

Release: 1.0
Effective: Draft

Derby Fire Department
Standard Operating Procedure Number 20
Operation of Emergency Apparatus

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to establish guidelines for the qualification and safe operation of emergency apparatus.
- 1.2 Responding to any emergency call, the Derby Fire Department places a great deal of responsibility on the drivers of our emergency vehicles. Not only must emergency vehicles drivers provide prompt conveyance of the apparatus, equipment, and personnel to provide service to those in need, but as importantly, must accomplish this task in the safest and most prudent manner possible.
- 1.3 Emergency vehicle drivers have in their care, custody and control most of the major assets possessed by this organization (the vehicle, portable equipment, personnel).
- 1.4 Emergency vehicle drivers also have a higher standard of care to provide to the general motoring public and must make every attempt possible to provide due regard for the safety of others. Drivers must constantly monitor and reduce the amount of risk and exposure to potential losses during each and every response.
- 1.5 Safe arrival at the emergency scene shall be, and must always remain, the first priority of all emergency vehicle drivers. In order to accomplish this enormous task all emergency vehicles drivers shall become familiar with, and constantly abide by the following policies and procedures.

2. General

- 2.1. Apparatus is all motorized equipment owned by the city that the Fire Department utilizes for incident response.
- 2.2. Operation will include the driving of apparatus and the operation of apparatus equipment utilized to perform functions at incidents or aides fire service personnel.
- 2.3. Priority Responses recognized by the Derby Fire Department will be as follows:
 - 2.3.1. Priority 1 – All emergency lights and siren(s) activated and proceed in accordance with Connecticut State Statutes regarding “Authorized Emergency Vehicle”

- 2.3.2. Priority 2 – No emergency lights and/or siren(s) and proceed in accordance with Connecticut State Statutes regarding vehicular traffic.
- 2.3.3. At no time should any emergency vehicle be operated during response with only visual warning devices.

3. Responsibilities of Drivers

- 3.1 All drivers shall follow departmental guidelines and the laws of the State of Connecticut for safe operation of apparatus.
- 3.2 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. 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. He/she should also verify right side and rear clearance with the person riding in the officer position. This 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.
- 3.3 When responding to a true emergency, all audible and visual warning devices will be operated at all times regardless of time of day and/or traffic conditions. All emergency vehicle driver's 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.
- 3.4 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. 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. An attempt should be made to have options available when passing or overtaking vehicles. If another vehicle operator fails to yield the right of way to an emergency vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver can not 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.
- 3.5 Although the department utilizes an electronic light changing device system to change lights at certain intersections throughout the city, drivers will not rely upon these devices to automatically change the lights to allow them to proceed through intersections. When approaching an intersection that is equipped with an electronic light changing device and the light is red upon approach, the driver will slow the apparatus down to a safe and reasonable speed to remain in control of the apparatus in the event that a vehicle or pedestrian can not anticipate the automatic change of the light.
- 3.6 Drivers of emergency apparatus shall observe the Basic Speed Rule (never exceed a speed which is safe, reasonable and proper for existing conditions).

3.7 The emergency vehicle driver 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. All drivers shall follow the rule for safe following distance and allow 1 second of following distance for every 10 feet of vehicle length for speeds under 40 mph and add 1 additional second for each 10 mph for speeds over 40 mph.

3.8 Drivers of emergency apparatus shall use extreme caution when approaching incident scenes.

3.9 The chock blocks provided with various pieces of fire apparatus shall be utilized at all times.

4. Response speeds

When responding to a true emergency only, drivers shall operate the vehicle they are driving at as close to the **posted speed limit** as possible, but not to exceed ten (10) miles per hour over the posted speed limit, conditions permitting. Examples of conditions requiring slower response speeds include but are not limited to;

- slippery road conditions
- inclement weather
- poor visibility
- heavy or congested traffic conditions
- sharp curves

5. Intersection Practices

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.

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:

- 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)
- Slow down if any potential hazards are detected and cover the brake pedal with the driver's foot.
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200 feet from intersection
- Avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible.

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 can not 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.

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;

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

8. Riding policy

The department requires all persons riding on fire 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 and/or the person riding in the officer position shall verify that all personnel are properly seated and in seat belts before the vehicle is moved. Standard communication signals should be formulated and utilized by all personnel.

The department prohibits the riding on tailsteps, 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.

9. Backing

The department recognizes that backing emergency vehicles is made hazardous by the fact that the driver cannot see much of where he/she intends to go. 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 tow following measures would be taken.

The department's first choice of backing procedures is that before any vehicle is put into reverse and backed that 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 himself/herself visible again.

If conditions exist that make use of spotters impossible, all drivers, before attempting to back up any fire department vehicle, shall will make a circle of safety to see 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.

10. 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;

- Speed limits
- Going through traffic control devices
- Passing in an unsafe manner

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 priviieges 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 up to and including termination.