

ALLIGATOR POINT / SAINT TERESA
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES
(SOG's)



Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) are detailed instructions or best practices that guide the daily operations of a fire department. Unlike policies, which are more defined rules and regulations, SOGs are specific, actionable steps for performing particular tasks. These guidelines help ensure consistency, safety, and effectiveness in the actions of firefighters and support staff. The following Standard Operating Guidelines are in effect as of the date listed below and shall be adhered to by all members of the APSTVFD.

Effective Date: 05/01/2025

Fire Chief

Signature: 

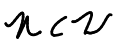
Date: 04/22/2025

Deputy Chief

Signature: 

Date: 

Safety Officer

Signature: 
Randy Taylor (Apr 22, 2025 16:15 EDT)

Date: 22/04/25

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Mayday and Abort Procedures

1. Purpose

To establish clear procedures for the declaration, communication, and management of MAYDAY and ABORT events to ensure the safety and survivability of all personnel operating at fire scenes or other hazardous incidents.

2. Scope

This guideline applies to all APSTVFD members operating at the scene of a fire or any emergency incident where structural integrity, fire conditions, or other hazards threaten firefighter safety.

3. Definitions

- **Mayday:** A distress signal used when a firefighter is lost, trapped, injured, disoriented, or experiencing a life-threatening situation.
- **Abort:** A signal to all crews to immediately withdraw from an unsafe operation due to sudden or anticipated structural collapse, flashover, or worsening conditions.

4. MAYDAY Procedure

4.1 When to Declare a Mayday

A firefighter shall declare a MAYDAY if any of the following occur:

- Lost or disoriented
- Trapped or entangled
- Seriously injured and unable to self-extricate
- Running out of air or low air warning activates with no exit path
- Witnessing another firefighter in distress

4.2 How to Declare a Mayday

- Use radio to announce: **“MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY”**
- Provide the following using the **LUNAR** acronym:
 - **L:** Location (last known or current)
 - **U:** Unit (assigned company or team)
 - **N:** Name (your name or affected firefighter)
 - **A:** Assignment (what you were doing)

- **R:** Resources needed (air, extrication, etc.)

4.3 Radio Procedures

- The Incident Commander (IC) will immediately:
 - Acknowledge the Mayday
 - Request radio silence except for emergency traffic
 - Initiate Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) deployment
 - Assign a rescue group supervisor
 - Maintain communications with the downed firefighter if possible

5. ABORT Procedure

5.1 When to Abort

The IC, Safety Officer, or any officer may call for an **ABORT** when:

- There is imminent danger of collapse
- Conditions rapidly deteriorate (e.g., flashover or backdraft signs)
- A structural integrity report or visual cues indicate withdrawal is necessary

5.2 How to Issue an Abort Command

- Transmit over radio: **“ABORT, ABORT, ABORT — Evacuate Immediately”**
- Activate the designated **emergency evacuation signal** (e.g., air horn blasts: three long blasts, pause, repeated for 30 seconds)

5.3 Response to Abort

- All personnel shall:
 - Immediately stop current tasks
 - Exit the structure or hazardous zone quickly and safely
 - Report to the designated accountability location
- Company Officers shall conduct a **PAR (Personnel Accountability Report)** and report status to IC

6. Post-Mayday/Abort Actions

- The IC shall:
 - Conduct a **full PAR** of all crews

- Transition operations to rescue mode if necessary
 - Consider request for additional resources
 - Log time of Mayday/Abort in incident documentation
- All personnel involved shall:
 - Participate in a **post-incident debrief**
 - Complete any incident reports as required

7. Training

- All members must receive annual training on MAYDAY and ABORT procedures
- Practical drills will be conducted at least semi-annually
- New members will be trained during their onboarding period

Firefighter Rehabilitation (Rehab)

1. Purpose

To establish procedures for firefighter rehabilitation (rehab) during emergency incidents and training exercises. This ensures the health and safety of all personnel through proper rest, hydration, medical monitoring, and re-entry evaluation.

2. Scope

This guideline applies to all APSTVFD personnel operating at incidents or training that pose physical stressors, such as heat, exertion, and dehydration, particularly in fireground operations, extended scenes, and high-heat conditions.

