

LOS PINOS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



TITLE	NUMBER	EFFECTIVE DATE	REVISION DATE
DRIVING EMERGENCY VEHICLES	315	October 6 th , 2004	

PURPOSE

Responding to any emergency call, the Los Pinos Fire Protection District places a great deal of responsibility on the drivers of our emergency vehicles. Not only must emergency vehicles drivers provide prompt conveyance of the apparatus, equipment, and personnel to provide service to those in need, but 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, and 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 vehicles drivers shall become familiar with, and constantly abide by the following policies and procedures.

PROCEDURES

A. 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 the emergency vehicle driver shall encircle the vehicles and visually inspect all four (4) 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 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.

COLORADO STATE LAW

It is the responsibility of the driver of each fire district vehicle to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with the Colorado Revised Statutes on Vehicles and Traffic. These Statutes provide specific legal exceptions to regular traffic regulations which apply to fire district vehicles only when responding to an emergency incident.

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A. COLORADO REVISED STATUTES 42-4-108. "PUBLIC OFFICERS TO OBEY PROVISIONS - EXCEPTIONS FOR EMERGENCY VEHICLES."

(1) The provisions of this article applicable to the drivers of vehicles upon the highways shall apply to the drivers of all vehicles owned or operated by the United States, this state, or any county, city, town, district, or other political subdivision of the state, subject to such specific exceptions as are set forth in this article with reference to authorized emergency vehicles.

(2) The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call, or when in pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law, or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in this section, but subject to the conditions stated in this article. The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle may:

- (a) Park or stand, irrespective of the provisions of this title;*
- (b) Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation;*
- (c) Exceed the lawful speeds set forth in section 42-4-1101 (2) or exceed the maximum lawful speed limits set forth in section 42-4-1101 (8) so long as said driver does not endanger life or property;*
- (d) Disregard regulations governing directions of movement or turning in specified directions.*

(3) The exemptions and conditions provided in paragraphs (b) to (d), in their entirety, of subsection (2) of this section for an authorized emergency vehicle shall continue to apply to section 24-10-106 (1) (a), C.R.S., only when such vehicle is making use of audible or visual signals meeting the requirements of section 42-4-213, and the exemption granted in paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of this section shall apply only when such vehicle is making use of visual signals meeting the requirements of section 42-4-213 unless using such visual signals would cause an obstruction to the normal flow of traffic; except that an authorized emergency vehicle being operated as a police vehicle while in actual pursuit of a suspected violator of any provision of this title need not display or make use of audible or visual signals so long as such pursuit is being made to obtain verification of or evidence of the guilt of the suspected violator. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require an emergency vehicle to make use of audible signals when such vehicle is not moving, whether or not the vehicle is occupied.

(4) The provisions of this section shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such

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provisions protect the driver from the consequences of such driver's reckless disregard for the safety of others.

(5) The state motor vehicle licensing agency shall designate any particular vehicle as an authorized emergency vehicle upon a finding that the designation of that vehicle is necessary to the preservation of life or property or to the execution of emergency governmental functions. Such designation shall be in writing, and the written designation shall be carried in the vehicle at all times, but failure to carry the written designation shall not affect the status of the vehicle as an authorized emergency vehicle.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE POLICY

Los Pinos Fire Protection District vehicles shall be operated in a manner that provides for the safety of all persons and property. Safe arrival shall always have priority over unnecessary speed and reckless driving enroute to an emergency incident.

Prompt, safe response shall be attained by:

- Leaving the station in a standard manner.
- Quickly mounting apparatus.
- All personnel on-board, seated and belts on.
- Station apparatus doors fully open.
- Driving defensively and professionally at reasonable speeds.
- Knowing where we are going.
- Using warning devices to move around traffic and to request the right-of-way in a safe and predictable manner.

Prompt response shall not be attained by:

- Leaving quarters before crew has mounted safely and before the station apparatus doors are fully open.
- Driving too fast for conditions.
- Driving recklessly or without regard for safety.
- Taking chances with negative right-of-way intersections.
- Intimidating or scaring other drivers.

During an emergency response, fire vehicles should avoid passing other emergency vehicles. If passing is necessary, permission must be obtained through radio communications.

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A “code” response is authorized only in conjunction with emergency incidents. Unnecessary emergency response shall be avoided. In order to avoid any unnecessary emergency response, the following rules shall apply. When the first unit reports on the scene with "nothing showing" or an equivalent report, any additional units shall continue running “code,” but shall not exceed the posted speed limit.

The first arriving unit will advise additional units to respond “non-code” whenever appropriate.

A. WARNING DEVICES AND TRUE EMERGENCIES

When responding to a true emergency (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, and actions by an emergency vehicle driver may reduce the seriousness of the situation), all visual warning devices will be operated at all times regardless of time of day and/or traffic conditions. All emergency vehicle 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 insure the right-of-way.

Emergency response (“code”) does not absolve the driver of any responsibility to drive with due caution. The driver of the emergency vehicle is responsible for its safe operation at all times. When responding “code,” warning lights must be on and sirens should be sounded to warn drivers of other vehicles, as required by the Colorado Revised Statutes on Vehicles and Traffic.

The use of sirens and warning lights 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 drivers 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.

B. 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

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emergency vehicle driver can not 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.

The emergency vehicle driver shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles and 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 one (1) second of following distance for every ten (10) feet of vehicle length for speeds under forty (40) mph and add one (1) additional second for each ten (10) mph for speeds over forty (40) mph.

C. RESPONSE SPEEDS

When responding to a true emergency only, drivers 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 (light traffic, good roads, adequate visibility, and dry pavement). Examples of conditions requiring slower response speeds include but are not limited to:

- Slippery road conditions.
- Inclement weather (wet, snow, or icy conditions).
- Poor visibility.
- Heavy or congested traffic conditions.
- Sharp curves.

