

## 101 Vehicle Safety Guide

**PURPOSE:** The intent of this policy is to prevent accidents involving vehicles operated by ECFR members. Desired benefits include: preventing personal injuries, fulfilling requirements of applicable State law, controlling insurance costs, preventing property damage, preventing apparatus out-of-service time, decreasing risks of law suits, eliminating potential suffering and loss of income for our members.

- I. Policy - All East County Fire & Rescue personnel entrusted with the responsibility of operating emergency response vehicles in the "emergency mode", as defined by Washington State law RCW 46 shall obtain and maintain Washington State Fire Service Training, Emergency Vehicle Accident Prevention (EVAP) certification. Additionally, all applicable steps for obtaining driving approval, as indicated in the District's Vehicle Operations Manual, shall be met.
  
- II. Apparatus Readiness
  - A. Gear shift lever in neutral (park where provided).
  - B. Parking brake set.
  - C. Battery switch in "off" position, where provided.
  - D. Ignition switch in "off" position.
  - E. Headlight switch in "on" position (vehicles equipped with a battery switch only).
  - F. Headlight dimmer switch in "low-beam" position.
  - G. 115-volt power supply plugged-in, where provided.
  - H. Radio controls adjusted to marked positions, to include "on", whenever keyed or controlled with a battery switch and in scan mode.
  - I. Windows, cabinets and cab doors closed, unless 115 v power supply lines prevent closing a door. The driver's window may be left partially open to help vent the cab.

- J. Emergency lights on and the master control switch off, where provided.
  - K. Heater controls in the defrost position.
  - L. Seat belts left in a position which will enable the next user to fasten the belt with the least possible motion.
  - M. Disconnected from any and all water supply points. If filling, standby personnel must be present with apparatus.
  - N. All equipment in-service and present. Determination can be made by referring to East County Fire & Rescue standards, NFPA 1900 series standards, past practice or Officer approval. Any apparatus or equipment taken out of service shall be reported to the Duty or Chief Officer.
  - O. Nothing shall be set or hung on any portion of the vehicle other than its designated spot. This includes: turnout clothing, first aid kits, radios, paperwork, coffee cups, etc.
  - P. All cabinet doors shall be left closed any time the apparatus is parked and left unattended.
  - Q. The driver shall be responsible to check the perimeter of the apparatus prior to moving the vehicle.
- III. Vehicle Operations:
- A. Only members of East County Fire & Rescue and persons authorized by the Fire Chief will be allowed to ride on the apparatus.
  - B. Head lights shall be turned on whenever District vehicles are in motion.
- IV. Operational Communications:
- A. Vehicle horn, electric or air as appropriate shall sound three times prior to placing gear selector in reverse and backing said vehicle (respect the neighbors).

- B. No personnel are permitted to ride on the hose bed, tail or running boards of any vehicle at any time.
- C. When backing an apparatus, a minimum of one person when available, shall be stationed at the rear, in a position to communicate with the driver and act as a guide.
  - a. The guide shall be positioned at the left rear or right rear of the apparatus, as conditions dictate. The guide shall be aware of both sides of the apparatus.
  - b. The EV driver ~~and the backing guide person are~~ is ultimately responsible for the apparatus and may be held personally and financially responsible for any damage caused as a result of negligence or disregard for safe operation.
  - c. If communications between the driver and the guide are lost, the driver shall bring the apparatus to an immediate halt. The apparatus shall remain stopped until communication between the emergency vehicle (EV) operator and guide is restored.
  - d. If it is impossible to obtain a guide, and it is absolutely necessary to back the apparatus up, the EV operator shall get out of the apparatus and check the area prior to backing; also known as G.O.A.L (get out and look).
  - e. Backing shall be done slowly with emergency lights operating. Drivers and guides shall use the standard signals for maneuvering apparatus as described in the Safety Standards for Fire Fighters.
  - f. Visual contact between the driver and backer must be maintained at all times. If visual contact is lost, the driver will immediately stop the EV and wait until contact is re-established before proceeding.
- D. Radio communications shall be of the clear text language.

V. Wheel Chocks:

Wheel chocks shall be placed on both sides of the driver side rear outer tire anytime the vehicle is parked. The only exceptions are while parked in the station ready for emergency response and when only one chock is provided. Both wheel chocks may be place in front, or in back of wheels during steep incline conditions.

VI. Vehicle Fuel Level:

Any time a District vehicle is returned to the station, the EV operator shall top off the fuel tank if the fuel gauge reads 3/4 full or less (1/2 on the first tank for apparatus equipped with dual fuel tanks).

VII. Water Tank Level:

Water tank shall be topped off anytime water is used (regardless of how much was used).

