

	BEDFORD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & RESCUE Standard Operating Procedure	
	Discipline: Administration	DATE: June 1, 2023
	Reference Number: FR-05	
	APPROVED BY: Chief Janet Blankenship	
	SUBJECT: Operating Emergency Vehicles	

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish a driving policy for Bedford County Department of Fire & Rescue (BCoFR) career staff and volunteers.

Scope:

The following standard operating procedures apply to all Bedford County Department of Fire & Rescue personnel and volunteers, further referenced as personnel.

Procedure/Requirements:

All Fire and EMS personnel, as a condition of driving, are required to understand and obey all local, state, and federal laws and regulations as they pertain to driving. All personnel who drive Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) vehicles/apparatus shall possess a valid Virginia driver's license. Personnel shall comply with all requirements established by BCoFR for the safe operation of motor vehicles regardless of vehicle ownership and/or insurance coverage. Drivers of all vehicles partially or fully funded and/or insured by Bedford County must either be an employee of Bedford County, or an active member of a fire department or rescue squad that is 20 years old with 4 years of driving experience and meet the minimum training requirements set forth in this SOP. All drivers of emergency response apparatus shall successfully complete an Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (EVOC)- 16 hour course and complete a minimum of ten hours of driver training per type of apparatus driven.

Standards of Conduct:

A. General Driving Rules

1. Vehicle drivers shall operate apparatus in such a manner as to not discredit themselves or Bedford County Fire & Rescue or endanger themselves or others.
2. All drivers and personnel shall be seated and belted when the vehicle is preparing to move or actually moving. The exception is when EMS providers are providing

patient care such as performing CPR or other necessary patient care activities. Every possible effort by the EMS crew should be made to be belted and secured while in the back of a moving ambulance.

3. Drivers shall not operate any departmental vehicle while under the influence of any alcoholic beverage or taking any medicine, drug, or compound which may impair their senses or interfere with their ability to operate such vehicle.
4. Drivers shall not move apparatus without first checking to ensure that all personnel are secured (seated/belted) and cab and compartment doors are secured.
5. Hearing protection shall be worn if the apparatus is outfitted with such while the vehicle is in motion.
6. Apparatus shall not be placed in such a position as to endanger either personnel or apparatus. Apparatus taken off the road shall be maneuvered with extreme caution and discretion. Drivers shall carefully check the ground conditions prior to going off road and shall do so only when necessary.
7. Apparatus drivers shall back vehicles safely and only after the unit's officer-in-charge (OIC) or a designated member has dismounted and proceeded to the rear of the apparatus to provide backing directions. The unit OIC or designated member must maintain visual contact with the driver. All other personnel shall remain on the apparatus until directed by the unit OIC to dismount. In the event the driver is alone, he/she should obtain backing assistance. If no assistance is available, the driver must dismount the vehicle and check around the entire vehicle to ensure that the vehicle can be backed in a safe manner.
8. For all apparatus equipped with wheel chocks, drivers shall place a wheel chock in the proper position immediately after stopping and dismounting from the cab of the vehicle, other than in quarters. Hand, air, foot, spring parking brakes, and Park position on automatic transmission shall not be relied upon as the sole means for maintaining a vehicle's stationary position.
9. Vehicles emerging from an alley, driveway, or bay shall stop immediately prior to driving onto the concrete apron or roadway, and shall yield the right of way to pedestrians and other vehicles to avoid collisions.
10. When a vehicle is to be driven using chains or on-spot chains, the maximum speed shall not exceed 30 MPH or the vehicle's specific manufacturer's specifications.
11. Drivers and officers shall not drive, or knowingly permit a vehicle to be driven, which is in such an unsafe condition as to endanger any person or property, or

member of Bedford County Fire & Rescue.

