



Lexington County Fire Service

Standard Operating Guidelines Vehicle Operations Procedures OPS-005

EFFECTIVE: December 1, 2007 **ISSUED BY:** Russell R. Rawl, Fire Service Coordinator

RECINDS: All Previous Policies

SCOPE: All persons who operate Fire Service vehicles.

POLICY:

I. Emergency Response

- A. Lexington County Fire Service 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 en route to an emergency incident.
- B. It is the responsibility of the driver of each Fire Service vehicle to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with the SC Motor Vehicle Code. This code provides specific legal exceptions to regular traffic regulations which apply to the Fire Service vehicles only when responding to an emergency incident or when transporting a patient to a medical facility. Emergency response 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. The officer in charge of a vehicle has the responsibility for the safety of all operations.
- C. When responding in an emergency mode, warning lights must be on, sirens must be sounded, and air horns must be blown intermittently to warn drivers of other vehicles, as required by the SC Motor Vehicle Code.
- D. The use of the sirens and warning lights does not automatically give the right-of-way to the emergency vehicle. This requests the right-of-way from other drivers,

based on their awareness of the emergency vehicle. Emergency vehicle drivers should make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers, and must drive defensively to be prepared for the unexpected, inappropriate actions of other drivers.

- E. All responses by Fire Service vehicles will occur with due regard to life and property. Lexington County Fire Service vehicles are authorized to exceed posted speed limits only when responding to emergencies under favorable conditions, including light traffic, good road conditions, good visibility and dry pavement.

II. ACHIEVING A SAFE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- A. Prompt, safe response shall be attained by:

1. Leaving the station in a standard manner.
 - (a) Quickly mounting apparatus
 - (b) All personnel don full protective clothing, are seated and belted before the vehicle moves. (Exception: The driver shall don protective clothing after setting up the apparatus at the incident.)
 - (c) Station doors fully open
2. Driving defensively and professionally at reasonable speeds.
3. Knowing the destination and how to get there.
4. Using warning devices to move around traffic and to request the right-of-way in a safe and predictable manner.

- B. Quick response shall NOT be attained by:

1. Leaving quarters before the crew is buckled and wearing full protective clothing, or before apparatus doors are fully open.
2. Driving too fast for conditions.
3. Driving recklessly or without regard for safety.
4. Taking unnecessary chances with intersections.
5. Intimidating or scaring other drivers.

III. SEAT BELTS REQUIRED

All Lexington County employees are required to use seat belts at all times when operating a County vehicle. All personnel shall ride only in regular seats provided with

seat belts. Riding on tailboards or other exposed positions is not permitted on any vehicles at any time. (Exception: When repacking large diameter hose following applicable guidelines.)

IV. INTERSECTIONS

- A. Intersections present the greatest potential danger to emergency vehicles. When approaching an intersection with the right-of-way, emergency vehicle drivers shall not exceed the posted speed limit and shall remain alert to the possibility of other vehicles entering the intersection.
- B. When approaching a red light, stop sign or yield sign, if there is any oncoming traffic or if the driver does not have a clear view of all approaching streets, the vehicle shall come to a full stop. The emergency vehicle may proceed only when the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way. If there is any doubt, the emergency vehicle shall come to a full stop and wait until the intersection can be crossed safely.

V. EMERGENCY RESPONSE LIMITED

Emergency response is authorized only in conjunction with emergency incidents. In order to avoid unnecessary emergency response the first arriving company shall establish incident command and remain cognizant of the fact that other units are responding emergent. As soon as possible the Incident Command will advise other responding units to continue responding in an emergency mode, to precede non-emergent to the incident, or to cancel their response. If situations appear not to be of an emergency nature, such as a small fuel spill from a vehicle accident with no threat of fire, or a false alarm reported by an alarm company, response shall be made non-emergent.

VI. PASSING

During an emergency response, fire vehicles shall avoid passing other emergency vehicles. If passing is necessary, arrangement shall be conducted through radio communications and permission granted to pass.

VII. BACKING APPARATUS

Drivers should avoid backing whenever possible. Where backing is unavoidable, guides shall be used. If no spotter is available, the driver shall walk completely around the apparatus before backing. Driver shall sound the horn before backing.

VIII. SIGNALS FOR BACKING

- A. **STRAIGHT BACK:** One hand above the head with the palms toward face, waving back. Other hand at your side. (Left or right optional.)

