

Chapter 15-1

Standard Operating Guideline for Operating Fire Apparatus

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1. Purpose

This SOG covers the duties of Fire Apparatus Operators (FAOs) for driving or operating apparatus, and for keeping the apparatus ready for service.

2. Scope

This SOG applies to all PVFD drivers or operators, regardless of rank.

3. Introduction

All FAOs must have training in the use of the apparatus in accordance with the PVFD SOP on Apparatus Operator Training. FAOs must always be aware of traffic laws, dept. SOPs, environmental conditions, and any other factors that affect the safe operation of apparatus. FAOs must always use due regard for safety when driving, especially while responding to an incident.

4. Before Apparatus Leaves

Before leaving the station on a run, the driver must know what the incident is, where it is, and what is the best route to get there. As soon as the driver gets in the truck, it may be started and warmed up. The truck shall not move until the officer is in, and all passengers have acknowledged that they are ready to go.

All efforts should be made to have the truck loaded with an adequate number of firefighters, and a balance of experience. If it becomes evident that there will not be at least 3 firefighters on the truck, the driver should wait a reasonable length of time to see if more arrive. This is especially true for all apparatus other than the first out. The preferred crew is 4 or 5 firefighters (total) on each pumper. If there is not an officer available for the run, the driver will either select a competent firefighter to ride as officer, or hold the truck until an officer arrives. Another firefighter shall not countermand the driver's selection without the approval of the driver. All drivers and officers must give consideration to making sure that all needed apparatus have a driver. Therefore, do not load up the first-out truck with several drivers and leave the rest of the fleet abandoned.

5. Responding to Incidents

Once the apparatus is on the road, the driver should concentrate on driving, and leave the siren and radio control to the officer. The officer should confirm that the driver knows where to go and navigate as necessary. The officer should also find the water sources closest to the incident and be prepared to use them as appropriate.

On apparatus equipped with auxiliary braking (Jake Brake on 8431), the system should be used in the low setting on wet roads and turned off when roads are icy or snow covered.

When responding to an emergency incident, fire apparatus shall have all warning equipment in use or have none at all. Code 2 response (red lights only, no siren) is not permitted.

There is no official speed limit for fire apparatus while on an emergency run. However, road and environmental conditions will dictate what speed is safe. Stop signs and red traffic signals must not be disobeyed. Driving must be done in a manner that allows for civilians on the road to maintain their safety. The apparatus driver must always be in control of the truck and drive as such.

6. On-Scene Operations

Each apparatus must be properly placed on the scene based on the nature of the run and the function of the apparatus. Drivers should keep this in mind for all apparatus, not just theirs. On structure fires, pumper drivers must give consideration for the best placement of an aerial truck, and position their pumper accordingly.

The driver should position their truck so that firefighters have a safe area to work without undue risk from other autos. This may mean shutting down the road if necessary. Road closure should be avoided if there is a risk of accidents caused by traffic congestion. If closure is necessary, it should be coordinated with the police. The road may be reopened only after the Incident Commander gives approval. Do not accept such an order only from the police.

While at a fire scene, drivers should minimize apparatus lights that interfere with visibility. General scene lighting should be done as soon as possible. Trucks that are not in use and not needed to provide warning lighting may be shut down, unless it is extremely cold.

Drivers should keep track of all equipment removed from their truck. Before leaving the scene, the driver should make sure all equipment is returned, or accounted for. The driver should also walk around their truck and make sure it is ready to move, checking doors, lights, and ladders as necessary.

7. Backing Apparatus

All trucks that have a rear blind spot require the use of a ground guide while they are being backed up. Before a truck is backed, the driver must be aware of where the truck needs to go. The driver must also have eye contact with the ground guide at the rear of the truck. If the driver loses sight of the ground guide, the driver should immediately stop until the ground guide returns to view.

If a truck must be maneuvered in a tight space, ground guides should be placed to watch each area of the truck. The ground guides should communicate with the driver using hand signals only, unless a collision is imminent. Then the ground guide should yell "STOP" to the driver in addition to giving a hand signal. All other personnel on or near the truck should be quiet during such maneuvers.

8. Returning Apparatus to Service

Before returning to the station, the driver should check if the truck needs fuel. If so, the driver and officer should immediately make arrangements to fill it.

When the truck returns to the station, the driver and crew should clean and service all equipment used. If any equipment is missing, damaged, or does not function, it should be immediately reported to the truck officer and to the Fleet Supervisor. If the crew can repair the equipment, they should do so. If not, take the equipment out of service and note it on the bulletin board. If SCBA are washed, they should be placed back in the truck cab and all doors should be left open for drying. Otherwise, doors should remain closed.

Trucks that are ready for service should be left with the headlights on and all windows rolled up. The truck radio should be on channel 1. Portable radios should be left in their charger, on channel 5.