

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE
4103
Emergency Vehicle Operating Guidelines
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Purpose: Responsibilities of emergency vehicle drivers.

Scope: All District Personnel

Author: Fire Chief

Procedure:

- A. Responding to any emergency call, the West Metro Fire Protection District places a great deal of responsibility on the drivers of our emergency vehicles. Not only must emergency vehicle drivers provide prompt conveyance of the apparatus, equipment and personnel to provide service to those in need, but as importantly, must accomplish this task in as safe and prudent manner as may be reasonable under the circumstances. Emergency vehicle drivers have in their care, custody, and control, most of the major assets of the organization in the personnel, vehicles, and portable equipment. Drivers must monitor and reduce the amount of risk and exposure to potential losses during every response. Safe arrival at the emergency scene shall be the first priority of all emergency vehicle drivers. In order to accomplish this task, all emergency vehicle drivers and crewmembers shall become familiar with, and constantly abide by the State Motor Vehicle laws, including but not limited to section 42-4-108 “exceptions for emergency vehicles” and the following policies and procedures. These laws and procedures, however, shall not relieve the emergency vehicle driver from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons nor will they protect the driver from the consequences of such driver’s reckless disregard for the safety of others.

I. Qualifications and/or Certifications:

- A. A valid drivers license is required to operate any vehicle owned by the Department.
- B. DO I certification is required to operate Medic Units and Utility Vehicles. This is the minimum level required for emergent operation of any Department vehicle.
- C. DO II certification is required to operate Engines/Pumpers, Telesqrts, Heavy Rescues, and SCBA Support Vehicles.
- D. DO III and Department certifications are required to operate Towers.

II. Driver Responsibilities:

- A. The driver of an emergency vehicle shall be directly responsible for the safe and prudent operation of the vehicle under all conditions.
- B. The driver’s first priority shall be for the safe arrival of the emergency vehicle at the emergency scene.

- C. The driver shall ensure that all personnel assigned to the vehicle are seated and secured with seat belts and in approved riding positions during any movement of the emergency vehicle.
- D. During emergency response, drivers of an emergency vehicle shall bring the vehicle to a complete stop for any of the following:
 - 1. When approaching a guarded intersection and the lights are red.
 - 2. When directed by a law enforcement Officer.
 - 3. When the driver cannot account for all lanes of traffic in an intersection.
 - 4. When other intersection hazards are present.
 - 5. When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing warning lights.
 - 6. When approaching an unguarded railroad crossing.

III. Officer Responsibilities:

- A. The Officer shall ensure that all personnel assigned to the vehicle are seated and secured with seat belts and in approved riding positions during any movement of the emergency vehicle. This does not apply to Members on Medic Unit who are involved in patient care.
- B. The Officer shall ensure driver is operating the vehicle in a safe and prudent manner.
- C. The Officer shall check map book, and/or computer aided response material to assist the driver in determining the safest and most direct route to the emergency scene.
- D. The Officer shall ensure the appropriate operation of the audio and visual warning devices and shall be responsible for operating the radio and communications equipment during response.
- E. Officer shall assist the driver in intersection crossing and backing.
(NOTE: When Medic Unit crews have two personnel in front, the passenger will assume the Officer responsibilities, when the driver is the only personnel in front, they must assume both driver and Officer responsibilities.)

IV. PROCEDURES:

- A. Prior To Moving The Vehicle:
 - 1. Prior to entering and moving the vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver shall ensure that all equipment is secured, that all compartment doors are securely closed and any physical obstructions moved out of the way. He/she should also verify right side and rear clearance with the person riding in the Officer position. This shall be conducted prior to moving the vehicle regardless of whether there is an emergency or not.
- B. Warning Devices and True Emergencies:
 - 1. Per state laws, when responding to an emergency, all audible and/or visual warning devices will be operated at all times. All emergency vehicle drivers must understand that warning devices are not always effective in making other vehicle operators aware of your presence. Warning devices only request the right-of-way, they do not ensure the right-of-way. Lights and sirens shall be turned off, and response changed to non-emergent, if the vehicle is unable to maintain the posted highway speed.

C. Vehicle Control and Right-of-Way:

1. All drivers shall attempt to maintain control of the vehicle that they are operating in such a manner as to provide the maximum level of safety for themselves, their passengers, and the public. Emergency vehicle drivers should be aware that the civilian vehicle operators might not react in the manner in which is expected or felt to be appropriate. An attempt should be made to have options available when passing or overtaking vehicles. The emergency vehicle driver should never force the right of way.
2. The emergency vehicle driver shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles and pedestrians at all times to make sure that a reasonably safe following distance is established and maintained. All drivers shall allow at least (2) seconds of following distance.

