

Section 5.01  
Emergency Vehicle Response

<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Emergency Vehicle Response</b>
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**PURPOSE**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide for the safest, most efficient response of personnel and apparatus to the scene of an emergency incident while providing for the safety of all persons and property. It must be remembered, that above all else, LIFE SAFETY IS OUR PRIORITY.

**SCOPE**

These guidelines shall apply to all personnel involved in a response to an emergency incident.

**ENFORCEMENT**

As with any safety guideline, primary responsibility for adherence to these guidelines rests with each individual. Shift officers are responsible for enforcement of these guidelines within their respective shifts. Authority to deviate from these guidelines rests solely with the Shift Officer, who bears full responsibility for the results of any deviation. At incidents not under the command of a Shift Officer, the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or Paramedic (Team Leader) in charge of the operation shall bear full responsibility for strict adherence to these guidelines.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES**

1. It is the responsibility of the driver of each Fire Department vehicle to operate such vehicle in a safe and prudent manner at all times. ALL Fire Department vehicles shall be operated in full compliance with the State of Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Code, Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 346 - *Rules of the Road*, State of Wisconsin, Department of Commerce Administrative Code, Chapter 30 - *Fire Department Safety and Health Standards*, and this or any other guideline or standard issued by the South Milwaukee Fire Department.

These laws provide specific legal exemptions to regular traffic regulations which apply to Fire Department vehicles only when responding to an emergency incident or when transporting a patient to a medical facility while in an emergency response mode. However, these laws do not absolve the apparatus operator from the responsibility of driving with due regard for the safety of others on the road. The apparatus operator remains fully accountable for his/her actions.

When responding as an emergency vehicle, warning lights must be on and sirens sounded to warn drivers of other vehicles, as required by State of WI law.

2. Use of Warning Devices - All audible and visual warning devices shall be in operation when making an emergency response, in which event the driver shall sound the siren when reasonable to warn pedestrians and other drivers. However, the use of sirens and warning lights does not automatically give the right-of-way to the emergency vehicle. These devices simply request the right-of-way from the other drivers based on their awareness of the

emergency vehicle presence. Emergency vehicle drivers must make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers and must drive defensively to be prepared for the unexpected inappropriate actions of others.

3. Drivers - Only personnel who have completed the South Milwaukee Fire department driver/operator training course shall be permitted to operate department vehicles, unless the vehicle is being operated under the direct supervision of a Department Officer or such person specifically assigned to assist in the driver's training function.

4. Speed - Fire Department vehicles are authorized to exceed posted speed limits only when responding in an emergency response mode under favorable conditions. This applies only with light traffic, good roads, good visibility and dry pavement. Under these conditions, a **maximum of 10 mph over the posted speed limit** is authorized. Under less-than-favorable conditions, **the posted speed limit** is the absolute maximum permissible. When emergency vehicles must travel in center or oncoming traffic lanes, **the maximum permissible speed limit shall be 20 mph.** Drivers shall always maintain a speed consistent with safe operation of the vehicle under the prevailing conditions.

5. Use of Seat belts - The driver of a Fire Department vehicle shall not move the vehicle until all personnel have boarded the vehicle **and are seated with their seat belts fastened.** It is the responsibility of the officer-in-charge or responsible person (Team Leader or Ambulance Attendant) and driver of the vehicle to confirm that all personnel are on-board, properly attired, with seat belts on, before the vehicle is permitted to ride.

6. Exiting the Station - Upon leaving the fire station, the driver shall be fully aware of other apparatus leaving at the same time and shall yield the right-of-way to such equipment as indicated by department guidelines or shift running procedures. Also, the driver should make it a practice to gently apply the brakes to assure their operation prior to entering the street.

7. Emergency Response - While in emergency response mode, ALL Fire Department vehicles shall be operated with headlights on, and both visual (warning lights) and audible (siren) warning devices operating. The decision to respond in this mode shall be based on the nature of and conditions surrounding the incident and the urgency of Fire Department arrival at the scene. Safe arrival shall always have priority over unnecessary speed and reckless driving en route to an emergency incident. Whenever possible, the decision shall be made while erring in favor of the potential outcome of the incident.

8. Non-Emergency Response - While not responding in an emergency response mode, all Fire Department vehicles shall be operated in full compliance with all state and local laws, department guidelines and common rules of the road. It should be remembered that Fire Department apparatus serve as a moving "billboard" and the manner in which it is operated reflects upon the entire department in providing a lasting impression to the public.

