



PROCEDURES MANUAL

SUBJECT: Rapid Assist Teams (RAT)

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203.01.14 Rapid Assist Teams

A. Scope

Establish procedures outlining the operations of a Rapid Assistance Team (RAT) at a structure fire. The goal of this procedure is to create a proactive Rapid Assistance Team to prevent the necessity of a firefighter rescue by removing all barriers to exit allowing the firefighter to self-rescue.

B. Definitions

1. RAT Group Supervisor- The person, usually the second due in District Fire Chief, that is in charge of RAT operations during a Mayday on the scene of an incident. Radio designation can be “RAT Group Supervisor” or “RAT Supervisor”.
2. Alternate Fire Ground – This fire ground is Channel 16 (the last fire ground channel in a zone) in all CFD Zones. This Fire Ground Channel is used during a Mayday **only** when the Incident Commander tells companies to switch to it. Currently this is the Mayday Channel on all CFD radios.
3. CAN Report – Conditions, Actions, and Needs report.

C. Assignment

1. Third closest available Truck Company will be designated as the RAT Truck.
2. Fourth closest available Engine Company will be designated as the Safety Engine. The Safety Engine will increase the size of the RAT Truck by at least two members and will supply two members, one being the Officer, to be designated as Accountability (*Refer to Section 202.07 Accountability*).
3. Once dispatched as the RAT Truck or Safety Engine, the Company **shall remain assigned in that role unless changed by the Incident Commander**. The Officer on the Company should not request to be changed. The Officer should announce the benchmark “Safety Engine 12 is Level 1” over the radio on arrival; it would then be up to the **Incident Commander** to change their role depending on the incident conditions or

arrival order.

D. Designation and Reporting

1. The radio designation for the RAT Truck will be “RAT” followed by the appropriate Company number. (Example: Truck 32 responding as the RAT Truck will be designated “RAT 32”).
2. The radio designation for the Safety Engine will be “Safety Engine” followed by the appropriate Company number. (Example: Engine 12 responding, as Safety Engine will be designated “Safety Engine 12”). Once the Officer reports the “on the scene” benchmark, this will be the last time the Officer will be using the radio designation as “Safety Engine 12”
 - a. The Safety Engine Officer and one other member, usually the FAO, will assume the duties of “Accountability”. From this point on the radio the Safety Engine Officer will use designation of “**Accountability**”.
 - b. The other two / three members of the Safety Engine will now become part of the “RAT” Truck and will remain as such for Accountability purposes throughout the Incident. The Accountability Officer should move their names on the Company passport to the RAT Truck passport. They will report to and be the responsibility of the “RAT” Officer.

E. Proactive RAT Actions and Tasks (Pre-Mayday)

1. When assigned to a Truck Company, first thing in the morning following the morning equipment check, the Officer should talk to everyone assigned to the Company for the tour, and discuss their roles when assigned as a RAT Truck.
2. Following Dispatch and throughout incident, remain alert to the radio and available on the exterior of the structure. (Most fires will require the RAT to remain on the exterior of the structure however; a high-rise or large commercial structure may require the RAT to stage in a forward position)
3. Upon arrival the RAT Company will Level 1 Stage and park apparatus out of the way to not impede other apparatus from approaching the scene.
4. Once the initial companies report a “working fire” the RAT Company shall stage apparatus and come forward to the scene, and announce they are initiating pro-active RAT duties.
5. If a stationary Command Post has been established, the RAT Officer will report face to face with the Incident Commander.
6. The RAT FAO and firefighters will bring RAT equipment forward.
7. The RAT Officer will perform an initial RAT size up of the structure. This size up will include a complete survey around the structure (360°) identifying all possible means of entrance and egress from the structure as

well as conditions and/or obstacles that may prevent a firefighter from rapidly exiting the structure. (Example: Doors padlocked closed, Security bars on windows, etc.)

8. If the fire is above the ground floor of a multi-floor commercial building, during this assessment, the RAT officer and another member of the RAT Company can enter the first floor to determine the location of the interior stairs. If this task is performed, the environment must be free of smoke and it must be a rapid assessment; **No Freelancing.**
9. The RAT Company Officer shall report all findings to the Incident Commander.
10. All impediments, locked doors, bars or plywood on windows, etc., to rapid firefighter exit from the structure shall be removed.
Note: Use good judgment when removing barriers while this will create a quick means of egress it may also increase fire conditions by creating a fire flow path. Consider fire conditions and location when making these decisions. For example, peeling back plywood without totally removing it will still allow firefighters to escape, but minimally effect the fire flow path. Also, when forcing locks on doors, close the door while still making sure the door can easily be opened in an emergency.
11. When firefighters are operating above ground level, portable or ground ladders shall be placed to upper story windows or roofs on all sides of the structure where appropriate. Begin with the areas where firefighters are working inside the structure. These ladders will provide an escape route should interior positions or roof operations become untenable. Ground ladders shall be placed on all sides of the building.
12. A safety fire line may be stretched and placed in front of the building. This line is **not** to be used for firefighting purposes. This is to only be utilized if needed during a “RAT” operation or rescue.
13. Lights shall be set up to illuminate all means of egress out of the building.

