

FREWSBURG FIRE DISTRICT OPERATIONAL POLICY	Section 6	RESPONSE MATRIX	
	SUBJECT	EMERGENCY VEHICLE RESPONSE	
	Policy 6-02	PAGE 1 OF 7	DATE: 01-01-2023

I. SCOPE

This policy applies to all members of the Frewsburg Fire District while operating department apparatus and shall be always adhered to.

II. PURPOSE

In responding to any emergency call, the Frewsburg Fire District places a great deal of responsibility on the drivers of our emergency vehicles. Not only must emergency vehicle drivers provide prompt conveyance of the apparatus, equipment, and personnel to provide service to those in need, but more importantly, they 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 the organization (the vehicle, portable equipment, and 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 response. Safe arrival at the emergency scene shall be, and must always remain, the top priority of all emergency vehicle drivers. To accomplish this enormous task, all emergency vehicle drivers shall become familiar with, and constantly abide by the following policies and procedures.

III. PROCEDURES:

1. RESPONSE TO ALARMS SHALL BE CONDUCTED AS FOLLOWS:

True Emergency - Immediately, using lights and siren(s), unless requested or stated otherwise by Chief Officer or Incident Commander on scene.

- A. Headlights on department or district apparatus shall be maintained in the ON position during operation.
- B. Red lights and siren must be always used in conjunction with one another while responding.
- C. Prudent use of audible warning devices should be observed when passing schools, hospitals, places of assemblage, and late-night calls.
- D. Responding apparatus may be canceled en route only by an on-scene recognized agency such as Fire, Police, Public Works, authorized alarm company, or Communications Center.
- E. At the Chief Officer's discretion, the responding unit may continue to the scene without use of lights and siren.

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2. CIRCLE OF SAFETY

Prior to entering the cab and starting the vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver shall make a circle of safety around the vehicle to see that all equipment is secured, that all compartment doors are securely closed, and that there are no physical obstructions in the driving path of the vehicle.

- A. During the circle of safety, the emergency vehicle driver shall walk around the vehicle and visually inspect all four sides and the top of the vehicle before entering the cab.
- B. The driver shall also verify right side and rear clearance with the person riding in the officer position.
- C. These safety checks shall be done prior to moving the vehicle regardless of whether or not the vehicle is responding to an emergency call or a non-emergency detail.

3. WARNING DEVICES AND TRUE EMERGENCIES

When responding to a true emergency, all audible and visual warning devices will be always considered for operation regardless of time of day and/or traffic conditions.

- A. All emergency vehicle drivers must understand that warning devices are not always effective in making other vehicle operators aware of the presence of emergency vehicles. *Warning devices only request the right-of-way; they do not ensure the right-of-way.*

4. 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.

- A. Emergency vehicle drivers should be aware that civilian vehicle operators may not react in a manner which is normally expected to be appropriate. An attempt should be made to have options available when passing or overtaking other vehicles.
- B. 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 they assume the right-of-way.
- C. The emergency vehicle does not have the right-of-way until the other vehicle acknowledges the presence of the emergency vehicle and yields the right-of-way.

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5. PASSING TRAFFIC

When an emergency vehicle must pass traffic moving in the same direction, the driver shall adhere to the following safe practices guidelines.

- A. When overtaking traffic that is moving in the same direction, the emergency vehicle driver shall give other drivers an opportunity to yield the right-of-way before passing.
- B. If it is necessary to pass a vehicle that has not yielded the right-of-way, the emergency vehicle shall provide as wide a clearance as safely possible.
- C. A fire department emergency vehicle shall not overtake another vehicle that is traveling in the same direction unless the driver of the lead vehicle has indicated that the other may pass.
- D. Emergency vehicles shall **NOT** pass traffic on the right.

6. RESPONSE SPEEDS

When responding to a true emergency only, drivers shall operate apparatus as close to the posted speed limit as possible. When conditions permit, drivers may exceed the posted speed limit by no more than ten (10) miles per hour. Examples of conditions requiring slower response speeds include, but are not limited to:

- A. Slippery road conditions
- B. Inclement weather
- C. Poor visibility
- D. Heavy or congested traffic conditions
- E. Sharp curves
- F. Steep downhill inclines
- G. Residential areas
- H. School Zones

7. SCHOOL BUS

All apparatus must come to a complete stop upon approaching a stopped school bus displaying red flashing lights. This includes driving on non-emergency details as well as emergency responses.

- A. Apparatus will not proceed until such school bus resumes motion, all flashing lights are turned off, the “**STOP**” sign is retracted, and you are signaled by the bus driver to proceed. The flashing red lights of the school bus must be off before you move forward, even if the bus driver signals for you to proceed.

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8. 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 shall adhere to the following:

- A. Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast, etc.). Scan for traffic in all four directions (left, right, front and rear)
- B. Slow down and bring vehicle to a complete and safe stop.
- C. Change the siren cadence not less than 200 feet from the intersection.
- D. Avoid using the opposing lane of traffic.
- E. Emergency vehicle drivers should always be prepared to stop.
 - a. 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.
 - b. The emergency vehicle does not have the right-of-way until the other vehicle acknowledges the presence of the emergency vehicle and yields the right-of-way.

