

---

S.O.P. #: 400-21

SUBJECT: RESPONSE PROCEDURES

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

---

Objective: Response to and from incidents, as well as operating on roadways present a high level of risk to fire department personnel. The company officer and fire apparatus driver operator of the vehicle are responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and for compliance with this standard operating procedure.

Section 1 : Response Modes

- A. Fire Department vehicles shall be operated in either an emergency mode, utilizing all vehicle emergency lights and sirens, or a non-emergency mode. Regardless of the vehicle operation mode, it is the responsibility of the driver of each vehicle to drive safely. It is the responsibility of the company officer to ensure that the driver is operating the vehicle in a safe manner.
- B. Response Criteria
- All personnel shall be seated and belted.
  - All warning lights and siren shall be activated.
  - The officer and driver shall determine the most practical route for response to an incident.
  - The Officer-in-charge of the first out unit with multiple units responding from the same station shall report to Fire Dispatch by radio upon leaving the station on any response.
  - A company moving to another station because of a greater alarm, drills, etc. will proceed under non-emergency conditions and retain their identity in all communications with Fire Dispatch on Talk-group 1.
  - Whenever apparatus is responding on an incident and cannot contact Fire Dispatch immediately upon leaving their station they will, upon contacting Fire Dispatch, give a location in conjunction with confirmation of their response. A location will also be given whenever confirmation of a response check is requested by Fire Dispatch.
  - Apparatus delayed for any reason while enroute to, or returning from, an incident will immediately notify Fire Dispatch by radio of their status.
  - When the delayed apparatus is clear to continue, Fire Dispatch is to be notified.
  - Fire apparatus and ambulances/medic units, while enroute to the Repair Shop and in condition to respond, shall report to Fire Dispatch as "in-service".
  - When a company encounters an emergency incident, regardless of type, and no fire department apparatus is on the scene, they will immediately advise Fire Dispatch of the situation.

Section 2: Emergency Response Mode:

1. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with State Motor Vehicle Statutes. This statute provides specific legal exceptions to regular traffic regulations that apply to fire department vehicles when responding to an emergency incident, or when transporting a patient to a medical facility in an emergency mode. Emergency response does not absolve the driver or the company officer of any responsibility to drive with due caution. The driver of the emergency vehicle and its officer are responsible for its safe operation at all times.
2. When responding in the emergency mode, all warning lights must be on and sirens must be sounding to warn drivers of other vehicles, as required by the state statute. When responding in a non-emergency mode no warning lights and siren shall be used.
3. The use of sirens and warning lights does not automatically grant the right-of-way to emergency vehicles. It merely requests the right-of-way from other drivers based on their awareness of the emergency vehicle presence. Drivers and company officers must make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers, and must drive defensively to be prepared for the unexpected actions of others.
4. Department vehicles are authorized to exceed posted speed limits only when responding in an emergency mode under favorable conditions. Under less than favorable conditions, the posted speed limit shall be observed.
5. Intersections present the greatest potential danger to emergency vehicles. When approaching a negative right-of-way intersection (red light, stop sign) the driver shall bring the vehicle to a complete stop. The driver shall proceed only after determining that all oncoming traffic in all lanes is yielding the right-of-way.
6. Emergency response is authorized only in conjunction with emergency incidents. Unnecessary emergency responses shall not be permitted. When the first arriving unit establishes that there is no emergency/nothing evident, then the incident commander will advise Dispatch and all responding units shall continue to the scene in the non-emergency mode.
7. During an emergency response, department vehicles shall avoid passing other emergency vehicles. If passing is necessary, the vehicle being passed must be contacted by radio and shall, when possible, move to the right lane.
8. Department vehicles shall not pass a school bus that has stopped with red lights flashing, unless the bus driver turns his lights off and pulls to the shoulder of the road. When clearly signaled by the bus driver that it is safe to pass a stopped school bus, the emergency vehicle shall proceed slowly and with extreme caution past the school bus. All members must be vigilant for children while approaching and passing the bus.
9. Department vehicles shall not exceed the posted speed limit when approaching a posted pedestrian crosswalk. If the crosswalk is occupied, the emergency vehicle shall slow down and prepare to stop if the pedestrian does not yield the right-of-way.
10. Fire department vehicles shall come to a complete stop at unguarded railway grade crossings. Caution shall be exercised at grade crossings where warning lights and or gates are provided. When approaching a grade crossing with lowered gates and or active lights, the vehicle shall come to a complete stop prior to the crossings.

Section 3: Backing of Fire Department Vehicles

1. When backing a fire department vehicle, at least one spotter shall be used. The exception shall be when the attendant of a medic unit is rendering patient care or when only one person is assigned to a vehicle such as a staff car, Division/Battalion Chief, or EMS Supervisor. If no spotter is available, the driver shall walk completely around apparatus to determine if obstructions are present before backing. Personnel are not permitted to ride on tailboard or runningboard while backing the vehicle.

Section 4: Roadway and Highway Operations

1. When operating on a roadway, position apparatus in such a manner as to provide the safest work area possible.
2. First arriving apparatus (Engines, Trucks, Squads) shall park to create a safe work zone that protects personnel from on coming traffic in at least one direction. Apparatus should block the most critical or highest volume direction first. The apparatus should be placed at a 45-degree angle to the curb no closer than 50 feet to the incident action area. Whenever possible, the angle of the apparatus should protect anyone at the pump panel or control area. First arriving apparatus should block only those travel lanes necessary to provide a safe working area.
3. When exiting apparatus always maintain an awareness of the risk of working around moving traffic.
4. Always exit on curb side, or non-traffic side, when possible.
5. Don personal protective equipment (PPE) once outside apparatus.
6. Parking of other responding vehicles
  - a. Medic Units, EMS Supervisors and other support vehicles should not be used as blocking units and should position in the shadow of the blocking apparatus. Company Officers should consider calling for the State Highway Administration CHART group early if additional blocking and or lane closures are needed on state roads.
7. Clearing Traffic Lanes
  - a. Once operational phases are completed, apparatus shall be re-positioned as soon as possible to allow traffic flow on as many lanes as possible. Crews, apparatus and equipment should be released as soon as practical to do so.