

	UNION CENTER FIRE COMPANY INC. Best Operating Guidelines	
	SUBJECT: EMERGENCY VEHICLE RESPONSE OPERATING GUIDANCE	BOG Series operations
	Approved: Fire Chief Chris Hoyt	Initiated 3-10-13 Revised

**EMERGENCY VEHICLE RESPONSE
OPERATING GUIDANCE**

PURPOSE:

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 apparatus, equipment and personnel to render service to those in need, but just as importantly, they 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 the organization (the vehicle, portable equipment and personnel). Emergency vehicle drivers are also held to a higher standard of care than the general motoring 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 all equipment is secured, all compartment doors are securely closed and any physical obstructions are moved out of the way of the vehicle. The driver should also verify clearance with the person riding in the officer position. This shall be conducted prior to moving the vehicle regardless of whether or not the vehicle is about to respond on an emergency or non-emergency. All passengers shall fasten seat belts prior to vehicle movement!

2. WARNING DEVICES AND TRUE EMERGENCIES

The definition of "True Emergency" (per United States Department Of Transportation and New York States Department Of Health) 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"**.

When responding to a "True Emergency", lights and siren (when necessary) will be operated. All emergency vehicle driver's 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.**

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 after checking to ascertain that the area will support the weight. White lights including headlights should be shut off upon arrival. Be careful when using any flood or spot lights as not to blind on coming traffic. **Always watch the traffic. Never assume the on-coming traffic can see you or will do the right thing.**

3. EMERGENCY - NON EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Upon arrival and size-up of an incident, command will advise all units as to the status of the incident. If no “true emergency” exists, command will advise equipment to respond in a non-emergency mode. Command may alter equipment response as necessary.

Response to mutual aid fill-ins, water problems, standbys, service calls, low batteries in smoke alarms, CO alarms with no medical emergency, lock outs and other non-life threatening calls will be made in the non-emergency mode.

At any time UCFC vehicles are driving on the road, headlights will be on!

4. VEHICLE CONTROL

All drivers shall attempt to maintain control of the vehicle 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 civilian vehicle operators may not react in the manner 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 their rate of closure on other vehicles and pedestrians at all times, to make sure that a safe following distance is established and maintained. All drivers shall follow the rule for safe following distance and allow 4 seconds of following distance as a minimum.

5. RESPONSE SPEEDS:

When responding to a true emergency, drivers shall operate the vehicle as close to the posted speed limit as possible, but not to exceed ten (10) miles per hour over the posted speed limit, conditions permitting. Examples of conditions requiring slower response speeds include but are not limited to:

- ◆ slippery roads
- ◆ inclement weather
- ◆ heavy or congested traffic conditions
- ◆ poor visibility
- ◆ sharp curves

INTERSECTION PRACTICES

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

UNCONTROLLED INTERSECTIONS

Intersections that **do not** offer a traffic 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 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 peddle. **BE READY TO STOP.**
5. Activate siren at least 250 feet prior to the intersection and, if so equipped, sound air horns 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 speed low 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, 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 require 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 off 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 in the intersection if possible.
6. **Every lane of an intersection must be treated as separate intersection.**

7. Activate siren at least 250 feet prior to the intersection and, if so equipped, sound air horns a few short blasts if there is any type of hazard in the area of the intersection.

8. Be alert for other emergency vehicles or drivers that may not see or hear you.

RAILROAD INTERSECTIONS

National Fire Protection Organization (NFPA) Operation Lifesaver and the Federal Highway Transportation Safety Administration (FHWTSA) say emergency vehicles **must** come to a **COMPLETE STOP** at every **unguarded crossing (no warning lights and /or gate arms)** before going across. The following is also recommended.

UNGUARDED CROSSING

1. Shut down the siren(s), air horn(s) and any other sound producing devices.
2. Do not race the engine, let it run at idle speed.
3. Open window and listen for the train's horn(s) or bell(s).

GUARDED CROSSING (warning lights and /or gate arms)

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

STOP, LOOK, LISTEN and LIVE!

PASSING EMERGENCY VEHICLES

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

CONVOYS AND ESCORTS

The disadvantages of EV 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 vehicle may also help to prevent such accidents.

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 unpredictable.

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. Most states require 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.

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, use extreme caution and look ahead for oncoming traffic.

RIDING POLICY and SEAT BELTS

The District requires all persons riding on emergency apparatus to be seated in approved riding positions and be secured in the vehicle by seat belts prior to the vehicle being placed into motion. The emergency vehicle operator 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.

BACKING

The company requires that whenever possible drivers should avoid backing, as the safest way to back up a vehicle is not to back up at all. When it is necessary to back up any emergency vehicle, all drivers shall adhere to one of the two following guidelines.

1 The company procedure is that before any vehicle is put into reverse and backed up, that a spotter be placed near the left rear of the vehicle. The spotter should walk to the front of the vehicle and should be in the drivers line of sight and positioned so that the driver can see the spotter at all times. If at any time the driver loses sight of the spotter, he / she shall immediately stop until the spotter becomes visible again. The spotter shall observe the area immediately behind and above the vehicle.

.2 If conditions exist that make use of a spotter impossible or impractical, all drivers shall get out and check behind and above the vehicle before backing to insure that there is nothing in the path of vehicle travel.

RESPONSE IN A PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLE (POV)

When responding to the station for an emergency in a privately owned vehicle (non department vehicle), all applicable motor vehicle laws shall be strictly adhered to. Privately owned vehicles are not granted any exemptions to the vehicle and traffic laws that apply to authorized emergency vehicles. **PRIVATE VEHICLES ARE NOT EMERGENCY VEHICLES AND THEREFORE ARE NOT AFFORDED ANY EXEMPTIONS OR SPECIAL PRIVILEGES UNDER STATE LAW.**

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

1. Speed limits; road, weather and light conditions.
2. Intersections with or without a traffic control device.
3. Passing, turning and parking.

You are authorized a blue identification light and you must comply with the NYS Motor Vehicle Commissioners Rules and Regulations Part 44, which covers size, type, color and candle power of the light. Remember, you are representing the Union Center Fire Company and you draw attention to yourself when you respond with a blue light operating on a vehicle.

NOTE: Under some conditions a POV equipped and operated by a fire chief or assistant fire chief is considered to be an authorized emergency vehicle (see NYS V&T Law, definitions of Fire Vehicles [115a(2)]).

You may be held both civil and criminally 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.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES - DRUGS AND FATIGUE

Under no condition shall a firefighter operate any district or department vehicle or make up any part of an EMS crew when that firefighter has the smell of alcohol on their breath or is under the influence of any type of intoxicant or drug. Firefighters should also refrain from driving if they are tired or under any emotional stress that could effect their driving in a safe and alert manner.

OTHER OPERATOR DUTIES

Drivers will not leave the area of the vehicle they drove to the incident. Unless instructed to do so.

Drivers will return vehicles to the fire station only upon orders of the incident commander.

Drivers are responsible to fill out the log book, make sure the vehicle water and fuel tanks are full and restock any items that were used including SCBA's.

