



SOUTH LYON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Manual of Procedures 401

VEHICLE OPERATIONS

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Approved: Chief Joey Thorington

I. SCOPE

- A. Responding to any emergency call, the fire department places a great deal of responsibility on emergency vehicle drivers. Not only must emergency vehicle 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. Emergency vehicle drivers have in their care, custody and control most of the major assets possessed by this organization, i.e., the vehicle, portable equipment, personnel. 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. Safe arrival at the emergency scene is the first priority of all emergency vehicle drivers. In order to accomplish, emergency vehicles drivers shall become familiar with, and constantly abide by the following procedure.

II. PREPARING TO DRIVE

- A. Circle of safety 360. Prior to entering the cab and starting the vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver shall make a circle of safety (360) 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 (360) the emergency vehicle driver shall encircle the vehicles 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
- B. Safety belts and restraints must be used in all vehicles. It is the responsibility of the emergency vehicle driver to be sure that everyone is seat belted prior to the vehicle being moved.
- C. The emergency vehicle driver will be responsible for donning appropriate turnout gear as soon as possible after arriving at the scene. Personal turnout gear is required to be on the apparatus whenever any vehicle is operating in a non-emergency situation.

III. EMERGENCY DRIVING

This applies to department owned vehicles and authorized privately owned vehicles. Employees shall reference MOP 402 for direction on whether an incident response is “emergency” or “normal” traffic.



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Any employee responding emergency status in a vehicle must have with them a device capable of receiving communications on the primary dispatch channel and shall revert to a normal traffic response at once upon being so directed by dispatch or a fire officer or the assigned apparatus have responded.

When a response is normal traffic, all applicable traffic laws, ordinances, and regulations shall be complied with.

Nothing in this procedure shall relieve the emergency vehicle driver of the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall it protect the emergency vehicle driver from the consequences of reckless disregard for the safety of others.

A. State Law

When responding to emergency calls, all driving is to be in accordance with the Michigan Vehicle Code, Public Act 300 of 1949.

B. Training / Qualifications

Emergency vehicle drivers shall meet the following criteria prior to driving any vehicle emergency traffic:

- Successfully completion of the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council, Driver Training
- Ten (10) hours of practical driving following MFFTC Driver Training Course
- Three (3) emergency responses with acceptable review
- If under 21 years old, employee must have a black helmet with MFFTC Firefighter I&II or EMT license for one year.
- Approval of the fire chief.

C. Riding policy

SLFD 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 shall verify that all personnel are properly seated and in seat belts before the vehicle is moved. SLFD prohibits the riding on tail steps, sidesteps, running boards, or any other exposed position.

D. Warning Devices

The emergency vehicle driver will turn on all emergency lights and headlights while responding to an emergency.

The siren shall be used to give adequate warning to other drivers and pedestrians. 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.

E. Vehicle Control and Right-of-Way

The emergency vehicle driver 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.



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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 a pedestrian 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.

F. 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

G. Uncontrolled intersections

Any intersection that does not offer a control device, e.g., 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, e.g., right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast.
- Observe traffic in all four directions, e.g., 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 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 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.

H. Stop Signs and Lights

The emergency vehicle driver may proceed past a red or stop signal, but only after stopping. All drivers shall stop at blind intersections before proceeding.

I. Controlled intersections

Any intersection controlled by a stop sign, yield sign, yellow traffic light or a red traffic light requires prudent action by the emergency vehicle driver. The following steps shall be taken:

- Do not rely on warning devices to clear traffic.



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- Scan the intersection for possible hazards, e.g., right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast.
- Begin to slow down well before reaching the intersection and cover the brake pedal with the drivers foot, continue to scan in four directions, e.g., left, right, front, back.
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200' from intersection.
- Scan intersection for possible passing options, e.g., pass on right, left, wait, avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible.
- Be prepared, during an emergency response, to bring the vehicle to a complete stop for the following:
 - when directed by a law enforcement officer
 - for red traffic lights
 - for stop signs
 - at negative right-of-way intersections
 - when the driver cannot account for visible traffic in the lanes of traffic in an intersection
 - when other intersection hazards are present
 - when encountering a stopped school bus with flashing warning lights
- 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.

