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| Title: | Emergency Vehicle Operations | | |  |
| Section: | 400 Apparatus, Equipment & Facilities | | | |
| SOG #: | 417 | Page: | 1 of 5 | |
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| Authorized By: | Fox River Fire District Chiefs | | | |

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to establish a procedure required to support the safe and effective operation of all emergency vehicles.

B. SCOPE

This guideline shall apply to the operations of all emergency vehicles.

C. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- 1) Emergency Vehicles: This includes ambulances, fire and support vehicles, privately owned vehicles (POV) and any other vehicles operated by members of the Fox River Fire District in the performance of their duties.
- 2) Emergency/Priority Response: When warning lights and audible warning devices are needed due to the nature of the emergency. Both warning lights and audible devices must be operating together in order to meet the legal definition of an emergency vehicle.
- 3) Non-Emergency/Non Priority Response: When Emergency/Priority Response is not needed due to the nature of the call. Drivers shall comply with all traffic laws and rules of the road that apply to all other vehicles.

D. GUIDELINE

- 1) Drivers must always wear seat belts.
- 2) Emergency/Priority Response creates a risk to emergency personnel, other users of the roadway, as well as to pedestrian traffic. The increased risk must always be balanced against the potential benefits of such a response.
 - a) Emergency/Priority Response should be limited to:
 - i) Situations where it can be assumed that a faster response could reduce the risk of death, lessen the chance of serious injury or disability of patients.
 - ii) Situations that would negatively impact property conservation.

b) Responders must use discretion when using Emergent/Priority Response based on the nature of the call, location of the incident, traffic and weather condition, crew configuration, and as well as response capabilities of the area. Special consideration should be given to responses utilizing a divided highway to gain access to exits in outlying areas. The use of emergency lighting, under these conditions, may create traffic problems.

c) Emergency/Priority Responses should be no different than responding under non emergent conditions other than the lights and sirens are operating and your speed is slightly faster. Responding in the emergent mode with lights and sirens is only intended to make those around you aware of your presence and to help clear a safe path for you to proceed, thus preventing you from having to wait in traffic.

d) Emergency/Priority Response only “asks” for the right of way, it does not “guarantee” it. Therefore, all traffic laws must be respected which includes stopping at all controlled intersections making sure it is safe to proceed before entering the intersection.

e) Emergency/Priority Response driving with a patient on board poses additional challenges. **This is a very dangerous time, especially for those providing patient care.** The driver must always be aware of the situation in the back and do everything possible to provide a safe and steady transport. Crew members standing unsecured in the patient compartment can easily be thrown and seriously injured or killed with the slightest variation in the speed or direction of the ambulance.

f) Examples of Emergency/Priority Response:

i) Working Fire (Smoke and or Flames showing)

ii) Traffic accidents with multiple or unknown injuries

iii) Complaints of respiratory distress or altered levels of consciousness

iv) Reports of injuries consistent with serious trauma

v) Possible cardiac or pulmonary distress or other indications a patient is possibly hemodynamically at risk

vi) Potentially serious medical conditions

vii) Mass casualty

viii) Indications of someone in distress or a potential life threatening situation

ix) Entrapment

x) Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) calls coded “C”, “D”, or “E”.

3) Non-Emergency/Non Priority Response is desired if at all possible to reduce risk. However an Emergency/Priority response is acceptable if warranted, at the crew’s discretion.

a) Examples of Non-Emergency/Non Priority Response:

i) A fire alarm activation

ii) Public service call

iii) Requests for lift assists

iv) Hospice request for patient transport

v) Requests to “stand by” in an area

vi) Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) calls coded “A” or “B”.

vii) Transport requests for patients who are currently at a skilled nursing facility or physician’s office.

Exceptions: b1) Reports of possible MI
b2) Possible stroke
b3) Unresponsiveness
b4) Shortness of breath or other airway compromise
b5) Unstable vital signs
b6) Life threatening injuries

4) Response classifications can be changed at any time during the response based on updated information from dispatch or other trained personnel on scene.

5) The decision to transport a patient Emergent/Priority or Non Emergent/Non Priority from the scene to a hospital is at the crews discretion based on the instability of the patient or the potential thereof.

6) Speed Limitations Policy:

a) The driver shall never exceed a speed that is safe and prudent based on road and weather conditions, or other circumstances, including the design and capabilities of the vehicle. 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.

b) The maximum speed while responding emergent in an emergency vehicle, under favorable conditions, shall not exceed the posted speed limit by more than 10 mph within the city limits and 20 mph on the paved county roads, highways and interstates.

7) Intersection Navigation:

a) More emergency vehicle accidents happen at intersections than anywhere else.

b) All emergency response vehicles shall come to a full and complete stop before entering a negative right of way intersection (red light, flashing red light, or stop sign), blind intersection, or any intersection where hazards are present and /or the driver cannot account for all oncoming traffic lanes.

c) Emergency vehicles shall not enter the intersection until all approaching traffic has yielded the right of way and it is safe to proceed. The emergency vehicle driver shall ensure that all lanes have yielded the right of way before advancing.

8) Stopped School Bus:

a) Emergency response vehicles shall not pass a school bus that has stopped with red lights flashing regardless of direction of travel or number of lanes.

b) When approaching a bus that has its red lights flashing, the emergency vehicle shall shut down only the siren and come to a complete stop. Proceed only after the bus driver turns off warning lights. All members must be vigilant for children while approaching and passing the bus. Vehicle operator must be prepared to stop immediately while approaching, passing, and /or leaving the area in which the school bus is stopped.

9) Active School Zone with Children Present

a) Emergency response vehicles shall not exceed the school zones posted speed limit, shut down the siren, obey all other traffic laws and follow any direction given by crossing guard.

9) Vehicle Backing:

a) When backing an emergency vehicle, a minimum of one spotter shall be at the rear of the vehicle. The spotter is responsible for guiding the driver and ensuring that any potential hazards are avoided. The spotter shall position themselves to have an unobstructed view and be in visual contact with the vehicle driver.

Spotters shall not ride on the vehicle while backing. If the driver loses visual contact with the spotter the driver must stop the apparatus immediately.

b) When a spotter is not available and the vehicle must be backed, the driver shall first walk completely around the vehicle before backing to ensure no obstructions will interfere with the backing procedure.

c) Department members are exempt from spotter duties while personnel in the patient compartment of the ambulance are engaged in performing emergency medical care. The driver shall take extraordinary care while backing the vehicle in these situations.

d) The use of wireless headsets to give added direction while backing is encouraged.

e) The use of a backup camera does not replace the above procedures.

10) Vehicle Lighting While Parked:

- a) During an emergency response;
 - i. Emergency lights shall be activated any time an emergency vehicle is parked in a roadway, on a highway/divided highway, or in a high traffic area.
 - ii. Hazard warning lights shall be used any time an emergency vehicle is parked on a street, driveway, or parking lot.
- b) During non-emergent activities;
 - i. Fire vehicles shall be parked in accordance to normal parking rules.
 - ii. If the above is not possible fire vehicles will be parked with their hazard warning lights on.

11) Privately Owned Vehicle Response:

- a) Personnel responding to an emergency must follow all laws and regulations.
- b) Drivers must own and operate a vehicle that complies with all state and local regulations including valid insurance.

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