




**City of Winchester
Fire & Rescue Department
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**



Section:	Operations	SOP:	7.6
Subject:	Apparatus Driving Procedure	Executed:	January 1, 2006
		Revised:	May 10, 2010
Approved:			
 Scott Cullers, Fire Chief			

PURPOSE

The safe arrival of fire and EMS apparatus at any incident scene is a top priority for this Department. To assist in this priority, it is the purpose of this memorandum to describe and enact appropriate measures to enhance safety and minimize risk to personnel, equipment, and the public during all emergency and non-emergency vehicular traffic.

RESPONSIBILITY

All Department personnel shall be held responsible for the proper use and care of vehicles belonging to the individual stations and this department and all accessories, equipment, and tools assigned to each vehicle. Furthermore, all personnel shall adhere to the provisions of this policy and the Safety Manual of the City of Winchester.

APPARATUS RESPONSE ROUTES

1. Apparatus shall not be driven in a direction opposing other traffic, such as a one-way street or in opposing traffic lanes, unless it is possible to do so with due regard for safety, and then only for the shortest distance possible.
2. It is always dangerous for one emergency vehicle to pass another, and may only be done when the driver of the apparatus to be passed has given verbal notification that it is safe to do so.
3. Apparatus shall not be closer than 300 feet behind other emergency vehicles during response to incidents.
4. The OIC may use radio communications to inform other emergency vehicles of their approach to intersections where they anticipate on-coming traffic from the other vehicles.

INCIDENT RESPONSE ROUTES

1. Emergency response shall require the use of all emergency warning devices, both audible and visual, and headlights.
2. Non-emergency response to incidents shall require response to the scene using no emergency lights or audible devices.
 - a. Headlights shall be on at all times that the apparatus is in motion.
 - b. Emergency lights may be activated while on the scene of the incident only as warning devices when the apparatus is fully or partially blocking a traffic lane.
3. Determination of emergency or non-emergency response may be by category of the dispatched incident or as instructed by ECC personnel upon direction from the OIC/AIC requesting the apparatus response.
 - a. Non-emergency response shall be made for all incidents dispatched for:
 - Bomb threats and/or investigation of suspicious packages
 - All types of public service incidents
 - Trouble alarms
 - Unauthorized controlled burns (except with endangered exposures)
 - Station transfers (fill-ins)
 - b. Incidents to which apparatus may respond in a non-emergency mode after being advised to do so by ECC personnel are:
 - Vehicles leaking fluids
 - Requests for additional manpower to any type of incident
 - Any other incident for which the OIC has directed ECC personnel to have apparatus respond no-emergency.
 - c. EMS apparatus, when transporting patients, shall continue to respond to the medical center as per previous recommendation by the Medical Direction Board:

<u>Patient Priority</u>	<u>Response Mode</u>
Priority 1	Full Emergency Response
* Priority 2	Full Emergency Response
Priority 3	Non-Emergency Response
Priority 4	Non-Emergency Response

* When the attendant identifies the patient is stable and not in jeopardy the response may be down-graded to non-emergency.

4. It shall also be noted that the use of any emergency warning device is restricted to those vehicles recognized by the Chief of Fire and Rescue as official Fire and Rescue Department vehicles.

APPARATUS SPEED LIMITS

1. All personnel, when driving apparatus in the non-emergency mode, shall be mindful of posted speed limits and shall obey all state and local laws.
2. The maximum speed of any vehicle during an emergency response shall not exceed **15 miles per hour** above the posted speed limit, with the driver being cognizant of traffic conditions, and due regard for the safety of civilians and fire and rescue personnel at all times.
 - a. All apparatus shall come to a complete stop when approaching a stop sign and all traffic signals that are reflecting red in their lane of traffic. The traffic shall be checked in all directions prior to proceeding through the intersection with due caution.
 - b. The maximum speed through any traffic-controlled intersection in which the apparatus has the right-of-way (i.e. green light) shall be the speed limit of the street involved. This shall also apply to school zones when denoted by flashing lights.
 - 1) When approaching an intersection displaying a flashing yellow light or a yield sign, apparatus shall slow to a speed at which it can safely stop. The traffic shall be checked in all directions prior to proceeding through the intersection with due caution.
 - c. During emergency response in areas of heavy congestion, caused by people, vehicles, and/or other items (i.e., tree limbs, building construction materials, etc.) speeds shall be reduced accordingly. At no time should the posted speed limits be exceeded when not safe to do so.
 - 1) These instances may necessitate the posting of personnel in front of the apparatus to serve as spotters and clear the route for safe response.
 - 2) If spotters are not available to ensure safe passage of apparatus, it may be necessary for the driver to stage the apparatus as close as safely possible and then proceed on foot to evaluate the situation. ECC and additional responding apparatus and personnel shall be advised of this by radio.