NOTE: All members of the RAT Truck must stay together as a Company and not involve themselves in any activity that reduces their ability to perform their primary function of firefighter rescue! The only exception is when the Officer is completing the 360° size-up and performing duties to develop an action plan should a Mayday occur.

F. Proactive RAT Action Checklist

Officer should utilize the current “Cincinnati Fire Department Rapid Assistance Team Company Officer Checklist”.

G. Responsibilities and Actions to be Taken in the Event a “Mayday” is Declared

1. Incident Commander

- a. Acknowledge Mayday, and attempt to identify the firefighter(s) involved, their last location and their problem.
- b. Shall immediately request Dispatch to initiate the “Mayday” procedure, which includes: an additional Alarm for staging, additional RAT Team, and an additional District Chief.
- c. Shall appoint a RAT Group Supervisor to command the rescue operation.
- d. Shall order all fire suppression Companies operating on the scene and not involved in the Mayday, to change from the assigned Fire Ground Talk Group to the Alternate Fire Ground (FG) Channel (currently the Mayday channel). This clears the original Talk Group from unnecessary transmissions. **Note:** Only change channels when ordered by the Incident Commander.
 - i. This leaves the distressed firefighter(s), the RAT, Heavy Rescue Company, and RAT Group Supervisor on the original operating Fire Ground channel.
 1. If known, identify Companies to remain on the original fire ground talk group and tell everyone else to switch. For example, Engine 3 is the Mayday, the Incident Commander would state, “Engine 3, RAT 19, Heavy Rescue 14, and District 2 all remain on this Fire ground Channel, everyone else switch to Alternate FG B (currently MAYDAY B)”.
 2. If there is a Company in the area of the Mayday, and they feel they can immediately assist the firefighter(s) in distress, they must inform the Incident Commander, and the Incident Commander will then need to replace that Company. The assisting fire company will then also stay on the original FG Channel.
 - ii. The Incident Commander needs to relay this change to Dispatch.
- e. Instruct Accountability to conduct a comprehensive incident PAR on the Alternate FG channel (currently the Mayday channel) as soon as possible to determine who and how many firefighters are in peril. Begin the PAR with the companies that were in the most dangerous positions prior to the Mayday.
 - i. Companies not responding to the PAR or are reporting missing members, need to be reported to the Incident Commander ASAP.

- ii. The Incident Commander will then notify the RAT Group Supervisor of this information. The RAT Group Supervisor will then determine if those Companies / Firefighters are in peril, involved in the Mayday or didn't switch to the Alternate FG channel (currently the Mayday channel).
 - f. Shall continue to direct the firefighting efforts to extinguish the body of fire to the extent safely possible, thus making the structure more tenable for rescue operations.
Note: The Incident Commander must focus his attention on controlling the fire and allow the RAT Group Supervisor to manage the rescue effort. The attack on the fire must continue.
 - g. Shall assign someone as an Aide to the RAT Group Supervisor to assist with accountability of companies entering the building assisting in the Mayday operations.
 - h. Shall designate a Staging Officer and Staging Area for all incoming Companies.
 - i. Shall request all resources that the RAT Group Supervisor needs through Dispatch.
 - j. Shall determine and request additional EMS resources needed, ALS Supervisor (EMS Group Supervisor) should be coordinating.
 - k. May have to decide to evacuate all members out of the structure including the Rapid Assistance Team if fire conditions deteriorate. The goal is to preserve as many lives as possible.
 - l. Utilize the current "Cincinnati Fire Department Rapid Assistance Team Incident Commander Checklist" and the current "Command Worksheet".
 - m. If an additional "Mayday" occurs on the Alternate FG channel (currently the Mayday FG channel), the Incident Commander may need to instruct Companies working on Alternate FG channel (currently the Mayday FG channel) to switch to a "Tac channel".
NOTE: This should be a last resort due to companies working in an IDLH environment could have difficulty switching.
 - n. Assign a Staff Officer as the second Safety Officer to assist with the Mayday. This Safety Officer will report directly to the RAT Group Supervisor.
2. Dispatch Responsibilities
- a. Acknowledge Mayday
 - b. Immediately dispatch an additional alarm, an additional District Chief, and an additional RAT Company.
 - c. Page the Administrative / Command Staff (All Call Page).
 - d. All dispatched and responding Fire Companies shall be told to respond using the Alternate FG channel (currently the Mayday FG

channel) in the originally dispatched Fire Zone (once the Incident Commander has all companies on the scene switch to the Alternate FG channel - currently the Mayday FG channel). For example, the original Fire Talk Group was “B-2”, all dispatched and responding Fire Companies will utilize “Alternate FG B (currently Mayday B)”.