D. INTERSECTION PRACTICES

Extreme care should be taken when approaching any intersection as intersections present the greatest potential danger and are responsible for a large percentage of major accidents involving emergency vehicles. Drivers are required to perform intersection operating procedures during all emergency responses.

1. Uncontrolled Intersections

Any intersection that does not offer a control device (stop sign, yield or traffic signal) in the direction of travel of the emergency vehicle or 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 four (4) directions (left, right, front, rear).

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- Slow down if any potential hazards are detected and cover the brake pedal with the driver's foot.
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200' from intersection.
- Avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible.

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 can not 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.

2. Controlled Intersections

Any intersection controlled by a stop sign, yield sign, yellow traffic light or a red traffic light requires a complete stop by the emergency vehicle driver. In addition to bringing the vehicle to a complete stop these additional steps must be followed 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 driver's foot, continue to scan in four (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, 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 person riding in the officer position communicate all is clear; reconfirm all other vehicles are stopped.
- Proceed one lane of traffic at a time treating each lane of traffic as a separate intersection.

3. Railroad Intersections

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

- Turn off all sirens and air horns.
- Operate the motor at idle speed.
- Turn off any other sound producing equipment or accessories.

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- Open the windows and listen for a train's horn.

E. NON-EMERGENCY RESPONSE

When responding to a call in a non-emergency response mode or normal flow of traffic ("non-code" or when not responding to a true emergency) the vehicle will be operated without any audible or visual warning devices and in compliance with all state motor vehicle laws that apply to civilian traffic.

F. ORDINARY TRAVEL PROCEDURES

All drivers shall obey all traffic laws and traffic control devices when driving any fire district 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.

G. RIDING POLICY

The district 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.

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

H. BACKING

The district recognizes that backing emergency vehicles is made hazardous by the fact that the driver cannot see much of where he/she intends to go. The district recommends that whenever possible drivers should avoid backing as the safest way to back up a vehicle is not to back up at all. When it is necessary to back-up any district vehicle all drivers shall follow one of the two following measures:

- The district's first choice of backing procedures is that before any vehicle is put into reverse and backed that a spotter be put 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.

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- If conditions exist that make use of spotters impossible, all drivers, before attempting to back up any fire district vehicle, shall make a circle of safety 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; 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.

I. RESPONSE IN PRIVATE OWNED VEHICLES

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:

- 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 and therefore 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, and loss of driving privileges.

VEHICLE ROLLOVER PREVENTION

Emergency vehicle rollovers are an all too frequent cause of vehicle damage. They are also a cause of serious injury and fatalities. Very often however, these incidents are of a highly preventable nature. All emergency vehicles are subject to rollovers but, tankers, pumper tankers, and ambulances are particularly vulnerable because of their high centers of gravity.

The simplest method of prevention, is for the emergency vehicle driver to just slow down. Excessive speed greatly reduces the drivers ability to control the vehicle on curves or when making evasive steering moves. Driving at a reduced speed will increase the drivers' ability to keep the vehicle under control under a wider range of circumstances.

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Excessive speed increases the likelihood that the weight will shift and cause the vehicle to be uncontrollable.

In addition to excessive speed and shifting weight, another leading cause of vehicle rollover is over steering after dropping off the road surface onto the shoulder of the road. Over steering will cause the vehicle to rollover by causing the weight to severely shift from one side to the other and/or by the vehicle tires gripping the road at an excessive angle once brought back off of the shoulder.

The potential for this type of incident increases as the difference in height between the road surface and the shoulder increases. The greater the difference in height the greater the angle of steering must be applied to overcome the resistance of the road surface against the tires of the vehicle. Once the tires are at a great enough angle to overcome the resistance and return to the driving surface they will either grip and shoot the vehicle in the opposite direction or will buckle and roll. Either way, the results are the same...a wrecked vehicle.

The following safe driving points will increase the emergency vehicle driver's ability to maintain control of their vehicle should he/she run off of the road surface onto the shoulder:

Things to do:

- Take your foot off of the accelerator and allow the vehicle to slow down gradually.
- Do not apply full braking! Use soft application of the brakes, natural deceleration and downshifting to bring the vehicle to a safe speed or complete stop.
- Under soft shoulder conditions feather the accelerator to help maintain control of the vehicle while slowing.
- Once the vehicle has been stopped or been brought down to a safe speed, gently steer the vehicle back onto the road surface using a lower gear and/or feathered acceleration to assist in overcoming the surface drop off or soft shoulder.

Things not to do:

- Do not attempt to steer back onto the road surface at speed or under acceleration.
- Do not make any sudden or drastic steering movements.
- Do not apply full braking.
- Do not attempt to accelerate over the surface drop off.

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ARRIVING AT AN INCIDENT

The unique hazards of driving on or adjacent to the incident scene require the driver to use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to react to the unexpected. Drivers must consider the dangers their moving vehicle poses to emergency personnel and spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency, and may inadvertently step in front of or behind a moving vehicle.

When stopped at the scene of an incident, vehicles should be placed to protect personnel who may be working in the street and warning lights shall be used to make approaching traffic aware of the incident. At night, vehicle mounted floodlights and any other lighting available shall be used to illuminate the scene. All personnel working in or near traffic lanes should wear high visibility vests. If it is not necessary to park vehicles in or near traffic lanes, the vehicle should be pulled off the road to parking lots, curbs, clear areas, etc., whenever possible.

The officer in charge or driver of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance of this procedure.

Larry Behrens

Larry Behrens, Fire Chief

October 6th, 2004

Date