

Santa Barbara City Fire Department - Standard Operating Procedures Emergency Operations		Code: E-III-9
Lost/Trapped Firefighter		
Chpt: III Structure Fires	Revised: 6/4/15	Pages: 4

I. PURPOSE

A. To establish a procedure to aid a firefighter if they find themselves trapped or lost.

II. BASIC SELF-SURVIVAL RESPONSIBILITIES

A. The Number 1 Basic Self-Survival responsibility is ***DON'T GET TRAPPED/LOST, OR RUN OUT OF AIR.***

B. The following are basic guidelines for fire fighters to follow if they become lost/trapped or separated from their crew in a building.

III. PROCEDURE

A. See S-V-5 Firefighter self-rescue

B. Call for help immediately

1. Fire fighters who find themselves lost or trapped must immediately use “May Day” to announce their situation while they continue to attempt to find their way out. (See [E-II-7](#) Emergency traffic / MayDay /1199F)

2. Fire fighters should not delay notification of distress. Notifications should occur as soon as the fire fighter THINKS he or she is in trouble. The longer you wait to tell somebody you are in trouble the more you jeopardize yourself and the rescuers lives.

3. Lost fire fighters should give Command the following information:

a) Who they are,

b) How many fire fighters are there,

c) What Division they were operating in,

d) Where they THINK they are (as accurately as possible), description of building structures surrounding them, sounds of nearby activities, (i.e., ventilation saw noise), or any other information that might direct rescue crews (RIC) (See [E-III-7](#) RIC) to their location.

C. Other radio channels

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1. If a lost fire fighter cannot contact Command, Dispatch, or any other units on the assigned radio channel, the fire fighter should go to another channel to attempt contact and declare an emergency.
2. STB CH 1 (Dispatch) or Command 2 is preferred.
3. It's important to find any channel that works. Once communication is established remain on that channel and messages will be relayed to Command.

D. Activate PASS device

1. As soon as a fire fighter recognizes he/she is lost or trapped, the PASS device must be manually activated to sound the audible tone.
2. If the device interferes with the lost fire fighters communicating critical radio messages to incident commander or rescuers, the device may be turned off temporarily.
3. Once messages are completed, the device must again be manually activated.

E. Crews stay together

1. Members that separate from each other make it difficult for rescuers to find all fire fighters. Crew members that stay intact as a crew enhance their chances for ALL being rescued and allows easier, more efficient extrication.

F. Follow the hoseline or lifeline out

1. Crew members should stay with the hose line (or lifeline) and follow it out whenever possible.
2. All fire fighters must remember that the male couplings lead toward the nozzle (the fire), the female side of the couplings toward the pump (outside).
3. The hose line should always be treated as a safety line to the outside. Where lifeline ropes are in use, follow the lifeline to the exterior.

G. Searching for an exit

1. A lost fire fighter should always attempt to get out of the building by whatever means possible.
2. Where doors, windows, or other egress is not available, fire fighters should next attempt to reach an exterior wall.
3. Once at the wall he/she will be able to search for doorways, windows, and hallways that generally lead to the outside.

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4. Rescuers will first search hallways, around walls, and around windows and doors, before sweeping large interior areas. For this reason, fire fighters must avoid collapsing in the middle of open spaces.
5. Getting to hallways, doors, or windows will increase the chances of being rescued early.
6. Breaching walls for escape or fresh air can aide in survivability. These actions also provide predictable activities that will aid rescuers.

H. Retreat to safe refuge

1. Where the fire fighter cannot find a way out, but there is a safe refuge (protective room or floor) away from the fire that the fire fighter can retreat to, he/she should take advantage of this location.
2. Command and the rescuers should then be advised of the location by whatever means possible.

I. Stay calm and conserve air

1. A conscious effort must be made by the lost fire fighter to control breathing.
2. Unnecessary talking or physical activity must be ceased, unless absolutely needed.
3. Fire fighters must control and pace their physical exertion activities in order to extend their SCBA air supply.

J. Horizontal position

1. If a fire fighter cannot get out, they should assume a horizontal position on the floor that maximizes the audible affects of the PASS device.
2. The fire fighter should attempt to take this position at an exterior wall, doorway or hallway that maximizes quick discovery by rescue crews.

K. Flashlight/tapping noises

1. If assuming a position to await rescuers, the fire fighters should attempt to position his flashlight toward the ceiling. This will enhance the rescuer's ability to see the light and locate the downed fire fighter.
2. If able, the fire fighter should attempt tapping noises to assist rescuers in locating him (i.e., hitting a tool against a metal roll-up door).

L. Company or division officers

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1. Company officers or division officers who are unable to locate a crew or fire fighters assigned to them, must immediately notify command and use “MAY-DAY” to notify all personnel operating on the fireground.
2. When possible the company or division officer should include whose missing, last known location, and actions being taken. Fire fighting positions must not be abandoned during the rescue effort; the Company and division officers **MUST** control free-lancing. Command will initiate a rescue effort.



See [PowerPoint](#) program on Firefighter self rescue.