

# Alive on Arrival

## Tips for Safe Emergency Vehicle Operations

### DID YOU KNOW?

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) Firefighter Fatality Reports indicate that many firefighters and other emergency responders have died on duty from crashes involving emergency and personal vehicles responding to and returning from fires and other emergencies.

These reports indicate that since 1984, between 10 to 20 percent of firefighter fatalities in any given year are from these types of incidents.

The USFA reports also illustrate that numerous firefighters and other emergency responders have died since 1995 from being struck by vehicles while operating on the roadway at emergency scenes.

These figures do not include the many injuries to emergency services personnel annually from emergency vehicle-related crashes.

### As an Emergency Vehicle Operator

- Ensure that you are trained in and fully capable of operating the emergency vehicle you are driving. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1002, *Standard for Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications*, specifies job performance requirements for personnel who drive and operate fire apparatus. In addition, NFPA 1451, *Standard for a Fire Service Vehicle Operations Training Program*, establishes minimum requirements in this area.
- Drive with due care. Operate an emergency vehicle as you would if all those in your vehicle and on the road around you are your family.
- Slower means safer. A good safety guideline is not to exceed the posted speed limit. Drive even slower when road conditions or visibility are poor.
- Always stop at intersections with a negative right of way. Proceed through these intersections and railroad crossings only after coming to a complete stop and when you are sure that other vehicles have stopped and given you the right of way. Be prepared to stop even when you have the right of way.
- At an unguarded railroad crossing or when your view is obscured at a railroad crossing, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommends lowering the emergency vehicle's window, idling the engine, and turning off all radios, fans, wipers, and audible warning devices to listen for on-coming trains.
- Never assume that another vehicle is aware of the presence of yours. Today's vehicles have noise insulation, powerful radios, and air conditioning that lessen the effectiveness of horns and sirens. Dark tinted windows may also impact the ability of drivers to see emergency lights. Additionally, some emergency lights may be difficult to see in day light.
- Park safely. Park your emergency vehicle away from hazardous areas such as downed electrical lines, falling debris and structures, flames, toxic gases, and smoke.
- If you park on a roadway, ensure that your emergency vehicle can be seen by oncoming traffic by appropriately using its emergency warning lights. Do not blind oncoming traffic with the vehicle headlights, spotlights, or scene lighting—turn them off when parked, especially at night. Park in a manner that shields the incident area from oncoming traffic.
- When operating on the roadway, wear an appropriate American National Safety Institute (ANSI)-certified high visibility traffic vest. This includes those that meet the ANSI 207, *High Visibility Public Safety Vests*, standard. Department of Transportation (DOT)-approved orange traffic cones at least 28 inches in height with retro-reflective collars should be deployed. Also, as an important safety measure, retro-reflective coral DOT-approved signs stating "EMERGENCY SCENE AHEAD" should be positioned "upstream" from the incident scene to warn approaching drivers. The use of illuminated warning devices such as flares and/or other equipment such as arrow boards can channel moving traffic away from the lane(s) in which emergency responders are working to create a safe working zone.

## As an Emergency Vehicle Operator (cont'd.)

- Always use the parking brake and appropriately chock the wheels of parked emergency vehicles.
- Don't move your emergency vehicle until you and all passengers are seated safely and wearing seatbelts; every occupant of an emergency vehicle needs to have a seatbelt. If your emergency vehicle does not have them for every occupant, they need to be installed.
- Make sure your emergency vehicle is completely stopped before anyone unbuckles their seat belts and exits.
- Always use a competent spotter when backing your emergency vehicle.
- Never drive an emergency (or any other) vehicle under the influence of drugs or alcohol or when fatigued. Be aware of how any medication or fatigue may affect your ability to operate an emergency vehicle.

## As an Emergency Vehicle Passenger

- Always put on protective clothing before getting in an emergency vehicle.
- Always ride seated in the interior of the emergency vehicle with your seatbelt fastened. Do not loosen your seatbelt when the vehicle is in motion.
- If not completely enclosed by the vehicle, wear a helmet and use eye protection.
- Never ride on the exterior tail board or side running boards of an emergency vehicle.
- Never stand in a moving emergency vehicle.
- Never try to jump onto or from a moving emergency vehicle.
- Ensure that all tools and equipment in passenger and patient treatment compartments are secured safely before the emergency vehicle moves.
- Ensure that the emergency vehicle has come to a complete stop before you unbuckle your seatbelt and exit the vehicle.
- Prior to exiting an emergency vehicle, ensure that it is safe to do so. Watch for oncoming traffic, downed wires, and other hazards. Look before you exit.
- When operating on the roadway, wear appropriate ANSI compliant, personal protective clothing with fluorescent and retro-reflective material.
- If you are performing as a spotter for a backing emergency vehicle, always be aware of its direction and location. Never turn your back on a vehicle headed in your direction.
- Never board an emergency vehicle as a responder under the influence of drugs or alcohol.



### As The Officer In Charge

You are responsible for safe and prudent operations of the emergency vehicle and for the safety of all passengers in the vehicle.



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