

# Washington Township Fire Department Standard Operating Procedure

**Division 300:** Occupational Safety & Health  
**Section 306:** Vehicle Operations  
**Subject 306.01:** Driving Apparatus & Vehicles  
**Supersedes:** B3-3.1 – .22 (7/13/92)



**Approved By:** 

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## **PURPOSE:**

One of the Department's core values is safety – reinforce work environment safety to protect the well-being of Department and community members. This standard operating procedure establishes the process for achieving safety when members drive apparatus and vehicles.

## **RESPONSIBILITY:**

Drivers of emergency and public safety vehicles must perform in accordance with this standard operating procedure and applicable sections (Chapter 4511) of traffic law from the Ohio Revised Code. If emergency and public safety vehicle drivers violate the law, they, not the Department, are subject to prosecution. The driver of each vehicle or apparatus has the duty and full responsibility to operate in compliance with all applicable laws and procedures. The driver is responsible for deviations from normal vehicular operation allowed by law. When riding as a passenger, an officer is responsible for the driver's actions.

Members, especially drivers, must thoroughly learn, understand and implement these procedures. Members must remain informed and proficient of these procedures.

## **PROCEDURES:**

Members of the Department that are allowed to drive and operate apparatus and vehicles:

- Must possess a valid Ohio motor vehicle operator license.
- Must have successfully completed the required criteria for driver/operator qualification, or
- Be enrolled in and learning to become driver/operator qualified.

Members trained to drive public safety vehicles<sup>1</sup> may do so in accordance with this and other Department procedures: Special Order 99-03, *Personal Emergency Equipment* (10/21/99) and General Order 86-1, *Public Safety Vehicle Inspections* (4/25/97)

Prior to driving an emergency or public safety vehicle, the driver must visually and/or audibly ensure that occupants have properly secured all seat belt and/or occupant restraint systems.

### **Non-Emergent Situations**

When driving an emergency or public safety vehicle in a non-emergent mode, the driver is required to:

- Observe all motor vehicle laws.
- Illuminate the headlights on low beam during daylight.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by ORC 4511.01(E), this includes privately owned motor vehicles operated by volunteer/on call firefighters.  
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- Drive in the left lane (#2 lane) when two through lanes are present.
- Disengage (shut off) the transmission retarder (or Jacob brake if so equipped) when road surfaces are wet.

### Emergency Situations

When driving an emergency or public safety vehicle in an **emergency** mode, the driver must:

- Acknowledge to the front seat passenger (if applicable) a concise route or location of the incident.
- Activate visual warning devices, except four-way hazard flashers, and turn the headlights on low beam<sup>2</sup>.
- Proceed with due regard and slow the vehicle's rate of travel when:
  - Approaching and passing through a 'green' traffic light; rate of travel must not be above the posted speed limit.
  - Adverse weather conditions are present (rain, snow, etc.).
  - Approaching intersections, even when you have the right-of-way.
  - Abnormally heavy traffic or congestion is present.
  - Visibility is reduced (night, fog, etc.).
  - Road conditions warrant (narrow road, winding road, construction, etc.).
  - A vehicle is driven off the hard surface roadway.
- Drive the emergency or public safety vehicle with due regard for the safety of persons and property.
- Stop completely:
  - At stop signs.
  - At red or yellow traffic signals.
  - For school buses displaying flashing warning lights during the discharge or loading of passengers.
  - At unguarded railroad grade crossings.<sup>3</sup>
  - At intersections when:
    - "Blind" conditions prevail.
    - Clearing and accounting for traffic in each lane to be crossed.
    - Negative right of way conditions exist.
- Exercise extreme caution and due regard for the safety of persons and property if the emergency or public safety vehicle must be driven left of center.
  - NOTE – This is an extremely dangerous driving maneuver and must be performed while operating at very, very low speeds.
- As a last resort, proceed against traffic flow on a one way street for only that section of street where an emergency exists.
- Maintain an adequate assured clear distance from another emergency or public safety vehicle that is proceeding first.
- Use the following as a guide at or around intersections when two different emergency or public safety vehicles responding on an emergency arrive at an intersection:

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<sup>2</sup> Other clear/white lens lights such as flood lights, scene lights, and ground lights are not to be illuminated during an emergency response.

<sup>3</sup> After stopping, the driver must visually and audibly ensure that no train traffic will be encountered on the railroad track.

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- The first arriving vehicle has the right of way over the other emergency or public safety vehicle.
- The emergency or public safety vehicle with the right of way by virtue of the traffic control device proceeds first.
- The emergency or public safety vehicle responding through the intersection without needing to complete any turns proceeds first.
- The emergency or public safety vehicle requiring a right turn at the intersection proceeds first before the emergency or public safety vehicle that must complete a left turn.

The Department recognizes and rewards courteous and safe driving practices. Report through the chain of command and to the Safety/Fitness/Wellness Committee when you witness actions deserving complimentary praise. Likewise, report violations or infractions of these procedures.

### **Prohibited Activities During the Emergency Response**

Drivers must **not**:

1. Willfully or wantonly disregard the safety of persons or property.
2. Operate sirens or radios, unless a front seat passenger is not present.
3. Exceed the safe or posted speed limit, whichever is lower, by more than ten miles per hour.
4. Drive Tanker 45 above the safe or posted speed limits under any conditions.<sup>4</sup>
5. Proceed against the traffic flow on a one way street as a means of completing a shorter travel route to an incident.
6. Pass another emergency or public safety vehicle that is also responding on an emergency basis.
7. Allow any non-employee of Washington Township to ride in or upon an emergency or public safety vehicle unless properly enrolled in the ride-along program.

### **Vehicle Parking – Non-emergency Conditions off Department property**

- When possible, the driver should remain with the vehicle.
- When possible the vehicle should be parked out of high traffic or congested areas.
- When out of station, place a road pylon at the driver's side rear corner of larger apparatus to serve as a caution to other drivers and as a reminder to complete a walk-around.
- The driver should walk around the entire perimeter of the vehicle prior to moving.
  - Re-secure loose or falling equipment that requires correction
  - Close open compartment doors
  - Note nearby obstructions such as signs, limbs, posts or curbs.
  - Remove any obstacles that have rolled under or fallen upon the vehicle.
  - Reduce emergency lights and activate four-way hazard flashers

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<sup>4</sup> According to the 2003 United States Fire Administration report, FA-248, *Safe Operation of Fire Tankers*, speed was listed as one of the six controllable factors that can help mitigate the disproportionate crash rate for tankers.

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### References

#### National Fire Protection Association

Standard 1002 – *Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications* (2003 edition)

Sections 4.3.1-4.3.7

Standard 1451 – *Fire Department Vehicle Operations Training Program* (2002 edition)

Sections 7-1.1-7-1.6, 7-1.8, and 7-2

Standard 1500 – *Fire Department Occupational Safety & Health Program* (2007 edition)

Sections 6.2.2, 6.2.2.1, 6.2.3, 6.2.5-6.2.10, 6.2.12, and 6.2.14-6.2.14.2.2

#### Ohio Revised Code

Chapter 4511 – Traffic Laws

#### Washington Township Fire Department

General Order 86-1, *Public Safety Vehicle Inspections* (4/25/97)

Special Order 99-03, *Personal Emergency Equipment* (10/21/99)

Training Bulletin 96-01-26 *Engine Driver/Operator Qualification Process* (5/24/96)

Training Bulletin 97-01-26 *Medic Member Driver/Operator Qualification Process* (8/4/97)