PRE-EMPTION

The 3M Opticom system installed within the City at various traffic intersections provides an additional resource to safely maneuver our apparatus during emergency incidents. At no time does this system relieve us of our responsibilities for due regard to safety. Apparatus drivers should be aware of the functionality of this system and of its limitations:

At no time does this system relieve us of our responsibilities for due regard to safety or replace any current policies or laws pertaining to emergency driving.

1. A list of intersections and the number of receivers is attached to this memo. A map is available in the Fire administration office showing which intersections are pre-empted.
2. When approaching a designated pre-empted intersection with flashing emergency lights on; a flood light (white) will flash alerting the apparatus driver that the intersection is transitioning to a preemptive state. The flood light will hold solid when the green ball and left turn arrow on the apparatus' approach are lit allowing traffic to proceed thus clearing the intersection. All other opposing directions of travel will receive red traffic signals.
3. When approaching a designated pre-empted intersection with other directional pre-emption, the first apparatus with flashing emergency lights to approach the intersection will be given the green traffic signal while the other approaching apparatus will be given the red traffic signal. After the initial apparatus passes through the intersection, the second apparatus will receive a flashing signal via the flood light indicating the traffic signal will not turn green for at least 20 seconds. In this case, we shall fall back to current procedures and approach the intersection with caution and make a complete stop prior to proceeding through the intersection while maintaining due regard to safety.
4. The Intersection of Braddock St. and Boscawen St. have had special programming for Rouss apparatus. This pre-emption is to aid in the apparatus movement in and out of Rouss fire station. All other apparatus will function similar to other pre-empted intersections.
5. Each apparatus with a 3M emitter installed has a unique identifier programmed to allow the traffic division to monitor and maintain the system. Statistics will be generated and modifications to the system programming may be made to best utilize the system while maintaining proper traffic flows. Apparatus outside of Winchester Fire & Rescue will not operate on this system unless specifically requested to be added.
6. Problems and suggestions with apparatus emitters or functions at intersections shall be reported to the Fire & Rescue office. This information will be forwarded to the proper personnel in the traffic division for investigation and maintenance.

SCHOOL BUS ENCOUNTERS

A vehicle that is responding in an emergency mode and encounters a school bus with flashing red lights shall come to a complete stop, unless it is responding in the opposite direction of the bus on a divided highway. The vehicle may proceed once the bus driver has cleared the roadway of children, turned off the flashing lights, and waved the vehicle through.

INCLEMENT WEATHER DRIVING

1. Fog, rain, snow, ice, and other inclement conditions necessitate extra caution and special driving skills. The apparatus operator is responsible to ensure that

proper visibility is maintained during these conditions, through the checking of windshield wipers for proper operation, cleaning of apparatus windows as needed, and daily inspection of lights.

2. It may become necessary, due to accumulation of snow and/or ice, for chains to be utilized to ensure traction for driving. All drivers of apparatus shall be fully trained in the use and operation of the Drop Chains or On-Spot Chains on apparatus on which they are installed and in the installation of cable chains and tire chains on all apparatus.
3. Vehicles shall not travel in excess of 25 miles per hour while chains are in use and shall adjust their travel speeds accordingly during all inclement weather conditions.
4. Station policy shall be followed wherever applicable in the determination of the utilization and installation of cable chains and tire chains.
5. After each response or outing of a vehicle utilizing chains, personnel shall walk around the vehicle to check for possible tire and body damage. An inspection of the chains shall also be performed at that time to ensure they are properly installed and tightened.

