

HIGH RISK/HIGH FREQUENCY

HUDSON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Guidelines

GUIDELINE NO: 200.04

SUBJECT: MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVING

APPROVAL: Scott St. Martin, Fire Chief

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Revised Date: n/a

PURPOSE

This guideline establishes motor vehicle driving procedures for both emergency and non-emergency modes with department apparatus. This guideline also addresses personally owned vehicles.

RESPONSIBILITY

1. All Chief and Company Officers have the responsibility to comply with and ensure that the personnel under their command are adequately trained, fully understand, and comply with this guideline.
2. All firefighters have the responsibility to learn and follow this guideline.

DEFINITIONS

1. Emergency Mode –BOTH visual and audible warning devices are in operation.
2. Reduced Speed – Reduced speed means no visual or audible warning devices are activated. The vehicle shall be operated within the scope of the posted motor vehicle laws.
3. Apparatus – A specialized emergency vehicle used for rescue, fire suppression or other specialized function
4. Emergency Vehicle – This term is to include both apparatus and vehicles.
5. Favorable Conditions – Driving conditions that include light traffic, good roads, good visibility, dry pavement and no road construction.
6. Vehicle – A passenger type vehicle used for routine driving and selected emergency response
7. Personal Owned Vehicle (POV) – A vehicle owned by a member of the Hudson Fire Department.

GUIDELINE

A. Introduction

1. The safe operation of an emergency vehicle depends heavily on the ability and experience of the driver and the added resources and direction of the officer.
2. All drivers shall maintain control of the vehicle in a manner as to provide the maximum level of safety for both their passengers and the general public.
3. Drivers should be aware that civilian vehicle operators may not react in the manner in which is expected or felt to be appropriate.
4. An attempt should be made to have options available when passing or overtaking vehicles.
5. If another vehicle fails to yield the right of way to an emergency vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver cannot force or assume the right of way.
6. The driver of an emergency vehicle shall be directly responsible for its safe operation.
7. When driving Department vehicles strict driving conduct and courtesy shall be observed. Although granted certain privileges by Wisconsin State Statutes for emergency mode operations, members are aware that a Department vehicle is a "moving billboard" advertising the Department and how that vehicle is used and operated reflects upon the entire Department.

B. General Driving Requirements

1. Emergency vehicles shall only be operated and driven by authorized department members, authorized maintenance personnel and other personnel as authorized by the Fire Chief or next highest ranking officer.
2. Drivers shall meet the State of Wisconsin driver's license requirements along with the Fire Department's driver training requirements.
3. Any member who has allowed their license to expire, be suspended or revoked shall not drive department apparatus or vehicles and shall immediately report this to the Fire Chief.
 - a. Non-sworn personnel shall report this to their immediate supervisor.
4. Smoking is prohibited inside any department apparatus or vehicle.
5. Vehicle headlights shall be utilized by all department apparatus and vehicles in both emergency and non-emergency driving situations.
6. Engines, Aerial, and Squads shall use the parking brake when parked whether in or out of the station.

C. Leaving Fire Station

1. Before the apparatus leaves the fire station the Officer or Firefighter in charge of the apparatus that will be seated in the right front passenger seat shall:
 - a. Confirm the overhead door is fully opened;
 - b. Confirm truck doors are closed, and
 - c. Confirm no other obstructions or debris is present.
2. When the driver is the sole occupant of the apparatus, (i.e. Tenders) the following steps shall be followed:
 - a. The overhead door shall be opened and verified it is all the way up;
 - b. Drive apparatus slowly from station watching for vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

D. Driver responsibilities

1. Driver's first priority shall be for the safe arrival of the emergency vehicle at the emergency scene
2. Driver shall not move an emergency vehicle until all personnel are seated and secured with seatbelts and in approved riding positions
3. During emergency response, drivers shall bring the emergency vehicle to a complete stop, prior to proceeding, for any of the following:
 - a. Red traffic lights
 - b. Stop signs
 - c. Blind intersections where there is no traffic control (traffic light or stop sign) in any direction
 - d. Prior to entering a controlled intersection (traffic light or stop sign) when traveling in oncoming lanes or on a painted or raised median
 - e. When other intersection or road hazards are present
 - f. When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing red warning lights and/or with deployed stop signal arm (stop sign)
 - g. When encountering activated railroad crossings
 - h. When directed by the company officer or a law enforcement officer
 - i. After stopping at a red light or stop sign account for all lanes of traffic prior to proceeding
4. During non-emergency travel, drivers shall obey all traffic control signals
5. The driver shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles and pedestrians
6. Driver shall know how to get to the scene prior to leaving station unless directed by officer

E. Officer responsibility

1. The officer or acting officer riding in the front passenger seat takes on the role of co-driver.
 - a. While not in physical control of the operation of the emergency vehicle, the officer provides an additional set of eyes and ears for the driver and shall also be responsible for making certain that the driver operates the vehicle in a safe manner that is consistent with this and any other appropriate policies.
2. 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.
3. Officer shall ensure driver is operating the vehicle in a safe and prudent manner during response in accordance with departmental guidelines and state law.
4. Officer shall issue warnings about road and physical hazards to the driver.
5. Officer shall direct the driver to cease any unsafe driving, such as excess speed or unsafe intersection practices.
6. Officer shall, when practical, operate the radio, audio and visual warning devices during response.
7. Officer shall check the map book to assist the driver in determining the safest and most direct route to the emergency scene.

F. Warning Lights

1. The use of sirens and warning lights does not automatically give the right-of-way to the emergency vehicle.
2. These devices simply request the right-of-way from other drivers, based on their awareness of the emergency vehicles presence.
3. Drivers must make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers.
4. They must drive defensively and be prepared for the unexpected actions of others.

