

Waterloo Vol Fire Department Standard Operating Guidelines

DRIVING POLICY GUIDELINES

1 DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS

- Age & Experience: There should be a minimum age and experience limit. It may vary, however history has shown us that it is best to begin training a driver after they have reached their 21st birthday. Also due to the heavy stress related to emergency vehicle driving, a person should have at least 2 years driving experience before being permitted to operate emergency vehicles.
- Past Driving Record: A person's previous driving history has been found to be a good indicator of future accident history. Attached to this guideline is a sample driver screening policy. Drivers should be screened, utilizing this standard at least annually.
- Driver License: Any candidate for driver should present a currently valid driver's license which is of adequate classification to meet state law. A photocopy of the license should be maintained in the potential driver's file. Upon expiration, the driver should be required to present the new license for copy and filing.
- Physical Condition: All drivers should be subject to a periodic medical evaluation to determine that the operator is fit to perform driving duties.

2 DRIVER TRAINING

Procedures for training and testing drivers should be developed. At a minimum, each driver candidate should:

Pass a written test covering department guidelines for driving, knowledge of response area, local and state laws applicable to driving emergency vehicles, and general information regarding the vehicle.

1. Complete an Emergency Vehicles Operators Course (EVOC) which is recognized by the organization.
2. Actually drive the vehicle several times with an experienced driver along. Initially, driving should take place in an empty parking area. Only after the experienced driver feels that the candidate is able to handle the vehicle properly, should they be permitted to operate on public roadways. The candidate should be required to train on all different types of roads within the response area including residential roads, commercial area and limited access highways if they are present.
3. Pass a final road test, which should include turning, backing, distance and clearance judgment, braking, parking, turn arounds and operations on any special roadway specific to the response area. Knowledge of dashboard gauges and warning lights should also be tested.
4. If maintenance or refueling is part of a driver's normal duties, the practical test should include these subjects as well.
5. If vehicles are equipped with retarders such as engine, transmission or drive line retarders, the candidate should be tested on the proper operations of these items.

Further information on driver training may be found in National Fire Protection Association Standard 1451

3 VEHICLE OPERATION

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This section should begin with a statement regarding the fact that the vehicles should never operate “Lights and Sirens for emergency response, unless they are responding to a true emergency and then, only with due regard for other vehicles.

TRUE EMERGENCY: A situation in which there is a high probability of death or serious injury to an individual or significant property loss, and action by an emergency vehicle operator may reduce the seriousness of the situation.

DUE REGARD: Driving in such a manner so as to avoid any predictable collision.

The organization should develop individual standards covering such items as safe driving during both emergency response and non-emergency travel. These standards should always emphasize that the safe arrival of the vehicle at the emergency scene is the first priority. Items listed here should include specific criteria regarding vehicle speed, crossing intersections, transversing railroad grade crossings, and the use of emergency warning devices.

Before any operation, the operator should be required to:

Check around the vehicle to see that there are no obstructions, all compartment doors are shut, clearance is adequate, electric cables and exhaust connections are off or ready to self-detach.

1. Ascertain that all passengers are seated and secured with seat belts.
2. Turn on lighting appropriate for the exterior light conditions, although it is recommend that the headlights be utilized at all times while the vehicle is in motion.
3. Before backing, a spotter must be in place to assist. No vehicle should be moved in reverse without a competent spotter in place.

During non-emergency travel:

1. Drivers should obey all traffic control signals, speed limits, and rules of the road of the jurisdiction involved.
2. Emergency warning lights should not be on. If permitted by law, warning lights may be illuminated while backing into the station for safety purposes.
3. No audible signals should be used except for the horn in an emergency.
4. The vehicle should come to a complete stop at all railroad grade crossings and proceed only when the driver is certain it is clear.

During emergency response:

1. Drivers should bring the vehicle to a complete stop and proceed only when safe under the following circumstances:
 - When directed by a law enforcement officer
 - Red traffic lights
 - Stop signs
 - Negative right-of-way intersections
 - Blind intersections
 - When the driver cannot account for all lanes if traffic in an intersection

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- When any intersection is not completely clear of traffic or pedestrians
 - When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing lights
2. Drivers should proceed through intersections only when the driver can account for all lanes of traffic.
 3. Vehicles should not attempt to circumvent any traffic law without the use of audible and visual warning devices. These devices should conform to National Fire Protection Association Standard 1901.
 4. Extra space should be maintained between two emergency vehicles traveling in the same direction. Traffic will likely begin to move after the first vehicle has exited the intersection, making it imperative for the second vehicle to come to a complete stop. Escorts should be discouraged for this same reason.

3.1 **ACCIDENT PROCEDURES**

No matter how comprehensive the driver policy is, accidents still do occur. What happens immediately following the accident is extremely important to the final outcome of the accident. Therefore accident procedures should be addressed in the driver policy. Specific procedures should be established as to what to do in the event of an accident. These should include:

- Responsibilities at the accident scene:
 1. Stop and investigate immediately
 2. Check for injuries of member and civilians
 3. Notify dispatch if the accident with location, number, type and extent of injuries, any need for additional units, police and the predetermined organization supervisors designated to be called (These should include the Chief, the Safety Office, the Public Information Officer, and the Maintenance Officer)
 4. Protect the incident scene with warning devices to prevent additional damages or injuries
 5. Do not move the vehicles until the police have arrived. If the emergency vehicle must leave the scene, at least one member should remain
 6. Do not discuss the accident with anyone other than the police
 7. Obtain names and addresses of witnesses
 8. Photos should be taken if possible
 9. Complete an on the scene accident report form (Available form ESI)
- After the accident:
 1. The organization's insurance provider should be notified as soon as possible
 2. The crew should be debriefed and complete reports
 3. The driver should complete all reports mandated by law, the organization and the insurance company

The organization should have an accident review board of some sort, with their own policy. The driver policy should refer to that document.

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3.2 **GENERAL SAFETY RULES**

The following are general provisions that should be addressed in the driver policy:

- No persons shall be permitted to ride on a tailboard or anywhere else outside the vehicle except during hose loading operations; and then only after the development of written safety procedures addressing the safety aspects.
- All persons shall be seated and belted before the vehicle is placed in motion. Members actively performing necessary emergency medical care while the vehicle is in motion should be secured to the vehicle by a seat belt or safety harness designed for such use, consistent with the effective provision of such emergency care.
- Releasing seat belts, while the vehicle is in motion should not be permitted for any reason, including donning gear. This should be done before boarding the apparatus or after arrival on scene. SCBA may be donned while belted.
- Members riding in cabs or tiller seats that are not enclosed on three sides and the top should be wearing helmets and eye protection.
- All vehicles should be inspected at least weekly as well as within 24 hours after use or repair to identify and correct unsafe conditions.
- The policy should set procedures for reporting an unsafe condition and declaring a vehicle out of service.
- Persons other than members should not be permitted to ride on vehicles except for patients in EMS vehicles.
- On fire apparatus, wheel chocks should be put into place before advancing the throttle for pump or ladder operations and on EMS vehicles before advancing the throttle for high idle.
- The driver should not be responsible for operating the radio while the vehicle is in motion.
- When at the emergency scene, only necessary vehicle warning lights should be left on. Headlights should always be turned off while parked.
- A re-certification program should be developed so that drivers must regularly indicate their abilities to a ranking officer or committee designated for this purpose. Driver performance may be used, so that members who execute their duties in an able, consistent manner may use their record to re-certify. However, no driver should become exempt from a regular physical.
- Appropriate apparel for drivers should be addressed. Drivers should not be wearing boots or bunker gear, which could impede their motions and safe operations of the vehicle.