

SECTION: 1503
TITLE: Use of Lights & Sirens
SUPERCEDES/RESCINDS: All Prior
EFFECTIVE DATE: 05-01-2014

1. DEFINITIONS

1. TRUE EMERGENCY: A situation in which there is a high probability of death, serious injury to an individual, or significant property loss, or has the potential to impact the environment, and actions by an emergency vehicle driver may reduce the seriousness of the situation.
2. EMERGENCY RESPONSE: Immediate response with lights & sirens.
3. NON-EMERGENCY RESPONSE: Immediate or delayed response without lights & sirens.

2. CIRCLE OF SAFETY

1. Prior to entering the cab and starting the vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver shall make a circle of safety around the vehicle to see that all equipment is secured, that all compartment doors are securely closed and any physical obstructions moved out of the way.
2. During the circle of safety the emergency vehicle driver shall encircle the vehicle and visually inspect all 4 sides and the top of the vehicle before entering the cab. He/she should also verify right side and rear clearance with the person riding in the officer position.
3. The circle of safety check shall be conducted prior to moving the vehicle regardless of whether or not the vehicle is about to leave on an emergency or non-emergency.

3. WARNING DEVICES

1. When responding to a true emergency, all audible and visual warning devices will be operated at all times regardless of time of day and/or traffic conditions.
 - a. 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 insure the right-of-way.

4. VEHICLE CONTROL & 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 both their passengers and the general public.
2. Emergency vehicle drivers should be aware that the civilian vehicle operators may 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. If another vehicle operator fails to yield the right of way to an emergency vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver cannot force the right of way, nor can you assume the right of way, therefore you do not have the right of way until the other vehicle yields to you.
3. The emergency vehicle driver shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles and pedestrians at all time to make sure that a safe following distance is established and maintained.
 - a. All drivers shall follow the rule for safe following distance and allow 1 second of following distance for every 10 feet of vehicle length for speeds under 40 mph and add 1 additional second for each 10 mph for speeds over 40 mph.

5. RESPONSE SPEEDS

1. When responding to a true emergency only, drivers shall operate the vehicle they are driving at as close to the **posted speed limit** as possible, but not to exceed ten (10) miles per hour over the posted speed limit, conditions permitting. Examples of conditions requiring slower response speeds include but are not limited to:
 - Slippery road conditions
 - Inclement weather
 - Poor visibility
 - Heavy or congested traffic conditions
 - Sharp curves

6. INTERSECTIONS

1. Extreme care should be taken when approaching any intersection as intersections are the locations responsible for a large percentage of major accidents involving emergency vehicles. Drivers are required to practice the organizations intersection operating guidelines during all emergency responses.
 - a. Uncontrolled Intersections
 - i. Any intersection that does not offer a control device (stop sign, yield or traffic signal) in the direction of travel of the emergency vehicle or where a traffic control signal is green

upon the approach of the emergency vehicle all emergency vehicle drivers should do the following:

- Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast, etc.).
- Observe traffic in all 4 directions (left, right, front, rear)
- Slow down if any potential hazards are detected and cover the brake pedal with the drivers foot.
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200' from intersection
- Avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible.

b. Controlled Intersections

c. Any intersection controlled by a stop sign, yield sign, yellow traffic light or a red traffic light requires a complete stop by the emergency vehicle driver. In addition to bringing the vehicle to a complete stop

i. these additional steps must be followed as well:

- Do not rely on warning devices to clear traffic
- Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast etc.) as well as driver options
- Begin to slow down well before reaching the intersection and cover the brake pedal with the drivers foot, continue to scan in 4 directions (left, right, front, back)
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200; from intersection
- Scan intersection for possible passing options (pass on right, left, wait, etc.) avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible
- Come to a complete stop
- Establish eye contact with other vehicle drivers; have partner communicate all is clear; reconfirm all other vehicles are stopped
- Proceed one lane of traffic at a time treating each lane of traffic as a separate intersection

c. Railroad Intersections

i. At any time an emergency vehicle driver approaches an unguarded rail crossing he/she shall bring the apparatus or vehicle 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:

- Turn off all sirens and air horns;
- Operate the motor at idle speed;
- Turn off any other sound producing equipment or accessories;
- Open the windows and listen for a train's horn

7. NON-EMERGENCY RESPONSE

1. When responding to a call in a non-emergency response mode or normal flow of traffic (when not responding to a true emergency) 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.

8. ORDINARY TRAVEL

1. All drivers shall obey all traffic laws and traffic control devices when driving any EM vehicle under ordinary travel conditions.

9. RIDING POLICY

1. The department requires all persons riding on apparatus to be seated in approved riding positions and be secured to the vehicle by seat belts whenever the vehicle is in motion. The emergency vehicle driver and/or the person riding in the officer position shall verify that all personnel are properly seated and in seat belts before the vehicle is moved. Standard communication signals should be formulated and utilized by all personnel. The department prohibits the riding on tail steps, sidesteps, running boards, or any other exposed position.

10. BACKING

1. The department recommends that whenever possible drivers should avoid backing as the safest way to back up a vehicle is not to back up at all. When it is necessary to back-up any vehicle, all drivers shall follow one of the two following measures would be taken.
 - a. 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.
 1. If at any time the emergency vehicle driver loses sight of the spotter, he/she shall stop immediately until the spotter is visible again.
 - b. If conditions exist that make use of spotters impossible, all drivers, before attempting to back up any vehicle, shall will make a circle of safety to:
 - See 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;
 - 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.
 - Emergency lighting is activated to the rear of the vehicle.

11. 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.
2. Privately owned vehicles are not provided with the same exemptions that are provided to emergency vehicles.
3. No member of the organization will be permitted to violate any motor vehicle laws.
4. 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 will be subject to disciplinary action including, suspension, loss of driving privileges and withdrawal of courtesy light permit.