

# Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Association

## Model Operating Procedures

### *Vehicle Operation*

#### **Purpose**

This procedure establishes policy for driving, riding or operating Fire Department vehicles in order to enhance safety and reduce risk of accidents and injuries to fire personnel and the public.

#### **Driving Fire Department Vehicles**

Fire Department vehicles shall be operated only by qualified and approved drivers, or by student drivers under the direct supervision of a qualified driver. In order to qualify as a driver, personnel must meet the following:

- Be 21 years old or older
- Not have a past medical history of fainting or seizures
- Hold a valid New Mexico Driver's License (CDL required to operate Water Tenders)
- Have a driving record that is clear of DWI, reckless or careless convictions (record reviewed annually)
- Successfully complete a department approved *Emergency Vehicle Operator* course
- Successfully complete a *Driver Operator Training Course*
- Satisfactory performance as a Trainee Driver Operator as documented in a properly initiated Task Book, and signed off by the Fire Chief.

The driver shall be directly responsible for the safe and prudent operation of the vehicle under all conditions. If the driver is under the direct supervision of a Company Officer, that Officer shall also assume responsibility for the actions of the driver.

Drivers shall not put the vehicle in motion until all persons are seated and secured with seat belts. Typically, a Company Officer will stand by the officer's door until all other personnel are on board and belted in. All persons shall keep their seat belts properly fastened any time the vehicle is in motion. The only exception to this requirement is for personnel performing patient care in the back of an EMS transport vehicle.

#### **Non Emergency Driving**

During non-emergency travel, drivers of fire department vehicles shall obey all traffic laws and rules-of-the-road of the State of New Mexico. Warning lights, siren, or any other emergency warning equipment will not be used.

#### **Emergency Response**

Fire department vehicles operated by qualified drivers when officially dispatched to an emergency, and using appropriate visible and audible warning devices, may ignore the normal restrictions of State of New Mexico traffic laws, provided that they do so in a safe and prudent manner and comply with other restrictions contained in this procedure.

- Maximum speed during an *emergency response* is limited to 10 mph over the posted speed limit.
- Drivers shall proceed through intersections at which they have the right of way, only when the driver can account for all lanes of traffic and has full control of the intersection.
- During an *emergency response*, drivers will bring the vehicle to a full and complete stop for any of the following:
  - When so directed by a law enforcement officer
  - At red traffic lights

- At stop signs
- When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing warning lights
- When the driver cannot account for all lanes of traffic in an intersection
- During an emergency response, drivers will operate their vehicle at reduced speed and proceed with caution for any of the following:
  - School zones
  - Areas congested with pedestrians
  - Conditions of reduced visibility or reduced vehicle traction and/or control

### **Backing Apparatus**

When backing fire apparatus a spotter will be used to direct the backing operation. The spotter should be positioned several feet behind the vehicle, on the driver's side in direct visual sight of the driver. The spotter will survey the area for obstructions, traffic, pedestrians, parked vehicles and any other hazards. The spotter shall direct the driver using visual hand signals, which are standardized as follows:

- **Stop** – both arms raised above the head with fists closed.
- **Backup** – both hands motioning towards the chest
- **Left or Right** – both arms pointing in the direction the driver should turn.

### **Parking Apparatus**

Wheel chocks should be used on all apparatus when parked on public streets or at an emergency scene. The driver will remain in the driver's seat covering the brake until a chock has been properly placed by a firefighter. If the driver is operating the vehicle alone, the driver should be confident that the parking brake is set and holding prior to exiting the cab and setting a chock.

When parked on an emergency scene, primary warning lights will be shut off, and only secondary flashers used. Headlights should also be shut off unless they are providing critical scene lighting. When parked in a traffic lane on a public road, traffic cones should be used to designate a traffic lane for motorists.

### **Response in Personal Vehicles**

Fire Department personnel who respond to the station or to an emergency scene in their personal vehicles will comply with all traffic laws of the State of New Mexico. The use of red lights and sirens, and extension of emergency vehicle privileges to personal vehicles will only be allowed when all of the following criteria have been met:

- The driver has completed all requirements to be a qualified driver as described in this procedure.
- The driver has shown proof of insurance, and the fire department has officially notified the insurance carrier that the vehicle will be equipped with red lights and siren.
- The vehicle be equipped with both audible warning devices (red lights) and audible warning devices (siren).
- The Fire Chief has issued specific written authorization to the driver.