



# PRINCE GEORGE FIRE AND EMS

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Date: December 8, 2020

Title: Driving Procedure

Authorized By: 

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## I. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to assure the efficient response of personnel and apparatus to the scene of an emergency without danger to public or private property, or injury, or death to civilians or Department personnel.

## II. Objective

To develop procedures for the safe operation of all Department vehicles.

## III. Scope

This procedure shall apply to all Prince George Fire & EMS personnel operating County vehicles.

## IV. Responsibility

The Driver/Operator is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations. The Company Officer/Attendant-in-Charge is responsible for managing compliance of this procedure

## V. Procedure

### A. General

1. Applicable to all Drivers:

- a. Must possess a valid Operator's License.
- b. Must be at least 18 years of age and no more than 50 years of age (pending a voluntary health certification). Offered up on a voluntary basis through December 2023.



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- c. Must have demonstrated driving proficiency in the type of equipment that will be operated either through a Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squad or Virginia Department of Fire Programs Emergency Vehicle Operator Course (EVOG). Prince George Law Enforcement personnel who have completed an approved DCJS EVOG program are authorized to drive ambulances. All personnel operating emergency vehicles are required to complete an Emergency Vehicle Operations refresher class annually. Drivers will not be allowed to operate an emergency vehicle without the annual refresher. Any member of the Department that drives a Department vehicle on an emergency response shall be required to complete a minimum twenty (20) hours driving/operating an emergency vehicle prior to being allowed to drive.
- d. Must have no major (i.e., DUI, Reckless Driving, Eluding, etc.) violations within the past 36 months.

## B. Backing

1. All visual-warning lights shall be used when backing apparatus. The horn shall be sounded three times to alert everyone that the unit is preparing to reverse. Avoid backing where possible. Where backing is unavoidable, a spotter shall be used. The only exception to this would be if the unit or the crew is in imminent danger. IF patient care would be compromised with the attendant leaving the patient care compartment and a spotter is unavailable, the driver/operator should dismount and walk completely around the unit before backing.
2. When a spotter is directing a vehicle, the spotter shall be responsible for any accidents that may occur, unless the driver disregards the spotter's directions. Any personnel not adhering to this procedure shall be subject to disciplinary action.



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## C. Seat Belts and General Safety

1. Non-Emergency Response/Assignment: Protective clothing is not required during non-emergency responses or assignments. Protective clothing taken on the apparatus shall be secured in compartments or other suitable locations which will protect against loss or damage. Where protective clothing is not required, a minimum of an issued safety vest shall be donned.
2. It is the responsibility of the operator and the Company Officer/Attendant-in-Charge is certain that all members are properly clothed and in a seated position with seat belts fastened, before the unit leaves the station.
3. The use of all tobacco products is not allowed in Department vehicles.
4. Headlights shall be on any time apparatus is traveling on a public or private road or way. If headlights are not needed for illumination or marking purposes, they may be turned off when the apparatus is parked.

## D. Exiting the Station/Putting the Unit in Motion

1. Upon leaving the station, the driver shall be aware of other apparatus leaving at the same time and shall yield to all emergency vehicles to the right. Upon leaving the station, the driver shall gently apply the brakes to assure their operation prior to entering the street. Anytime the unit is preparing to move forward, the horn shall be sounded two times to alert every one the unit is going in motion.



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## **E. Warning Devices**

1. The use of warning lights and sirens does not automatically give the right-of-way to the emergency vehicle. These devices simply request the right-of-way from other drivers, based on their awareness of the emergency vehicle presence. Emergency vehicle Driver/Operators 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.
2. Under state law, both warning lights and sirens shall be in operation when responding to an emergency. Audible warning devices shall be operated in a fluctuating manner. No vehicle will be driven with just its warning lights in operation.

## **F. Speed**

1. Under all conditions the maximum speed of any responding vehicle shall be consistent with that recommended by the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles state law concerning emergency vehicle operation. Drivers must always maintain a speed consistent with safe operation of the vehicle under prevailing conditions.

## **G. Lane Position during Emergency Responses**

1. During emergency response vehicles shall travel in the left lane, and when passing, vehicles shall pass on the left. Only in extreme circumstances should the operator pass on the right side and only then with extreme caution.
2. When emergency vehicles must travel in center or oncoming traffic lanes, the maximum permissible speed should be limited based on the circumstances.



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3. Intersections are the most dangerous areas to approach during an emergency response. The following special precautions shall be observed by all responding vehicles:
  - a. When an emergency vehicle must use center or oncoming traffic lanes to approach controlled intersections, (i.e., traffic light or stop sign) they will come to a complete stop before proceeding through the intersection.
  - b. When approaching a controlled intersection (i.e., stop sign or traffic light) with a negative right-of-way (i.e., red light or stop sign), the operator shall bring the unit to a complete stop and only proceed after the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way. Failure to do so will result in the operator being immediately removed from driving and subject to disciplinary action.
  - c. The maximum allowable speed through any intersection shall be the posted legal speed limit.