VIII. Vehicle Accidents:

- A. A vehicle accident report shall be completed for any accident involving a motor vehicle, whether involving District apparatus or a private vehicle, if the incident occurred while the individual was conducting District business.
- B. The accident shall be reported to the Duty Chief as soon as possible.
- C. The accident report shall be submitted to the Chief or his designee within 24-hours of the accident, if not sooner. A copy shall be forwarded to the Safety Officer.
- D. A State of Washington Collision Report shall also be completed and sent to the appropriate agencies if necessary.
- E. If the incident occurs while District apparatus is responding to an emergency alarm, the apparatus involved shall notify Dispatch as follows:
  - 1. Exact location of the accident.
  - 2. Nature of the accident, for example: pedestrian, two-car, etc.
  - 3. Number of patients and assistance required, for example: ambulance, police, etc.
- F. Upon notification of an accident, Dispatch will:
  - 1. Dispatch requested assistance.
  - 2. Dispatch additional emergency apparatus to the original emergency alarm, if needed.
  - 3. Advise the Fire Chief, if not already advised.

- G. Personnel on apparatus involved in an accident will render assistance or aid to the injured.
- H. The apparatus involved may continue response to the emergency alarm, under the following conditions, after:
  - 1. Mark the wheel position of the involved apparatus
  - 2. Assigning one member to remain at the scene and initiate the accident investigation.
  
  - 2. Conducting a mechanical check of the apparatus to determine that any damage incurred will not affect vehicle operation. Note\* Special consideration should be given to: brakes, steering, lights, radiators, etc.
- I. Apparatus will be placed out-of-service under the following conditions:
  - 1. Any injury or death.
  - 2. Any damage to property.
  - 3. Damage to apparatus, that in the opinion of the EV operator or Officer would prohibit a continued response safely.
- J. If the vehicle is not able to respond to the emergency, leave the vehicle in place until released by the local law enforcement.
- K. Personnel on the responding apparatus will initiate accident investigation:
  - 1. Obtain names, addresses and telephone numbers of any witnesses.
  - 2. Obtain statements from witnesses.
  - 3. Provide and obtain insurance card information.
  - 4. Take pictures of the scene.
- L. Accident report forms shall be in every station and carried in every District vehicle. The report forms shall be completed immediately after the accident and be given to the Fire Chief or his designee for action. A copy of all accident reports shall be given to the Safety Committee.

- M. If the incident occurs while responding in a private vehicle, discontinue response until appropriated actions are taken to resolve the incident. The Duty Chief shall respond to any POV accident if the accident occurred while responding to an incident.
- N. All accident scenes shall be photographed with still photography. Include; each vehicle involved; angle shots from each direction (N,S,E,W); property damage; road surface; and any other pertinent evidence.
- O. All Fire District and personal vehicles involved in accidents while conducting District business shall be investigated;
  - 1. Performed by Duty Officer or On Call Chief Officer.
  - 2. Law enforcement investigation will be at the discretion of the responding law enforcement officer.

IX. Approved Drivers:

Only District members completing all driving steps as outlined in the Driver's Training outline (see the procedure, Driver's Training) or under the direction/supervision of an approved District Apparatus Evaluator, for training purposes, shall be permitted to drive District apparatus.

X. Vehicle Safety:

- A. The driver will keep the apparatus under control and drive in a defensive manner at all times.
- B. Caution should be exercised when pulling out of the stations, with the driver and/or the officer having the responsibility of making sure the front of the station is clear.
- C. The parking brake shall be set prior to personnel boarding or leaving the apparatus (this includes releasing personnel to take a hydrant). Personnel shall not exit the apparatus until directed by the Officer.
- D. There shall be no boarding or leaving apparatus that is in motion.
- E. No one shall ride on the hose bed for any reason while the vehicle is in motion.

- F. If possible all apparatus at emergencies shall be parked in such a manner that will permit a free flow of traffic, while providing adequate protection to personnel working on or near the apparatus.
  - G. If possible, park all District and private vehicles on the same side of the street.
  - H. When at an emergency and not legally parked, headlights and Opticom shall be turned off and red lights shall be left on when a potential exists for blinding on-coming traffic. If the incident requires the use of headlights for operations, they may be left on at the discretion of the IC. Traffic flares or cones shall be set if on-coming vehicles will not be able to see the emergency scene at a safe stopping distance, for example: a curve. All compartment doors shall be closed.
  - I. Seat belts shall be worn at all times when the emergency vehicle is in motion.
  - J. Emergency lighting shall be used at the AO discretion when backing into the station truck bay.
- XI. Driving to the Emergency:
- A. Emergency response routes shall be selected prior to the emergency vehicle responding. Before leaving the station, the driver and/or officer will confirm the address, check the nearest hydrant location, and determine the best route and an alternate route. The officer shall have a map readily available en route for confirmation or route changes.
  - B. All responses shall be Code "3" (lights and siren) unless otherwise stated per Dispatch or the Incident Commander.
  - C. Apparatus shall not attempt to pass each other unless authorized by the Officer or driver in the affected apparatus by radio contact.
  - D. The first in apparatus shall report any hazards in the roadway to the other responding apparatus, for example: a stalled vehicle, ice, etc.

