Ocean City Fire Department
Standard Operating Guidelines

Safety

Subject: Roadway and Roadside Scene Safety
Revised: 15 September 2018
Approved: 18 December 2018
Effective: 1 February 2019
Section: 709.00

709.01 Purpose

To establish guidelines that provides protection for personnel and incident victims at all roadway or roadside incident scenes.

709.02 Policy

A. This guideline identifies parking practices for fire department apparatus and vehicles, at emergency incidents, that will provide maximum protection and safety for personnel operating in or near moving vehicular traffic. It also identifies several approaches for individual practices designed to keep personnel safe while exposed to the hazardous environment created by moving traffic.

B. It shall be the policy of the Ocean City Fire Department to position apparatus and other emergency vehicles at a vehicle-related incident on any street, road, highway or expressway in a manner that best protects the incident scene and work area. Such positioning shall afford protection to fire department personnel, law enforcement officers, tow service operators and the motoring public from hazards of working in or near moving traffic.

C. All personnel should understand and appreciate the high risk that personnel are exposed to when operating in or near moving traffic. Responders should always operate within a protected environment at any roadway incident.

D. Always consider moving vehicles a threat to your safety. At every roadway emergency scene, personnel are exposed to passing motorists of varying driving abilities.

E. Approaching vehicles may be driven at speeds from a creeping pace to well beyond the posted speed limit. Some of these vehicle operators may be vision impaired, under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, or have a medical condition that affects their judgment or abilities. In addition, motorists may be completely oblivious to your presence due to distractions caused by cell phone use, loud music, conversation, inclement weather, and terrain or building obstructions. Approaching motorists will often be looking at the scene and not the roadway in front of them. Assume that all approaching traffic is distracted and that there is the potential for a collision.

F. Nighttime incidents requiring personnel to work in or near moving traffic are particularly hazardous. Visibility is reduced and driver reaction time to hazards in the roadway is slowed.

709.03 Definitions

A. Advance Warning – notification procedures that advises approaching motorists to transition from normal driving status to that required by the temporary emergency traffic control measures ahead of them.

B. Block – positioning a fire department vehicle on an angle to the lanes of traffic creating a physical barrier between upstream traffic and the work area. Includes 'block to the right' or 'block to the left'.

C. Buffer Zone – the distance or space between personnel and vehicles in the protected work zone and nearby moving traffic.

D. Downstream – the direction that traffic is moving as it travels away from the incident scene.

E. Flagger – a fire department member assigned to monitor approaching traffic and activate an emergency signal if the actions of a motorist do not conform to established traffic control measures in place at the roadway incident scene.

F. Shadow – the protected work area at a roadway incident that is shielded by the block from apparatus and other emergency vehicles.

G. Temporary Work Zone – the physical area of a roadway within which emergency personnel perform their fire, EMS and rescue tasks at a roadway incident.

H. Transition Zone – the lanes of a roadway within which approaching motorists change their speed and position to comply with the traffic control measures established at an incident scene.

I. Upstream – the direction that traffic is traveling from as the vehicles approach the incident scene.

709.04 Procedure

A. Safety Benchmarks

All emergency personnel are at great risk while operating in or near moving traffic. There are several specific tactical procedures that should be taken to protect all crew members and emergency service personnel at the incident scene including:

1. Never trust approaching traffic.
2. Avoid turning your back to approaching traffic.
3. Establish an initial 'block' with the first arriving emergency vehicle or fire apparatus.
4. Always wear the Class II or Public Safety highway safety vest, turnout coat or high visibility parka at all roadway or roadside incidents.
5. Utilize fire apparatus and police vehicles to initially redirect the flow of moving traffic.
6. Establish advanced warning and an adequate transition area upstream of the incident in order to reduce travel speeds of approaching motorists.
7. Use cones and/or flares where appropriate for sustained traffic control and direction.
8. Establish a fire department member assigned to the 'flagger' function to monitor approaching traffic and activate an emergency signal if the actions of a motorist do not conform to the established traffic control measures in place at the roadway incident.