- B. TURN: Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended. (Driver has option as to which way he turns apparatus and spotter then assists the driver in backing apparatus.)
- C. STOP: Both arms above head with open hands.
- D. NIGHT BACKING: Signals will be the same. The spotter will assure that the spotlights on rear of apparatus are turned on before he allows apparatus to be backed. A flashlight may be carried, but at no time will it be directed toward mirror.
- E. SPOTTER SAFETY
 - 1. The spotter should try to always be in view of the driver's side mirror. (There will be rare exceptions where a spotter will have to use a passenger side.)
 - 2. A helmet will be worn by all spotters in traffic. Once the driver has determined the direction of the turn, the spotter has complete control of the movement of the apparatus. If there is ever any doubt as to the safety of either spotter or apparatus, stop the maneuver until proper adjustments are made.

IX. OPERATING AT THE SCENE OF EMERGENCIES

- A. The unique hazards of driving on or adjacent to the fire ground requires the driver to use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to react to the unexpected. When driving apparatus on the fire ground, drivers must resist the tendency to drive hastily or imprudently, due to the urgent nature of fire ground operations.
- B. Drivers must consider the dangers their moving vehicle poses to fire ground personnel and spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency, and may inadvertently step in front of or behind a moving vehicle. Drivers must also be aware of the potential that exists for vehicle accidents on or near the fire ground due to the distraction caused by the emergency.
- C. 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 shall wear high visibility vests or reflective turn out gear.

X. VEHICLE INCIDENT REPORTING

The purpose of the Vehicle Incident Reporting procedure is to insure accurate claims reporting. However, accident reporting requirements set forth are for administrative review only, and do not supersede SC Law regarding vehicle collision investigation requirements.

The driver of a County vehicle that is involved in an incident or accident (no matter how slight) shall be responsible for reporting the incident/accident to their Supervisor. Vehicle incidents are to be reported immediately. An incident report shall be prepared and filed with the County's Risk Management Division. The Risk Manager will report the incident to the appropriate insurance company (if applicable).

A. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Employees involved in a vehicle accident/incident while on the job shall:

1. Call a Law Enforcement official immediately, and remain on the accident scene (and request that the other party's to the accident – if applicable, also remain on the accident scene) until a Law Enforcement official arrives.
2. Employees should refrain from making statements regarding the incident/accident with anyone but the investigating law enforcement officials, appropriate County officials, and necessary representatives of any involved insurance carrier.
3. When a County vehicle collision results in injury or property damage, the following reports are to be completed and sent to the Risk Management Division of the Personnel Department:
 - (a) The Lexington County Incident Report and/or Supervisor's Report of Injury (completed and sent within 24 hours or the next business day.)
 - (b) The South Carolina Collision Report (FR-10) as completed by the Department of Public Safety and/ Risk Management Division.
 - (c) A Uniform Traffic Collision Report (TR-310).
 - (d) A descriptive statement by the employee involved as to accident circumstances.
 - (e) A Lexington County Report of Injury form (if applicable).
 - (f) Any applicable accident witness statements.
 - (g) Any applicable vehicle damage report estimates.
 - (h) Any other supportive material or information (including photographs) that may have a bearing on the accident.

XI. VEHICLE INSURANCE IDENTIFICATION CARDS

Vehicle insurance identification cards **must** be kept inside each vehicle as required by law. Each vehicle that has a license tag should also have a vehicle registration card. If registration card is missing, please contact Fleet Services at 785-8360.

XII. TOWING OF FIRE SERVICE VEHICLES

Due to the specialized requirements of towing Fire Service vehicles, Fleet Services **must** be notified if any vehicles require towing. Fleet Services will be responsible for coordinating the towing of all Fire Service vehicles.

This should be accomplished by contact County, informing them of the situation and they will in turn contact Fleet Services or the on duty Mechanic.

XIII. DRIVING RECORD POLICY

All employees and volunteers in Fire Service who are required by their position to operate a county vehicle are subject to this policy.

A. Conditionally Hired Employees

A driver history check will be performed for all conditionally hired employees. The following conditions apply:

1. All conditionally hired employees must possess a valid South Carolina Driver's License with no record during the previous five years of a suspended driver's license as a result of driving under the influence of alcoholic beverages or dangerous drugs, driving while impaired (or the equivalent), reckless homicide, involuntary manslaughter, or leaving the scene of the accident.
2. The significance or quantity of moving violations will be considered when determining the best applicant for the job.

B. Employees

A driver history check will be performed for all employees to establish the current driving record. The following conditions apply:

1. For all Fire Service jobs which require the operation of a county vehicle, any employee who does not possess a valid South Carolina Driver's License will be terminated. A provisional license, such as one authorized by the court system in Driving Under the Influence (DUI) cases, is not considered a valid license for the purpose of this policy. For all positions that require a commercial driver's license, employees will be subject to all

applicable local, state and federal requirements which supersede all conditions of this policy.

