

VEHICLE OPERATION

GENERAL

The Clay County Fire Department's will consider health and safety as primary concerns in the specification, design, construction, acquisition, operation, maintenance, inspection, and repair of all vehicles and equipment.

SEAT BELTS

All Clay County Fire Department's Employees are required to use seat belts at all times when operating a department vehicle equipped with seat belts. Anyone riding as a passenger/attendant in department vehicles is also required to use seat belts; i.e., ambulance, engine, staff vehicle, etc. The Company Officer/driver of the vehicle will confirm that all personnel and riders are on-board, properly attired, with seat belts on, before the vehicle is permitted to move.

All personnel shall ride only in regular seats provided with seat belts. Riding on tailboards or other exposed positions is not permitted on any vehicle at any time.

DRIVERS/OPERATORS OF FIRE DEPARTMENT VEHICLES

The Clay County Fire Department's vehicles will be operated only by members who are trained and certified in their proper operation. Driver/operators of fire department apparatus shall meet the requirements specified in this standard.

Drivers of the Clay County Fire Department's vehicles will have valid driver's license. Vehicles will be operated in compliance with all traffic laws, including sections pertaining to emergency vehicles, as applicable.

Drivers of the Clay County Fire Department's will be directly responsible for safe and prudent operation under all conditions. When the driver is under the direct supervision of an officer, that officer will also assume responsibility for the actions of the driver.

Drivers will not move department vehicles until all persons on the vehicle are seated and secured with seat belts or safety harnesses in approved riding positions.

Company apparatus will not be left unattended while parked away from quarters except during emergencies, out for repair, or with the approval of the Fire Chief.

Vehicles will only be parked in fire lanes during emergencies.

During all other business vehicles will use regular parking areas.

General

The fire department apparatus driver/operator shall be legally licensed.

The fire apparatus driver/operator shall be subject to periodic medical evaluation, to determine physical ability adequate for performance of duties as an operator of fire department vehicles.

BASIC DRIVER/OPERATOR REQUIREMENTS

Preventative Maintenance

The fire department apparatus driver/operator shall perform routine tests, inspections, and servicing functions required to assure the operational status of fire department vehicles, including:

- a) Battery check
- b) Braking system
- c) Coolant system
- d) Electrical system
- e) Fueling
- f) Hydraulic fluids
- g) Lubrication
- h) Oil levels
- I) Tire care
- j) Steering system
- k) Tools, appliances, and equipment
- l) Pump operations

The fire department apparatus driver/operator shall record and report repairs and inspections.

ALARM RESPONSE

Code 3 response is authorized only in conjunction with emergency incidents.

Unnecessary emergency response shall be avoided. In order to avoid any unnecessary emergency response, the following rules shall apply.

On automatic alarms (one company still) Only the first due in truck will respond code three

all other units will drive in a normal fashion with the traffic flow. The Fire Chief has the authority to initiate these runs as a code three only if in his judgment

When responding to Code 3, warning lights must be on and sirens must be sounded to warn drivers of other vehicles, as required by the Minnesota state statutes.

The use of sirens and warning lights does not automatically give the right-of-way to the

emergency vehicle. These devices simply request the right-of-way from other drivers, based on their awareness of the emergency vehicle presence. Emergency vehicle drivers must make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers, and must drive defensively to be prepared for the unexpected inappropriate actions of others.

CODE 3

“Emergency” All warning lights and audible signals should be used. **Remember these do NOT absolve the driver of any responsibility to drive with due regard to public safety.** Safe arrival shall always have priority over speed and maneuvering en route to an emergency incident.

NO CODE

“Non- Emergency” No warning lights are to be used. Driver should proceed with the normal flow of traffic

DRIVERS

- A. Drivers shall attain a prompt, safe response by:
 - 1. Knowing where they are going, and how to get there.
 - 2. Being seat-belted in place prior to vehicle movement.
 - 3. Ensuring doors are closed and station doors are fully open prior to vehicle movement.
 - 4. Driving defensively and professionally at a speed appropriate for conditions, but in no case more than 10 m.p.h. over posted speed.
 - 5. Using warning devices to move around and to request the right-of-way in a safe and predictable manner.

