
Ocean City Fire Department Standard Operating Guidelines

Safety

Subject: Emergency Vehicle Response

Revised: 15 September 2018

Approved: 18 December 2018

Effective: 1 February 2019

Section: 708.00

708.01 Purpose

The purpose is to establish procedures and guidelines for the safe operation of department vehicles when utilizing an emergency response.

708.02 Scope

This document applies all drivers of department vehicles who are exercising the emergency vehicle driving privileges as enumerated in § 21-106 of the Maryland Transportation Article.

708.03 Policy

A. Intersection Navigation

1. The fire department emergency vehicle shall come to a complete stop prior to entering a negative right-of-way intersection (red light, flashing red, or stop sign), blind intersection, or any other intersection where hazards are present and/or the driver cannot account for all oncoming traffic lanes.
2. The emergency vehicle shall not enter the intersection until all approaching traffic has yielded the right-of-way and it is safe to proceed.
3. If necessary, due to traffic conditions or visual obstructions, the emergency vehicle driver shall cross the intersection in stages, treating each lane as a separate intersection. The driver shall stop the vehicle, as necessary, to ensure that each lane may be crossed safely.
4. When passing through an intersection where the emergency vehicle has the right-of-way, by virtue of a green light in the direction of travel and/or a stop signal (stop sign) for cross traffic, the emergency vehicle shall proceed through the intersection with due caution.
5. Emergency vehicle drivers must visually confirm that oncoming/opposing traffic is stopped while approaching any intersection, and be prepared to stop immediately, if necessary.

B. Travel in Opposing Traffic Lanes

1. Operating emergency vehicles in opposing traffic lanes is extremely hazardous under all conditions and should only be considered under exceptional circumstances (i.e., if there is no alternate route of travel).
2. When an emergency vehicle must travel in an opposing traffic lane, the driver shall proceed with extreme caution.

3. If there is a median separating the emergency vehicle from the slow or stopped traffic, the driver shall only travel in the opposing traffic lanes until reaching the next closest intersection or emergency crossover. This distance may only be exceeded when directed by the on-scene Incident Commander or law enforcement, and oncoming traffic has been stopped.

4. When approaching a controlled intersection in an opposing traffic lane, the emergency vehicle shall come to a complete stop prior to entering the intersection, even if the light is green in the direction of travel.

C. Travel on a One-Way Street

1. Operating emergency vehicles against the normal flow of traffic is extremely hazardous under all conditions and should only be considered under exceptional circumstances (i.e., if there is no alternate route of travel).

2. Travel against the normal flow of traffic on a one-way street shall be limited to short distances, preferably one block.

3. Emergency vehicle drivers must proceed slowly and with extreme caution in these situations.

4. The emergency vehicle shall come to a complete stop prior to entering an intersection while traveling on a one-way street.

D. Passing Traffic in an Emergency Vehicle

1. A fire department vehicle, responding in the emergency mode, shall not overtake another emergency vehicle that is traveling in the same direction, unless the driver of the lead vehicle has indicated that the other may pass.

2. A following vehicle may contact a leading vehicle, by radio, to request permission to pass.

3. When passing another emergency vehicle, the drivers of both vehicles, shall use extreme caution and provide as wide a clearance as possible.

E. Stopped School Bus

1. Emergency vehicles shall not pass a stopped school bus that has stopped with red lights flashing to load or unload passengers, unless the bus driver clearly signals that it is safe to pass.

2. When clearly signaled by the bus driver that it is safe to pass the bus, the emergency vehicle shall proceed slowly and with extreme caution past the bus; members must be vigilant for children while approaching and passing the bus.

3. The driver/operator of the emergency vehicle must be prepared to stop immediately while approaching, passing, and leaving the area in which the school bus is stopped.

F. Pedestrian Crosswalk

1. If the crosswalk is occupied, the emergency vehicle shall slow down and be prepared to stop if the pedestrian does not yield the right-of-way.

G. Aggressive Driving

1. Emergency vehicle drivers shall not employ aggressive driving techniques to force other drivers to yield the right-of-way.

2. Emergency vehicles must be operated with due regard for the safety of civilian traffic at all times, and under all circumstances; the elimination of aggressive driving techniques is also critical for protecting the safety of other crew members assigned to the vehicle.

H. Maneuvering at an Incident Scene

1. Driver/operators shall exercise extreme caution while maneuvering emergency vehicles at an incident scene; other drivers and pedestrians may be distracted or preoccupied by events and/or a number of hazards that may be present.
2. Vehicles shall be moved slowly and cautiously, with spotters assigned to guide the driver in tight situations.
3. When streets have been closed to regular traffic, the emergency vehicle driver remains fully responsible for the safe and prudent operation of the vehicle at all times.
4. When operating at an incident scene where the streets have not been closed to regular traffic, fire department vehicles shall be positioned, parked, or staged in a manner that considers safety as a primary factor.
5. Prior to moving an emergency vehicle in any location, the driver/operator shall ensure that all occupants are seated and properly secured in approved riding positions. The only exception to this would be during the loading of five-inch supply line (refer to SOG 711.00 – Hose Loading onto Moving Apparatus).