

# HEPBURN TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

## DRIVING GUIDELINES

### **Purpose: (Exceeds NFPA 1500 6.2)**

Responding to any emergency call 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 the safest and most prudent manner possible. Emergency vehicle drivers have in their care, custody and control most of the major assets possessed by this organization (the vehicles, portable equipment, personnel). Emergency vehicle drivers are also held to a higher standard of care than the general public and must provide due regard for the safety of others. ***Safe arrival at the emergency scene shall be, and must always remain, the first priority of all emergency vehicle drivers.***

### **Procedures:**

#### **1. Checking vehicle prior to moving:**

Prior to entering the cab and starting the vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver shall make a quick check around the vehicle to see that equipment is secured, that compartment doors are securely closed and any physical obstructions moved out of the way. (Circle of Safety) He/she should also verify clearance with the person riding in the officer position. If occupied by an officer, that officer also takes responsibility for the driver's every action. This shall be conducted prior to moving the vehicle regardless of whether or not the vehicle is about to leave on an emergency or a non-emergency. When the parking brake is released if the Red warning light/buzzer in the cab comes on – you will set the brake and check ALL the doors by getting out of the vehicle. **(Circle of safety)**

#### **2. Warning Devices and True Emergencies:**

When responding to a "**true emergency**", lights and siren (when necessary) will be operated. 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!***

The definition of "**true emergency**" is any situation in which there is a **HIGH PROBABILITY** of death or serious injury to an individual or significant property loss, and actions by an emergency vehicle driver may reduce the seriousness of the situation.

### 3. Emergency - Non/Emergency Response:

Upon arrival and size up of all incidents that equipment is responding to in the emergency mode - command will advise as soon as possible that the equipment respond in non-emergency if no "**true emergency**" is taking place.

Operators will respond to vehicle accidents with no injuries, move-ups or stand by assignments, water problems, stand-bys, service calls, low batteries in smoke alarms, CO alarms w/ no medical emergency, lock outs, stable medical patients – people at location that don't know the code & **all other non-life threatening calls** in the **NON-EMERGENCY** mode. **If in doubt respond non-emergency – this will be the MAJORITY of our responses!**

**Any time equipment is on the road the head lights will be on.**

Upon arrival at the scene all vehicles will be parked in the safest location and in a position to carry out their function. If possible locate them off the highway, at an angle after checking to see if the area will support the weight. **ALL forward emergency lighting will be OFF.** Be careful when using any flood or spot lights as not to blind on coming traffic. **Always watch the traffic and never assume the on-coming traffic can see you or will do what you want them to do. Position the vehicle assuming it will be struck!**

### 4. Vehicle Control:

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. 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.

The emergency vehicle driver shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles & pedestrians at all times to make sure that a safe following distance is established and maintained. All drivers shall follow the rules for safe following distance and allow **FOUR SECONDS** of following distance as a minimum.

### 5. Response Speeds:

When responding to a "**true emergency,**" drivers **shall not exceed the posted speed limit.** Only respond at the posted limit under ideal driving conditions. Examples of conditions requiring slower response speeds include but are not limited to:

- slippery road conditions

- inclement weather
- poor visibility & at night
- Heavy or congested traffic conditions and sharp curves

## 6. Intersection Practices:

Extreme care should be taken when approaching any intersection as intersections are the locations responsible for the largest percentage of major accidents involving emergency vehicles. Drivers are required to practice the organizations intersection operating guidelines during all emergency responses.

### Railroad Intersections

NFPA, Operation Lifesaver, and the FHWTSA say emergency vehicles must come to a **COMPLETE STOP** at every **Unguarded crossing** before going across. The following is also recommended:

1. Shut down the sirens, air horns and any other sound producing items.
2. Do not race the engine, let it run at idle speed.
3. Open the window and listen for the train's air horns or bells.

### Guarded crossings

1. Slow down and be ready to stop for the train.
2. The crossings safety warning equipment may not be working.
3. Never try to beat the gates or proceed when the warning lights are on.
4. Never drive around the gates because you think the gates are going up too slowly.

### Stop-Look-Listen and Live!

### Uncontrolled Intersections

Intersections that **DO NOT** offer a control device (signal, yield or stop sign) in the direction of travel of the emergency vehicle or where the signal light is green should be approached in the following manner:

1. Scan the intersection for all possible hazards: right turns on red, pedestrians, fast approaching vehicles, bicycles, etc.
2. Check the traffic in all four directions in the area of the intersection.
3. If you have the green light **DO NOT** exceed the posted speed limit.
4. As you approach the intersection remove your foot from the accelerator and place it over the brake pedal. **BE READY TO STOP.**
5. Activate the siren in the **WAIL MODE** at least 250 feet prior to the intersection and if so equipped, sound the air horns (if so equipped) a few short blasts if there is any type of hazard in the area of the intersection.

6. Pass other vehicles on the left whenever possible, if you pass on the right use extreme caution.
7. Always be prepared and keep the vehicle's speed slow enough so you can stop if another vehicle fails to yield the right-of-way.

***Remember - You only have the right-of-way if someone yields it to you. If they don't yield it to you then you don't have the right-of-way.***

### **Controlled Intersections**

Intersections controlled by a **red traffic light, flashing red light, stop sign or a yield sign** requires a **COMPLETE STOP** by the emergency vehicle operator. The following will also make your trip safer at the controlled intersection:

1. **DO NOT** rely on the warning lights, sirens or air horns to clear traffic.
2. Scan the intersection for all hazards and travel options as you approach, pass on the left whenever possible.
3. Slow the vehicle well in advance of the intersection. Apply the brakes slowly. Continue to scan all areas of the intersection.
4. **COME TO A COMPLETE STOP** and continue forward only after you are sure you have control of **EVERY LANE** of the intersection.
5. Communicate your intention to move forward and try to have eye contact with the other drivers at the intersection if possible.
6. **Every lane of the intersection must be treated as a separate intersection.**
7. Siren in the **WAIL MODE** in use at least 250 feet prior to the intersection. Short blasts on the air horns (if so equipped) prior to the intersection.
8. Be alert for other emergency vehicles or drivers that may not see or hear you at the intersection.

