

1 Purpose & Scope

The Chicora Fire Department (Chicora Independent Hose Co.) places a great deal of responsibility on the drivers of our emergency vehicles when they are responding to any emergency call. Emergency vehicle drivers provide prompt conveyance of the apparatus, equipment, and personnel to provide service to those in need, but just 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 (personnel, the vehicle, portable equipment). 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 shall be, and must always remain, the first priority of all emergency vehicle drivers. In order to accomplish this enormous task, all emergency vehicle drivers shall become familiar with and constantly abide by the following policies and procedures.

2 General Procedures

2.1 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 any physical obstructions moved out of the way. During the circle of safety check the emergency vehicle driver shall encircle the vehicle 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 procedure 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.

2.2 Warning Devices and True Emergencies

When responding to a true emergency*, all audible and visual warning devices will be operated at all times regardless of the time of day and/or traffic conditions. (This is required by the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code.) All emergency 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 ensure the right-of-way.

**The definition of a true emergency is a situation in which there is a high probability of death or serious injury to an individual or significant property loss where actions by an emergency vehicle driver may reduce the seriousness of the situation.*

2.3 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. 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. 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 the driver assume the right of way. 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 on pedestrians 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 speeds over 40 mph.

2.4 Response speeds

When responding to a true emergency, drivers of fire vehicles 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. (See note * below.) Examples of conditions requiring slower response speeds include but are not limited to:

- inclement weather
- slippery road conditions
- poor visibility
- heavy or congested traffic conditions
- sharp curves

****IMPORTANT! Under the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, ambulances are not permitted to exceed the speed limit.***

3 Intersection Practices

3.1 *Intersections*

Operators must use extreme caution when approaching any intersection, as intersections are the locations responsible for a large percentage of major accidents involving emergency vehicles. Drivers are required to practice the organization's intersection operating guidelines during all emergency responses.

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.

3.2 *Uncontrolled intersections*

An uncontrolled intersection is one not having a control device (stop sign, yield sign or traffic signal) in the direction of travel of the emergency vehicle or one where 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 (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast etc.). Observe traffic in all 4 directions (left, right, front, rear)
- Slow down if any potential hazards are detected and cover the brake pedal with your foot.
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200 feet from intersection
- Avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible

3.3 *Controlled intersections*

A controlled intersection is one having a stop sign, yield sign, yellow traffic light or a red traffic light. Controlled intersections require a complete stop by the emergency vehicle driver. In addition to bringing the vehicle to a complete stop, the operator must follow these additional steps as well:

- Do not rely on warning devices to clear traffic
- Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast etc.) as well as driver options
- Begin to slow down well before reaching the intersection and cover the brake pedal with the drivers foot, continue to scan in 4 directions (left, right, front, back)
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200' from intersection
- Scan intersection for possible passing options (pass on right, pass on left, wait etc.) avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible
- Come to a complete stop.
- Establish eye contact with other vehicle drivers, have partner communicate all is clear; and re-check that all other vehicles are stopped.
- Proceed one lane of traffic at a time, treating each lane of traffic as a separate intersection.

Note: The Pennsylvania Vehicle Code permits fire apparatus to proceed past a stop sign or stop light after ensuring other traffic is not entering the intersection. However, it is the policy of the Chicora Fire Department that all our vehicles should come to a complete stop before proceeding through the intersection.

3.4 *Railroad intersections*

In addition the emergency vehicle driver shall perform the following prior to proceeding. 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.

- turn off all sirens and air horns
- operate the motor at idle speed
- turn off any other sound producing equipment or accessories
- open the windows and listen for train horn

4 Non-emergency Response

When responding to a call in a non-emergency response mode (or normal flow of traffic) or when not responding to a true emergency, the driver shall operate the vehicle without any audible or visual 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.

5 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 breaking any traffic laws or driving any vehicle in an aggressive manner will be subject to disciplinary action including, suspension of driving privileges.

6 Riding Policy

The department 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 and/or the person riding in the officer position shall verify that all personnel are properly seated and in seat belts before the vehicle is moved. Standard communication signals should be formulated and utilized by all personnel.

The department prohibits riding on tailboards, sidesteps, running boards, or any other exposed position. Personnel who perform emergency medical care while the vehicle is in motion should be secured to the vehicle by a seat belt or safety harness designed for occupant restraint.

7 Backing

The department recognizes that backing emergency vehicles is made hazardous by drivers not being able to see much of where they intend to go. The department recommends that whenever possible drivers should avoid backing as the safest way to back up a vehicle is not to back it up at all. When it is necessary to back-up any departmental vehicle, all drivers shall follow one of the two following measures:

- The department's first choice of backing procedures is that before any vehicle is put into reverse and backed, a spotter should be in place near the rear of the vehicle. The spotter should be safely positioned so that the emergency vehicle driver can see them at all times. If at any time the emergency vehicle driver loses sight of the spotter, he/she shall stop immediately until the spotter makes himself/herself visible again.
- If conditions exist that make use of spotters impossible, all drivers, before attempting to back up any fire department vehicle, shall make a circle of safety inspection to see that no person or persons are directly behind the vehicle or in its intended path of travel; all equipment is secured and that all compartment doors are securely closed; and any physical obstructions are moved out of the way. The emergency vehicle driver should also note all potential obstructions in the intended path of travel.

8 Responding In Privately-Owned Vehicles (POVs)

8.1 *Responsibility of Members Responding in POVs*

When any member responds to the station or to the scene of an emergency in his/her private vehicle, each member 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 member of the organization will be permitted to violate any motor vehicle laws, including but not limited to:

- Exceeding 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; therefore, they 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.

