



[www.firefighternearmiss.com](http://www.firefighternearmiss.com)

## Report of the Week

Excuse me, can I get a word in here?  
06/09/2011

**Report Number:** 11-0000075

Report Date: 02/10/2011 03:29

### Synopsis

Radio traffic prevents progress updates.

### Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Captain

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 17 - 20

Region: FEMA Region IV

Service Area: Suburban

### Event Information

Event type: Fire emergency event: structure fire, vehicle fire, wildland fire, etc.

Event date and time: 02/01/2011 00:00

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Rain

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Individual Action
- Communication
- Situational Awareness

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Other

### Event Description

While on an automatic aid working a residential structure fire, poor use of radio communication was experienced. Crews were advancing a 1 ¾" line on the first floor of a two story house on a basement from the Alpha side to the Alpha/Bravo corner. My crew of four was advancing a 1 ¾" line from the Charlie side back door to the Alpha/Bravo corner in the basement just below the crews above. My crew was experiencing heavy smoke and heat conditions while advancing to the seat of the fire. Once the fire was knocked down, several attempts were made to notify Incident Command of the conditions of the fire but were unsuccessful due to the amount of heavy radio traffic. It took several minutes to get through to Incident Command to notify them that the fire was out and overhaul was being performed.

Excuse me, can I get a word in here?

1 of 3

## Lessons Learned

If a mayday would have occurred, it possibly would not have been heard due to the heavy radio traffic. The Safety Officer on scene giving out command tasks and firefighters were talking on the radio without any specific reasons. My suggestion would be that only Company Officers in charge of a task given by Incident Command should be transmitting information to Command post. Fire fighters should relay information to their Company Officers face to face and remain off the air unless there is a danger or mayday that needs to be relayed to Incident Command. The Safety Officer should only be the eyes and ears for the Incident Command and remain off the radio unless there is some information that the Incident Commander may need to know. Communication is the key to all incidents. Poor communication can easily turn into a bad day for a fire fighter if they are unable to get through to Command when in danger.

## Report of the Week

This week's ROTW, [11-075](#), and the related reports, address the second theme for the IAFC's 2011 Fire/EMS Safety Health and Survival Week. "Being Ready for the Mayday" focuses on three elements of fireground operations that must be in place to support a successful ending if a firefighter experiences a mayday. Personal safety equipment, communications and accountability systems provide layers of protection and support to the firefighter in distress and those working to locate and remove the firefighter from danger. [11-075](#) focuses on communication.

*"While on an automatic aid working a residential structure fire, poor use of radio communication was experienced. Crews were advancing a 1 ¾" line on the first floor of a two story house on a basement from the Alpha side to the Alpha/Bravo corner. My crew of four was advancing a 1 ¾" line from the Charlie side back door to the Alpha/Bravo corner in the basement just below the crews above. My crew was experiencing heavy smoke and heat conditions while advancing to the seat of the fire. Once the fire was knocked down, several attempts were made to notify Incident Command of the conditions of the fire but were unsuccessful due to the amount of heavy radio traffic. It took several minutes to get through to Incident Command to notify them that the fire was out and overhaul was being performed...Poor communication can easily turn into a bad day for a fire fighter if they are unable to get through to Command when in danger."*

The approach of the reporter is akin to putting up the traffic light before the tragic collision occurs. The basement fire is rife with danger. The opposing hoseline potential is great when there is an outside entrance available. The crew operating above the fire has no way of knowing how long the fire has been burning beneath them or how much weight the weakening floor joists can hold. In the event of a mayday, heavy radio traffic can often drown out those who have the most important message to transmit. Once you read the entire account of [11-075](#) and the related reports, answer the following:

1. How would you rate the radio traffic on your incident scenes: light, medium, or heavy? Cite specific examples to support your position.
2. Define "essential message" in relation to radio transmissions. How many messages do you hear on your fireground that you would define as "essential"?

3. What “personal safety equipment” would you consider as a minimum for a firefighter to carry when he entered a structure?
4. Does your department’s accountability system plot where personnel are on the incident scene, or is it just a mechanism to tell the incident commander who is on the scene?
5. If you were to be caught in a mayday situation and couldn’t get through on the talk channel, what other steps could you take to call your mayday?

Being ready for the mayday is more than just reading about being ready and observing how others handle the highly emotional event. Reviewing accounts of maydays are an essential component of mayday preparation. Practicing mayday drills is a second essential module. Last but not least, maintaining a constant vigilance for the emerging mayday situation is the third side of the Ready for Mayday triangle.

### **Related Reports – Topical Relation: Being Ready for the Mayday**

[05-468](#)

[06-533](#)

[07-990](#)

[08-129](#)

[09-663](#)

[10-896](#)

Have you experienced a mayday and no one responded? Submit your report to [www.firefighternearmiss.com](http://www.firefighternearmiss.com) today so everyone goes home tomorrow.

*Note: The questions posed by the reviewers are designed to generate discussion and thought in the name of promoting firefighter safety. They are not intended to pass judgment on the actions and performance of individuals in the reports.*