9. CONTROLLED INTERSECTIONS

Any intersection controlled by a stop sign, yield sign, yellow traffic light or a red traffic light requires a complete **STOP** by the emergency vehicle driver if you cannot account for all lanes of traffic. In addition to bringing the vehicle to a complete stop, all emergency vehicle drivers shall adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Do not rely on warning devices on the emergency vehicle to clear traffic.
2. Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast, etc.) and consider driver options.
3. Change the siren cadence not less than 200 feet from the intersection.
4. Scan the intersection for possible passing options (pass on right, pass on left, wait, etc.). Avoid using the opposing lane of traffic when possible.
5. The emergency vehicle driver shall STOP and then proceed through the intersection with extreme caution.
6. Come to a complete **STOP** even if you can account for all lanes of traffic.
7. Establish eye contact with other vehicle drivers and have co-driver communicate all is clear; and reconfirm all other vehicles are stopped.
8. Proceed one lane of traffic at a time, treating each lane of traffic as a separate intersection.

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10. RAILROAD INTERSECTIONS

Anytime an emergency vehicle driver approaches a guarded or unguarded rail crossing, during emergency or non-emergency responses, he/she shall bring the vehicle to a complete **STOP** before entering the rail crossing. In addition, the emergency vehicle driver shall perform the following prior to proceeding onto the tracks:

1. Turn off all audible devices and object.
2. Operate the motor at idle speed
3. Open the windows and listen for an approaching train's horn.

11. NON-EMERGENCY RESPONSE

When responding to a call in a non-emergency mode or in the normal flow of traffic, the vehicle will be operated with the headlights on, without any audible or visible 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.

12. ORDINARY TRAVEL PROCEDURES

All drivers shall obey all traffic laws and traffic control devices when driving any fire department vehicle under ordinary travel conditions. Any driver observed violating any traffic laws or driving any vehicle in an aggressive or unsafe manner will be subject to disciplinary action including suspension of driving privileges.

13. RIDING POLICY

The fire department requires all persons riding on fire apparatus to be seated in approved riding positions and to be secured to the vehicle by seat belts whenever the vehicle is in motion. The fire department prohibits riding on the rear step, side steps, running boards, hose beds, or any other exposed position.

14. BACKING

The fire department 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 chiefs recommend that whenever possible, drivers should avoid backing. When it is necessary to back-up any department vehicle, all drivers shall adhere to one of the following measures:

- A. A spotter shall be put in place near the rear of the vehicle in sight of the driver prior to the vehicle being shifted into reverse and backed-up.

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- B. The spotter should be safely positioned so that the emergency vehicle driver can see them at all times.
- C. The spotter should generally take a position at the rear driver's side of the apparatus. If at any time the emergency vehicle driver loses sight of the spotter, he/she shall stop immediately until the spotter is visible again.
- D. If conditions exist that make use of spotters impossible, all drivers shall stop the vehicle and exit the cab.
 - 1. Before attempting to back-up any department vehicle, the driver 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.
 - 2. All equipment is secured and that all compartment doors are securely closed; and that there are no physical obstructions in the intended path of travel.
 - 3. The emergency vehicle driver should also verify adequate vertical clearances (no low hanging power lines, tree limbs, or structural members).

15. AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

- A. Emergency vehicle drivers shall not employ aggressive driving techniques to force other drivers to yield the right-of-way.
- B. Emergency vehicles must be always operated with due regard for the safety of civilian traffic, and under all circumstances; the elimination of aggressive driving techniques is also critical for protecting the safety of other fire personnel assigned to the vehicle.
- C. Emergency vehicle drivers have been cited, fined, and sentenced to imprisonment for causing harm through aggressive driving.

16. REPORTING UNSAFE APPARATUS OPERATIONS

Apparatus drivers and officers have a responsibility to ensure that the operation of fire department apparatus is always conducted in a controlled and safe manner during emergency and non-emergency modes. The Chief Officers have the added responsibility to address unsafe operations.

- A. For unsafe actions, which the officer determines to be minor, the officer should correct the operator as soon as practical. Depending on the circumstances, the officer may elect to inform the Fire Chief of the corrective action taken.

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- B. For unsafe actions determined by the officer to be other than minor in nature, the officer should take appropriate action to correct the driver immediately and notify the Fire Chief as soon as possible.
- C. The Fire Chief will investigate the reported unsafe action(s) and take appropriate steps to address the incident.

17. MOTOR VEHICLE RECORD CHECKS

- A. The fire company or fire district shall obtain and review a copy of the member's motor vehicle record from the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles prior to allowing an individual to begin driver training.
- B. In the interest of emergency vehicle safety, the fire District / district will perform periodic motor vehicle record (MVR) checks on all drivers.
- C. In addition, all drivers' license information will be entered into the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles License Event Notification System (LENS).
 - 1. Through this system, the Fire Chief will be notified of pertinent driver violations, suspensions, etc. Drivers must notify the Fire Chief in person of any Class A or B violations.
- D. An individual who has been charged with an offense that could result in a suspension or revocation of his/her driver's license should notify the Fire Chief within 48 hours. The individual may be suspended from driving emergency vehicles pending judgment, depending on the circumstances. Such charges would include:
 - 1. Driving while intoxicated (DWI)
 - 2. Driving while ability Impaired (DWAI)
 - 3. Negligent homicide or gross negligence
 - 4. Aggravated assault with a motor vehicle
 - 5. Reckless driving
 - 6. Leaving the scene of an accident