J. 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
- Operator the motor at idle speed
- Turn off any other sound producing equipment or accessories
- Open the windows and listen for a train's horn

K. Direction of Movement (travel)

The driver may disregard regulations governing direction of movement, or turning in specified directions provided the driver does not endanger life or property.

L. Passing Private Vehicles

Driver should always pass other vehicles on the left side of the vehicle being passed because state law instructs other vehicles to yield to the right for emergency vehicles. When conditions only allow for passing on the right, it must be done with extreme caution.

M. Passing Emergency Vehicles

An apparatus driver can only pass another emergency vehicle if the driver receives permission of the vehicle being passed. It must be accomplished cautiously.



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N. Passing School Buses

Emergency vehicles must never pass a school bus while the bus's red flashing lights are illuminated. The emergency vehicle driver must come to a complete stop and proceed with caution only after the bus driver gives permission to do so.

O. Following Emergency Vehicles

Extreme caution should be used when following other emergency vehicles. Distance between vehicles should be more than the driver estimates will be needed to stop safely.

P. Crossing the Center Line

Crossing the center line or using the left turn lane is permitted when all normal lanes are blocked. Emergency vehicle drivers must be sure that all on-coming traffic lanes and turning lanes are stopped. In this case, drivers must proceed slow enough to stop to avoid vehicles turning left in front, and also on-coming vehicles making right turns into your path of travel.

Q. Expressway Turn-Arounds

Drivers should only use designated median turn-arounds when it is necessary to change directions on an expressway. Medians and shoulders should be avoided because of possible debris, soft surfaces, and narrow clearances.

R. Off-Road Travel

It is generally ill-advised to take any vehicle more than 15,000 lbs. off road. However, there may be instances, especially with Ladder 1, where it is appropriate to take a vehicle off road to achieve a tactical position.

When vehicles are taken off the road:

- The company officer should evaluate the need for off road use.
- Identify potential hazards (firmness of soil, type of soil, septic tanks and other underground hazards).
- Establish best route.
- Spotter to walk route, in front of vehicle.
- No exterior passengers

S. Sterile Cab

The idea of a sterile cockpit is adapted from the aviation world and is frequently discussed in crew resource management (CRM). Emergency vehicle drivers shall adhere to a sterile cab atmosphere when driving emergency traffic.

- All eyes out, scanning for hazards.
- No cell phone use, unless by the company officer looking up the incident location.
- All personnel clearly identify any potential hazards early on.
- Driver stops at intersections, and company officer calls clear or wait.

T. Donning Fire Gear In-route

Drivers should safely stop the apparatus when a call is received by radio while a crew is on non-emergency business. Riding firefighters should don fire gear before a response is started.



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IV. NON-EMERGENCY DRIVING

When responding normal traffic, 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. All drivers shall obey all traffic laws and traffic control devices when driving any fire department 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.

V. PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES

Firefighters are required to respond to the station for incidents. An officer may respond to the scene if the response is of a type where such action would be useful to the mitigation of the incident.

Employees responding with a civilian in a privately owned vehicle must respond normal traffic (non-emergency). Employees, who are in an authorized privately owned vehicle or SLFD apparatus, may respond emergency status to incidents only when they are within the City of South Lyon or a directly bordering jurisdiction. This limitation does not apply to chief officers. An officer so doing shall have a two-way handheld radio with them before responding directly to a scene. Chief officers shall exercise their discretion in determining their response.

VI. NON-AUTHORIZED PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES

When any employee responds to the station in his/her private vehicle, each employee 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 employee 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 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 including, suspension, loss of driving privileges and withdrawal of courtesy light permit.

VII. AUTHORIZED PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES

Upon approval of the fire chief, only employees who are 21 years old with a black helmet with MFFTC Firefighter I&II or EMT license are able to have emergency warning equipment on a privately owned vehicle. The vehicle must be properly and legally licensed as a motor vehicle in the State of Michigan, and must be insured to at least the minimum lawful requirements of the Michigan No-Fault Act.



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Nothing in this paragraph shall prohibit or discourage employees from obtaining or maintaining a greater amount of insurance coverage, but, in no event, shall any vehicle be operated without at least the minimum legally required coverage.