### **7. Passing Other Emergency Vehicle:**

You should never attempt to pass another emergency vehicle that is on an emergency run. The only exception is when the other emergency vehicle has a problem and its operator clearly signals or radios to you to pass. Even then, extreme caution must be used.

### **8. Convoys and Escorts:**

The disadvantages of Emergency Vehicle convoys and escorts greatly outweigh any advantages. If two or more emergency vehicles are going to a scene they should stay at least 500 feet apart. Cars that pull over may pull back directly into the path of the second vehicle if not enough distance is maintained. Using a "wail" mode in the first vehicle and a "yelp" mode in the second may also help to prevent such accidents.

## 9. Passing Stopped School Buses:

Emergency vehicles are not exempt from the stopped school bus laws. **Never pass a stopped school bus that is displaying red lights.** If the driver shuts off the lights and signals you to pass then-and only then-should you move forward. Be very careful, children can be very unpredictable.

## 10. Passing Vehicles As You Respond:

If possible you should pass vehicles on the left. Most people do not expect to be passed on the right, especially by an emergency vehicle. Pennsylvania requires that other vehicles yield to the emergency vehicle by going to the right and then stopping. If another vehicle decides to move to the right as you try to pass on the right, you're in trouble. Only in rare situations can passing on the right, using extreme caution, be justified.

## 11. Crossing the Center Line:

Crossing the center lines of a highway should be done only if the lanes in front of you are completely blocked and you have no other choice. Use extreme caution. On a two lane road, the double yellow or single yellow on your side should never be crossed'

## 12. Expressway and Thruway Operations:

On expressways and thruways the flow of traffic is a priority. The flow must be maintained or serious rear-end accidents will occur. In most cases, traffic flow can be maintained. If traffic must be stopped, warning must be placed prior to the backup. Vehicles should be parked at an angle, on one side of the highway only. Cones should be used to move traffic where you want it to go. Never stand between the flow of traffic and the rear of any vehicles stopped at the incident. If you have to make a U-turn do it at the area maintained for U-turns. **ALL FORWARD FACING EMERGENCY LIGHTS WILL BE OFF!**

## 13. Riding Policy and Seat Belts: (NFPA 1500)

**All persons** riding on any emergency vehicle are 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.** Personnel who perform emergency medical care while the vehicle is in motion should be secured to the seat by a belt when possible.

## ROLLOVER PREVENTION – USFA & NIOSH Recommendations

- Avoid soft shoulders – on narrow roads maintain position close to centerline of the road while traveling
- Do not panic
- Get control of your speed – take your foot off the gas and stay off the brake
- • Allow the vehicle to slow down on its own to under 20 MPH
- • Maintain control of your steering – go straight ahead
- • When at a slow speed (under 20 MPH) turn the wheel to the left and get back onto the roadway
- • Do not jerk the wheel or apply acceleration to the vehicle

#### **14. Backing:**

It is recommended that whenever possible drivers should avoid backing. When it is necessary to back-up any vehicle, drivers shall follow one of the two following guidelines. The safest procedure is that before any vehicle is put into reverse and backed that a spotter be placed near the left rear of the vehicle in a position to be seen at all times. If at any time the driver loses sight of the spotter, he/she shall stop immediately until the spotter makes himself/herself visible again. The spotter shall equip himself/herself with a portable radio that will be on our Channel 8 and communicate with the operator on Channel 8 as needed. conditions exist that make use of a spotter impossible, all drivers, before attempting to back up any vehicle, shall get out and check the rear to see that nothing is directly behind the vehicle or in its intended path of travel.

#### **15. Alcoholic Beverages - Drugs and Fatigue:**

Under no conditions will a member operate any equipment or make up any part of the EMS crew when that member has the smell alcoholic beverage on his/her breath or is under any influence of any type of intoxicants or drugs. Members should also refrain from driving if they are tired or under any other emotional stress that could effect their driving in an alert and safe manner. If you are involved in an accident, you may be required to take a blood test.

#### **16. “Jake” Brake Operation: (or other secondary braking system)**

The “jake” brake has on/off and high/low settings. It also is de-activated by the anti-lock brake system. Make sure you use the “jake” brake in the proper manner or the rear drive wheels could slow too rapidly and cause the apparatus to slide and lose control. **In rain, ice or snow shut off these devices.**

#### **17. Responding in Your Private Non-Emergency Vehicle:**

When responding to the station or scene of an emergency in your own private vehicle, all applicable motor vehicle laws must be strictly adhered to. **Privately owned non-emergency vehicles are not granted any exemptions to the vehicle and traffic laws that apply to authorized emergency vehicles.**

Due to the stress that a timely response generates, you need to make a special effort to operate your vehicle in a safe manner. As with emergency vehicles, you should pay close attention to:

- Speed limits, road, weather and light conditions
- Intersections with and without control device
- Passing, turning and parking in a safe location

***You can be held both criminally and civilly liable if an accident were to occur while on duty as an emergency responder. The agency for whom you work can also be brought into a lawsuit if the case can be made that you were improperly or inadequately instructed, or no effort was made to control unsafe or reckless operation when responding.***

*When parking at the scene, keep your vehicle as far away as reasonably possible and in a safe position, try to keep vehicles on one side of the street and if possible out of the street.*

*Shut off all lights.*