- e. Shall monitor **both** the original fire ground channel and Alternate FG channel (currently the Mayday FG channel). .
- 3. RAT Group Supervisor (RAT Chief)
 - a. Shall report directly to the Incident Commander (face-to-face).
 - b. Shall remain at the Command Post with the Incident Commander.
 - c. Shall wear a radio headset throughout the RAT evolution.
 - d. Shall request an Aid from the Incident Commander to assist with accountability of the Mayday and RAT Companies.
 - e. Shall maintain accountability for all RAT teams deployed into the structure.
 - f. Shall utilize the current “Cincinnati Fire Department RAT Commander Checklist”.
 - g. Radio designation shall be “RAT Group Supervisor “or “RAT Supervisor”.
 - h. Shall communicate directly with the downed firefighter on original fire ground channel. If possible, determine who is involved, last location and problem.
 - i. Shall direct the rescue efforts of the RAT Team from the exterior of the structure or a forward Command location in the event of a high-rise or large structure.
 - j. Shall prompt RAT officer if additional resources are needed for the rescue effort.
 - k. Shall assemble fire companies to assist with the rescue efforts. This may entail laying additional hose lines to protect the RAT Team and/or victim. If victim is trapped, a protective hose line shall be put in service.
 - l. Shall determine with the assistance of the ALS Supervisor (EMS Group Commander) if additional EMS resources are needed.
 - m. Request additional needed resources through Command.
- 4. Rapid Assist Team (RAT)
 - a. Upon declaration of a “Mayday” shall report (face-to-face) immediately to the Incident Commander to determine last known location of distressed firefighter from Accountability Officer and retrieve RAT Pack.
 - b. Determine with assistance of RAT Group Supervisor the best location to make entry to search for distressed firefighter.

- c. Shall perform a rapid search of the structure with emphasis on the distressed fire fighter's last known location.
- d. The use of a tag line while searching is **highly recommended**.
- e. Upon finding the distressed firefighter, shall immediately transmit to the RAT Group Supervisor the involved Company, and identity of the firefighter(s) by name, utilizing name plate on back of coat and or reflective name on facepiece. **Note: Do not** declare an additional Mayday upon finding the distressed firefighter. This could cause confusion.
- f. Shall give the RAT Group Supervisor a CAN (Conditions, Actions, Needs) report.
- g. If no extrication is involved, the RAT Team shall remove the firefighter from the structure.
- h. The RAT Officer must weigh the decision to "quick fill" the firefighter(s) air supply if trapped. If the firefighter(s) are not trapped remove ASAP without "quick filling".
- i. The RAT Officer needs to request additional resources through the RAT Group Supervisor to assist prior to their Company becoming tired if it is going to be a long / tedious extrication.
NOTE: RAT operations are very labor intensive. The quicker the firefighter(s) are removed from the building the better the chances for a good outcome. **Ask for help early.**
- j. If the firefighter requires extrication, the RAT Team shall determine the most efficient access to the distressed firefighter, communicate this information to the RAT Group Supervisor and deploy the RAT Rope to the exterior of the structure. The RAT rope will signify **the most direct route to the firefighter from the exterior of the structure**. The RAT Company Officer shall perform a rapid size-up of the extrication needs and request the necessary equipment and personnel from RAT Group Supervisor.
- k. The RAT Company Officer shall supervise and direct the rescue effort from the interior. The RAT Officer answers directly to the RAT Group Supervisor. If the RAT Officer must leave the structure he/she will designate another interior rescue Officer for the RAT Group Supervisor to communicate with.
NOTE: RAT Officer needs to be able to communicate at all times with the RAT Group Supervisor. The Officer should not get involved in the process of RAT drags etc, this will delay communication with the RAT Group Supervisor. The RAT Officer needs to control and direct the rescue effort. If the need arises that the Officer needs to get involved in the dragging / carrying process, the officer should give another member of the

RAT Company the responsibility of communicating with the RAT Group Supervisor.