The fire chief has the right to revoke the approval of a privately owned vehicle with or without cause and with or without notice.

The vehicle must be registered with the fire chief or designee as a vehicle in which emergency operation shall be permitted, and must have successfully passed the department's private motor vehicle inspection program as administered by the fire chief or designee.

In order for a private vehicle to respond emergency status as required by law, it must be equipped with at least one flashing, rotating, or oscillating red lights for use when responding to an emergency call if when in use the flashing, rotating, or oscillating red light that is clearly visible in a 360-degree arc from a distance of 500 feet when in use. It must also have a mechanical or electronic siren capable of warning other drivers of said vehicle's approach, and be audible at least 500 feet away. (Michigan Vehicle Code Act 300, P.A. 1949).

The vehicle must be maintained in safe operating condition and approved by the chief, who shall have the right to inspect, review, and revoke the vehicle's operational status at any time.

The motor vehicle to be equipped with emergency warning devices shall not, if privately owned, be a motorcycle.

All authorized vehicles shall be inspected annually by the fire chief or designee. SLFD reserves the right to require vehicles greater than three years old or out of warranty, whichever comes first, to be inspected by an approved mechanic as designated by SLFD for safety, and overall vehicle operation. The inspection must be documented on the SLFD Private Vehicle Inspection Form.

VIII. REQUIREMENTS OF THE OPERATOR

All requirements herein shall be equally applicable to the operators of all vehicles on departmental business, whether such vehicles are privately or department owned.

Must have a current valid Michigan Driver's License and a driving record acceptable to the department. All employees are enrolled in the State of Michigan, Secretary of State Subscription Service program, and the fire chief is notified of all driving infractions.

May not have any active disciplinary driving restrictions or any operational changes to his or her driver's license. Any such changes must be brought to the immediate attention of the fire chief.



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Must not operate any vehicle for any department purpose, including but not limited to responses, emergency and otherwise, while under the influence of any substances that may alter their mental or physical status, specifically including, but not limited to alcohol and other controlled substances, whether or not prescribed by a physician.

Must notify the fire chief upon any motor vehicle crash, whether or not such occurs while engaged in departmental business, and also upon any finding of responsibility for or guilt of any driving or civil infraction, whether or not such occurs while engaged in departmental business, as well as of any other loss of, restriction on, or infirmity of their Michigan Driver's License and/or insurance on their privately owned vehicle.

All notifications required regarding crashes, licenses, infractions, insurance status, and driving restrictions shall be made, in writing, to the fire chief within seven (7) days of their occurrence. Failure to comply with these requirements may be cause for discipline up to and including discharge.

IX. MODIFICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, REQUIREMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Pursuant to the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code Act 300, P.A. 1949, the fire chief, at all times, retains final authority and discretion in matters relating to emergency response of privately owned motor vehicles and the operation, emergency and otherwise, of departmental vehicles. The fire chief may amend, alter, or add conditions to these requirements as he so determines in his discretion.

No employee may operate departmental vehicles, or operate emergency status in privately owned vehicles, without the express permission, in writing, of the fire chief. Failure to comply with this requirement may be cause for discipline up to and including discharge.

As with most things regarding emergency response, it is impossible to write a procedure covering every situation. Fire officers retain the discretion to modify these procedures as required by unforeseen circumstances, while also retaining the attendant responsibility for such modifications. Calmness and carefulness, however, are integral to the successful conclusion of every situation, particularly those involving emergency driving.

Operating a vehicle emergency status simply requests that other drivers yield the right of way. They may, or may not, or, often enough may take wholly unexpected action upon discovery of a losing or approaching emergency vehicle. Careful defensive driving practices, retaining full control of the vehicle, and alertness toward the actions of other drivers are all useful practices.

X. SCENE OPERATIONS

- A. On arrival, the apparatus driver must position the apparatus in a manner that allows for its efficient use, and that avoids unsafe conditions, e.g., overhead wires, Haz-Mat, unfavorable winds, and blocking of other fire apparatus and according to the orders of the company officer.
- B. The apparatus driver must stay with the rig and is the designated engineer unless otherwise directed by the company officer.



