VEHICLE FIRES

BULK TRANSPORT

WESTERN RESERVE JOINT FIRE DISTRICT
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR AUTO FIRES

1. Don SCBA and protective clothing prior to arrival on scene.
2. Size up situation.
3. Give condition report.
4. Lay supply line or secure water supply as needed.
5. Park apparatus no closer than 100 feet from vehicle, preferably uphill.
6. Place wheel chocks.
7. Pull 1-3/4" attack line (at minimum).
8. Attack vehicle at angles.
9. Cool fuel tank, bumpers, and headlights.
10. Carry tools (hook and irons).
11. Punch out taillight or use piercing nozzle to cool top of gas tank, if needed, or under hood.
12. Search for victims using thermal camera or tools.
13. Pull additional lines, as needed, for mop up or overhaul. These may be smaller than 1-3/4".
14. Overhaul.
15. Call Fire Investigator for follow-up investigation.

WESTERN RESERVE JOINT FIRE DISTRICT
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR
FIRES INVOLVING BULK TRANSPORT VEHICLES

The techniques of extinguishment for fires in vehicles transporting flammable fuel are similar in many ways to fire in storage facilities. The major differences are:

- increased life safety risk to firefighters from traffic;
- increased life safety risk to passing motorists;
- difficulty in determining the products involved;
- difficulty in containing spills and run-offs;
- tanks and piping weakened or damaged by the force of collisions;
- instability of vehicles.

While a serious accident may bring traffic to a halt, many incidents will be handled with traffic passing the scene at near-normal speeds. A lane of traffic in addition to the incident lane should be closed from traffic use during initial emergency operations. The use of open flame flares should be avoided due to the possibility of their igniting leaking fuels. Fire apparatus should be positioned to take advantage of topography and weather conditions, uphill and upwind, and to protect firefighters from traffic. Firefighters should exit the apparatus and work as much as possible from the curb side away from traffic. In addition, the firefighter should avoid working where the apparatus could be pushed into them if it were struck by another vehicle. Where traffic is passing closely, firefighters should be careful not to allow tool handles to extend into the traffic lane where they may be struck. When law enforcement personnel are unavailable, a firefighter should be assigned the role of Traffic Control Officer.

The techniques of approaching and controlling leaks or fires involving vehicles are the same as for storage vessels. Additionally, firefighters should be aware of the failure of vehicle tires that may cause the flammable load to shift suddenly. The crews will need to know the status of the water supply so as not to exceed the limitations of that supply. As is the case in structural fire attack, it may be necessary to protect trapped victims with hose lines until they can be rescued.

Firefighters must determine, as soon as possible, the exact nature of the cargo from bills of lading manifest plackerts, or the driver of the transport vehicle. Unfortunately, cases will certainly exist where these items cannot be found, plackets are either wrong or obscured, and drivers are unable to identify their cargo. In these cases, it may be best to wait until the cargo can be identified through the shipper or manufacturer responsible for the vehicle. In such a case, a sufficient area should be cleared away from the vessel, and if burning or if a spill exists, the hazmat team should be notified.

Single passenger vehicles usually present less of extinguishment problem due to the reduced amount of fuel carried. Burning or leaking fuel can be flushed from beneath of the vehicle, and then the remaining Class A fire attacked. The firefighters should avoid standing in front of the shock-absorber type bumpers or newer vehicles as they may explode. Large amounts of water will be needed to attack fires that have ignited aluminum or magnesium alloy vehicle components. Firefighters should use extra caution when water is first applied to these burning parts as fire

intensity will be greatly increased. Firefighters should not assume that private vehicles or small vans are without extraordinary hazards such as saddle fuel tanks, propane tanks, explosives or hazardous materials. Vans are often used to transport small amounts of radioactive materials for hospital use. Also, large dollar losses can occur from fires in messenger or carrier vehicles. Certainly, firefighters should view any military vehicle as a target hazard.

In the event that the Incident Commander responding firefighters determine that a hazardous material is contained within or carried by the private or commercial vehicle, the incident shall be treated as a hazardous materials incident.