## **H. Passing Vehicles**

1. Operators of emergency vehicles are allowed to pass other vehicles in a no passing zone (this includes highway markings such as a double yellow line, etc.) only after the other vehicles have pulled to the side of the road and yielded to the emergency vehicle and the operator has a clear view of the road ahead.



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## I. Driver Attention

1. The Driver/Operator shall focus his/her full attention on the safe operation of the vehicle. The Driver/Operator shall not operate the radio, lights, sirens, or any other equipment unless they are the sole occupant of the vehicle. Operation of these devices shall be the responsibility of the Company Officer or the Attendant-in-Charge.
  - a. Drivers of Command vehicles are exempt from this requirement if there is only one person in the front seat of the vehicle. Drivers of these vehicles shall exercise extreme caution when it is necessary to operate equipment.
2. The unique hazards of driving on or adjacent to the incident scene requires the driver to use extreme caution to be alert and prepared to react to the unexpected. Drivers must consider the dangers their moving poses to personnel and spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency, and may inadvertently step in front of or behind a moving vehicle.

## J. Approach Safety

1. On approaching the emergency scene, all drivers shall watch for emergency vehicles approaching from other directions. They shall drive with extreme caution and be constantly on the alert for personnel and for civilians who may be distracted by the emergency and may step in front of the approaching apparatus.



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## **K. School Buses**

1. During emergency and non-emergency responses, vehicles will stop for school buses with red lights flashing loading or unloading students, and proceed only after authorized to do so by the driver of the school bus. The only exception is if the school bus is being off-loaded on the opposite side of a divided four-lane highway. Driver/Operators should still be alert for possible children or occupants off loading and crossing the highway.

## **L. Parked Vehicles**

1. When stopped at the scene of an incident, apparatus should be strategically placed to protect personnel who may be working in the street and warning lights will be used to make approaching traffic aware of the incident. When necessary, law enforcement will be called for traffic control.
2. If it is not necessary to park vehicles in or near the traffic lanes, the vehicle should be parked as not to create a traffic hazard. If possible, use parking lots. If the vehicle must be parked in the street, park next to a curb and display their four-way flashers, and directional bar (Not to be used while in motion).
3. No equipment shall be removed from any apparatus for personal use.
4. When not on a response, compartment doors shall remain closed unless opening is necessary in order to access equipment, e.g. apparatus check off or community services such as show and tell.
5. Traffic cones shall be placed on the traffic side of the vehicle at the front and rear corners as well as down the side. Where the unit may be surrounded with potential traffic, cones should encompass the vehicle.



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## M. Accident Notification

1. Any member who is involved in an accident while operating a County vehicle shall immediately notify the Emergency Communications Center, request resources as needed, and request the Director of Fire & EMS be notified.
2. Members are to provide necessary patient care to those needing assistance. Reference the "Accident Report Guide" (see attached) in the glove box of each unit to assist in the collection of information for documentation purposes.
3. All members of the crew shall submit in writing, a written report of the incident circumstances, to the Director of Fire & EMS, prior to being released from duty (unless physically unable).
4. Any member involved in an accident involving property damage or injury may be subject to a drug screen, and will not be released back to duty until the results are determined.

## N. Annual License Check

1. All Department drivers will be required to maintain a valid Operator's License.
2. A review of each driver's license will be conducted on an annual basis.
3. Drivers with the following are not eligible to drive department vehicles:
  - a. More than 3 minor (i.e., failure to yield, lane violation, following too close, speeding, etc.) moving violations within the past 30 months





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- b. More than 1 at-fault accident within the past 36 months
- c. More than 2 minor moving violations in combination with one at-fault accident within the past 36 months
  - i. Such drivers will be required to take a defensive driving course at their own expense, on their own time. Proper documentation for successful completion will need to be submitted to the Director of Fire & EMS prior to being released to drive.
  - ii. Any driver/operator convicted of a driving infraction, shall notify the Director of Fire & EMS in writing.

## O. Limited Access Highways

1. No personal vehicles shall respond to the scene to incidents on the interstate. With the exception of an officer or personnel with a radio who can establish command; they can respond as necessary.
2. Traffic cones shall be strategically placed well in advance of the incident considering speed and breaking distances, to diver on-coming traffic.
3. An engine, tanker or aerial truck shall be positioned prior to the incident, to block the scene and provide protection to the on-scene personnel.