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- C. When laying hose, the driver will not exceed 7 mph. (brisk walk).
- D. Whenever any diesel powered apparatus is standing and idling for more than 1 minute, the idle should be increased to maintain a minimum of 30 PSI on the oil pressure gage. It has been found that this will require from 800 to 1000 RPM's.
- E. Apparatus drivers will utilize wheel chocks, anti-shock steps, and appropriate fire gear, and any other provided safety equipment when operating equipment at a scene.

XI. BACKING UP

For all vehicles weighing over 15,000 lbs., a back-up guide is required when personnel beside the driver are available.

Drivers are responsible for any apparatus movement. The driver and guide will communicate the movement plan prior to the guide taking his/her position at the driver's side rear of the vehicle. The driver must wait for a guide to be in full view on the driver's side before moving any vehicle in reverse. They must also use standard warning signals when moving in any direction (two beeps forward, three beeps reverse). Drivers must stop and investigate immediately when the guide is no longer in full view.

When the vehicle has only a driver, the driver shall attempt to utilize any available fire department personnel to act as a guide. Where no personnel are available to assist, the driver shall make a complete 360-degree survey of the area around the vehicle to determine if any obstructions are present prior to backing the vehicle.

Signals for Backing

- Straight Back: Both hands above the head motioning back up movement.
- Turn: Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended, there should be no movement of the arms. The arms should point in the direction the guide wants the rear of the vehicle to travel.
- Stop: Both arms crossed held above the guide's head.

XII. STATION RETURN

- A. Apparatus Driver must check all equipment upon returning to the station.
- B. After any damage to fire department vehicles or equipment, the driver will submit a report that explains the circumstances. This report will be turned in to the Fire Chief and appropriate officer as soon as possible. The Company Officer should attest to the report as well by signing it.
- C. Apparatus drivers are responsible for completing an apparatus report after any vehicle usage.
- D. Driver shall check to insure all emergency lighting switches, including the master switch, have been shut off. Driver and company officer also will make sure all equipment has been cleaned and returned to the proper apparatus.



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XIII. FUELING OF APPARATUS

- A. Engine 1, Engine 2, and Ladder 1 shall be fueled when the tank is less than $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
- B. Rescue 1, Car 1, and Car 2 shall be fueled when the tank is less than $\frac{1}{2}$ full.
- C. Proper forms and/or fuel log must be completed.
- D. Vehicle shall not be left unattended when refueling
- E. NO SMOKING is permitted.

XIV. VEHICLE CRASH

All employees, who are involved in a motor vehicle crash, while driving a department vehicle or authorized POV (when responding to an incident) are required to take the following actions:

- STOP immediately! Render first aid to injured parties.
- Notify dispatch and police with brief initial report.
- Secure witnesses to the accident, however, only talk about the accident with SLFD officers, or police officers handling the report.
- Notify fire chief as soon as reasonably possible.
- After any damage to fire department vehicles or equipment, the driver will submit a report that explains the circumstances. This report will be forwarded to the fire chief and appropriate officer as soon as possible. The company officer should attest to the report as well, by signing it.

When a department vehicle is involved in a crash the South Lyon Police Department (SLPD) shall be contacted to make a report. SLPD shall be requested to make a report even if there is no damage to the SLFD apparatus and / or the other vehicle / property owner does not want a report to be made. If the crash occurs outside of the City of South Lyon, the emergency vehicle driver shall make every effort reasonable to have a law enforcement agency write a report. If circumstances are such that a police report cannot be obtained, the SLFD shall work to obtain the other vehicle / property owner's information along with pictures.

X. REVIEW OF DRIVER/OPERATOR PERFORMANCE

Any employee who is involved in a vehicle crash or is accused of wrongdoing while driving or operating a department vehicle will be brought before the fire chief for review. The purpose of the review is to determine if any law or procedure has been violated. Discipline may include any of the following.

- Remediation training.
- Possible revocation of authorization for emergency warning equipment on a privately owned vehicle.
- Termination of engineer or aerial apparatus operator status and pay grade.
- Suspension of employment
- Termination or employment.

Approved by:
/s/ Chief Joey Thorington