12. The driver of a Fire/Rescue Department vehicle that is involved in an accident shall follow the proper reporting procedures. This includes the proper notification to Bedford County Fire & Rescue Administration, along with an accident report, detailed events, and witness statements from the parties involved. Fire & Rescue vehicle drivers who are involved in accidents may be subject to drug and alcohol screening testing. Any Bedford County Fire & Rescue vehicle that is involved in an accident that includes personal property damage and/or injury will require an Investigation and written Police report by the appropriate law enforcement agency.
13. Drivers shall use extreme caution when operating apparatus in low overhead areas and over weight-restricted bridges. When safe passage is questionable, the driver shall stop and allow the OIC to dismount and guide the driver through such spaces. As for weight restricted bridges, no apparatus shall be driven on the bridge when the vehicle weight exceeds the weight limit of the bridge.
14. Vehicles shall not park in designated fire lanes and posted no parking or designated handicap areas when on routine non-emergency business, such as preplans, errands, etc.
15. Smoking and Tobacco use shall not be permitted by any Fire/Rescue member while in a moving/stationary apparatus.
16. Any use of cell phones by the operator of a moving Fire/EMS vehicle that requires the driver to hold the device is not permitted and hands-free use of a cell phone by the driver is not permitted during incident response unless emergent and pertinent to the incident.

B. Emergency Response

The following provision under this procedure shall not relieve any driver of an emergency vehicle from exercising extreme due caution or regard for the safety of all persons. Drivers shall use due regard for safety when operating any emergency vehicle. Drivers must stop at all red lights and stop signs.

1. Emergency vehicle drivers may only exceed the posted speed limit, to a maximum of 20 mph over the posted speed limit, under the following conditions:
 - a. When exercising extreme due caution and the safety of all persons (Fire/EMS/and citizens) and property are not in danger.

- b. Only when weather and the time of day permit the driver's visibility to clearly identify and avoid potential hazards within their anticipated path of travel.
2. At night and during inclement weather, the emergency vehicle driver shall not exceed the posted speed limit and speed shall be reduced below the posted speed limit as necessary. In all instances, extreme caution will be observed.
3. Emergency vehicle drivers shall reduce the speed of the vehicle sufficiently at all intersections to negotiate a full stop when the intersection cannot be safely entered. All emergency vehicle drivers shall yield the right of way to any vehicle that is already in an intersection and shall not enter an intersection until all oncoming traffic has yielded the right of way. Upon entering the intersection, the vehicle shall be under complete control and driven at such a speed that it can be safely stopped to avoid a collision should another vehicle enter the intersection. Emergency vehicle drivers shall realize the "right of way" must be granted by the other driver.
4. The driver shall utilize all visible and audible warning devices as appropriate while operating a vehicle under emergency conditions and after being properly dispatched by Bedford Communications or having informed dispatch of said response.
5. Emergency vehicle drivers shall be aware of the running routes of other companies and squads and be alert for other responding apparatus. The right of way for two (2) responding pieces of equipment shall be determined by the following sequences:
 - a. Apparatus having the right of way by traffic control devices.
 - b. Apparatus that will be traveling through an intersection without negotiating any turns will have preferences over vehicles having to turn.
 - c. Apparatus negotiating a right hand turn at an intersection will have preference over an apparatus that must turn left.
 - d. The first vehicle in the intersection shall have the right of way.
6. When emergency vehicle drivers are responding behind another responding emergency vehicle, they shall use extreme caution. The driver shall reduce the speed of the vehicle and/or regulate the travel distance between the two vehicles to negotiate a full stop and avoid a collision if the vehicle comes to a full stop to

avoid a collision if other vehicles pull into his/her path after yielding the right of way to the first vehicle.

7. Emergency vehicle drivers shall not overtake or pass other responding emergency vehicles without clear communications between the 2 apparatus and confirmation of clear roadways to execute the pass.
8. Emergency vehicles shall be driven on the right-hand side of the center line of roadways except when passing. This also applies when there is a median strip in the center of the road. Drivers shall not travel on the left side of the median strip or center dividing line unless necessary due to congested traffic.
9. When overtaking and passing motorists, emergency vehicle drivers shall pass on the motorists' left side except when the motorists have stopped at an intersection making a left turn, or when the motorists have pulled to the extreme left of the roadway and indicated by their actions that they are aware of the emergency vehicle's presence. Drivers may then pass on the motorists' right side but shall exercise extreme caution.
10. Emergency vehicle drivers may travel against traffic on one-way streets and lanes only when the emergency is in that section of that street or lane, not as a means of taking a shorter route. Whenever it is necessary to travel the wrong way on a one-way thoroughfare, they shall reduce the speed of the vehicle to negotiate a full stop to avoid a collision and proceed with extreme caution only after that section of roadway has been shut down by law enforcement or other emergency personnel.
11. The use of audible and visual emergency warning signals shall not be permitted on a moving emergency vehicle while involved in non-emergency activity.
12. Emergency vehicle drivers shall stop for all school buses displaying flashing lights and shall proceed only after the driver of the school bus signals that it is safe to do so and all flashing lights are turned off.
13. Emergency vehicle drivers shall not proceed across a railroad crossing if the warning devices are operating or the gates are lowered. If there are no gates or warning devices, the emergency vehicle must stop and look both ways and then proceed with caution.
14. When approaching the scene of any emergency, emergency vehicle drivers shall slow down well in advance so as not to endanger personnel and equipment already on the scene as well as citizen spectators. Apparatus shall be parked in accordance with instructions provided by the incident commander. Every