- E. Turnouts (bunker gear, protective clothing) shall be donned before the vehicle responds. An exception is allowed for the driver, if wearing turnouts hinders safe operation, and he/she shall don them on the emergency scene before beginning scene operations. The driver will confirm that all passengers are buckled up before place the apparatus in motion.
- F. If the vehicle is in motion at the time of dispatch, turnouts shall be donned at the scene.
- G. To assure a safe response to emergencies, vehicles shall be operated with judgment rather than speed. All drivers shall use caution and shall keep safety in mind for every decision made. Driving conditions such as roads, weather, lights and traffic may dictate reductions in speed. The maximum allowable speed limit shall be no more than 10 m.p.h. over the posted speed limit.
- H. When operating an EV with lights and an audible warning device (siren) the driver may: disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions after right-away has been relinquished by other vehicles.
- I. Speed at intersections:
  - 1. Non-controlled: Extreme caution must be used as the right-of-way shall not automatically be assumed. Speed shall be dictated by traffic and weather conditions, and the emergency vehicle shall be under control and have the capability of stopping at any point in the intersection short of a collision.
  - 2. Controlled: When entering an intersection which is controlled by a traffic signal or stoplight, and the signal is against the responding apparatus, the apparatus shall stop and accelerate only after control of the intersection is assured. To clear the intersection safely, it may be necessary to stop at each obscured traffic lane on multi-lane streets. An amber signal shall be considered the same as a red signal.
- J. When not responding to alarms, emergency vehicles shall obey all traffic laws.



- K. Operators of private automobiles shall obey all traffic laws when responding to the station or to the emergency scene. Green lights or flashers are not allowed for POV response.
- L. Radios will be operated by the member riding in the officer's seat and not the EV operator whenever possible.
- M. Whenever an EV is in operation, the use of bay door controls will rest with the EV operator.
- N. Headlights shall be in use at all times.
- O. The EV operator will demonstrate the attitude and skills of a "Pro Driver" as instructed and evaluated in EVAP training (Driving Skill Course & Road Test).

XII. Safety Committee Operation:

- A. With regards to EVAP, specifically, the Safety Committee shall be responsible for:
  1. Establishing an accident prevention program for all Fire District Drivers.
  2. Review all vehicle accidents.
  3. Establishing and conducting an accident review board.
  4. Safety Committee meetings as specified in WAC 296-305-020.

**Driver Responsibility**

- A) Driver of emergency vehicles shall be directly responsible for the safe and prudent operation of the vehicle under all conditions.
- B) Driver's first priority shall be for the safe arrival of the emergency vehicle at the emergency scene.
- C) Driver shall not move emergency vehicles until all personnel on the vehicle are seated and secured with seat belts and in approved riding positions.
- D) During emergency response, driver of emergency vehicle shall bring the vehicle to a complete stop for any of the following:
  - 1) When directed by a law enforcement officer
  - 2) Red traffic lights
  - 3) Stop signs
  - 4) Negative right-of-way intersection

- 5) Blind intersections
  - 6) When the driver cannot account for all lanes of traffic in an intersection
  - 7) When other intersection hazards are present
  - 8) When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing warning lights
- E) During non-emergency travel, drivers of emergency vehicles shall obey all traffic control signals and signs and all laws and rules set forth by state and local jurisdiction.

#### **Driver Responsibilities Continued**

- F) During emergency response and non-emergency travel, drivers of emergency vehicle shall come to a complete stop at all railroad grade crossing
- G) The driver shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles and pedestrians
- H) A safe following distance is to be established and maintained, allowing 1 second of following distance for every 10 feet of vehicle length for speeds under 40 mph (add 1 additional second for every 10 mph for speeds over 40 mph)
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Whether actually an elected or appointed officer or not, the individual riding in the front passenger seat of an emergency vehicle takes on the role of co-driver. While not in physical control of the operation of the vehicle, the officer provides an additional set of eyes and ears for the driver and should also be responsible for making certain that the driver operates the vehicle in a safe manner. If the driver is negligent in the operation of the vehicle and causes injury and/or property damage, the officer may also be found to be jointly negligent. Standard Operating Guidelines should address the following areas.

## Officer Responsibility

- Officer shall ensure that all personnel on the vehicle are seated and secured with seat belts and in approved riding positions prior to movement of the emergency vehicle
- Officer shall ensure driver is operating the vehicle in a safe and prudent manner during response in accordance with departmental policy and state statutes
- Officer shall issue warnings about road and physical hazards to the driver
- Officer shall direct the driver to cease any unsafe driving, such as excess speed or unsafe intersection practices
- Officer shall be responsible to operate the radio and communications equipment during response
- Officer shall operate the audio and visual warning devices
- Officer shall check map book, run cards or computer aided response to assist the driver in determining the safest and most direct route to the emergency scene
- Officer shall assist the driver in the intersection crossing and backing according to specific responsibilities outlined in the intersection and backing policies