



NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Department of EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

TOPIC: Emergency Vehicle Operation	SOG #: 2.6
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the operation of vehicles owned, operated and maintained by the Northampton County Department of EMS (NCEMS). The department utilizes a fleet of vehicles as an essential resource to our personnel, providing a safe and efficient quality service to our customers. It is the objective of NCEMS to provide appropriate vehicles, training and supervision of personnel who operate vehicles. Supervisors are expected to implement and enforce all vehicle policies contained in this SOG.

SCOPE

All department EMS personnel

CONTENT

The following procedures are in accordance with accepted standards put forth in the Virginia Emergency Medical Services Regulation. Violations of any of the below, the finding of any form of inappropriate or unsafe operations of any licensed EMS vehicle, or any moving violation charge during the operation of any licensed EMS vehicle may result in disciplinary actions and/or driver penalties.

ELIGIBILITY to OPERATE VEHICLES

1. Must be eighteen (18) year of age.
2. Have a valid driver’s license in the state in which they reside with no restrictions in Virginia or any neighboring state.
3. Must have and maintain a satisfactory driving record as follows:
 - -4 or fewer demerit points
 - No DWI/DUI convictions within the last five (5) years
 - An overall pattern of safe vehicle operation and driving habits
4. Evidence of completion of an OEMS approved Emergency Vehicle Operator’s Course (EVOC).
5. Operators shall complete an orientation process to be cleared to drive in each station. Driver orientation shall be documented on the appropriate NCEMS FORM, with appropriate officer approval(s) prior to release.
6. All approved operators for emergency vehicles are to notify the EMS Director/Chief in writing, within three (3) days, of any moving violation while operating a motor vehicle while off duty. Final court disposition shall also be reported with three (3) calendar days of the date of conviction.



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7. All approved operators are to notify the EMS Director/Chief immediately upon learning their driver's license has been suspended or revoked.
8. Appropriate follow-up action will be implemented should problems exist with any of the above operator requirements.

OPERATION of VEHICLES

All licensed EMS vehicles must be operated in compliance with applicable state law at all times.

When operating an emergency vehicle in reverse:

- When backing a vehicle which may have an obstructed view to the rear, back slowly, watch both sides using mirrors and if possible enlist a spotter, outside the emergency vehicle, as a guide;
- Any time an emergency vehicle is in reverse, the audible alarm shall be on. If the backup alarm is not audible, a special report form shall be filed immediately to the EMS Director/Chief upon return to the station.

When operating an emergency vehicle the driver is responsible for the following:

- Ensuring all front seat occupants are wearing a seat belt at all times while the vehicle is in motion (Other occupants should wear seat belts when practical);
- Safe operation and the use of good judgment in the proper response of the emergency vehicle;
- Exercise added caution when driving through residential and school zones, overtaking children on bicycles/roller skates, etc. and when passing playground areas.
- Ensuring all items in the patient compartment are stored or secured in a manner to prevent them from interfering with the operation of the vehicle or becoming projectiles in the event of an accident;
- The safety of those on the emergency vehicle;
- Knowing the location of the call and how to get there before responding;
- Making a walk around inspection of the vehicle prior to operation to check for obvious concerns, such as low tires, fluid leaks, broken lights or mirrors, etc;
- Ensuring all equipment (stretcher, defibrillator, backboards, etc.) is on the emergency vehicle and safely secured for travel;
- No vehicle should be operated with a known safety defect until appropriate repairs are completed;
- When stopping on the road becomes necessary, appropriate warning devices shall be deployed, including emergency lights, flares, safety cones or reflective triangles to provide adequate warning.

When responding on an emergency call:



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- Lights shall be used at all times and sirens as necessary, unless specifically requested not to by dispatch or the caller;
- The emergency vehicle shall be brought to a complete stop at all times under the following conditions:
 1. *When directed by a law enforcement officer;*
 2. *At all red traffic lights or stop signs;*
 3. *At yield signs;*
 4. *At a blind intersection;*
 5. *When the driver cannot account for all lanes of traffic in an intersection or other intersection hazards are present;*
 6. *When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing warning lights;*
- When hazardous road conditions exist, emergency vehicles will be operated below the posted speed limit, using good judgment.

When transporting to the hospital:

- When hazardous road conditions exist, emergency vehicles will be operated below the posted speed limit, using good judgment;
- Routine use of emergency lights and siren for transports to the hospital or receiving facilities shall be limited to only those patients who comply with 12VAC5-31-1150 of the EMS regulations. Transports to the hospital in the emergency mode of operation are acceptable when determination by the Attendant-In-Charge (AIC) is such the patient's condition is unstable or life threatening. All stable patients shall be routinely transported in the non-emergency mode;
- Should a conflict arise between a career AIC and volunteer driver pursuant to the transportation mode, career staff must file a special report documenting such conflict.

When accompanying another emergency vehicle:

- Use extreme caution, since many other motorists, when seeing the first emergency vehicle pass, cannot hear the second siren and assume there is only one vehicle;
- The suggested following distance is ten (10) car lengths;
- An alternate siren mode from the first emergency vehicle is recommended.

UNIT READINESS

Prior to putting the unit back in service after a call, usually at the hospital, the driver is responsible for ensuring the following are completed:

- Cleaning and decontaminating the unit;
- Checking for equipment previously left at the hospital;



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- Restocking the unit while at the hospital (On all ALS calls and as necessary on BLS calls, the Attendant-in-Charge will provide, to the driver, a list of supplies used). Only supplies not available at the hospital should be replaced at the station.

ACCIDENTS WITH EMERGENCY VEHICLES

Any emergency vehicle involved in a motor vehicle accident will:

- Stop;
- Notify Rescue Dispatch, via radio, of the incident and request known additional resources needed and law enforcement for investigation;
- Establish scene safety;
- Determine number of injuries and treat any injuries as able;
- Notify EMS Director/Chief or appropriate NCEMS Duty Supervisor and determine extent of damage to the emergency vehicle (The EMS Director/Chief or NCEMS Duty Supervisor shall notify the appropriate Station Liaison.);
- Statements regarding the accident are not to be made to anyone with the exception of the investigating law enforcement officer, investigating Duty Supervisor or EMS Director/Chief.
- An operator involved in an accident affecting a motor vehicle will be required to submit to a post-accident drug screen and breathe alcohol test if certain conditions are present (please see the Anti-Substance Abuse Policy for specifics);
- Written information concerning the accident, including information about other drivers involved should be forwarded as soon as possible to the EMS Director/Chief for insurance filing purposes. (Whenever possible a copy of the investigating officer's report should be obtained.)

OPERATOR REMEDIATION

Additional training may be required or conducted on an 'as needed basis' for personnel who have demonstrated a pattern of unacceptable driving performance, as determined by NCEMS Officers.