G. Intersections

1. Intersections present the greatest potential danger to emergency vehicles. When approaching and crossing a controlled intersection with the right-of-way (green light), drivers shall not exceed the posted speed limit.
2. When emergency vehicles must use oncoming traffic lanes or a painted or raised median to approach controlled intersections (traffic light or stop sign), they must come to a complete stop before proceeding through the intersection, including occasions when the emergency vehicle has green traffic lights.
3. When approaching a negative right-of-way intersection (red light, stop sign), the vehicle shall come to a complete stop and proceed only when the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way.

H. Passing Other Vehicles

1. During an emergency response, drivers shall avoid passing other responding emergency vehicles.
2. Wisconsin Statutes requires private vehicles to slow down and pull to the right when they see an emergency vehicle approaching.
3. Drivers should use extreme care when moving the apparatus left of center in the roadway
 - a. Apparatus should be moved left of center only when absolutely necessary and then should do so with caution.
 - b. Proceed past stopped vehicles slowly to ensure that they do not enter your lane of travel.
4. If it is necessary to pass on the right the driver shall slow to a speed that allows for a safe and complete stop if necessary.

I. Railroad Crossings

1. Drivers shall use caution and ensure that it is safe to proceed prior to crossing any railroad tracks.
2. Apparatus shall not drive around crossing gates that have been lowered, or proceed through a crossing with activated signals (non-gated). The only exceptions shall be:
 - a. When it has been confirmed by railroad personnel that the gates or signal are activated due to a malfunction or maintenance;
 - b. When there appears to be an obvious malfunction and the company officer has left the vehicle and has visually confirmed the absence of any approaching trains in either direction

J. Vehicle retarders and Jake brakes

1. Vehicles and apparatus equipped with engine, transmission or driveline retarders or Jake brakes shall operate with the retarder when appropriate.
2. Due to the slippery nature of wet, snow or ice covered roads, the retarder or brake is to be placed in the "off" position when encountering these conditions.

K. Fire ground Operations

1. The unique hazards of driving on or adjacent to the fire ground require the driver to use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to react to the unexpected. Drivers must consider the dangers their moving vehicle poses to fire ground personnel.
2. In addition, spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency may inadvertently step in front of or behind a moving vehicle.
3. When stopped at the scene of an incident, vehicles shall be placed to protect personnel who may be working in the street and warning lights shall be used to make approaching traffic aware of the incident.
4. At night, vehicle mounted floodlights and any other lighting available shall be used to illuminate the scene, with the exception of vehicle headlights which should be shut off when possible.
5. If it is not necessary to park apparatus or vehicles in or near traffic lanes, they shall be pulled off the road to parking lots, curbs, etc. whenever possible.

L. Wheel Chocks

1. Wheel chocks shall be utilized on apparatus as follows:
 - a. Wheel chocks shall be utilized (when so equipped) at all times when the vehicle is parked, driver's seat is unoccupied and not in quarters;
 - b. Truck apparatus wheel chocks shall be set in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendation
2. Placement and removal of wheel chocks is the responsibility of the apparatus driver.

M. Applicable State Statutes - Emergency Vehicle

1. Wisconsin Statute 346.03
 - a. The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in this section, but subject to the conditions stated in subs. 2 to 5.
 - b. The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle may:
 - a. Stop, stand or park, irrespective of the provisions of this chapter;
 - b. Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down or stopping as may be necessary for safe operation;
 - c. Exceed the speed limit; (Due regard)
 - d. Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

- c. The exemption granted the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle by 2.a. applies only when the operator of such vehicle is giving visual signal by means of at least one flashing, oscillating or rotating red light.
- d. The exemptions granted by sub. 2. b., c., and d. apply only when the operator of the emergency vehicle is giving both such visual signal and also an audible signal by means of a siren or exhaust whistle, except as otherwise provided in sub. 4.
- e. The exemptions granted the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle by this section do not relieve such operator from the duty to drive with due regard under the circumstances for the safety of all persons nor do they protect such operator from the consequences of his or her reckless disregard for the safety of others.

N. Personal Vehicles

1. Members are to comply with all applicable traffic laws when responding to the fire station for an incident response.
1. The vehicle shall be in good condition with all safety equipment intact and working.
2. Emergency equipment in POV will be allowed by means of annual permit issued by the Fire Chief and will be reviewed annually.
3. The Fire Chief will approve emergency lighting and audible warning devices used in POV. The operator will be responsible for any motor vehicle accidents while operating POV.

O. Minimum qualification for emergency response

1. Must possess a valid driver's license.
2. Must allow check of driving record.
3. Each department member will have a good driving record. The department will do an annual driving record check.
4. Driver must be a member of the Hudson Fire Department.
5. Members will not be permitted to operate in emergency mode until completion of entry level firefighter training, and 6 months employment with the department.
6. The POV shall have approved emergency lighting and audible equipment.
7. There must be an appropriate need to operate a POV in the emergency mode.
8. The operator of a POV equipped with emergency lights and siren will have completed approved emergency vehicle driver training prior to issuance of permit by Fire Chief.

P. Educational requirements

1. All Hudson Fire department members will take documented training in emergency vehicle operation.

Q. Administration

1. All members operate POV in the emergency mode at the full discretion of the Fire Chief. This privilege may be revoked at any time.

References – Wisconsin State Statutes, Risk and frequency classification information - <http://firefighterclosecalls.com/sopsog.php>, FFCC—Policy/SOG Program - Safety—Apparatus and Vehicle Operations and Case studies.