3. Objectives

- Prevent injuries and illnesses caused by heat stress, fatigue, dehydration, and overexertion
- Provide a systematic process for medical evaluation, rest, and rehydration
- Ensure that firefighters are physically and mentally fit to return to active duty after rehab

4. When Rehab is Required

Rehab operations should be established when:

- Firefighting or rescue activities exceed **30 minutes** of heavy work without breaks
- Weather conditions are extreme (heat index above 90°F or wind chill below 32°F)
- Personnel have used **2 full SCBA cylinders**, or **45 minutes of intense work**
- IC, Safety Officer, or Officer in Charge determines rehab is necessary based on scene conditions
- Any personnel exhibits signs of distress, heat illness, injury, or abnormal behavior

5. Rehab Location and Setup

- The Incident Commander will designate a **Rehab Group** in a safe, shaded, or climate-controlled area away from the hazard zone
- Preferably near EMS or medical units for rapid support
- Provide:
 - Seating/rest area

- Hydration (water and electrolyte drinks)
- Towels, misting fans, or cooling stations (if available)
- Blankets in cold weather
- Basic medical equipment for vitals monitoring

6. Rehab Process

6.1 Check-In

- Firefighters report to rehab after completing the assigned work/rest cycle or when directed by command
- Accountability will track personnel entering/exiting rehab

6.2 Medical Monitoring

- Vital signs assessed by EMS personnel or a qualified responder:
 - **Pulse**
 - **Blood pressure**
 - **Respiratory rate**
 - **Temperature (if heat-related illness suspected)**
- Any abnormal readings may result in mandatory rest, treatment, or transport to hospital
- Personnel showing **signs of heat exhaustion, dehydration, chest pain, confusion, nausea, or vomiting** will receive immediate medical care

6.3 Rest and Rehydration

- Rest period: **minimum of 10–20 minutes** or longer depending on conditions
- Hydration: at least **16 oz (half a liter)** of water or electrolyte solution
- Light snacks may be offered on extended incidents

6.4 Return to Duty

- Personnel must be cleared by rehab staff before returning to operations
- If not cleared within a reasonable timeframe, they will be removed from duty and evaluated by EMS

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Incident Commander

- Ensures rehab is established
- Assigns Rehab Officer or Group Supervisor
- Monitors personnel rotation and scene safety

Rehab Officer

- Manages rehab site setup and operation
- Coordinates with EMS
- Tracks entry/exit of personnel
- Ensures proper documentation

Company Officers

- Monitor their crews for signs of fatigue or distress
- Ensure their crew reports to rehab as required
- Communicate any medical concerns to Rehab or Command

Firefighters

- Self-monitor for signs of heat stress or fatigue
- Follow directions to enter rehab when told
- Hydrate and rest appropriately
- Report any symptoms immediately

8. Documentation

- Basic rehab records should be maintained including:
 - Personnel entering rehab
 - Vitals (if taken)
 - Time in/out
 - Any medical concerns or EMS transports

9. Training

- All APSTVFD members shall receive annual training on the importance and procedures of firefighter rehab
- Rehab procedures will be reviewed during drills and incorporated into major incident simulations

Landing Zone (LZ) Operations

1. Purpose

To establish procedures for the safe selection, preparation, operation, and securing of helicopter landing zones (LZs) during emergency incidents such as trauma calls, medevac transports, or search and rescue operations.

2. Scope

This guideline applies to all APSTVFD personnel involved in requesting, establishing, or managing helicopter landing zones within the department's response area.

3. General Safety Rules

- Only trained personnel shall approach or operate in/around the LZ
- No personnel shall approach the aircraft unless directed by the flight crew
- All members shall remain aware of rotor wash, noise, and visibility issues caused by the helicopter
- Protect eyes and secure gear — all helmets must be secured; no loose items near the LZ
- Accountability must be maintained at all times

4. Requesting a Helicopter

- Request for air medical transport is typically initiated by:
 - EMS crew on scene
 - Incident Commander (IC)
 - Medical control via dispatch
- Provide the following information:
 - Location (physical address or GPS)
 - Nature of the emergency (e.g., trauma, cardiac)
 - Number and condition of patients
 - Estimated time of arrival of ground crew to LZ
 - Special hazards in the area (power lines, weather, etc.)

5. LZ Selection Criteria

LZ must be:

- **Flat, firm, and free of debris**
- Minimum size: **100' x 100'** (night ops may require 120' x 120')
- Clear of **obstructions**: trees, wires, poles, signs, fences
- Surface: avoid sandy or loose gravel areas (rotor wash hazard)
- Preferably **upwind** of the incident scene for safety
- At least **150 feet** from patient care or command post areas

6. LZ Setup Procedure

- Assign an **LZ Officer** (can be the first arriving fire officer or designee)
- Secure the perimeter — restrict access to **emergency personnel only**
- Mark the corners of the LZ with:
 - **Traffic cones** (day), or **strobe lights/flashlights** (night)
 - Do **not** point lights directly at the aircraft
- Ensure **radio contact** is available with the aircraft (via Fire/EMS or mutual aid frequency)
- Communicate wind direction, obstacles, and LZ surface condition with the pilot
- Once the aircraft is 1–2 minutes out, clear the LZ of all personnel