D. Response Speeds:

1. The driver of an emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call, may exceed the lawful speed limit so long as said driver does not endanger life or property. For determining whether an emergency vehicle driver endangered life or property while speeding is to ask whether the emergency vehicle operator's speed created an unreasonable risk of injury or damage of life or property. Examples of influencing factors on the response speeds chosen include but are not limited to:
 - a) The legal speed limit in the area
 - b) The speed at which the operator was driving
 - c) The conditions of the road
 - d) The type of area in which the operator was driving
 - e) The traffic and pedestrian conditions
 - f) The existence of poor or restricted visibility

E. Intersection Practices:

1. Extra care as may be required by the circumstances should be taken when approaching any intersection, as intersections are the locations responsible for a large percentage of major accidents involving emergency vehicles. Intersections provide a location for a high frequency and severity of accidents due to:
 - a) Restricted Visibility
 - b) Assumption of Other Driver's Actions
 - c) Confused Drivers
 - d) Traffic Volume
 - 1) Slow down prior to reaching an intersection in order to get a good view of the situation, and to avoid startling unaware motorists.
 - 2) Drivers are required to practice the following intersection guidelines during all emergency responses:
 - a. Be patient
 - b. Account for all lanes of traffic.
 - c. Avoid passing on right unless it is the last resort.

- d. Avoid traveling in opposing traffic unless you are certain traffic is clear. If you must, do so with extreme caution and stay to your far right.
- e. Do not rely on warning devices to clear traffic.
- f. Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast, etc.).
- g. Observe traffic in all four (4) directions (left, right, front, rear).
- h. Slow down if any potential hazards are detected and cover the brake pedal with the driver's foot.
- i. Change the siren cadence not less than 200' from intersection, use yelp mode.
- j. When the light is red or intersection is controlled by a stop sign:
 - a. Bring the vehicle to a complete stop.
 - b. If all traffic lanes are blocked, turn off lights and sirens to avoid forcing traffic out into an intersection.

Emergency vehicle drivers should always be prepared to stop!

3) Unguarded Railroad intersections:

- a) At any time an emergency vehicle driver approaches an unguarded rail crossing he/she shall bring the apparatus he/she is operating to a complete stop before entering the grade crossing. In addition, the emergency vehicle driver shall perform the following prior to proceeding:
 - 1) Turn off any sound producing equipment or accessories.
 - 2) Open the windows and listen for a train's horn.

F. Non-Emergency Response Procedure:

- 1. When responding to a call in a non-emergency response mode or normal flow of traffic, the vehicle will be operated without any audible or visual warning devices and in compliance with all state motor vehicle laws that apply to civilian traffic.
- 2. All drivers shall obey all traffic control devices when driving any fire department vehicle under ordinary travel conditions. Any Member observed breaking any traffic laws or driving any vehicle in an aggressive manner may be subject to disciplinary action including, suspension of driving privileges.

G. Riding Policy:

- 1. The Department prohibits the riding on tail steps, sidesteps, running boards, or any other exposed position.
- 2. Loading of 5" hose shall be permitted on moving fire apparatus only when all of the following conditions are complied with:
 - a) There shall be a Member, other than those Members loading hose, assigned as a safety observer.
 - b) The safety observer shall have an unobstructed view of the hose loading operation and be in visual and voice contact with the apparatus operator

- c) Non-fire department vehicular traffic shall be excluded from the area or shall be under the control of authorized traffic control persons.
- d) The fire apparatus shall be driven only in a forward direction at a speed not to exceed 5 mph.
- e) No Members shall be allowed to stand on the rear step, side steps, running boards, or any other location on the apparatus while the apparatus is in motion.
- f) Members shall be permitted to sit in the hose bed, but shall not stand while hose is being loaded.

