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Revised 00-00-00

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EMERGENCY VEHICLE RESPONSE GUIDELINES

Purpose

Responding to any emergency call, the Barkhamsted Fire District places a great deal of responsibility on the drivers of our emergency vehicles. Not only must emergency vehicles drivers provide prompt conveyance of 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. Emergency vehicle drivers have in their care, custody, and control most of the major assets possessed by this organization (the vehicle, portable equipment, personnel). Emergency vehicle drivers also have a higher standard of care to provide to the general public and must make every attempt possible to provide due regard for safety of others. Drivers must constantly monitor and reduce the amount of risk and exposure to potential losses during each and every response. 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 vehicle drivers shall become familiar with, and constantly abide by the following policies and procedures.

1. Circle of Safety

Prior to entering the cab and starting the vehicle, emergency vehicle drivers 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 vehicle and visually inspect all four 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.

Add text about the CEVO II course

2. Warning devices and true emergencies

When responding to a true emergency¹, all audible and visible warning devices will be operated at all times regardless of time of day and/or traffic conditions. All 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.

¹ The definition of a true emergency is a situation in which there is a high probability of death or serious injury to an individual or significant property loss, and actions by an emergency vehicle driver may reduce the seriousness of the situation.

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3. Vehicle control and right-of-way

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 operator might 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 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.

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 one second of following distance for every ten feet of vehicle length for speeds under 40 mph and one additional second for each ten mph for speeds over 40 mph.

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** possible, but not to exceed ten miles per hour over the posted speed limit, conditions permitting. Examples of conditions requiring slower speeds include but are not limited to:

- Slippery road conditions
- Inclement weather
- Poor visibility
- Heavy or congested traffic conditions
- Sharp curves

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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.

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:

- Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast, etc.). Observe traffic in all four 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' from the 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 operator 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.

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Controlled intersections

Any intersection controlled by a stop sign, yield sign, yellow traffic light, or a red traffic light require **Prudent Action** by the emergency vehicle driver. The following steps should be taken:

- Do not rely on warning devices to clear traffic.
- Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turn 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 four directions (left, right, front, rear).
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200' from intersection.
- Scan intersection for possible passing options (pass on right, left, wait, etc.) avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible.
- If all visible traffic in all lanes cannot be accounted for, the driver should bring the vehicle to a complete stop. If the driver proceeds past a control device with a negative right-of-way without coming to a complete stop, both the driver and the officer should be required to complete an incident report providing an explanation of the circumstances that permitted them to do so.
- Establish eye contact with other vehicle drivers; have partner communicate all is clear; reconfirm all other vehicles are stopped.
- Account for traffic one lane of traffic at a time treating each lane of traffic as a separate intersection.

Railroad intersections

At any time an emergency vehicle driver approaches an unguarded rail crossing he/she shall bring the apparatus or vehicle he/she is operating to a complete stop before entering the grade crossing. In addition the emergency vehicle driver shall perform the following prior to proceeding:

- Turn off all sirens and air horns.
- Operate the motor at idle speed.
- Turn off any other sound producing equipment or accessories.
- Open the windows and listen for train's horn.

6. Non-emergency response

September 2005

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Revised 00-00-00

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When responding to a call in a non-emergency response mode or normal flow of traffic (non-code 3 or when not responding to a true emergency) 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.

7. Ordinary travel procedures

All drivers shall obey all traffic laws and traffic control devices when driving any fire district 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.

8. Riding policy

The district 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 signals should be formulated and utilized by all personnel.*

The district prohibits the riding on tailsteps, sidesteps, running boards, or any other exposed position except as outlined in the hose loading policy.

9. Backing

The district 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 district recommends that whenever possible drivers 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 district vehicle all drivers shall follow one of the two following measures:

- The district'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 all 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.

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- If conditions exist that make use of spotters impossible, all drivers, before attempting to back up any district vehicle, shall 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; that all compartment doors are securely closed; and any physical obstructions are moved out of 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 privileges under Connecticut State Statutes.** 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 light permit.

Acknowledgement

I _____ acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Emergency Vehicle Response Guidelines and have also been trained and understand the items and instructions contained in the policy. I also understand the importance of safe operation of Barkhamsted Fire District vehicles and will abide by all of the tactical and administrative operating guidelines contained in this document.

Signed _____ Date _____