RAILROAD CROSSINGS

1. Apparatus responding in an emergency mode that encounters an unguarded or unmarked railroad crossing shall slow down and be prepared to safely come to a complete stop short of the crossing. The driver shall ensure that it is safe to proceed before crossing the railroad tracks.
2. Drivers shall also use caution when approaching and crossing any guarded or marked railroad crossing. Under no circumstances shall any Fire and Rescue Department vehicle proceed around gates that are closed at a railroad crossing.

VEHICLE BACKING PROCEDURE

1. Whenever possible, apparatus drivers should think ahead and position apparatus so backing is not necessary.
2. No person shall be in the bed portion or on the rear of any vehicle at any time it is backing. The only exception would be when re-packing a long lay of supply hose, for which a spotter must be used.
3. Spotter(s) shall be used with any vehicle that has obscured rear vision, such as pumpers, aerial apparatus, and ambulances; or in any instance when traffic or the surrounding area warrants the use. The spotter(s) shall direct the driver in a manner that will avoid obstructions in the path of travel. The shared responsibility for proper backing procedures lies with both the driver and the spotter(s).

4. When only one spotter is available, he or she shall stand in such a position to be seen by the driver in the driver side mirror. (There may be locations when it would be safer for the spotter to be on the right side of the vehicle. If so the driver is to be made aware and eye contact is to be maintained between the driver and spotter in the mirror.)
 - a. Communications between the driver and spotter(s) shall be by use of hand signals. The spotter shall use one hand to motion the driver to begin backing and the other hand to show/point the direction for the driver to turn. Use two upright closed fists for the signal to stop.
 - b. Spotters shall allow a safe distance (5 to 15 feet) between themselves and the backing apparatus.
5. If available, two spotters may be utilized. The second person shall be positioned at a strategic location for that vehicle and in view of the driver/operator. For instance, it may be advantageous for a second spotter to be positioned in front of the apparatus to ensure the unit is free of obstructions.
6. Other personnel on the apparatus shall exit the vehicle before the vehicle starts backing and stay a safe distance away from the vehicle. These personnel should also stay out of the traffic lane, unless being utilized to stop traffic.
7. Whenever a spotter is not available, the driver has the responsibility to ensure that the area is clear to back the apparatus. If there is any doubt regarding backing safely, the driver is not to back the apparatus, and is to ask for assistance.
8. The driver must be responsible for sounding a back-up alert. If there is no back-up alarm on the vehicle, this shall be done by sounding three short blasts of the air horn.

OTHER SAFETY RULES

1. All personnel, while operating or riding in the cab/passenger compartment of a vehicle, shall wear seat belts, when the vehicle is so equipped.
 - a. An exception to this rule may be when EMS personnel are performing patient care duties in the patient compartment of an ambulance. However, any personnel not actively involved in patient care shall be seated and wear seat belts whenever possible. Any infraction of this causing injury or property damage will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for determination of variation from policy.
2. During response on fire, hazardous materials, or rescue (i.e., motor vehicle collisions, elevator rescues, industrial accidents, etc.) incidents, all personnel except those manning EMS transport vehicles, administrative vehicles, and SERV/utility vehicles shall be in full turn-out gear and ready to don SCBA before getting on the apparatus. Turn-out gear shall be defined as bunker pants and boots, turn-out coat, helmet, and nomex hood, with gloves ready for donning.

- a. The apparatus driver has the option of wearing bunker pants and boots while driving, and will don all other PPE upon arrival on the scene.
- b. Apparatus that is on the street and is being maneuvered at the time the incident is dispatched shall immediately respond. All personnel shall remain seated with seat belts affixed in the secured position. Upon arrival at the scene, personnel shall don protective equipment.

