

Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, three words that no one in the Fire/EMS service ever wants to hear on the scene of an emergency. In order to help eliminate or at least reduce the chance of this occurring, Mayday training is paramount.

Mayday training is necessary when firefighters get into a life or death situation inside a building. This may have occurred while in there searching for occupants that are in danger or while extinguishing a fire.

Mayday Firefighter Down training is designed to teach all levels within fire departments, from the basic firefighter to the chief officer. Students are taught proper radio traffic etiquette for calling a mayday, self-rescue techniques, Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) management, and techniques for getting other members out of a life or death situation. Mayday Firefighter Down training is very labor intensive and requires a high degree of physical fitness. The motto for Mayday Firefighter Down training is “never give up.”

Firefighters call a Mayday for numerous reasons; they may be tangled, pinned or stuck, fallen through a roof or floor, caught in a flashover situation, experiencing a self-contained breathing apparatus emergency, become disoriented in a zero visibility environment, or simply not be able to locate an exit out of the building.

Recently, Mayday Firefighter Down training has taken on a new demeanor in Spotsylvania County at the Rappahannock Regional Fire/EMS Training Center.

The Spotsylvania County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Management Training Division recognized the need to be able to provide state of the art Mayday Firefighter Down training to their personnel. To address this, they obtained the support of the Rappahannock Regional Fire/EMS Training Center leadership and started the process of planning to build a two-story 1,800 square foot house with a basement on property at the training center located off of Trench Hill Lane in Spotsylvania County.

The concept for the house came from the Frederick County Fire and Rescue Department in Winchester, Virginia. A group of instructors from Spotsylvania and Fredericksburg took a trip to look at the house in Winchester along with one in Fairfax City. They ultimately decided to use the plans from Winchester for the training house.

A grant was applied for and approved by the Virginia Fire Services Board/Virginia Department of Fire Programs, in the amount of \$46,598 to help with the construction of the house. The additional funding of \$80,000 came from the Spotsylvania County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Management Aid to Localities funding, which comes from the Virginia Fire Services Board/Virginia Department of Fire Programs.

Construction of the house began in May and was completed in September. There are still some additional props that Spotsylvania’s Training Division plans to add, and they will be working on this in the near future. In addition to Mayday training, the house can also be utilized for search and rescue, SCBA, and EMS training.

23 students attended the first Mayday Operations course that utilized the new Mayday house on November 1st, 2nd, & 3rd. The instructors for that class were Stephen Wise, Christopher Graves, Shawn Dunstan, Jared Beard, Jack McGovern, and Baldwin Locher. The class consisted of skills such as a wall breach, Columbus and Denver drills, disentanglement techniques, a rope slide and ladder bail, stair movements, RIT/air emergencies, floor drags, and the removal of an unconscious firefighter down a ladder.

Some of the special props built inside the house include fold-away Denver drill walls, a kick through wall on 2 levels of the house, and five false wall props used to set tools in a wall for emergency bailouts. Additional features include anchor points to tie off ladders beneath every window, two ceiling mounted belay systems with four anchor points on the second floor, two anchor points on the first floor, and tie off anchor points for rope slides on each level. The house also has four Columbus drill props (a two-story drill and two single-story drills), and is equipped with piped in theatrical smoke on all levels.,

The personnel of Spotsylvania Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Management are very excited to have this house now as part of the training center. The training opportunities that this affords them are endless, as they address the aspects of the job where firefighters are in the most danger.