2. Any employee who has received six (6) or more points against his license in any 12-month period, or ten (10) or more points against his license in any five-year period, will be required to attend the County's Defensive Driving training.
3. Any employee who has been required as a result of this policy to attend more than one Defensive Driving training session in any five-year period will be subject to disciplinary action.
4. All employees must report any moving violations to their supervisor within seven (7) calendar days of being charged with the violation(s).

C. Fire Service Volunteers

A driver history check will be performed for all volunteers in Fire Service to establish the current driving record. The following conditions apply:

1. In order to operate a Fire Service vehicle, volunteers must possess a valid South Carolina Driver's License with no record during the previous five years of a suspended driver's license as a result of driving under the influence of alcoholic beverages or dangerous drugs, driving while impaired (or the equivalent), reckless homicide, involuntary manslaughter, or leaving the scene of the accident. If such a record exists for a volunteer, he may request a review of his driving privileges after five (5) years have passed from the date of license suspension. Any volunteer who does not possess a valid South Carolina Driver's License will have driving privileges suspended until such time as a valid license is obtained. A provisional license, such as one authorized by the court system in Driving Under the Influence (DUI) cases, is not considered a valid license for the purpose of this policy.
2. Any volunteer who has received six (6) or more points against his license in any 12-month period, or ten (10) or more points against his license in any five (5) year period, will be required to attend the County's Defensive Driving training, or a driver training program approved by the County, the cost of which is to be born by the volunteer. An exception can be made by the Fire Service Coordinator to suspend driving privileges in lieu of the driving training course requirement.
3. All volunteers must report any moving violation to the Station Fire Chief within seven (7) calendar days of being charged with the violation(s).

IVX. DRIVERS LICENSE FACTS

- A. To Operate Lexington County Pumpers and Tankers (over 26000#) you must have the following licenses:

Class E

Class F

Class A - endorsement **N** (tanker) or **X** (haz-mat or tanker)
Cannot have **K** restriction (without air brakes)

Class B - endorsement **N** (tanker) or **X** (haz-mat or tanker)
Cannot have **K** restriction (without air brakes)

- B. To operate Lexington County Brush Truck, Service Truck, Pickup and Car (under 26000#) you must have the following license:

Class D or any of the above

- D. To operate only publicly owned vehicles (County, State and Federal) you can obtain a CDL with a P restriction or a Class E. DOT physicals are not required. To receive this license you must show proof that you are a member of the County Fire Service by providing a letter to the Department of Motor Vehicles and signed by station Chief, confirming membership. If you presently have a CDL and you wish to obtain the tanker endorsement you **must** take a written test at The Department of Transportation. DOT physical are not required if you re obtaining this endorsement for CDL with the P restriction.

VX. EMERGENCY VEHICLE AUTHORIZATION FORM

The purpose of this form is to document that any personnel vehicle equipped with Emergency Warning devices meets the requirements for such as outlined by the State of South Carolina and Lexington County.

- A. The Emergency Vehicle Authorization Form must be properly completed and approved for each individual personal vehicle.
- B. Personnel are required to provide documentation that the Insurance Carrier is aware that the personal vehicle is equipped with Emergency Warning devices and will be operated as an Emergency Response vehicle. This documentation must be on the Insurance Carrier's letterhead.
- C. Lighting requirements set by SC Code 56-5-4700:
(1) emergency lighting must be mounted as high as possible
(2) flashing red lights are to be visible at 500 feet in normal daylight in all directions.
- D. Siren requirements set by SC Code 56-5-4970:

- (1) sirens must be capable of emitting sound audible under normal conditions from a distance of not less than 500 feet in all directions.
- E. Vehicle must be operated by authorized Lexington County Fire Service personnel when emergency warning devices are in operation.
- F. Personnel are required to have a minimum of training prior to being approved for personal vehicle authorization. This training includes: Orientation to Lexington County Fire Service, 1152 Course, and Emergency Vehicle Driver's Training.

LEXINGTON COUNTY FIRE SERVICE

EMERGENCY VEHICLE AUTHORIZATION FORM

I have inspected the vehicle described below and found it to meet the following requirements:

Vehicle Description

Make: _____ Model: _____

Year: _____ VIN: _____

Owner: _____ Operator: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

I am providing on company letterhead my acknowledgment that the above vehicle insured by my company is equipped with emergency warning devices and will be used as a personal emergency response vehicle.

Insurance Company: _____

Insurance Agent: _____ (print) _____ (signature)

Insurance Agent Telephone: _____

For Department Use

Firefighter's Name: _____

Station Name/Number: _____

Fire Chief: _____ (signature) Date: _____

Approved by Lexington County Fire Service:

_____ (signature) Date: _____