8.2 *Warning Lights on POVs*

The Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code regulates the use of warning lights on privately-operated vehicles. All members who have a warning light on their private vehicle must register their vehicles with the department each year.

The following officers are permitted to have a red light and audible warning signal (AWS) on their private vehicles:

- Chief
- 1st Assistant Chief
- 2nd Assistant Chief
- Fire Police Captain
- Fire Police Lieutenant

Under the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code, the vehicles of those officers listed above are considered to be emergency vehicles when these officers are responding to a true emergency. Therefore, they are entitled to the same exemptions as fire vehicles. However, all officers using their private vehicle in the role of an emergency vehicle must operate the vehicle in a responsible manner, always exercising due regard for the public.

All other regular members are permitted to have a blue light, but no AWS, on their private vehicle. Probationary members are not permitted to have a blue light on their vehicle. Probationary members who have a blue light on their vehicle because they are also members of another department may not use the blue light until their probationary period at Chicora has ended.

Please note the Motor Vehicle Code has specific physical requirements for warning lights on POVs. Members who are not sure what is a suitable light should check with the Chief.

9 Ambulance Response & Patient Transport

Under the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code, the regulations governing emergency response by ambulances differ from those for fire vehicles. For example: ambulances are not permitted to exceed posted speed limits, and they must come to a complete stop at red lights and stop signs before proceeding through intersections. Additionally, ambulance responses are governed by other protocols of the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Ambulance drivers shall familiarize themselves with all codes and regulations governing ambulance response. Some of these regulations are revised at regular intervals. Ambulance supervisors and command officers shall review current regulatory requirements with new drivers. Command officers shall also schedule update sessions with drivers when regulatory requirements or recommendations are revised.

10 Accidents Involving Department & Private Vehicles

All accidents involving department vehicles, no matter who is at fault, must be reported as soon as possible to the Chief of the department. The Chief will also notify the president and treasurer of the incident.

Drivers of the vehicle(s) involved should get all necessary information from other drivers involved. This should include the driver's name, driver's address, insurance information, color and make of vehicle, and license plate number. Drivers should also get names of any witnesses and the investigating police officer.

In addition to the above information, the CFD driver must complete the "Vehicle Accident/Loss Investigation Report" shown in Appendix A. Bank copies of this form are carried in each vehicle. You can also obtain a copy of the form from a line officer. **This form must be completed and turned into the Chief the same day as the accident.**

Drivers who are involved in an accident while responding POV to the station for a call or to the scene should also report the accident to the Chief and complete a report on the form shown in Appendix A. Members should understand that in the event of a law suit concerning the accident, both the member and the department may be named in the litigation.

11 Appendix A – Accident Report Form



Vehicle Accident/Loss Investigation Report

(This is not a claim form)

Fire Department _____ Date _____
Address _____
Name of Driver _____ Vehicle ID/Unit Number _____
Type of Vehicle _____
Date Driver Last Certified On Above Vehicle _____
Date of Accident _____ Time _____ Date Reported _____
Location of Accident _____

Roadway

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Straight _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> 2-lane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curve _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> 3-lane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> On Grade _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> 4-lane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Level _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Divided |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hillcrest _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Rural |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dry _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wet _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Lanes marked |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muddy _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Lanes unmarked |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snowy _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> No road detects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Icy _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Holes, ruts, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oily _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Loose material |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Accident Occurred:

- ☐ At station
☐ Responding to emergency
☐ At emergency scene
☐ Returning from emergency
☐ Training
☐ Convention or parade
☐ Other _____
☐ Sleet

Type of Loss

- ☐ Personal injury
☐ Property damage
☐ Vehicle damage

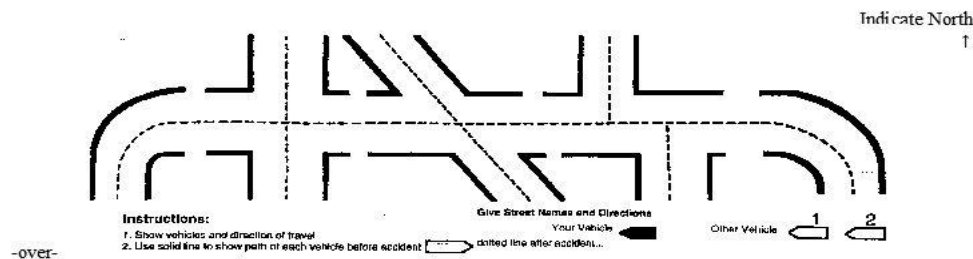
Weather

- ☐ Clear
☐ Rain
☐ Snow
☐ Fog
☐ Other _____

Description Of Accident _____

Motor Vehicle Diagram

Complete the following diagram showing direction and positions of automobiles involved, designating clearly point of contact.



Safety Analysis

What acts, failures to act and/or conditions contributed most directly to this accident? (Immediate Cause)

What are the basic or fundamental reasons for the existence of these acts and/or conditions? (Fundamental Cause)

What action has or will be taken to prevent recurrence? Place "X" by items completed.

Safety Supervisor's Comments _____

Driver's Signature _____

Date _____

Supervisor's Signature _____

Date _____

Safety Supervisor's Signature _____

Date _____

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12 Revision History

July 13, 2016 Approved and adopted by Chief Cody Craig for general release to department.

January 08, 2019 Changed to new format for SOGs.