Protecting Firefighters

Telecommunicators play a vital role in protecting firefighters during active fire emergencies. By providing emergency responders with information about on-scene conditions before arrival and facilitating communication as an incident unfolds, telecommunicators help protect both firefighters and civilians. This course introduces the Incident Command Structure, firefighter safety tactics and equipment, the Mayday signal, and the telecommunicator's responsibilities when interacting with callers, firefighters, and the Incident Commander. The course is designed to prepare telecommunicators to respond quickly and confidently when a firefighter or team is in distress.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Describe the Incident Command Structure and its role in fire emergency response.
2. Explain the safety equipment and tactics used by firefighters.
3. Explain the role of the Mayday signal and the telecommunicator's responsibilities when a Mayday is called.
4. Describe the role of the telecommunicator in ensuring the safety of firefighters.
5. Apply communication and information-gathering practices that support firefighter rescue and accountability during active fire incidents.

Module 1: Key Elements of Fire Emergency Response

This module introduces the primary systems, personnel, and organizational structures used during fire emergencies. Learners examine the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Incident Command System (ICS), the responsibilities of the Incident Commander, and the role of the Rapid Intervention Team in protecting firefighters and coordinating rescue operations.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Describe the purpose of the National Incident Management System.
2. Explain how the Incident Command System organizes command, control, and coordination during an emergency.
3. Identify the primary tactical priorities overseen by the Incident Commander.
4. Describe the responsibilities of the Incident Commander during an active fire response.
5. Explain the purpose and role of a Rapid Intervention Team in firefighter rescue operations.

Content/Activities

- National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- Incident Command System (ICS)
- Incident Commander Responsibilities
- Tactical Priorities of Fire Response
- Rapid Intervention Team (RIT)
- Firefighter Rescue and Accountability

Module 2: Safety Tactics

This module examines specialized fire safety tactics that may require telecommunicator support during an active fire emergency. Learners explore the LUNAR information-gathering process, Personnel Accountability Reports, Elapsed Time Notifications, and the importance of obtaining accurate information when a firefighter is lost, trapped, injured, or otherwise in distress.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the purpose of the LUNAR acronym during a firefighter distress call.
2. Gather essential information about a firefighter's location, unit, name, assignment, air supply, and needed resources.
3. Describe the purpose and required elements of a Personnel Accountability Report.
4. Explain how Elapsed Time Notifications support firefighter safety and Incident Commander decision-making.
5. Describe how information about air supply, location, and rescue resources can expedite a firefighter rescue.

Content/Activities

- LUNAR
- Location, Unit, and Name
- Assignment and Air Supply
- Resources Needed
- Skip Breathing
- Personnel Accountability Report (PAR)
- Elapsed Time Notifications (ETNs)
- Firefighter Survival and Rescue Considerations

Module 3: Safety Equipment

This module introduces safety devices used by firefighters and explains how their alarms and signals can assist in identifying firefighters in distress. Learners examine the Personal Alert Safety System device, SCBA low-air alarm, portable radio emergency button, and dispatch console emergency alerts, with emphasis on recognizing the sounds and understanding their significance.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the purpose and activation of a Personal Alert Safety System device.
2. Describe how an SCBA protects firefighters and identify the significance of its low-air alarm.
3. Explain how a portable radio emergency button sends a distress alert.
4. Recognize the role of dispatch console emergency alerts during an active fire incident.
5. Distinguish among common firefighter safety alarms and emergency notification devices.

Content/Activities

- Personal Alert Safety System Device (PASS)
- PASS Device Alarm Audio
- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)
- SCBA Low-Air Alarm Audio
- Portable Radio Emergency Button
- Portable Radio Emergency Alarm Audio
- Dispatch Console Emergency Alert
- Dispatch Console Emergency Sound Audio

Module 4: The Mayday Signal

This module focuses on the Mayday signal used by firefighters or crews facing life-threatening danger. Learners examine when a Mayday should be transmitted, how it differs from an urgent radio transmission, factors that can interfere with the call, and the telecommunicator's responsibilities for hearing, confirming, documenting, and supporting a Mayday response.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the purpose and proper use of the Mayday signal.
2. Identify circumstances in which a firefighter should transmit a Mayday.
3. Distinguish a Mayday transmission from an urgent radio transmission.
4. Identify environmental and equipment factors that may interfere with a Mayday call.
5. Describe telecommunicator responsibilities for monitoring, documenting, and relaying information during a Mayday.