- B. Drivers shall **NOT**:
 - 1. Leave quarters without checking compartment doors and bay door.
 - 2. Drive faster than conditions warrant or take unnecessary chances during negative right-of-way situations.
 - 3. Use the size or speed of the vehicle in such a way to intimidate or scare other drivers.

- C. Specific Rules:
 - 1. When responding “emergency,” warning lights and sirens must be on to ask for the right-of-way.
 - 2. In cases where emergency response is hampered by stacked or stopped traffic, the siren should be disengaged to minimize stress on drivers attempting to yield the right-of-way (i.e.,

waiting for a green light or a break in traffic). Drivers not using the siren must follow all applicable traffic regulations.

VEHICLE BACKING AND SIGNALS

Backing of Fire Department vehicles should be avoided whenever possible. Where backing is unavoidable spotters shall be used. If no guide is available, the driver shall dismount and walk completely around apparatus to determine if obstructions are present before backing.

In addition, spotters shall be used when vehicles must negotiate forward turns with restrictive side clearances and where height clearances are uncertain. **There is no exception to this rule.**

Under circumstances where the vehicle is manned by only the driver, that vehicle driver shall attempt to utilize any available fire department personnel to act as spotters. Where no personnel are available to assist, the vehicle driver shall get out of the vehicle and make a complete 360 degree survey of the area around his vehicle to determine if any obstructions are present.

Where engine or ladder companies are backed, all crew members (except the driver and Captain) will dismount the apparatus and act as spotters. Spotters should be located at as many corners as possible with at least one spotter at the left rear corner of the apparatus. Where only a single spotter is available, the spotter should be located off the rear corner, and will act as the primary spotter.

Spotters are not permitted to ride tailboard positions while backing fire apparatus.

Spotters will discuss the backing plan with the engineer/driver before proceeding. The communication/warning process will be agreed upon prior to backing. Both door windows (driver and front passenger) will be in the down position to allow for maximum communication/hearing between spotters and the engineer/driver. Fire radio volumes will be turned down.

The vehicle shall not be backed until all spotters are in position and communicate their approval to start the backing. Spotters will remain visible to the engineer/driver. Anytime the driver loses sight of the primary spotter, the vehicles shall be stopped immediately until the spotter is visible, and the communication to continue backing is processed.

When vehicles must be backed where other vehicles traffic exists, the vehicle's emergency lights (if equipped with such lights) shall be operating and orange safety vests shall be worn by all spotters.

The company officer is responsible for compliance with these procedures and the safe backing of the apparatus.

SIGNALS

STRAIGHT BACK: One hand above the head with palm toward face, waving back, other hand at your side. (Left or right hand optional)

TURN: Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended. (Driver will advise the spotter which way the turn will be made. The spotter then assists the driver in backing apparatus. The driver's intentions must be verbally communicated to the spotter).

STOP: Both arms crossed with hands in fist. Be sure to yell the stop order loud enough that the engineer/driver can hear the warning.

NIGHT BACKING:

Signals will be the same. The spotter will assure that the spotlights on rear of apparatus are turned on before allowing apparatus to be backed. A flashlight may be carried, but at no time will it be directed toward mirror.

PASSING

During an emergency response, fire vehicles should avoid passing other emergency vehicles. If passing is necessary, permission must be obtained through radio communications, using the communications order model.

The unique hazards of driving on or adjacent to the fire ground requires the driver to use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to react to the unexpected.

Drivers must consider the dangers their moving vehicles poses to fire ground personnel and spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency, and may inadvertently step in front of or behind a moving vehicle.