1. The RAT Company Officer shall maintain close supervision of his/her members and shall be cognizant of their air supply and physical condition.
5. Heavy Rescue Company
 - a. Upon declaration of a firefighter "Mayday", the Heavy Rescue Company shall be relieved of their firefighting duties if operating on the scene.
 - b. The Heavy Rescue Company shall immediately report to the RAT Group Supervisor in full PPE with fully charged SCBA and await orders.
 - c. The Heavy Rescue Company shall not be used as part of the search effort.
 - d. The Heavy Rescue Company primary responsibility will be to perform technical extrication once the RAT Team locates the victim.
 - e. When the Heavy Rescue Company is/are deployed inside the structure to extricate a firefighter they shall report to the RAT Company Officer. The Heavy Rescue Company is/are in charge of the extrication however the RAT Company Officer has responsibility for the interior rescue effort.
6. Additional Fire Companies used for RAT Operations
 - a. Additional Fire Companies can consist of engine or truck companies depending on the nature of the task to be performed and will report to the RAT Group Supervisor and stand by.
 - b. These companies may be utilized to assist with any of the RAT operations.
 - c. May be utilized to place a protective hose line between the fire and the RAT Team and/or the distressed firefighter.
 - d. May be utilized to place ground ladders or to transport SCBA cylinders, tools and equipment to affect the extrication of the distressed firefighter.
 - e. The radio designation for these fire companies will not change. For example if Engine 3 is dispatched or designated to assist with the RAT operations, their radio designation will remain "Engine 3". This eliminates confusion during a very high stress time.
7. Accountability
 - a. Shall immediately set up the MSA SCBA Monitoring System Computer in the District Vehicle (Incident Commander's vehicle) if it has not already been set up.
 - b. Per the Incident Commander's request, shall conduct a comprehensive incident PAR on the Alternate FG channel

(currently the Mayday FG channel) as soon as possible to determine who and how many firefighters are in peril. Begin the PAR with the companies that were in the most dangerous positions prior to the Mayday.

- c. Any Companies not responding to the PAR or are reporting missing members, this information needs to be reported to the Incident Commander ASAP.
 - d. Per the Incident Commander's request, may need to also conduct a PAR on the original FG Channel to determine if companies not responding to the PAR on the Alternate Fireground Channel (currently the Mayday Channel) are actually missing or just did not switch to the Alternate FG (currently the Mayday channel) per the Incident Commander's request. Note: This should only occur by the Incident Commander's request to not interfere with RAT operations.
 - e. Notify the Incident Commander when the PAR is complete.
 - f. An additional Accountability Officer may also be assigned to the RAT Group Supervisor to assist in determining the location of the RAT Truck and all assisting companies.
8. Safety Captain (SO2)
- a. In charge of overall scene and operational safety.
 - b. Reports directly to the Incident Commander, **not** the RAT Group Supervisor.
 - c. Shall evaluate the proactive RAT tactics of the RAT Company and take actions to correct insufficient RAT operations.
 - d. Shall monitor fire conditions and building stability, while advising Command.
9. ALS Supervisor
- a. Shall become EMS Group Supervisor.
 - b. Shall set-up Triage, Treatment and Transport Areas.
 - c. Shall ensure Medic Unit(s) are in a position for Rapid Transport.
 - d. Shall advise Command of additional EMS resources needed.
10. Medic Unit(s)
- a. Shall position Medic Unit for rapid transport from scene.
 - b. Shall bring all ALS equipment and cot forward to area directed by ALS / EMS Group Supervisor.

H. The third (3rd) arriving District Chief will report to Command and be assigned as needed. The third (3rd) District Chief will most likely be assigned to the opposite side of the fire building.

I. Post Mayday

1. The Incident Commander should consider switching to defensive tactics to regroup, if still active fire after extrication of firefighter(s) and the PAR has been completed by the RAT Group Supervisor.
2. Evaluate the need to relieve companies of duty.
3. Consider Incident Stress Debriefing
4. Protect scene for investigation and assign someone to preserve potential evidence until the arrival of a Fire Investigator.
5. Obtain witness statements from individuals before they leave the scene.

J. Notes and Other Considerations

1. Incidents of large geographical size or large structures such as high-rise buildings may require the use of multiple RAT Teams.
2. Incident Commander, the RAT Group Supervisor, and Accountability need to stay together in one area (face-to-face communication) during the Mayday.
3. Consider using a company in staging as additional accountability personnel or Chief Aides.
4. Once additional staff arrives on the scene, limit the number of personnel at the Command Post to minimize the “noise” and distractions during the Mayday operations.