

	Department of Public Safety	
	Standard Operating Guidelines	
	Subject:	Operation of Emergency Vehicles
	Section:	Operations
	Guideline Number:	307
	Effective Date:	February 20, 2008
	Revised Date:	December 18, 2024
Signature of Approval:	Charles R. Pruitt Director of Public Safety 	

PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to establish operating procedures and regulations for the operations of emergency vehicles.

POLICY

It is the policy of the Accomack County Department of Public Safety that personnel will always operate emergency response vehicles with due regard to safety and will be familiar with and adhere to section 46.2-920 of the Code of Virginia while responding to emergencies.

DEFINITIONS

Officer in Charge – shall mean the person, responsibility for the apparatus and crew. For EMS calls this shall mean by law the Attendant-in-Charge (AIC).

Code 1 Response – shall mean responding with Emergency lights and audible siren activated, Emergency Response mode.

Code 2 Response - shall mean responding with normal traffic, without any Emergency lights and audible siren activated, NON- Emergency Response mode.

PROCEDURES

Prior to Departure:

- A. The Officer in Charge/Attendant in Charge (AIC) of the apparatus shall ensure that the driver is:
 - Aware of the destination
 - Alert, physically able and trained to drive the particular vehicle
 - Vehicle is ready
- B. The driver shall ensure that the bay door is completely open upon departure and closed once the apparatus is clear.
- C. The driver shall ensure that all passengers are seated and secured in accordance with Section A of the General Requirements of this SOG.

Enroute to Emergencies:

- A. In accordance with section 46.2-920 of the Code of Virginia, the driver of any emergency vehicle, when such vehicle is being used in the performance of public services, and when vehicle is operated under emergency conditions, may, without subjecting himself to criminal prosecution:
1. Disregard speed limits while having due regard for safety of persons and property.
 2. Proceed past any steady or flashing red signal, traffic light, stop sign, or device indicating moving traffic shall stop if the speed of the vehicle is sufficiently reduced to enable it to pass a signal, traffic light, or device with due regard to the safety of persons and property.
 3. Park or stop notwithstanding the other provisions of this chapter.
 4. Disregard regulations governing a direction of movement of vehicles turning in specified directions so long as the operator does not endanger life or property.
 5. Pass or overtake, with due regard to the safety of persons and property, another vehicle at any intersection.
 6. Pass or overtake with due regard to the safety of persons and property, while en route to an emergency, stopped or slow-moving vehicles, by going to the left of the stopped or slow-moving vehicle either in a no-passing zone or by crossing the highway centerline.
 7. Pass or overtake with due regard to the safety of persons and property while en route to an emergency, stopped or slow-moving vehicles, by going off the paved or main traveled portion of the roadway on the right. Notwithstanding other provisions of this section, vehicles exempted in this instance will not be required to sound a siren or any device to give automatically intermittent signals.
- B. While enroute to emergencies, drivers shall NOT pass a stopped school bus with warning lights indicating loading or unloading of children unless there is a physical barrier dividing the highway. If there is no physical barrier dividing the highway, the driver shall turn off the siren until the school bus has turned the warning lights off.
- C. All fire department apparatus, while responding to an emergency call, shall come to a complete stop at all red light and stop sign controlled traffic intersections. Both the officer and the driver operator shall scan the intersection to ensure that all traffic has stopped before proceeding.
- D. While enroute to emergencies, drivers shall:
1. Operate all warning lights
 2. Ensure Opticom device is activated. Opticom devices shall not be activated while responding or transporting in the non-emergency mode.

3. Place the electronic siren in the automatic, intermittent mode when:
 - a. Approaching intersections controlled by traffic signal lights (whether traffic light is red, amber or green), stop and/or yield signs
 - b. Passing or overtaking another vehicle
 - c. Reasonably necessary
4. Mechanical sirens and/or air horns shall be used as necessary. When used they shall be operated so as to bring the siren to full pitch and then alternate pitch up and down. Do not press the button and just hold it.

NOTE: On structure fire responses and fire alarm responses when the initial arriving unit reports nothing showing or in an investigative mode, additional responding apparatus shall down grade their response to the non-emergency mode.

At Emergency Scenes:

- A. At emergency scenes drivers shall maneuver their vehicles with due regard for safety of life, property and nearby activities.
- B. Drivers of vehicles that are safely parked off the traveled portion of the roadway and that are not impeding or endangering vehicular or pedestrian traffic or compromising the safety of the operation may turn the ignition off and turn their lights off.
- C. Fire apparatus and or EMS Units are not designed to travel off hard surface roadways or areas with the exception of the brush truck. The decision to take apparatus off any hard surface area will be made by the officer in charge of that unit and only after evaluating the need and the ability to safely move the apparatus.
- D. Disengage Opticom while staging at accidents near intersections.