It is the responsibility of the driver of each Fire Department vehicle to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with the Minnesota state statutes. This code provides specific legal exceptions to regular traffic regulations, which apply to Fire Department vehicles only when responding to an emergency incident or when transporting a patient to a medical facility. Emergency response (Code 3) does not absolve the driver of any responsibility to drive with due caution. The driver of the emergency vehicle is responsible for its safe operation at all times.

EMERGENCY DRIVING PROCEDURE

To establish a vehicle driving policy and specific responsibilities for safe operation of all Fire Department vehicles and approved personal vehicle incident response.

Responsibility:

All Fire Department personnel required or approved to drive department apparatus or

respond emergent to incidents shall adhere to this policy.

Procedure:

I. Driving Guidelines

- A. It is the responsibility of the driver of any vehicle driven to support Fire Department operations to do so in a safe and prudent manner at all times.
- B. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with Missouri Revised Statutes. These statutes provide specific legal exceptions to regular vehicle regulations which apply to vehicles responding to an emergency incident.
- C. To address community awareness, responses during late night hours, CODE 3 responses within residential neighborhoods, and responses near hospitals may be achieved utilizing just warning lights and minimal use of the siren if no traffic is present. **ALTHOUGH TRAFFIC REGULATIONS MUST BE FOLLOWED.**
- D. Responding vehicles traveling over the posted speed limit incur an additional liability to the safety of others as speed limits are designed for small passenger vehicles operating within that environment and not heavy, slow handling fire apparatus. For this reason, speeds exceeding 10 mph over the speed limit are considered unsafe and not allowed.
- E. Under less favorable conditions, the posted speed limit should be considered the absolute maximum response speed. Less favorable conditions include, but are not limited to, heavy traffic, limited visibility, poor surface, or inclement weather.
- F. At all intersections, the driver must account for all traffic lanes prior to entering the intersection. If the intersection is a negative right-of-way (stop sign, red light, etc.) the driver **MUST** slow to less than 5 mph or **BEFORE** entering the intersection and may proceed only if **ALL** traffic lanes have yielded.
- G. Emergency vehicles are required to pass other vehicles on the left. In any case where an emergency vehicle passes other vehicles on the right, an additional responsibility is incurred. If an emergency vehicle is involved in an accident where passing on the right is involved, the emergency driver may be cited.
- H.. During an emergency response, fire vehicles should avoid passing other emergency vehicles. If passing is necessary, permission should be obtained through radio communications. As a general guideline, passing

applies to wide-open road ways with plenty of visibility and minimal side-road access.

- I. During an emergency response, drivers should slow to a near stop when approaching railroad tracks as sirens and reflected light may mask an on-coming train. Do not count on traffic signaling devices to warn of a train. A confirmed visual clearance of the tracks is necessary prior to crossing.
- J. When approaching a designated school zone, or a school bus with flashing red lights, the driver shall obey **ALL** traffic regulations, including stopping, regardless of emergency response. The siren should be discontinued.
- K. Emergency responses should be discontinued upon hearing **“Proceed with Caution**

“On Scene” Driving

- A. The unique hazards of driving on or near the incident location require drivers to use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to react to the unexpected.
- B. Drivers must consider the dangers their moving vehicles pose to other fire personnel and spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency, and may inadvertently step in front of or behind a moving vehicle.
- C. First arriving apparatus should be stopped so that the apparatus can protect working personnel. Flashing or rotating warning lights should be utilized to warn approaching traffic of the incident. At night strobe lights and fixed headlights or spot lights may cause night blindness to approaching traffic. For this reason these should not be utilized when stopped at a scene.
- D. Staged apparatus should be placed far enough away from the scene so not to impede further response or create additional traffic hazard. Readiness to contribute to the specific incident or respond to another incident should be considered when staging.
- E. On scene backing should be done with a spotter when possible. If no spotter is available, the driver shall do a 360° walk around and visual clearance check prior to backing. **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE!**