

## **Standard Operating Procedure/Policy for the safe and efficient operation of Fire Apparatus and/or Emergency Vehicles:**

It is a given that the drivers of emergency vehicles are under extreme pressures to make timely responses to calls for assistance from the communities they serve. Literally, communities almost mandate a “timely” response while at the same time failing to complete a response due to motor vehicle accident is unacceptable. For this reason the information included within this document shall be the accepted Standard Operating Procedure that all drivers of the \_\_\_\_\_ will follow when responding or returning from alarms.

It is also a goal, that following these procedures will allow the \_\_\_\_\_ to provide a safe work environment and reduce line of duty deaths and injuries through safe driving. It is also our goal to protect our public image, reduce liability and/or service disruption as a result of motor vehicle accidents involving our apparatus. Information within this document can only be circumvented under the direct order of the Fire Chief, Chief Administrator or his/her designee. However, in situations where direct orders are given to disregard this document, drivers still must drive with “due regard” for pedestrians and other motorists.

### **RESPONSIBILITY:**

It is the responsibility of each driver to operate his or her vehicle responsibly at all times. Fire Department vehicles shall operate within the parameters of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic law and all applicable sections. The V&T grants special exceptions or privileges to emergency vehicles and these exceptions are only extended during times of a bonafied emergency or while transporting a patient for purposes of emergency medical treatment, to a hospital or health care facility. Emergency response does NOT absolve the driver from failure to use due regard.

### **LIGHTS & SIREN:**

When responding to an emergency call, all emergency lights and a siren shall be used. Drivers clearly must understand that lights and siren simply “request” the right-of-way and do not guarantee any special privileges. It is the responsibility of the apparatus driver to make every reasonable effort to communicate their presence and intended actions to other motorists and pedestrians. Despite lights and siren(s) drivers must drive defensively and prepare for the unexpected actions of others.

## **SPEED:**

Fire Department vehicles are authorized to exceed the posted speed limit ONLY when responding to an emergency and ONLY under favorable conditions. Favorable conditions for the purposes of this document are described as:

- Light Traffic
- Good Road Quality
- Clear Visibility
- Dry Pavement

Under less than favorable conditions the posted speed limit is the maximum speed that may be attained.

## **INTERSECTIONS:**

It should be understood by all apparatus operators that intersections pose the greatest hazard to emergency vehicles. When approaching an intersection where the emergency vehicle has the right-of-way drivers will NOT exceed the speed limit and SHALL move their foot from the accelerator and cover the brake.

When approaching an intersection that is a “negative” intersection or one where the apparatus does not have the right of way the apparatus shall approach using the center or oncoming lane. The apparatus shall ALWAYS make a complete stop and be prepared for the unexpected actions of pedestrians or other motorists. The apparatus shall only proceed through the intersection when the driver is convinced it is clear to do so.

## **EARLY REPORTS/RETURN TO SERVICE:**

To insure the safety of the community and responding personnel it shall be the duty of the “first due” unit to provide an accurate description of what they have at the scene. When a first due unit provides a “nothing showing” report ALL other responding units may continue lights and siren to the incident however they may NOT exceed the speed limit. As soon as a determination is made by a “first due” unit or Fire Department Officer that additional units are not needed units will be returned to service as soon as possible. Units that have been “picked up” shall return immediately to quarters via the most direct route and shall avoid “the scene” or “drive byes” to insure there is no traffic congestion.

## **BACKING OF APPARATUS:**

Drivers of Fire Apparatus should avoid backing said apparatus whenever possible. When backing is unavoidable spotters **MUST** be used. When there is no spotter available the driver must exit the cab and do a complete walk around to observe for hazards. When possible spotters shall cover all four corners of the vehicle when backing. When only one spotter is available the left rear corner shall be covered. Driver and spotters shall confirm the backing and agreed procedures verbally prior to beginning the maneuver. The following points shall be followed when backing:

All cab windows shall be open

All emergency lights shall be activated

If the driver loses sight of any spotter the apparatus shall be stopped

Driver shall be responsible for safe backing operation

Hand signals shall be as follows:

### **Straight Back:**

One hand above head w/palm towards spotters face, waving back. The other hand shall be at the spotter's side.

### **Turn:**

Both arms pointing direction of turn with index fingers pointed

### **Stop:**

Both arms crossed, fists clenched

## **SEAT BELTS:**

An ejection of personnel during an apparatus accident is a national concern of the fire service. For this reason seat belt use is required for **ALL** personnel onboard apparatus. The driver must confirm that all personnel onboard are properly seated and belted prior to moving the apparatus. Also, personnel must be properly attired for the task at hand and any cab-mounted equipment **MUST** be secured in its designated mount. Flash lights, imagers, axes, hand tools etc cannot be loose in the cab area. Only approved, belted seating surfaces shall be used for riding.

## **PASSING APPARATUS:**

Whenever possible emergency vehicles should avoid passing each other. Where passing is unavoidable it shall not be done without the drivers of each apparatus involved communicating with each other via radio or hand signals. Drivers should consider the dangers their vehicles pose to personnel, spectators and other vehicles. Drivers **MUST** use extreme caution and low speed entering or exiting the fireground and shall be prepared to react to the unexpected.

## **PARKING/SHIELDING:**

Fire apparatus shall always be parked in a position to provide protection to personnel. Warning lights shall be used to warn approaching motorists of the emergency scene. Vehicle mounted floodlights shall be used to light the scene whenever possible. Personnel working outside of the fire apparatus shall wear reflective turnouts or vests. When not shielding personnel or being used at the scene, apparatus should be moved off the highway or pulled into a driveway or parking lot near the scene.

## **TIMELY RESPONSE:**

Timely responses shall NOT be achieved by:

- Leaving the station before crews are properly seated and belted
- Driving too fast for conditions
- Driving recklessly
- Taking chances at intersections
- Intimidating other motorists
- Failing to use accepted defensive driving practices and principals
- Rushing to “beat” other apparatus to be first due

## **LOW HAZARDS:**

Drivers and officers to the following incidents shall give consideration, and appropriate responses shall occur:

- Rubbish or grass fires (not near structure)
- Apparatus relocation
- Service calls
- Dumpster fires (not near structure)

## **TRAINING:**

Drivers of Fire Department Vehicles shall complete the following minimum training and compliance requirements:

- 2 Classroom driving sessions per year
- 2 Behind-the-wheel sessions per year
- 1 Drivers license review per year
- 1 Defensive driving interview per year
- 1 Driving observation by an officer per year
- 1 Road test by officer or designee every two years
- 1 Written “driving” quiz consisting of 10 questions every two years

**RECORDS:**

Each driver of Fire Department vehicles shall have a “drivers” file created. This shall be a manila office type file with the driver’s last and first name on the tab for filing alphabetically. Said files shall be kept in the Chief’s office and shall be reviewed for content annually. The file shall include a copy of the driver’s state driver’s license and at least four years of the training documents listed in the above “training” section of this document, to be able to demonstrate consistency and proof of completion.

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