7. Approach and Departure

- Never approach the aircraft unless escorted or directed by the flight crew
- Always approach from the **front or downhill side**, in view of the pilot
- Stay clear of:
 - **Tail rotor** at all times
 - **Main rotor** when spinning
- Crouch while walking under rotor arc
- Do not carry long objects vertically (e.g., IV poles, antennas)

8. Night Operations

- Use **vehicle headlights or scene lighting** to backlight the LZ
- Avoid pointing lights upward or at the helicopter
- Ensure adequate visibility of LZ perimeter using strobes or flashlights
- Be cautious of night vision goggle (NVG) interference — only use white light if directed

9. Communication

- Use the designated mutual aid or EMS LZ frequency
- Maintain contact with:
 - Dispatch
 - Aircraft (if equipped and trained)
 - Ground EMS and Incident Command
- Provide:
 - Winds (direction and speed if known)
 - Obstacles within 500' radius
 - Hazards (wires, towers, nearby fire or smoke)

10. Securing the LZ Post-Landing

- Maintain security until aircraft departs
- Clear the area of all personnel and equipment before takeoff
- Confirm rotors have fully stopped before any approach or unloading (unless directed by crew)
- Report any incidents or safety concerns to command immediately

11. Training

- All members shall complete **annual training** in LZ operations, including:
 - LZ setup
 - Safety zones
 - Aircraft approach/departure protocols
- Practical LZ drills should be conducted at least once a year in cooperation with air medical providers

Handling Emotionally Difficult Calls & Peer Support Practices

1. Purpose

To provide a supportive and structured approach for firefighters coping with emotionally challenging calls. This guideline outlines how the department will recognize, address, and respond to the mental and emotional needs of its members, while promoting peer support, resilience, and healthy recovery.

2. Scope

This guideline applies to all APSTVFD personnel exposed to emotionally impactful incidents, including but not limited to:

- Pediatric fatalities
- Suicide or self-harm scenes
- Mass casualty events
- Fatal fires or vehicle accidents
- Incidents involving known community members
- Any call a member finds personally traumatic

3. Department Commitment

APSTVFD is committed to:

- Recognizing the psychological stress of emergency service work
- Supporting members after difficult calls
- Reducing the stigma around emotional support and mental health care
- Promoting mental resilience and well-being among members

4. Immediate On-Scene Support

- Company Officers or Incident Commanders will monitor personnel for signs of emotional distress
- If a member appears overwhelmed, fatigued, or emotionally affected, they may be reassigned, removed from active duty, or encouraged to step back temporarily
- No member shall be criticized or penalized for needing a break due to emotional stress

5. Post-Incident Support Actions

After any call deemed emotionally difficult:

- A defusing may be offered within 1–4 hours post-incident. This is a brief, informal conversation allowing personnel to decompress and share initial reactions. Participation is encouraged, not mandatory.
- A Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) or peer support meeting may be arranged within 24–72 hours when appropriate. These will be coordinated with trained personnel or mutual aid partners with peer support teams.

6. Peer Support System

- The department will maintain a list of trained Peer Support Team members available for confidential one-on-one conversation
- Peer Support is not counseling, but a confidential resource for talking through emotional responses with someone who understands the job
- Members are encouraged to check in on each other after hard calls, even informally
- Signs that someone may need peer support:
 - Withdrawal or isolation
 - Irritability or uncharacteristic behavior
 - Sleep disturbances or fatigue
 - Reluctance to return to duty
 - Excessive focus or detachment from the incident

7. Requesting Outside Help

- APSTVFD encourages use of professional mental health resources
- Any member may confidentially request help from:
 - The Fire Chief
 - Peer Support Team
 - Franklin County mental health resources or crisis services
- Information on available mental health hotlines and counseling services will be posted in the station and distributed annually

8. Confidentiality

- All conversations with peer supporters or officers regarding emotional wellness are strictly confidential, except when there is a concern for immediate harm to self or others
- No documentation will be placed in personnel files regarding participation in CISD, peer support, or wellness-related conversations

9. Ongoing Mental Wellness

- The department encourages participation in:
 - Stress management training
 - Annual wellness workshops or check-ins
 - Physical fitness programs
 - Community-building activities and team bonding to foster trust and communication
- Officers will lead by example in creating a culture that values emotional resilience and open dialogue

