



**Standard Operating Guideline: OPS 2**

Subject: Emergency Vehicle Operations

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Approval:

EMS Representative:

Fire Representative:

Career Representative:

Director:

*[Handwritten signatures for EMS Representative, Fire Representative, Career Representative, and Director W.B. Ferguson]*

**Purpose:** In order to provide the County of Franklin with timely, efficient, and effective fire and emergency medical services, guidelines for emergency response are necessary in order for responders to deliver these services safely and within accepted parameters.

**I. Vehicle Operation Procedures**

**A. Circle of safety**

1. Prior to entering the cab and starting the vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver shall make a circle of safety around the vehicle to see that all equipment is secured, that all compartment doors are securely closed and any physical obstructions moved out of the way.
2. During the circle of safety the emergency vehicle driver shall encircle the vehicles and visually inspect all 4 sides and the top of the vehicle before entering the cab.
3. The operator should also verify right side and rear clearance with the person riding in the officer position.
4. This Circle of Safety inspection shall be conducted prior to moving the vehicle regardless of whether or not the vehicle is about to leave on an emergency or non-emergency.

B. Warning device usage

1. When responding to an emergency call, all visual warning devices will be operated at all times at responder discretion as it relates to time of day and traffic conditions.
2. Audible warning devices shall be utilized in accordance with the state law.
3. Emergency vehicle drivers must understand that warning devices are not always effective in making other vehicle operators aware of your presence. Warning devices only request the right-of-way, they do not insure the right-of-way.

C. Vehicle control and right-of-way

1. All drivers shall attempt to maintain control of the vehicle that they are operating in such a manner as to provide the maximum level of safety for both their passengers and the general public.
2. Emergency vehicle drivers should be aware that the civilian vehicle operators may not react in the manner in which is expected or felt to be appropriate.
3. An attempt should be made to have options available when passing or overtaking vehicles.
4. If another vehicle operator fails to yield the right of way to an emergency vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver cannot force the right of way, nor can you assume the right of way, therefore you do not have the right of way until the other vehicle yields to you.
5. Operators of emergency vehicles shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles and pedestrians at all times to make sure that a safe following distance is established and maintained.

D. Response speeds

1. When responding to a call for service, drivers shall operate the vehicle they are driving in a manner that allows them to maintain control of the emergency vehicle and allows other motorists adequate reaction times to yield right-of way.
2. Emergency vehicle operators should consider the nature of the call, traffic congestion, as well as road conditions when responding to emergency calls. When hazardous conditions exist, the operator should consider reducing speed or responding in a non-emergent manner to insure that responders arrive safely. Examples of these situations are:
  - a) slippery road conditions
  - b) inclement weather
  - c) poor visibility
  - d) heavy or congested traffic conditions
  - e) sharp curves
3. If at any time, the on duty Captain determines that hazardous road conditions exist, the following inclement weather protocol pertaining to emergency vehicle responses shall be followed:
  - a) Lights and sirens shall not be utilized.
  - b) Response speeds shall at no time exceed posted highway speeds.

- c) Emergency lights shall be engaged while the vehicle is parked in the highway right-of-way.
- d) When on scene at a motor vehicle accident or incident located on a state highway, the emergency vehicle should be parked in a manner that will shield responders and patients from oncoming traffic.
- e) Wheel chocks shall be used when parking an emergency vehicle on inclined surfaces that are covered in ice.
- f) Emergency vehicles will not be used to tow, pull, or winch another vehicle which is stranded unless the location of the vehicle creates an extreme traffic hazard.
- g) Dispatch shall be notified and announce County-wide that the inclement weather protocol is in effect. An alert text shall also be sent via Active 911.

#### E. Intersection Practices

1. Extreme care should be taken when approaching any intersection as intersections are the locations responsible for a large percentage of major accidents involving emergency vehicles. Drivers are required to practice the organizations intersection operating guidelines during all emergency responses.
  - a) Uncontrolled intersections
 

Any intersection that does not offer a control device (stop sign, yield or traffic signal) in the direction of travel of the emergency vehicle or where a traffic control signal is green upon the approach of the emergency vehicle all emergency vehicle drivers should do the following:

    - (1) Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast, etc.). Observe traffic in all 4 directions (left, right, front, rear)
    - (2) Slow down if any potential hazards are detected and cover the brake pedal with the driver's foot.
    - (3) Change the siren cadence not less than 200 feet from intersection
    - (4) Avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible.
    - (5) Emergency vehicle drivers should always be prepared to stop. If another vehicle operator fails to yield the right of way to an emergency vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver cannot force the right of way, nor can you assume the right of way, therefore you do not have the right of way until the other vehicle yields to you.
  - b) Controlled intersections
 

