


RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY VOL. FIRE & RESCUE ASSOCIATION.	NUMBER: SOG-204 - 1 (REVISED)
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	EFFECTIVE DATE: 11/18/2022
SUBJECT: Vehicle & Traffic Safety	PAGE 1 of 4
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PURPOSE: To provide appropriate safety guidelines for fire and rescue personnel when operating emergency vehicles or deployed at the scene of a roadway incident.

BACKGROUND: Responding to emergency incidents does not in any manner reduce the responsibility to operate vehicles safely. While prompt response to emergency incidents is an organizational priority, safety is always a higher priority. The responding units must arrive safely at the location where they are needed before they can deliver the required services. Unsafe operation of an emergency vehicle creates an unacceptable risk to fire and rescue members, to the public, and to the individuals who are in need of assistance.

POLICY:

1. Emergency vehicle shall always be operated with due regard for safety of persons and property.
2. Drivers bear full responsibility for the safe operation of the vehicle at all times, including compliance with all traffic laws, as well as other applicable policies, procedures, rules, and regulations.
3. Drivers shall ensure the vehicle is safe for driving, all equipment is secure, all compartment and passenger doors are closed, and all passengers are seated with their seatbelts secured. Exceptions to this policy are situations where patient care in an ambulance limits the effective use of seatbelts; ambulance personnel should use seatbelts when not actively treating or touching the patient and should minimize the time they are unrestrained.
4. Emergency vehicles shall only be operated by individuals who comply with the applicable state driver's license requirements and have been trained and certified to operate the particular vehicle or type/class of vehicle through a comprehensive Emergency Vehicle Operator Course (EVOC). An exception is when the vehicle is being operated under the direct supervision of the Chief or their designee, as part of a training program.

WARNING DEVICES:

5. The posted speed limit may be exceeded only when the required warning devices are in use and when weather, traffic and road conditions are favorable.

INTERSECTIONS:

6. During emergency responses, vehicles should come to complete stop prior to proceeding through any controlled intersection against the signal of a light or Stop sign, or any railroad crossing. The vehicle may proceed after all opposing traffic has stopped or the intersection has been cleared.

7. If necessary due to traffic conditions or visual obstructions, vehicles shall cross intersections in stages, treating each lane as a separate intersection. The driver shall stop the vehicle as necessary to ensure each lane may be crossed safely.

8. If another responding emergency vehicle is met at an intersection, the vehicle with the right-of-way normally shall be given the right-of-way.

9. Travel against the normal direction of traffic flow on a one-way street shall be limited to short distances. Emergency vehicle drivers must proceed slowly and with extreme caution in these situations.

10. Travel in an opposing traffic or center turn lane shall be limited to short distances. When approaching a controlled intersection (traffic lights or stop signs) in an opposing traffic lane or center turn lane, the emergency vehicle shall come to a full stop before entering the intersection, even if the traffic lane is green in the direction of travel.

PASSING:

11. When overtaking traffic moving in the same direction, drivers shall give the other vehicle an opportunity to yield the right-of-way before passing. If it is necessary to pass a vehicle that has not yielded the right of way, the emergency vehicle shall provide as wide a clearance as possible.

12. Passing other emergency vehicles while responding to an emergency is prohibited unless the vehicle being overtaken pulls off to the far-right side of the roadway, stops, and physically waves the overtaking vehicle past or clearly makes a unit to unit radio transmission indicating the same.

13. Emergency vehicles shall not pass a school bus that has stopped with red flashing lights to load or discharge passengers.

INCIDENT SCENES:

14. When parking an emergency vehicle at the scene, the front wheels should be turned away from where personnel or patients will be located.

15. Apparatus and other emergency vehicles at an incident location shall be positioned in a manner that best protects the incident scene and work area in accordance with the Department of Transportation Traffic Incident Management (*TIMS*) manual.¹

16. The driver/operator of any emergency vehicle shall ensure that their vehicle's parking brake is applied before exiting the cab, and place wheel chocks if equipped at the scene of any incident.

17. Personnel operating in or near a roadway should be wearing a Safety Vest per *SOG 203*. Helmet use is also highly recommended for all personnel.

18. Whenever possible, apparatus should be positioned at the scene of a roadway incident in such a manner as to create an effective safety barrier between the scene and moving traffic.

19. Orange traffic cones should be utilized whenever possible to provide a visible safety perimeter around apparatus parked in or near the roadway for emergency incidents, training, and public service events.

a. On roads with speeds 45 mph or greater, the first cone should be deployed 250 feet behind the first emergency vehicle.

b. The cones should then be placed to merge traffic around the scene safety zone created with additional cones.

c. The vehicle operator is responsible for timely and appropriate deployment of traffic cones.

20. The use of high beam headlights at night and/or the placement of scene lighting should be considered with regard to the potential to cause temporary blindness of passing motorists.

21. The driver of any emergency vehicle shall not move the vehicle until all passengers have boarded the vehicle and are seated with seat belts fastened.

BACKING:

22. Backing of vehicles shall be avoided where possible.

23. Before backing a vehicle, drivers shall ensure the intended path is clear of hazards and obstructions.

24. Spotters should be used when backing vehicles where the driver does not have 360-degree visibility.

An exception is if the driver has no spotter available and it is essential to back a vehicle, the driver, after checking the area behind before backing, shall back the vehicle at a slow speed and with extreme caution. If available, the driver shall intermittently check the backup camera to ensure the area remains free of obstructions and/or pay attention to the sounds from back-up sensors.

¹ www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_330.pdf

25. Spotters are responsible for assisting the driver and ensuring any potential hazards are avoided.

Standard signals shall be used to communicate with the driver during the backing maneuver using hand signals or voice signals. Spotters shall direct the driver to stop at any time the backing maneuver cannot be completed safely.

AUTHORITY TO DEVIATE FROM THIS POLICY:

26. Authority to deviate from this policy and the resulting accountability for that deviation rests solely with the Chief or in her/his absence the highest ranking officer.

OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES:

SOG-203 : Safety Vests

SOG-401: Apparatus Driver Requirements

SOG-206: Anti-Substance Abuse