Content/Activities

- Mayday Signal and Proper Transmission
- Listen In: A Mayday Call
- When Firefighters Send a Mayday
- Mayday vs. Urgent Radio Transmissions
- Sources of Radio Interference
- Monitoring and Verifying Mayday Calls
- The Mayday Checklist
- CAD Documentation and Rescue Support

Module 5: Your Role — Interacting with the Caller

This module examines the telecommunicator's responsibility for gathering useful information from callers and providing appropriate pre-arrival instructions. Learners explore hazardous materials, smoke characteristics, specific location information, inverted visualization, and actions callers may take while evacuating without delaying their escape or increasing their risk.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Gather relevant details from callers about fire conditions, hazards, smoke, and location.
2. Explain how smoke color, amount, and movement can provide information about fire conditions.
3. Apply inverted visualization to obtain specific location information that can assist responding firefighters.
4. Provide pre-arrival instructions that prioritize the caller's immediate escape and safety.
5. Identify appropriate actions callers may take while exiting when those actions do not delay evacuation or increase danger.

Content/Activities

- Telecommunicator's Dual Role
- Gathering Fireground Details
- Hazardous Materials Information
- Smoke Color and Movement
- Specific Location Information
- Inverted Visualization
- Pre-Arrival Instructions
- Caller Evacuation and Fire-Containment Actions

Module 6: Your Role — Working with the Fire Department

This module focuses on the telecommunicator's role in supporting the Incident Commander and firefighters during an active incident. Learners examine radio monitoring, dedicated rescue channels, LUNAR information, PASS activation, safety-message repetition, and time tracking. The module emphasizes the telecommunicator's unique ability to filter background noise, maintain situational awareness, and relay accurate information from a controlled communications environment.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain how telecommunicators support communication between firefighters and the Incident Commander.
2. Describe the value of monitoring multiple radio frequencies and assigning a dedicated rescue channel when possible.
3. Gather and relay accurate LUNAR information during a firefighter distress event.
4. Explain how telecommunicators help ensure that firefighter safety signals and critical messages are heard.
5. Describe the importance of tracking elapsed incident time and providing 10-minute notifications to the Incident Commander.

Content/Activities

- Supporting the Incident Commander
- Monitoring Radio Communications
- Dedicated Rescue Radio Channels
- Gathering and Relaying LUNAR Information
- PASS Device Activation
- Listen In: Making Sure a Safety Signal Is Heard
- Running Time Clock
- 10-Minute Incident Notifications

Module 7: Knowledge Check

This module provides learners with an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the major firefighter-safety concepts covered throughout the course. Questions reinforce recognition of safety equipment, Mayday situations, fire conditions, communication practices, and telecommunicator responsibilities.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Identify the purpose and function of firefighter safety devices and alarms.
2. Recognize situations requiring a Mayday signal.
3. Apply appropriate communication and information-gathering practices to firefighter safety scenarios.
4. Interpret information about smoke, location, and emergency conditions.
5. Demonstrate understanding of the telecommunicator's role in protecting firefighters.

Content/Activities

- Knowledge Check: PASS Device
- Knowledge Check: Firefighter Safety Equipment
- Knowledge Check: LUNAR and Accountability
- Knowledge Check: Mayday Situations
- Knowledge Check: Smoke Conditions
- Knowledge Check: Radio Communication
- Knowledge Check: Inverted Visualization
- Knowledge Check: Telecommunicator Responsibilities

Course Completion Criteria

To successfully complete this course and earn continuing education hours, learners must achieve a minimum score of 75%. The quiz must be completed within 30 minutes.

- CE hours awarded: 1
- Certificate duration: 12 Months

Technical Requirements

- Desktop, laptop, or mobile device
- Speakers or headphones
- High-speed Internet access
- A current web browser