



# TRAINING NOTES

## DIVISION OF TRAINING

### Sea Cliff Ave. Near Miss | RIC Review

#### When/ Where:

July 15, 2022  
224 Sea Cliff Ave,  
San Francisco

#### Resources:

SFFD Manual: Rapid  
Intervention Crew (RIC)  
Operations

SFFD Vimeo:  
Sea Cliff Accident  
Walk Through



## Sea Cliff Ave Near Miss

On Friday July 15, 2022, the San Francisco Fire Department experienced a near miss event when an engine company lieutenant fell into an elevator shaft on a working fire at 224 Sea Cliff Ave. At 0425 in the morning, Box 7216 was struck for a working fire. Smoke was showing from the second and third floor eaves of a type 5 mansion. The mansion had three floors above grade and one floor below grade.

Truck 14 arrived on the scene first and split its crew. T14 located the fire room, laddered the second-floor roof with a 24' ladder, and made the roof of the third story with their aerial ladder. E34 was the first arriving engine company. E34 made a 200' ready line lead to the entrance of the fire room. E22 made a large line wye lead to the base of the interior stairwell which led to the second floor. Engine 31 began advancing a 1-3/4" bundle from the large line wye. The Officer proceeded up the stairs to the second floor of the mansion to scout the path of the hose-lead his crew was to about make. Conditions on the second floor were smoky and visibility was low. In the process of performing horizontal ventilation, the Officer pushed on a door that did not open. The door had a hollow core, a lightweight feel, and a thin door handle similar to a closet. He then pulled and the door opened with little to no resistance.

The Officer fell down an open elevator shaft from the second floor and landed on the roof of the elevator car parked at the basement level. It is important to note that the door to the elevator shaft SHOULD NOT have opened so readily since the elevator car was parked two floors below.

An interior Battalion Chief located the downed Officer in the elevator shaft and made a “firefighter down” radio transmission. The RIC company was en route at the time of this transmission. Truck Company 10 was redirected to assist Engine 22 in locating the officer. T10 and Engine 22 forcefully opened the first-floor elevator door by hand breaking the latch without the need of force entry tools and found the lieutenant on top of the elevator car.

Truck 10, along with Engine 22, removed the down lieutenant from the hazardous environment. The lieutenant was then treated and rapidly transported to the hospital by our ambulance, and thankfully, discharged the same day.

This event brings up many points of training to review as a company, should you find yourself in the same position.



*Photo 1: Outward swinging elevator door entrance*



*Photo 2: View of elevator shaft from the second floor where E31 Officer fell*

**BUILDING CONSTRUCTION & SITUATIONAL AWARENESS:**

One point to note, is our situational awareness is comprised of our fire experience, knowledge of fire behavior, ability to complete our firefighting skills, and knowledge of building construction. In this case, it's important for us to remember a concept in our forcible entry manual on door orientation. "If you are operating in a smoke-filled hallway, and about to force an outward opening door, be sure you are not about to crawl headfirst into an elevator shaft." (*SFFD Forcible Entry*, page 12).

In general, outward opening doors in the residential environment will lead to stairs, elevator shafts and closets. In either case, an outward opening door should be a prompt to you that this isn't a bedroom door where victims may be located.

Our situational awareness of building construction can be improved daily while conducting company fire inspections and after EMS responses. In both instances, we have access to buildings that we may later respond to for fires. In the light of day, while not in a high-pressure situation, get an idea of the building's layout and unique features. Over your career, you'll start to recognize both hazards and commonalities among the buildings we respond to in San Francisco.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

The SFFD Division of Training encourages all company officers conduct a MAYDAY radio traffic drill in compliance with *General Order 09 A-59* with their members.

To conduct a MAYDAY drill using department radios, please utilize the "Training Command-4" channel on your handheld radio. To get there, on the side of the radio, press and hold the half circle shaped button on the side of radio until the training band appears. After that, move your toggle switch to channel 4. Please take caution to only transmit over the training band and not normal city radio channels.

When conducting your mayday drill, have the member say "mayday" 3 times to ensure it is heard by everyone operating on that channel. The officer on another radio will acknowledge the mayday and await the details from the member. *General Order 09-A-59* states the following information should be included, when practical:

- Nature of the problem
- Company ID & member name
- Number of members needing help
- Location of members
- Conditions
- Current or planned actions

Essentially, report the “who, what, where and why” Important note, a MAYDAY is not the same as emergency traffic. Emergency traffic is for important fire ground information, a mayday is specifically reserved for when a member feels their life, or the life of another member, is in danger.

### **RIC TOOLS:**

Additionally, all companies are asked to review the RIC equipment cache and company assignments in the event they are designated as the RIC on a working fire in the city.

When serving as a RIC, remember to get the following equipment from your rig, the nearby truck company, or the chiefs buggy (*SFFD, Rapid Intervention Crew Operations, page 3.1*)

*From your rig, obtain:*

- Set of Irons
- Axe
- Rope Bag
- 6' Ceiling Hook
- Door chocks
- Officer box flashlight
- Thermal imaging camera

*From a nearby truck, obtain:*

- Power Saw
- Rabbit Tool (if appropriate)

*From a chief's buggy, obtain:*

- RIC bag
- Pack tracker

Make sure you give specific assignments and tool carrying orders to your members during roll call, en route to the fire scene or on the fire scene.

### **FINDING A DOWN FIREFIGHTER:**

The best act that can be executed for a down firefighter is removal from the hazardous environment. However, sometimes based on building orientation, down firefighter location, distance from exit, and level of entrapment, down firefighter removal may be delayed.

The next most important step is ensuring the down firefighter is breathing and has enough air in their SCBA.

While packaging for removal or awaiting assistance, the company that located the down firefighter can ensure they have enough breathing air and provide more if needed via their EBSS (aka buddy breather).



When training for finding a down firefighter, consider using the following acronym: **PACCAN**

*P- silence the PASS*

*A- check and address their air situation*

*C- communicate the following:*

*C- conditions*

*A- actions*

*N- needs*

### **CONSTANT READINESS:**

Based on national statistics on mayday transmissions, ([www.ProjectMayday.net](http://www.ProjectMayday.net)), approximately 8% of maydays are rescued by designated rapid intervention companies. That 8% should not be ignored and we should certainly train and prepare for that 8%. However, it is more likely that a mayday will be mitigated by the down firefighter's crew, another interior crew, or even the down firefighter themselves. This means all crews must be listening to the radio during a fire, staying aware of their locations and surroundings, and be ready, if the situation present itself, to rescue a fellow firefighter.

### **CONCLUSION:**

We must not forget how dangerous this job can be. Our training and readiness should match those dangers daily. In this case, the readiness of all the crews involved in the down firefighter operation averted tragedy. Excellent work by all companies involved. Let's all aim to be just as prepared. This can be accomplished through regular company training on all firefighting competencies.