H. Backing:

1. The Department recognizes that backing emergency vehicles is made hazardous by the fact that the driver cannot see much of where he/she intends to go. The Department recommends that whenever possible drivers should avoid backing. When it is necessary to back-up any Department vehicle, all drivers shall follow one of the two following measures:
2. The Department's first choice of backing procedures is that before any vehicle is put into reverse and backed that a spotter be put in place near the rear of the vehicle. The spotter should be safely positioned so that the emergency vehicle driver can see them at all times. If at any time the emergency vehicle driver loses sight of the spotter, he/she shall stop immediately until the spotter makes himself/herself visible again.
3. If conditions exist that make use of spotters impossible, all drivers shall walk completely around the vehicle, before attempting to back up, to ensure that no person or persons are directly behind the vehicle or in its intended path of travel; all equipment is secured and that all compartment doors are securely closed; and any physical obstructions are moved out of the way. The emergency vehicle driver should also note all potential obstructions in the intended path of travel, including overhead obstructions.
4. GENERAL BACKING RULES:
 - a) Never be in a hurry when backing.
 - b) Do not put the Unit into reverse gear before coming to a complete stop.
 - c) Roll the window down completely.
 - d) Remove headset/hearing protection.
 - e) Make visual and verbal contact with spotter.
 - f) If no spotter is available:
 - g) Reconsider backing up. Is it really necessary?
 - h) Make a reasonable attempt to get someone to act as a spotter.
 - i) If both Members are present, but the patient requires constant care, the operator can proceed with backing the Unit only if the above procedures are taken.
5. OPERATOR RESPONSIBILITY:
 - a) Bring the unit to a complete stop.
 - b) A spotter is in place eight to ten feet at the left rear of the unit.

- c) Be able to see spotter in left rear view mirror. If you cannot see the spotter, do not backup!
 - d) Driver and spotter must establish and continue eye-to-eye contact in a rear view mirror at all times.
 - e) Operators and spotters must mutually understand the hand signals to be used PRIOR TO BACKING.
6. SPOTTER RESPONSIBILITY:
- a) Get out of the unit and survey the right side and rear area for obstacles that would damage the unit. Remember overhead clearance.
 - b) Place yourself eight to ten feet to the left rear of the unit.
 - c) Make sure the operator can see and hear you.
 - d) Be familiar with the hand signals before allowing backing maneuvers to begin.
 - e) Have eye contact with operator at all times through the left side rear view mirror and direct the driver with mutually understood hand signals.
7. USE OF THE SAFETY VISION CAMERA SYSTEM:
- a) Complications and limitations relating to the Safety Vision Camera system will at no time and in no way relieve a Driver from the responsibility to maneuver safely and to ensure avoidance of collision.
8. EXTERIOR REAR CAMERA USAGE:
- a) At no time will the Safety Vision Camera be used as a substitute for Department outlined backing procedures, whenever a backer can be utilized.
 - b) Its use during compromised situations is allowed only if the Driver is well familiarized with the Safety Vision system and has previously practiced reverse motion with the camera – in a controlled practice area.
 - 1) Prior to any reverse motion, the Driver must get out and make a well-perceived check of the area wherein reverse motion will be directed.
 - 2) At all times when reverse vehicular motion will be initiated, the camera microphone system must be set loud enough to present the Driver with clear audible sounds and warnings from the vehicle rear area.
 - 3) Vehicular speed will be kept slow enough to provide ample reaction time to hazards entering the camera sight range.
 - 4) Prior to reverse motion, sirens and dashboard radios will be turned off.
 - 5) During reverse motion, mirrors must be used in conjunction with the camera.
9. PATIENT COMPARTMENT CAMERA USAGE:
- a) As a learning tool and a Security tool.
 - 1) The first priority of the Medic Unit operator is maneuvering the Medic Unit safely.

- 2) Viewing of the patient compartment is permissible only when the vehicle is not in motion – such as light-controlled intersections or parked. The patient compartment camera is not a rear view mirror.
- 3) Audible monitoring of the patient compartment through the Camera system's microphone is completely appropriate.
- 4) If the attending Paramedic requests the Driver's visual attention, the vehicle must be stopped first.

I. Response in Privately Owned Vehicles:

1. When any Member responds to the station or to the scene of an emergency in his/her private vehicle, each Member must strictly adhere to all applicable motor vehicle laws. Privately owned vehicles are not provided with the same exemptions that are provided to emergency vehicles. No Member of the organization will be permitted to violate any motor vehicle laws, including but not limited to:
 - a) Speed limits
 - b) Going through traffic control devices
 - c) Passing in an unsafe manner
2. While it is recognized that timeliness in response to an emergency is important, it is imperative that all drivers understand that their private vehicles are not emergency vehicles and therefore are not afforded any exemptions or special privileges under state law. Any driver observed breaking any traffic laws or operating any vehicle in an aggressive or unsafe manner might be subject to disciplinary action including suspension.