

Washington Township Fire Department Standard Operating Procedure

Division 300: Occupational Safety & Health
Section 306: Vehicle Operations
Subject 306.02: Backing Apparatus & Vehicles
Supersedes: B3-3.21 (7/13/92)



Approved By: 

Date: February 10, 2009 Date Last Reviewed:

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this procedure is to protect the safety of personnel when Department vehicles are backing-up or performing other maneuvers that require the use of a spotter to promote safety and prevent vehicular damage.

RESPONSIBILITY:

The officer, driver and spotter(s) are equally responsible for the safe operation of the vehicle.

PROCEDURES:

Backing Department vehicles should be avoided whenever possible. When backing is unavoidable, use a spotter. Additionally, use a spotter when vehicles must negotiate maneuvers with restrictive front and side clearances, and where height clearances are uncertain.

The lead spotter must discuss the backing plan with the driver before proceeding. Prior to backing the vehicle, all spotters must view the planned backing route for any obstructions or hazards (tree limbs, hose, debris, cars, etc.). Agree upon a communication/warning process prior to backing. Open the driver side window to allow maximum communication/hearing between the spotter and driver. Minimize or silence distractive sounds or audio.

Before spotters dismount the apparatus, place the vehicle in *Park* or *Neutral* and apply the parking brake. When dismounting apparatus, walk around the front of the vehicle if you are moving to the passenger side to spot. During the execution of a backing maneuver, do not walk behind the vehicle (back bumper/tailboard area) out of the driver's line of sight. Spotters are not permitted to ride the tailboard/back bumper while assisting in backing vehicles/apparatus.

Signals:

Straight back: One hand above the head with palm toward face, waving back. (Left or right hand optional). Other hand at your side.

Turn: Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended.

Stop: Both arms raised and crossed with hands in fist.

Night Backing:

Signals are the same. Prior to backing the vehicle, the spotter must confirm that the spotlights on the rear of the vehicle/apparatus are illuminated. If you use a flashlight, make sure it is not directed toward the vehicle's mirrors.

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Backing All Department Vehicles and Apparatus, Except Staff Cars:

Backing with Spotter

1. **Activate the vehicle's emergency lights.**
2. Deploy at least two members to act as spotters.¹
3. Locate the lead spotter at the left rear corner (driver side) of the apparatus.
4. Position the lead spotter far enough back from the vehicle so s/he can see the passenger side rear corner of the vehicle.
5. Position a second spotter at the right front corner (passenger side) to assist the operation.
6. Only the lead spotter communicates directly with the driver.
7. The driver of the vehicle watches the lead spotter.
8. The lead spotter may receive information from the other spotter(s).

Backing with Driver Only

1. The driver dismounts to survey the entire perimeter of the vehicle.
2. While backing the driver will closely observe mirrors on both sides of the vehicle.
3. If the driver experiences depth perception problems then:
 - a. Driver dismounts to obtain one road pylon.
 - b. Driver places the road pylon at one rear corner of the vehicle's stopping point. (This should be the left rear corner if no turning is necessary.)
 - While acquiring and placing the road pylon, the entire perimeter of the vehicle must be surveyed.
 - c. While backing, with the vehicle emergency lights activated, the driver closely observes the road pylon.
 - d. When the vehicle's rear corner is very near the road pylon, the driver will dismount again.
 - If the vehicle is not at the desired point, place the road pylon again, view the entire perimeter of the vehicle, and begin backing again.

¹ If the apparatus/vehicle has two person minimum staffing, one member dismounts and serves as lead spotter.
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