Alternative options are:

- Apparatus may pull to a safe stopping point, where personnel may don gear and proceed with response to the incident.
 - The apparatus may slow to a reduced speed, at which the personnel may safely don gear and seatbelts before response to the incident.
3. No use of tobacco products shall be allowed on or in the apparatus.
 4. When multiple vehicles are leaving from one location in response to an EMS or rescue incident, including motor vehicle collisions, the medic unit shall leave the station prior to the pumper. When responding to fire or hazardous materials incidents, the pumper shall precede the medic unit. This shall apply unless the driver of the designated first-out unit directs the other to proceed first.
 5. The City of Winchester's Administration Department conducts a semi-annual driver's license check on all city employees to ensure that those employees are legally licensed to operate city vehicles and equipment.
 - a. City employees are required to immediately report any additions to their driving records (convictions on traffic violations) to their supervisors.

ABANDONED APPARATUS

When apparatus is abandoned for any reason, it is the responsibility of the career duty officer to see that the apparatus is returned to the station in a timely manner. The duty officer should secure a driver for the apparatus or the duty vehicle and retrieve the abandoned apparatus. A station shall not be put out of service to retrieve abandoned apparatus.

TRAINING OF APPARATUS DRIVERS

1. All personnel should have current Emergency Vehicle Operators' Course (EVOC) certification through the Virginia Department of Fire Programs or the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads before driving apparatus on response to incidents.
 - a. Personnel are allowed to drive apparatus for training purposes before attaining EVOC certification, but are encouraged to receive this certification as early as possible in the training process.

2. It is the responsibility of the individual volunteer stations to establish and follow guidelines for training of volunteer personnel as apparatus drivers. It is also the responsibility of the volunteer Station Chief to coordinate with the career Station officer the training of career personnel in apparatus driving and operations.
3. Only those persons who are previously approved by their individual stations, or by the Department in the case of career personnel, to drive that station's apparatus shall be authorized to drive similar apparatus belonging to another station or owned by the Department. For example, any person authorized by Station 1 to drive Medic 1 shall also be authorized to drive any other ambulance in the stations or the Department. This shall also be true for pumping apparatus.
 - a. Because the apparatus owned by Station 2 is unique to that station, personnel from that station will not be approved to drive apparatus from other stations, nor will personnel from other stations be approved to apparatus from Station 2, without prior training and approval by the Station Chief of Station 2 and the career officer or Station Chief of the personnel involved.
 - b. The Department's hazardous materials response vehicle, HazMat 4, shall be driven only by Winchester Fire and Rescue Department career personnel, Frederick County Fire and Rescue Department career personnel, any other member of the Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team, or others as authorized by a career officer.
 - c. The administrative vehicles of the Department may be driven by a station member who is approved to drive any unit of a station, after authorized by a career officer to do so.

VEHICLE COLLISIONS

1. The driver of any station or department-owned vehicle that is involved in a motor vehicle collision shall immediately, by the quickest means of communications, give notice of the accident to the career duty officer and the local law enforcement body having jurisdiction over the area of the accident (City or State Police).
2. Unless a life-threatening situation exists, the driver shall not move the vehicle from the point of impact until the investigating officer and duty officer arrive on the scene.
3. The career duty officer will review the circumstances of the collision and prepare a written narrative of the information he obtained from his investigation..
 - a. The initial report shall be submitted within 24 hours as per instructions on WFRD Form #116- VEHICULAR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION FORM..
 - b. If necessary, a complete and final report shall be forwarded to Fire and Rescue Department Headquarters within 7 days of the collision.

4. A urine drug screen and breath alcohol test are required for the apparatus driver with an accident involving any of the following:
 - The driver of the vehicle is charged by Police;
 - A fatality has occurred as a result of the accident;
 - Any person receives immediate medical attention away from the scene of the accident;
 - Any vehicle must be towed; or
 - The investigating department officer suspects the driver to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

5. Reports of all motor vehicle collisions involving Fire and Rescue Department vehicles shall be forwarded to the City's Risk Manager for review by the Accident Review Board.

The task of getting emergency vehicles to their destinations is becoming more difficult and hazardous. This is true because traffic and driver distractions continue to grow. This policy is intended as an effort to reduce the risks of emergency response for responders and members of the public.

All members of this department are reminded to do their part to make the workplace safer.