9. Reduced Response - When conditions of an emergency incident so dictate, the Incident Commander (IC), officer-in-charge, or other responsible person (Team Leader, Ambulance Attendant, etc.) shall evaluate the need for other responding apparatus to continue on an emergency response and down-grade the urgency of response of initial or additional apparatus to a "non-emergency" mode. In this mode, all apparatus shall continue response without the use of emergency warning lights and sirens. It is also the responsibility of the IC,

officer-in-charge, or responsible person to cancel the response of apparatus that is not required at the emergency incident scene.

10. Passing - Passing other moving emergency vehicles during an emergency response is dangerous, most often unnecessary and should be avoided if at all possible. If passing becomes absolutely necessary, permission MUST first be obtained through radio communications with the vehicle being passed.

11. Transporting Members of the Public - Members of the public who are transported as passengers in Fire Department vehicles shall be restrained with seat belts or ambulance cot straps. Passengers who ride-along on medical transports shall, whenever feasible, ride in the front, passenger seat. For the sake of safety, transport of members of the public while the vehicle is operated in the emergency response mode should be avoided. It is the ultimate responsibility of the driver of the vehicle to assure that members of the public are properly seated and wearing their seat belt prior to moving the vehicle.

12. Intersections - Intersections present the greatest potential for danger during emergency response.. The following special precautions shall be adhered to by all responding vehicles:

-When an emergency vehicle enters an intersection with the right-of-way, drivers **shall not exceed the posted speed limit.**

-When an emergency vehicle enters an intersection in the center lane or left of center, the driver **shall come to a complete stop** until all other traffic in the intersection has yielded the right-of-way. This applies even when the emergency vehicle has the green light at a controlled intersection.

-When approaching a controlled intersection with a negative right-of-way (red light or stop sign) the emergency vehicle **shall come to a complete stop** and may proceed only when the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way.

13. Approach Safety - On approaching the emergency scene, all drivers shall watch for emergency vehicles approaching from other directions and proceed with extreme caution. Drivers shall also consider the dangers their moving vehicle poses to fireground personnel and spectators and be constantly on the alert for those who may be distracted by the emergency and step in front of or behind the apparatus.

14. Vehicle Parking - Upon arrival on the scene of an emergency incident, vehicles should be placed to protect personnel who are operating where the potential for contact with motor vehicle traffic exists. Vehicle warning lights shall be used to make approaching traffic aware of the incident and, if necessary, apparatus headlights should be turned off to avoid "blinding" the drivers of approaching vehicles. If it is not necessary to position apparatus in or near traffic lanes, the apparatus should be pulled off the road and placed in parking lots, driveways, etc. whenever possible.

15. Traffic Cones - Vehicle operators shall, as soon as practical, place orange traffic cones in such a manner as to create a "safe" work zone around their apparatus. The preferred method of placement should provide for re-routing of traffic to follow a safe & proper route around the apparatus and incident scene. If traffic is unable to be safely rerouted through use of traffic cones and apparatus, assistance shall be requested from the police department.

16. Protective Equipment - Vehicle operators shall don retro-reflective vests at all times and all personnel shall don retro-reflective vests and protective helmets when operations place them in potential contact with motor vehicle traffic.

17. Incident Lighting - At night, vehicle mounted floodlights and any other lighting equipment available shall be used to illuminate the incident scene. However, caution must be exercised so supplementary scene lighting does not create additional problems for motorists.

18. Prompt, safe response shall be attained by:

-Knowing where we are going

-Leaving the station in a standard, consistent manner:

○ quickly mounting apparatus

○ all personnel on board, seated and belted

○ fire station doors fully opened

-Driving defensively and professionally at reasonable speeds.

-Using warning devices to move around traffic and to request the right-of-way in a safe and predictable way.

Fast response shall not be attained by:

-Leaving quarters before crew has mounted safely and before fire station doors are fully opened.

-Driving too fast for conditions.

-Driving recklessly or without due regard for safety.

-Taking unnecessary chances with negative right-of-way intersections.

-Intimidating or scaring other drivers.

### **VEHICLE OPERATIONS REVIEW**

-Maximum speed - 10 mph over posted speed limit (favorable conditions)

-Posted speed limit when entering intersections with green light.

-Traveling in center lane or oncoming traffic - 20 mph maximum

-Traveling in center lane or oncoming traffic - complete stop at all traffic lights / stop signs

-Complete stop at all red lights / stop signs.

***UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHALL ANY ASPECT OF SAFETY BE  
SACRIFICED IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE SPEED OF THE RESPONSE***