

**GUIDELINES FOR  
EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATIONS**

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### **A. Training**

Fire Department vehicles shall be operated only by those members who have successfully completed an Approved Driver Training Program, or by student drivers who are under the supervision of a qualified driver. Driver/operators of fire apparatus shall meet the requirements specified in these Standard Operating Guidelines.

### **B. General Requirements**

Drivers of Fire Department vehicles shall have valid driver's licenses. The driver must have 5-years driving experience, successfully complete the District's Emergency Vehicle Operations Course and be qualified by an officer to drive the fire apparatus.

Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with all traffic laws of the State of Ohio, including those Sections pertaining to emergency vehicles.

Drivers shall not move the Fire Department vehicles until all persons on the vehicle are seated and secured with seatbelts or in approved riding positions, other than as specified in the procedures for Hose Loading. Riding on tail steps, sidesteps, running boards, or in any other exposed position is specifically prohibited. Standing while riding is specifically prohibited.

All firefighters riding in Fire District apparatus shall wear all issued protective gear responding to or returning from a fire-related emergency. (Apparatus drivers exempted.)

All fire apparatus shall have wheels chocked when parked anywhere other than inside the fire station (cars and vans excluded).

All equipment on the fire apparatus is the responsibility of the engineer.

All fire vehicles operated during adverse weather conditions shall be operated at a reduced safe speed.

It is the responsibility of all personnel operating a Fire District vehicle to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with all applicable State of Ohio traffic laws. These laws provide specific legal exceptions to regular traffic regulations when responding to an emergency incident. An emergency response (Code 3) does not absolve the driver of the responsibility to drive with due caution. The driver of the emergency vehicle is responsible for its safe operation at all times.

Neither officers nor senior firefighters shall order nor encourage unsafe driving conditions.

Personnel shall not operate any fire department vehicle while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Personnel taking prescription medication, which may impair their ability to safely operate apparatus shall advise the OIC.

During an emergency response, fire department vehicles should not pass one another, unless permission is obtained through radio communications. When two vehicles are approaching a common intersection, each vehicle is to advise they are approaching the intersection through radio communications.

Backing of a Fire Department vehicle shall be avoided whenever possible. When backing is unavoidable, a guide should be used. Guides should also be used when vehicles must negotiate turns with restrictive side clearances and when height clearances are uncertain. If there is no guide available, the driver should walk around the vehicle prior to moving the vehicle to locate any potential obstructions or hazards.

### C. Emergency Response

Code 2 is the response to an incident without the use of red lights and siren. Code 3 is the response to an incident using red lights and siren.

A Code 3, emergency response by firefighters operating Fire Department vehicles, will be permitted only when responding to a call where there is reasonable cause to believe that a human life or property is in danger and that a delayed or slower response would be likely to increase the risk to the person in danger. In all cases, emergency responses will be made in accordance with applicable traffic laws in the Ohio Revised Code.

The priority for emergency responses is to arrive at the scene safely, not quickly. Driving at speeds higher than designated in the SOP will not be tolerated. Exercise extreme caution when responding on snow, slush or icy roads.

When responding Code 3, warning lights must be on and sirens must be sounding continuously as a warning to other drivers, as required by Ohio Motor Vehicle laws.

The use of sirens and warning lights does not automatically give you the right-of-way; they are simply requesting the right-of-way from other drivers. Emergency vehicle drivers must make every effort possible to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers. They must also drive defensively and be prepared for unexpected or inappropriate actions of other drivers.

- Under less than favorable conditions, the post speed limit is the absolute maximum permissible.
- When an emergency vehicle must travel in center or oncoming traffic lanes, speeds shall be reduced and due regard exerted.

- When emergency vehicles must use center or oncoming traffic lanes to approach controlled intersections (traffic light or stop sign), they must use due regard before proceeding through the intersection, including occasions when the emergency vehicle has green traffic lights.
- When approaching a negative right-of-way intersection (red light, stop sign), the vehicle shall use due regard, and may proceed only when the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way.

