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The U.S. Fire Administration maintains the **Emergency Management and Response – Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC)**.

For information regarding the EMR-ISAC visit [www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac) or contact the EMR-ISAC office at: (301) 447-1325 and/or [emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov).

# The InfoGram

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## Fire Dispatching and the Mayday Call

A fire dispatcher's role in a fireground Mayday call can be the deciding factor between whether the response will be rescue or recovery. The fire dispatcher is in a unique position to be able to monitor all frequencies available to the firefighters on the scene while the Incident Commander cannot.

The dispatcher can replay garbled audio transmissions to detect if a Mayday was called and missed, as fireground conditions often cause communications problems. If they are the only one to hear it, the fire dispatcher will need to relay information to the Incident Commander in the event of a Mayday call.

Training Officers should ensure fire dispatchers are involved with the department when Mayday training takes place. Dispatchers should be up-to-date on the fire department's SOP/SOG for Mayday calls, have a checklist of duties to be performed if a Mayday is called, and know what both the personal alert safety system (PASS) and the SCBA low-air alarms sound like. The [National Fire Academy](#) offers the course "Calling the Mayday," available on CD or [via online training](#).

(Source: [FireEngineering.com](http://FireEngineering.com))

## U.S. Drought Portal Website Resources

The [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) (PDF, 535.9 Kb) reported last week that over 63% of the U.S. is experiencing mild to exceptional drought conditions. This is causing mandatory water restrictions and shortages, increased fire risk, delayed river shipping as water levels fall, and can cost states millions of dollars in crop damage.

The National Integrated Drought Information System ([NIDIS](#)) created the [U.S. Drought Portal](#) site to share access to research, forecasting, and impact data with the State and local level. Some components of the site:

- [Drought Monitor](#) – a map of the drought impact of the U.S. updated weekly with the most recent data available.
- [Map & Data Viewer](#) – GIS-based mapping that provides layered views of the country including levels of drought, weather, and geographic regions.
- Drought in the News – located on the Drought Portal homepage, lists current national headlines on the impact of current drought conditions.
- [Keetch-Byram Drought Index map](#) – provides a fire potential assessment based on cumulative moisture content in the ground.

*The InfoGram is distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures.*

The Drought Portal is one component of the planned interactive NIDIS system which will provide a better drought monitoring and reporting structure. By networking with State and local levels to collect the data, NIDIS hopes to create a more comprehensive history of drought events.

(Source: [U.S. Drought Portal](#))

## Changing Hospital Response to Emergencies

With every natural or man-made disaster comes a renewed look at the way various sectors respond. [Homeland Security Today published an article](#) in its “Best Practices” section earlier this month discussing hospital plans and how they have changed in response to events like September 11<sup>th</sup>, the anthrax letters, and Hurricane Katrina.

These and other disasters have shown gaps in training and resources that hospitals and medical systems have worked to fill. Increased training in chemical, biological, and nuclear events and changes in Federal and State regulations are two examples.

The recent mass casualty incident in Colorado will also have lessons to be learned. Some of the hospital staff have already cited their involvement in the [response to the Columbine shootings](#) as helping them be prepared for this event, while others cite the [monthly drills their hospital runs](#), which are over and above the twice-yearly drills required.

Another aspect of the emergency planning includes how to deal with the arrival of frightened family members, inquisitive reporters, and officials. Levels of access should be clearly defined, as should the amount of information given out about the response during and after an incident.

(Source: [HSToday](#))

## Synthetic Drugs Still a Danger after Ban

Legislation pushed and signed this month bans the sale, production, and possession of 28 so-called “bath salt” drugs, synthetic drugs that imitate the effects of illegal drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine. Many public health officials are stating that while this is a positive step, it is not enough.

As soon as one chemical combination is deemed illegal, the makers alter the original formula or develop new or stronger formulas. These new formulas are then legal to sell. This practice makes it difficult to keep ahead of the trend and prohibit sale or possession.

Another problem with enforcement of the ban is that it must be proven they were intended for human use. Most packaging now has “not for human consumption” printed somewhere, a technicality that can prevent prosecution.

The inexpensive drugs are often sold over-the-counter in small stores such as tobacco or convenience shops. The drugs can be labeled as incense or bath salts under names like “Lady Bubbles” or “Bliss.” Many of the drugs don’t show up on drug tests. The drugs are usually smoked or snorted and can cause hallucinations, paranoia, and very violent behavior.

(Source: [Jems](#))

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