



New Jersey Deputy Fire Chiefs Association

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Via Fax and Regular Mail

July 2, 2007

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RE: Proposed New Rules: N.J.A.C. 5:75-2.5 - 2.10

Good Morning, Mr. Ticktin:

The New Jersey Deputy Fire Chiefs Association (NJDFCA), at its statewide meeting on Monday, June 4, 2007 voted unanimously to oppose, the proposed new rules, specifically N.J.A.C. 5:75-2.6 "Emergency Radio Traffic" as put forth by the Division of Fire Safety.

The New Jersey Deputy Fire Chiefs Association, a professional organization of career Battalion and Deputy Fire Chiefs throughout the State of New Jersey, strongly requests that the term "MAYDAY" be retained as the word that indicates a firefighter in trouble or difficulty.

The term "MAYDAY" is a unique, plain-language term that tells everybody that you are in trouble, and they clear the air to listen for more information.

We also wish to bring to your attention that the State of New Jersey has spent tens of thousands of dollars to develop a "NEW JERSEY EDITION OF A FIREFIGHTERS HANDBOOK TO TRAIN FIREFIGHTER ONE'S STATEWIDE". In the New Jersey Edition Handbook, on pages 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 to mention a few, they indicate that a firefighter should use "MAYDAY" because it is a universal call for help. The handbook further points out, when a firefighter is lost, they should immediately call "MAYDAY" as one of the many actions they should take.

An Association of Battalion & Deputy Chief Officers

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We, the NJDFCA, strongly disagree with the National Fire Protection Association, Standard NFPA 1500, 2007 Edition, (Annex) A.8.2.3, "The term *mayday* should not be used for fireground communications in that it could cause confusion with the term used for aeronautical and nautical emergencies."

The New Jersey fishing boat captains that we spoke to along with some private pilots all agree, that "MAYDAY" is a unique, plain-language term that tells everybody you are in trouble, NO MATTER WHAT OCCUPATION YOU ARE IN.

I have included an article from Dr. Burton Clark of the National Fire Academy that was reproduced on Firehouse.com, for your information.

Respectfully yours,

Charles Aughenbaugh, Jr.
Deputy Fire Chief (Ret.)
President
New Jersey Deputy Fire Chiefs Association

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CAJ:cda

Enclosure

Firehouse.com - Printable Article

The Web's Source for Fire, Rescue & EMS

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We Have Permission To Use The Word Mayday **OPY**

Dr. Burton A. Clark
MembersZone Contributor
Firehouse.Com Contributor

I can hear some readers now: "What do you mean we have permission to use the word Mayday- we have been using it all along! What's the big deal?" It is not a "big deal" but it is an important "little deal". Having a common understanding and use of words is a significant foundation of professionalism. In addition, words can have a powerful influence on our cognitive and affective responses to the verbal cues. Think of what happens to you when you hear the phrase "Working Fire" over the radio as you are responding. Is the term Mayday a word to be used by the fire service?

A colleague and friend Howard Cross, who studied French for six years, explained the origin of the word Mayday to me. Mayday comes from the French "m'aide" (literally; help me), the root verb being aider (to help). Knowing the source and meaning of a word is important to our comprehension.

As you know, our Firefighter I and II Standards do not use the word Mayday. When I was writing about the concept of Mayday Decision Parameters for firefighters, I was advised that the word Mayday had not been accepted as the standard firefighter distress call. Since I was studying our Mayday Doctrine, someone sent me a copy of the 2002 NFPA 1500 standard. In the Appendix A.8.1.11 in bold print, it states: "The term mayday should not be used for fireground communications in that it could cause confusion with the term used for aeronautical and nautical emergencies." My first reaction was confusion; our radios have a difficult time talking to each other across the street. How could they interfere with a plane or ship in distress?

I became curious. Who is the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) over the word Mayday? The AHJ over the word Mayday is the National Search and Rescue Committee (NSRC) in Washington, DC. The Committee is composed of the Departments of Defense, Interior, Commerce, and Transportation, in addition to the Federal Communication Commission and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The Chairman is Rear Admiral Ken Venuto of the US Coast Guard.

I wrote to the Admiral at the NSRC: "Many fire departments nation wide use the term "Mayday-Mayday-Mayday" over fire ground radios as part of their emergency procedures when a firefighter's life is in danger. ...(I enclose a copy of the NFPA 1500 standard A.8.1.11) My questions are: Will a firefighter calling Mayday, on the fire ground over a fire department radio, cause confusion in the aeronautical and or nautical emergency communications system? If not, does the National Search & Rescue Committee see any reason the fire service should not use Mayday-Mayday-Mayday as the distress call for firefighters?"

Caption Steve Sawyer US Coast Guard, Alternate Chairman, NSRC wrote me back, hear are some excerpts: "Use of MAYDAY under such circumstances is permissible under U.S. law and regulations [the ones sighted were International Radio Regulations (2001), Paragraph 4-9 and

FCC rule (Part 80.311)]. The radio frequencies concerned are different from the aeronautical and maritime frequencies, so use of the term should not cause confusion. Further, any effective means of calling for help is authorized under other national and international radio regulation for true distress situations. ... The U.S. has taken no action to preclude use of the word Mayday by endangered firefighters. ...

Mayday is recognized nationally and internationally as a signal meaning life is in danger and immediate assistance is required, although federal regulations only mention its use for ship and aircraft.

The above guidance is based on review of the regulations and consultation with experts of the Coast Guard, FCC, International Civil Aviation Organization and others.

We trust that this explanation will help not only for your local training and operations; you may also find it useful seeking to update relevant guidance in NFPA or other standards, as appropriate."

I have forwarded this information to the NFPA 1001 and 1500 committees. Thanks to our consensus standards making process, the fire service has increased its common understanding and use of words. Fire Service Doctrine comprehension helps us in our continuing quest to become a true profession. We have permission from the NSRC to use the word Mayday. Our next step is to decide if we choose to use it. Mayday the word is just a "little deal" - unless you have to call it. I pray someone hears you when you call out "help me" in any language.

Dr. Burton A. Clark, EFO is the Management Science Program Chair for the National Fire Academy and Director of an Emergency Support at the Federal Emergency Management Agency. . Burt writes and lectures nationally on fire service research and professional development. If you would like to contact Burton, he can be reached at burton@firehousezone.com

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