Any intersection controlled by a stop sign, yield sign, yellow traffic light or a red traffic light requires a complete stop by the emergency vehicle driver. In addition to bringing the vehicle to a complete stop these additional steps must be followed as well;

    - (1) Do not rely on warning devices to clear traffic
    - (2) Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast etc.) as well as driver options

- (3) Begin to slow down well before reaching the intersection and cover the brake pedal with the drivers foot, continue to scan in 4 directions (left, right, front,, back)
- (4) Change the siren cadence not less than 200 feet from intersection
- (5) Scan intersection for possible passing options (pass on right, left, wait, etc.) avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible
- (6) Come to a complete stop
- (7) Establish eye contact with other vehicle drivers; have partner communicate all is clear; reconfirm all other vehicles are stopped
- (8) Proceed one lane of traffic at a time treating each lane of traffic as a separate intersection

F. Non-emergency response

When responding to a call in a non-emergency method with the normal flow of traffic, the vehicle will be operated without any audible or visual warning devices and in compliance with all state motor vehicle laws that apply to civilian traffic. At no time should any emergency vehicle be operated during response with only visual warning devices.

G. Ordinary travel procedures

All drivers shall obey all traffic laws and traffic control devices when driving any emergency vehicle under ordinary travel conditions. Any driver observed breaking any traffic laws or driving any vehicle in an aggressive manner will be subject to disciplinary action including, suspension of driving privileges.

H. Riding policy

The department requires all persons riding on apparatus to be seated in approved riding positions and be secured to the vehicle by seat belts whenever the vehicle is in motion. The emergency vehicle driver shall verify that all personnel are properly seated and in seat belts before the vehicle is moved. The department prohibits the riding on tail steps, sidesteps, running boards, or any other exposed position. Personnel who perform emergency medical care while the vehicle is in motion should be secured to the vehicle by a seat belt or safety harness designed for occupant restraint when available, within reasonable limits and not to impede patient care.

I. Backing

The department recognizes that backing emergency vehicles is hazardous by the fact that the driver cannot see much of where he/she intends to go **and must utilize mirrors in performing this task**. The department recommends that whenever possible drivers should avoid backing as the safest way to back up a vehicle is not to back up at all. When it is necessary to back-up any departmental vehicle all drivers shall follow one of the following measures:

1. The department's first choice of backing procedures is that before any vehicle is shifted into reverse, a spotter be put in place near the rear of the vehicle. The spotter should be safely positioned so that the emergency vehicle driver can see them at tall times. If at any time the emergency vehicle driver loses sight of the

spotter, he/she shall stop immediately until the spotter makes him/her visible again.

2. If conditions exist that make use of spotters impossible, all drivers, before attempting to back up any vehicle, shall make a circle of safety to insure that; no person or persons are directly behind the vehicle or in its intended path of travel; all equipment is secured and that all compartment doors are securely closed; any physical \ obstructions are moved out of the way. The emergency vehicle driver should also note all potential obstructions in the intended path of travel.

J. Response in private owned vehicles

When any member responds to the station or to the scene of an emergency in his/her private vehicle, each member must strictly adhere to all applicable motor vehicle laws. Privately owned vehicles are not provided with the same exemptions that are provided to emergency vehicles. No member of the organization will be permitted to violate any motor vehicle laws, including but not limited to;

1. Speed limits
2. Going through traffic control devices
3. Passing in an unsafe manner
4. While it is recognized that timeliness in response to an emergency is important, it is imperative that all drivers understand that their private vehicles are not emergency vehicles and therefore are not afforded any exemptions or special privileges under state law. Any driver observed breaking any traffic laws or operating any vehicle in an aggressive or unsafe manner will be subject to disciplinary action including, suspension, loss of driving privileges and withdrawal of courtesy.
5. Any damages incurred to private vehicles which are operated by fire and emergency medical services personnel shall NOT be covered by county insurance.
6. Any violations of federal, state or local law or damages incurred will not be covered by county insurance.

K. Driver eligibility requirements.

Public Safety personnel must meet driving eligibility requirements prior to operation of any county owned vehicles. Past criminal offenses, moving offenses, traffic infractions, and physical abilities may restrict personnel or eliminate personnel from operating county owned vehicles.

1. Personnel with a conviction of driving under the influence within the past 5 years may not operate county vehicles.
2. Personnel that have had a suspended driver's permit within the past 12 months may not operate county owned vehicles.
3. Personnel are prohibited from operating any county owned vehicle under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. For the purpose of this section, under the influence of alcohol shall be defined as having a blood alcohol content greater than .02%. Illegal drugs shall be any substance that is not prescribed by a licensed physician and is present in the bloodstream upon testing.