attempt shall be made to avoid blocking roadways so as not to impede other apparatus.

15. The Driver/OIC has the responsibility for ensuring the safety of the crew, vehicle, and the public.
16. Apparatus shall be utilized as a barrier from oncoming traffic whenever possible. When acting as a barrier, warning lights shall remain on and at least 3 traffic cones, flares, or other retro warning devices shall be used with other emergency devices. These devices shall be used to warn oncoming traffic of the emergency operations and the hazards to personnel operating at the scene. The OIC and/or command shall be responsible for the safety at the scene of an accident.
17. The posted speed limit in School Zones shall be obeyed while responding to an emergency call.

C. Apparatus Positioning

1. It is critical for apparatus to be positioned in a manner that ensures emergency responders and patients are protected but also to allow for work to be performed.
2. Members working on an emergency scene should maintain vigilant awareness of the environment around them. All members operating in the roadway for any duration MUST wear PPE, to include a traffic vest or turnout gear, with fluorescent/reflective striping.
3. The wheels on all blocking apparatus should be turned away from the area where responders are working to lessen the chance of it being pushed toward members if struck by another vehicle.
4. Apparatus emergency lights shall remain on for the duration of the event if any portion of the roadway is occupied.
5. Traffic lanes shall be closed and access adequately blocked as necessary to provide for responder and patient safety. Law enforcement should be requested for this purpose whenever possible.
6. Always look before stepping out of apparatus or into any areas where vehicles might be encountered.

D. Administration

1. Bedford County Fire & Rescue will monitor the DMV driving records of all career and volunteer members. This regular tracking is performed to identify any positive or negative changes applicable to an individual's driver's license, such as the accumulation of moving violation points and/or suspended and/or revoked licenses. Bedford County Fire & Rescue will perform annual DMV audits for career personnel and volunteer agencies will be monitored on a rotational basis.
2. Bedford County Fire & Rescue will maintain a complete driving record for each career employee and volunteer members as requested from the Department of Motor Vehicles.
 - a. Career and volunteer members who have accumulated minus four (-4) points shall be counseled by their career supervisor or volunteer Chief/Captain.
 - b. Career and volunteer members who have accumulated minus six (-6) or more points shall not be permitted to drive any Fire/EMS department vehicle until the points return to a minus four (-4) or above. The career or volunteer member, their supervisor or Department Chief/Captain shall be notified in writing. The loss of driving privileges may result in additional Departmental action due to the inability of the Employee/Volunteer to perform his/her job requirements.
 - c. All career and volunteer members must make immediate notification regarding any moving violations regardless of state where an infraction occurred or changes to his operator's license or driver's license. The immediate notification shall be defined as no more than 10 calendar days following the moving violation. If an employee or affiliated volunteer within Bedford County Fire & Rescue fails to notify Fire & Rescue Administration about a suspension/revocation, they shall be subject to disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal. The appropriate supervisor or Captain/Chief will be also notified.

E. Responsibilities

1. All career and volunteer drivers shall be responsible to drive with due regard for the safety and all persons.
2. All career and volunteer members that drive any Fire & Rescue vehicle shall be required to comply with this written SOP.

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3. All career and volunteer officers are responsible for ensuring that all members under their supervision are aware of and comply with the provisions of this Standard Operating Procedure.