10. Training

- All personnel will receive annual awareness training on:
 - The impact of cumulative stress and trauma
 - How to recognize signs of distress in themselves and others
 - The process of activating peer support or requesting debriefings
- Peer Support Team members will receive additional outside training as available

11. Accountability and Culture

- No firefighter shall be criticized or mocked for showing vulnerability, expressing emotional reactions, or requesting support
- A “tough it out” mindset is discouraged; instead, APSTVFD values professionalism, teamwork, and mutual care

Response Limitations During Hurricanes/Post-Storm Check-Ins

1. Purpose

This guideline outlines APSTVFD's procedures for response limitations during hurricanes and the necessary steps for post-storm check-ins. It ensures safety for all members, proper coordination during emergency events, and adherence to evacuation orders during severe weather.

2. Scope

This guideline applies to all APSTVFD personnel and addresses response operations during hurricane events, including response limitations, evacuation procedures, and post-storm recovery actions.

3. Response Limitations During Hurricanes

3.1 No Staffing During Severe Weather

- APSTVFD does **not staff the station** during severe weather events (hurricanes, tropical storms, etc.).
- All members are expected to follow proper sheltering procedures at their homes or designated shelters once a hurricane warning or severe weather watch is issued.

3.2 Response Limitations Based on Wind Speed

- **No response will take place** once **sustained winds reach 40 mph** or higher.
 - At this wind speed, response operations will cease, and personnel are to shelter in place until further notice.
 - Once winds exceed 40 mph, no non-life-threatening responses will occur, and personnel should not attempt to travel or engage in operations.

3.3 Adherence to Evacuation Orders

- All APSTVFD personnel must adhere to any **evacuation orders** issued by **Emergency Management** or local authorities.
 - Evacuation orders must be followed immediately; no member will remain behind to run calls for the department during evacuation periods.
 - Personnel who are instructed to evacuate must comply and leave the area as directed for their safety and the safety of their families.

3.4 Apparatus Relocation

- In the event of an impending hurricane or severe weather, the Fire Chief may direct the relocation of apparatus out of the district to a safer location.
 - Relocation will be done at the discretion of the Fire Chief, based on weather forecasts, access to safe facilities, and the need to protect department assets.
 - All members will be informed of the relocation of the apparatus as soon as it is determined.

3.5 Flood Water Rescue

- APSTVFD **does not perform flood water rescue** operations.
 - If flooding occurs, **no attempts** will be made by APSTVFD personnel to engage in water rescues.
 - Mutual aid agencies equipped and trained for water rescue, including **water rescue teams** or specialized departments, will be contacted for assistance.

4. Post-Storm Check-Ins and Response Readiness

4.1 Immediate Post-Storm Check-In

- After the storm passes and it is safe to operate, personnel will perform a check-in to assess safety, evaluate damage, and prepare for recovery operations.

Check-In Procedure: All personnel will report their status and location through established department communication channels, such as WhatsApp or other designated platforms.

A typical check-in message should include: “[Name/Unit], [Location], [Status: Safe/Ready to Assist], [Any immediate concerns, if applicable].”

4.2 Safety Considerations for Post-Storm Operations

- **Safety of Personnel:**
 - Before engaging in any post-storm response, personnel must inspect their assigned apparatus and ensure equipment is operational and free from damage.

- Personnel will not be sent out if there are hazards (e.g., downed power lines, flooding, or damaged structures) until proper safety assessments are complete.

4.3 Roadways and Damage Assessments

- **Damage Assessments:** Initial assessments of roadways and critical infrastructure (e.g., fire stations, utilities) will be conducted by the department to ensure it is safe to mobilize.

If roads are impassable, mutual aid may be requested, and specialized response agencies will be contacted.

5. Communication Procedures

5.1 Communication Check-Ins

- All personnel must perform check-ins over WhatsApp or other established communication channels at fixed intervals, reporting their status and readiness to engage in post-storm recovery operations.
 - Any emergency traffic or urgent communications will be relayed through the established channels.

5.2 Coordination with Emergency Management and Mutual Aid

- APSTVFD will coordinate with Franklin County Emergency Management, local utilities, and mutual aid agencies for post-storm resource allocation, road assessments, and assistance with recovery operations.
- In the event of extensive damage or large-scale emergencies, APSTVFD will provide support as necessary, in accordance with the availability of resources and personnel.

6. Mental Health Support and Debriefing

- After responding to post-storm operations, particularly if trauma or fatalities are involved, members will be encouraged to:
 - Participate in peer support or critical incident stress debriefings (CISD).
 - Contact mental health resources if needed for emotional support.