4. Personnel under the care of a licensed physician must submit a physician's statement of approval to operate any county owned vehicle.
5. Prior to operating any county owned vehicle, personnel that have reached the age of 70, must submit an annual physicians release that certifies the person is able to operate the vehicle in a safe manner. This must be submitted to Public Safety Administration.
6. Personnel must be at least 18 years of age, have possessed a valid driver's license a minimum of two (2) years and meet the above criteria, prior to operating any county owned vehicle or county insured vehicles.
7. Personnel suspended from operating any county owned vehicle due to violations of any of the above policies, shall not be eligible to operate any county owned vehicle for a period of 5 years from the effective date.
8. An annual driving history report from the Department of Motor Vehicles should be obtained by the administrative office for Franklin County Public Safety for every person eligible to operate county owned vehicles.
9. Prior to operating a county owned vehicle, the Director of Public Safety or his designee shall determine eligibility of the applicant.
10. A driver's history report shall be prepared for all applicants of the Department of Public Safety. Applicants shall sign a written release for Department of Public Safety personnel to obtain the drivers history transcript.
11. Personnel shall have completed the appropriate Emergency Vehicle Operators Course for the vehicle they are operating.
12. If an eligible driver receives a traffic citation, regardless of location, the Public Safety office must be notified within the next seven (7) business days of occurrence. Failure to comply with this notification may result in disciplinary action.
13. If a driving record reflects a deficient in points of 0 or more, the individual will not be allowed to operate a vehicle insured by Franklin County Public Safety.
14. Personnel must currently possess a valid Virginia driver's license.
15. As indicated in Section I, Subsection K, line 6, all personnel shall have two (2) years of driving experience. If the previous two (2) years driving experience are not in Virginia, it will be the responsibility of the proposed driver to obtain the records and submit them to the Franklin County Department of Public Safety. Any cost associated with obtaining such records will be the responsibility of the proposed driver.
16. All drivers must meet the bylaws of the local agencies for vehicle operations.

## **II. Vehicle Incidents and Investigations**

### **A. Accidents involving Emergency Vehicles**

1. All vehicle crashes and incidents involving county owned vehicles, regardless of how minor must be investigated by the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction.
2. The involved driver shall make the proper notifications through the communications center.
3. All parties involved in crash shall be assessed for injuries.

4. Assess for any hazards such as leaks, traffic hazards or any other situation which will make remaining at the site of the incident more hazardous.
5. Fire/EMS staff responding to a call must immediately notify the communications center of the incident and have another unit dispatched to handle the initial call. If the unit involved is an ambulance and transporting a patient, another ambulance shall be dispatched to handle the transport.
6. The communications center shall notify the proper law enforcement agency having jurisdiction to conduct an investigation.
7. The Director, Division Chief of Operations, and Captain-1 shall be notified by phone or email.
8. The Senior Officer on scene shall make sure that driver involved in the accident completes an accident report form and submits it into the administration office with 24 hours.
9. If the incident involves a volunteer unit the Chief Officer of that agency shall also be notified.
10. The involved driver shall be transported to the hospital and shall be tested for drugs and alcohol.
11. Refusal of drug and alcohol testing will result in immediate suspension.
12. Vehicle vs. Deer will not require drug/alcohol testing.

### **III. Emergency Vehicle Incident Review Committee**

- A. The Director of Public Safety shall appoint an Emergency Vehicle Incident Review Committee to review the facts gathered from incidents involving county owned emergency vehicles. The committee will be responsible for the following:
  1. Conduct a review of each incident reported to determine if in-service drivers training should be conducted to address accident trends.
  2. Determine if the emergency vehicle operator followed Emergency Vehicle Operation guidelines, local ordinances, and state law.
  3. Make recommendations to the Director of Public Safety regarding Emergency Vehicle Operation policy and procedure.
  4. Determining if the occurrence is one of the following:
    - a) Incident-An unavoidable occurrence in which the operator did not contribute to the event.
    - b) Accident (Mild Chargeable)-An avoidable occurrence in which the operators action, or lack thereof, or violation of an emergency vehicle operating guideline, contributed to the cause of the event.
    - c) Accident (Strong Chargeable)-An avoidable occurrence in which the operators action, or lack thereof, or violation of an emergency vehicle operating guideline, or local ordinance, or violation of state law, was the direct cause of the event.
    - d) Accident (Gross Negligence)-An avoidable occurrence in which the operator willfully and intentionally violated an emergency vehicle operations guideline, local ordinance, or state law, which resulted in, or contributed to the event.
- B. The committee shall meet semi-annually to review incidents.