep at firehouse, even if uninterrupted by a run, we are sleeping with one eye open. There is a lot of concern about sleep and rested firefighters, how that effects a lot of things including Mayday events. Firefighters who are in the second half of their shift or working over-time or working more than their normal shift have an increased risk of being a mayday victim.

-Energy drinks should never be taken in stressful situations, caffeine has a significant factor on how the brain works during stress: Many energy drinks actually say on the label do not take if you are in a stressful environment.

WHO IS YOUR RIT TEAM?

-Did you have confidence in your RIT team? Almost 70% said no: Who is coming to rescue you? Have you drilled with them? Are you confident today in their abilities?

...most said no. This is an opportunity for training and mutual aid training as well when RIT is mutual aid.

COMMAND OFFICERS AND TRAINING FOR THE MAYDAY

-Only 23% of Incident Commanders who ran a mayday event had previously participated in mayday drills with their crews.

You can't run a drill without all the resources and that includes the incident commanders.

If you didn't train on it - how are you going to react? Chiefs are quick to remind the troops to train-but chiefs and command officers must also participate by doing "their role" during training-as well as separate regular training for command officers in command training centers,

-RIT and accountability was established less than 35% of the time before the incident commander arrived: Again, more supporting data above showing us that Maydays happen early and often before RIT is in place.

-34% of company officers said they knew that the firefighter who had the mayday had a training/experience deficiencies prior to the fire. It was predictable: This is a bit scary and highlights the need to TRAIN MORE, especially if you have that firefighter. Don't allow that lack of training to be a "problem laying in wait"...a problem you know exists, but fail to deal with it.

COMMAND TOOL

-41% of Incident Commander's were using a tactical worksheet or board: Experienced IC's swear by the use of a command worksheet to help track and manage an incident. When a Mayday occurs, it's too late to start writing things down.

AUXILIARY APPLIANCES

-Was the FDC pumped when available? 32% yes: Why are we not pumping the FDC when we have a fire in a sprinklered building? There have been several maydays, some that resulted in firefighter fatalities in big box/sprinklered buildings.

COMMAND OBSERVATIONS:

-Assign someone else to run the firefighter rescue ASAP: The same person should not run the fire and run the mayday...command needs to be split. Keep in mind that when there is a Mayday event, someone still needs to take care of the original emergency or things will get worse.

-Expect emotional mutiny, react quickly and control freelancing: When something bad happens on the fireground, we all run to help, it's our natural instinct. Company officers and command officers need to control freelancing and monitor and track crews at all times so when the MAYDAY happens, it may be more manageable.

RIT STAFFING AND OPERATIONS:

-60% of RIT teams had 3 or less firefighters assigned to the RIT: Other studies have shown that it can take up to 12 firefighters to rescue one firefighter. Is a three person RIT effective, a joke or are we simply checking the box so we can say we had one?

-Average RIT removal takes 19 minutes: Crews are going to be out of air, crews are going to be tired, crews will need to be replaced. What is your MAYDAY policy? Who does what? What does your fire dispatch center do and send? Is it automatic?

...so gang, that's just a brief summary of what Don presented-some eye opening stuff.

If you would like to contact Don about the entire MAYDAY presentation, he can be reached

here: donaldeabbott@yahoo.com

Here is also an article about the MAYDAY study:

<http://www.firehouse.com/article/12156553/the-mayday-project>