In order to avoid emergency vehicles responding Code 3 unnecessarily, the first arriving unit will advise additional responding units to shut down to Code 2 when appropriate.

When proceeding to an emergency scene, all fire vehicles shall slow down and proceed with caution when entering an intersection whether the vehicle has the right-of-way or not.

Drivers shall proceed through intersections only when the driver can account for all lanes of traffic in the intersection.

During emergency response, drivers of Fire Department vehicle shall come to a complete stop at all unguarded railroad grade crossings. Drivers shall assure that it is safe to proceed before crossing the railroad track(s). Drivers shall also use caution when approaching and crossing any guarded grade railroad crossing.

This is especially important at crossing where the tracks are curved, vision is obstructed, or the crossing has more than one set of tracks where the presence of one train may hide the approach of another. Sight distance may be optimized by having one or more members cross the tracks on foot and look for approaching trains.

When Fire Department vehicles arrive on the scene of an incident, they should be positioned to protect personnel who may be working in traffic lanes. Warning lights should be left on to alert approaching traffic of your presence. At night, use vehicle mounted floodlights, if available, or other light sources to illuminate the scene. Any personnel working in traffic lanes should wear fire department issued DOT/ANSI reflective vests.

#### D. Non-Emergency Response

During non-emergency travel, drivers of Fire Department vehicles shall obey all traffic control signals and signs, and all laws and rules of the road of the State of Ohio for the operation of motor vehicles.

All fire apparatus shall adhere to all rules and regulations for railroad crossings set forth above during non-emergency vehicle operations.

## E. Personal Vehicles

Lights and sirens on personal vehicles shall be used on emergency calls only. Such use will be in accordance with all laws of the State of Ohio.

All personal vehicles shall be equipped with sirens, lights, and stickers in accordance with state law, if used for emergency response.

No lights or sirens shall be used to answer a call from outside the Fire District, unless directed to do so by the dispatcher or an officer.

A driver of a personal vehicle, operating during an emergency response, shall follow all applicable SOG's set forth in this Section.

### **Code 3 Response To Emergencies In Private Vehicles**

#### Driver:

- You must have at least have 5-years of driving experience before you are permitted to use red lights and siren.
- You must possess a valid Ohio Driver's License.
- You must show proof of insurance.
- You are permitted to use red lights and siren on your personal vehicle after you have been on the fire department for one full year and not on probation.
- You must have successfully completed the Basic Firefighter's or First Responder course.
- You must satisfactorily complete an approved Emergency Vehicle Operations course (E.V.O.C.)

#### Vehicle:

- The vehicle must be registered to the member requesting permission to use red lights and siren. If the member's automobile is owned by his/her family member, a letter acknowledging that permission is given to use the vehicle for response to emergency situations using red lights and siren must be given to the District stating that the owner accepts our conditions, as well as releasing the District from any liability. This statement will be signed by the legal owner of the vehicle.
- In order to use red lights and siren on your personal vehicle, your vehicle must have passed an annual safety inspection. You must have the lights and siren to be used, installed on the car at the time of the inspection. You must display the appropriate inspection stickers on your windshield.

#### Response:

- When responding to a call Code 3, you must use both a red light and a siren at all times. The red light must be visible above the roof line of your vehicle; it is not to be placed on the dashboard, unless additional lighting is used which provides 360° lighting protection.
- If you respond to an emergency Code 3, then all of the previous emergency vehicle response procedures must be followed.