Medic Units Transporting to Hospitals:

Routine use of emergency lights and siren for transports to the hospital or receiving facility shall be limited to only those patients that 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 that the patient's condition is unstable or life threatening. All stable and all BLS patients shall be routinely required to be transported in the non-emergency mode.

The AIC shall be the person held accountable for the transportation mode regardless of volunteer agency represented and/or driver of the EMS unit in question.

Mode of transportation to the hospital SHALL be indicated on the radio as Code 1 (emergency response - lights and siren) or Code 2 (non-emergency response – no lights or siren normal driving)

Example: “Medic 6-1 enroute SMH Code 2”.

Medic Unit Operations at Hospitals:

After discharging patients at area hospitals, medic units shall be shut off if the battery is sufficiently charged, or the unit shall be moved to a designated area away from the emergency entrance doors while battery charges. This is necessary to eliminate accumulation of exhaust fumes within the hospital building.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. Whether responding to emergency or non-emergency incidents, all personnel shall be seated with seat belts secured at all times.
- B. During emergency response, drinking and eating of food shall be prohibited.
- C. Response to standby, fill-in, move ups or returning to station shall be in the non-emergency response mode.
- D. During operation of a vehicle cellular phone use shall be in accordance with policy ADM 218.
- E. Personal protective equipment will be carried on vehicle in which you are operating at all times.
- F. When backing vehicles, the driver shall always have a spotter behind the vehicle to act as a guide and to lookout for persons or objects behind the apparatus. When there is only one spotter available, the person shall guide the driver by standing at the rear of the vehicle on the passenger's side. The spotter shall remain visible to the driver and guide the driver as needed for safe operations. In situations where a spotter is unavailable, the driver shall exit the vehicle, and visually inspect the area to ensure that the area is free of backing hazards. Failure to follow this procedure can result in disciplinary action.
- G. It is the requirement of the County of Accomack that all persons who operate a county vehicle have a valid Driver's License. This requirement is not restricted by rank or by whether you are a member of the career or volunteer fire force. If, during your normal departmental duties, you will have occasion, no matter how infrequent, to drive such a vehicle or apparatus, you must have a valid Driver's License from the state in which you reside.
- H. Training and Certification
 - The Department will conduct an annual driving record check.
 - All Career Personnel shall have a valid Emergency Vehicle Operators Course Certification.
 - Effective January 1, 2025, on duty Fire Medics must have VDFP Driver Pumper Operator (DPO) to drive apparatus 20,000 lbs. or greater.
- I. Railroad Grade Crossing: During emergency response or non-emergency travel, drivers of Department of Public Safety vehicles shall come to a complete stop at all unguarded railroad tracks. Drivers shall also use caution when approaching and crossing any guarded grade railroad crossing.

J. Hose Loading: Hose loading operations shall be permitted to be performed on moving fire apparatus only when all of the following conditions are complied with. There are the minimum requirements for hose loading procedures.

1. All members involved in the hose loading shall be trained in these procedures.
2. There shall be a member, other than those loading hose, assigned as a safety observer. The safety observer shall have an unobstructed view of the hose loading operation and be in visual and voice contact with the apparatus operator.
3. Non-Department of Public Safety vehicular traffic shall be excluded from the area or shall be under the control of the law enforcement.
4. The fire apparatus shall only be driven in a forward direction at a speed of 5 mph or less, unless the hose cannot be straddled by the apparatus. In this case, the apparatus may be backed up to pick-up the hose.
5. Members shall be allowed to stand on the tail step, only while loading hose when the vehicle is operating at 5 mph or less.
6. Members shall be allowed in the hose bed, but shall not stand while the apparatus is in motion.
7. Prior to the beginning of each hose loading operation, the situation shall be evaluated by the company officer or acting officer to ensure compliance with all the provisions of the standard operating procedure. If the standard operating procedure cannot be complied with, or if there is any question as the safety of the operation for the specific situation, then the hose shall not be loaded in this manner.

K. Accidents and/or Damage to Any Vehicles: Any emergency vehicles involved in an accident while responding to an incident shall:

1. Stop and inform the dispatcher of status (i.e out-of-service).
2. Call for Law Enforcement, report required.
2. Notify their immediate supervisor and determine the extent of damage to the apparatus.
3. Treat any injuries.
4. Statements regarding the accident are not to be made to anyone with the exception of the investigating law enforcement officials and investigating supervisor.
5. Complete vehicle accident form promptly (within 24 hours or the next business day).

NOTE: If the driver of the vehicle is a Department staff member and there is personal injury, damage, or significant impact, it is the discretion of the Battalion Chief and/or Director to require a drug screening.