B. Apparatus and Emergency Vehicle Benchmarks

1. Listed below are benchmarks for safe parking of apparatus and emergency vehicles when operating in or near moving traffic.

a. Always position the first arriving apparatus in a blocking position that will protect the scene, patients, and emergency personnel.
b. Initial apparatus placement should provide a work area protected from traffic approaching at least one direction.
c. Allow apparatus placement to slow approaching motorists and redirect them around the incident scene.
d. Use fire apparatus to block at least one additional traffic lane more than that already obstructed by the incident.
e. When practical, position apparatus in such a manner to protect the pump operator from being exposed to approaching traffic.
f. Positioning of large apparatus must create a safe parking area for EMS units and other fire department vehicles. Operating personnel, equipment, and patients should be kept within the 'shadow' created by the blocking apparatus at all times.
g. When blocking with apparatus to protect the emergency scene, establish a work zone of sufficient size and includes all damaged vehicles, roadway debris, the patient triage and treatment area, the extrication work area, personnel and tool staging area and the ambulance loading zone.

2. For incidents occurring at intersections, or where the incident may be in the middle lane of the roadway, two or more sides of the incident will need to be protected.
3. When possible, law enforcement vehicles must be strategically positioned to expand the initial safe work zone for traffic approaching from opposing directions. The goal is to effectively block all exposed sides of the work zone. The blocking of the work zone should be prioritized according to traffic volume.
4. On roadway incidents where a charged hoseline may be deployed, the apparatus should be placed in a blocking position so that the pump panel is downstream and the driver/operator is protected from on-coming traffic.
5. Traffic cones shall be deployed from the rear of the blocking apparatus toward approaching traffic to increase the advanced warning provided to approaching motorists.
a. Personnel shall place cones and retrieve cones while facing oncoming traffic.
b. Traffic cones should be deployed at 15-foot intervals upstream of the blocking apparatus with the furthest traffic cone approximately 75 feet upstream. On limited access/high volume roadways cones should be placed at 30-foot intervals of the blocking apparatus with the furthest cone approximately 150 feet upstream.
6. EMS units should be positioned downstream of the incident and within the protected work area provided by larger apparatus to allow the patient loading area to be away from moving traffic.

C. Incident Command Benchmarks

The initial arriving officer and/or Incident Commander must ensure that the following critical benchmarks are completed in order to provide a safe and protected work environment for emergency scene personnel. These benchmarks include:

1. Ensure that the first arriving apparatus establishes an initial block to create the initial safe work area.
2. Assign parking locations to all later arriving emergency vehicles.
3. Lanes of traffic shall be identified numerically from left to right when facing the direction of travel.

4. Work with on-scene law enforcement to provide a balance between traffic control and traffic flow, however, the safety of personnel operating on the scene should never be compromised in order to increase the flow of traffic.

D. Emergency Crew Personnel Benchmarks

Listed below are benchmarks for safe actions of individual personnel when operating in or near moving traffic.

1. Always maintain an acute awareness of your working environment.
2. Never trust moving traffic.
3. Always look before you move.
4. Always keep an eye on moving traffic.
5. Avoid turning your back on moving traffic.
6. Personnel should enter and exit emergency vehicles from the protected side of the vehicle when possible.
7. Class II or Public Safety vests shall be worn at all times while operating at a roadway/roadside incident.
8. When walking around emergency vehicles, be alert to your proximity to moving traffic.
    a. Stop at the corner of the unit, check for traffic, and then proceed along the unit, remaining as close to the emergency vehicle as possible.
    b. Maintain a 'reduced profile' when moving through any area where a minimum 'buffer zone' condition exists.

E. Night or Reduce Light Conditions

In order to improve safety during reduce light conditions and/or during night time operations at roadway incidents, the following is recommended:

1. Turn OFF vehicle headlights.
2. Provide overall scene lighting.
3. Illuminate cones with flares, when possible.
4. Consider additional blocking apparatus upstream of the incident.