- Never respond Code 3 to a call with anyone other than another firefighter in your vehicle. This includes family members.
- Do not run Code 3 in another community unless it is a mutual aid call in that community and you have been directed to during the tone alert. Report to the staging area.
- Permission to run Code 3 does not extend beyond District's limits. You do not have permission to run Code 3 in other communities, or within the District for reasons other than an emergency alarm that you are directed to respond through the District's tone alert system. The District does not extend to any member permission to respond Code 3 based on your membership in any other organization. You must meet the other organizations requirements and obtain their permission to respond Code 3. Permission to respond Code 3 by another organization does not automatically give you permission to respond Code 3 in the District without meeting the District's conditions.
- If you do not have red lights or siren, then you will respond to the call obeying all traffic laws.
- Never follow another emergency vehicle closer than 500 feet.
- Do not respond to a call unless the tone alert system has been activated. Responding to a call you heard on a scanner, radio, or pager is prohibited.
- Driving direct to a scene is discouraged/not permitted. However, if you must drive direct, when you arrive at the scene, park your vehicle so it does not impede any other fire apparatus or emergency vehicle. Park on the same side of the street of the call and use care not to block any fire hydrants.

## **Motor Vehicle/Apparatus Accidents**

- A. Whenever a District vehicle, or a personal vehicle operated during an emergency response, is involved in any type of accident, whether moving or non-moving on private or public property, the police department must be notified. The involved apparatus or personal vehicle and/or equipment shall not be moved until a police report is taken. The accident shall be reviewed by the Health and Safety Committee.
  
- B. The Health and Safety Committee shall conduct a formal analysis of the accident or loss, and they will complete any applicable insurance accident investigation forms. The Committee should determine the cause of the loss, and should take corrective action to prevent any similar losses in the future.

## **DRIVER SAFETY - STANDARD SIGNALS FOR BACKING OF FIRE DEPARTMENT APPARATUS**

### **VEHICLE BACKING AND SIGNALS**

Backing of Fire Department vehicles should be avoided whenever possible. Where backing is unavoidable, spotters shall be used. In addition, spotters shall be used when vehicles must negotiate forward turns with restrictive side clearances and where heights clearances are uncertain.

Under circumstances where the vehicle is manned by only the driver, that vehicle driver shall attempt to utilize any available fire department personnel to act as spotters. Where no personnel are available to assist, the vehicle driver shall get out of the vehicle and make a complete 360 degree survey of the area around his vehicle to determine if any obstructions are present.

Where engine or ladder companies are backed, all crew members (except the driver/tiller person) will dismount the apparatus and act as spotters, including the Company Officer. Spotters should be located at as many corners as possible with at least one spotter at the left rear corner of the apparatus. Where only a single spotter is available, the spotter should be located off the left rear corner, and will act as the primary spotter.

Spotters are not permitted to ride tailboard positions while backing fire apparatus.

Spotters will discuss the backing plan with the engineer/driver before proceeding. The communication/warning process will be agreed upon prior to backing. Both door windows (driver and front passenger) will be in the down position to allow for maximum communication/hearing between spotters and the engineer/driver. Fire radio volumes will be turned down.

The vehicle shall not be backed until all spotters are in position and communicate their approval to start the backing. Spotters will remain visible to the engineer/driver. Any time the driver loses sight of the primary spotter, the vehicle shall be stopped immediately until the spotter is visible, and the communication to continue backing is processed.

When vehicles must be backed where other vehicle's traffic exists, the vehicle's emergency lights (if equipped with such lights) shall be operating and orange safety vests shall be worn by all spotters.

The company officer is responsible for compliance with this procedure and the safe backing of the apparatus.



## **SIGNALS**

**Straight Back:** One hand above the head with palm toward face, waving back. Other hand remains at your side. (Left or right hand optional.) See Figure 1.

**Turn:** Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended. See Figure 2. (Driver will advise the spotter which way the turn will be made. The spotter then assists the driver in backing apparatus. The driver's intentions must be verbally communicated to the spotter.)

**Stop:** Both arms crossed with hands in fists. See Figure 3. Be sure to yell the stop order loud enough that the engineer/driver can hear the warning.

## **NIGHT BACKING**

Signals will be the same. The spotter will assure that the spotlights on rear of apparatus are turned on before allowing apparatus to be backed. A flashlight may be carried, but at no time will it be directed toward mirror. See Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7.