

JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

Standard Operating Guideline

Apparatus & Vehicle Operations

Purpose:

The purpose of this guideline is to define the responsibilities of personnel operating fire department apparatus and vehicles and identify department expectations towards ensuring safe driving/operating practices. This guideline is written to comply with NFPA 1451 and 1500.

Scope:

The scope of this guideline shall include any personnel operating Jefferson Township Fire Company (JTVFC) apparatus and vehicles and also any personnel riding in that apparatus or vehicle.

Introduction:

The safe operation of an emergency vehicle depends heavily on the ability and experience of the Driver and the added resources and direction of the Officer. All drivers shall maintain control of the vehicle in a manner as to provide the maximum level of safety for both their passengers and the general public. Drivers should be aware that 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 fails to yield the right of way to an emergency vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver cannot force or assume the right of way.

The driver of an emergency vehicle shall be directly responsible for its safe operation. When the driver is under the direct supervision of an officer or acting officer, that officer or acting officer shall also assume responsibility for the actions of the driver.

General Driving Requirements:

Emergency vehicles shall only be operated and driven by authorized department members or authorized maintenance personnel. Drivers shall meet the State of Pennsylvania driver's license requirements along with the Fire Department's driver training requirements outlined below. Any member who has allowed their license to expire, be suspended or revoked shall not drive department apparatus or vehicles and shall immediately report this to the Fire Chief or highest ranking officer in charge. Drivers in training to become apparatus operators shall operate said vehicles only while under the direct supervision of a Line Officer or appointed training officer designated by the Fire Chief. No person shall operate a fire department apparatus or vehicle without supervision until he or she is specifically trained in its operation and in the use of its equipment (generators, pumps, lights, etc.) and has been signed off and approved by the Fire Chief.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. AT NO TIME WILL A DRIVER OPERATE A COMPANY APPARATUS OR VEHICLE WHILE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL AND/OR A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE.
2. The Operator will be a minimum of twenty-one (21) years of age.
3. The Operator shall possess a valid Pennsylvania driver's license.
 - a. Commercial Drivers License (CDL) holders are preferred and will be given priority driving privileges over a non-CDL holder.
4. The Operator shall have successfully completed EVOC and Pump 1.
5. The Operator will agree to have a driver's check performed.

Emergency vs. Non-Emergency Response:

Fire company apparatus and vehicle operations are classified as either "emergency" or "non-emergency." During "non-emergency" operations, emergency vehicles shall comply with all of the traffic laws and rules of the road that apply to all other vehicles. The specific exceptions to traffic laws that apply to emergency vehicles shall only be exercised during authorized emergency response operations.

Emergency response creates an increased risk to firefighters and to other users of the roadways. The increased risk must be balanced against the potential benefits of faster response in situations where lives and/or property are at risk. Emergency response shall be limited to situations where prompt response is likely to reduce the risk of death, serious injury or disability, or preventable damage to property.

When multiple units are responding in emergency mode, the Officer arriving at the scene and assuming Command of the incident shall determine if it is appropriate to downgrade the response of any units that are still enroute. The additional units shall be directed to continue "at reduced speed" or non-emergency when the situation does not urgently require their presence at the scene.

Examples of incident classifications are provided below:

Emergency Alarm Response Classifications:

- Smoke or fire in a building *f*
- Outside fire with exposures
- Carbon monoxide alarm – with indication of person(s) in distress *f*
- Motor vehicle accident with injuries
- Motor vehicle fire
- Brush fires
- Gas leak inside a building *f*
- Hazardous materials release with persons in distress
- Critical medical incident

Non-Emergency Alarm Response Classifications:

- Automatic fire alarm system activation – proper passcode/human report of no smoke or fire *f*
- Residential smoke alarm sounding – no indication of smoke or fire *f*
- Carbon monoxide alarm – with no indication of person(s) in distress *f*
- Smoke in the area – no indication of source *f*
- Electrical wires arcing
- Tree down
- Water leak/pumping detail
- Unknown odor – no symptoms or persons in distress *f*
- Open/illegal burn complaints
- Relieve units at the scene of an incident that is under control
- Standby / Relocation to another department

Smoking:

Smoking is prohibited inside any department apparatus or vehicle.

Headlights:

Vehicle headlights shall be utilized by all department apparatus and vehicles in both emergency and non-emergency driving situations.

Emergency Brakes:

Engine, Rescue and Tanker shall use the parking brake at all times when parked, including in the station. Wheel chocks shall be used, regardless of the grade, in all circumstances except when an apparatus is parked in the station, ready to respond to an alarm. Support vehicles (Car and Brush Truck) are to utilize the parking brake, when appropriate.

Seatbelts:

All persons driving or riding in fire department vehicles shall be seated in approved riding positions with seatbelts fastened at all times when the vehicle is in motion.

The driver shall not begin to move the vehicle until all passengers are seated and properly secured. All passengers shall remain seated and secured as long as the vehicle is in motion. Seatbelts shall not be loosened or released while enroute to dress or don equipment.

Members shall not attempt to mount or dismount from a moving vehicle under any circumstances.

Exterior Vehicle Riding:

No personnel shall ride on the exterior and/or apparatus tailboard except when hose s being reloaded on the apparatus. If the apparatus is moving while hose is being reloaded, it shall be operated at a safe speed. During this operation, a spotter shall be utilized and vehicle speed shall be monitored by the Officer or someone delegated by the officer.

Responding to Alarms:

- All drivers shall respond in a safe and professional manner.
- All drivers of apparatus shall obey all local, county and state traffic laws while responding to and from alarms.
- All members shall wear safety belts responding to and from alarms while riding on apparatus.
- All members shall remain seated until the vehicle has been safely positioned.
- All members responding on any apparatus shall have all required Personal Protective Equipment on or in their possession before getting on apparatus.

Driver Responsibilities:

The Driver's first priority shall be for the safe arrival of the crews to the emergency scene.

The Driver shall not move an emergency vehicle until all personnel are seated and secured with seatbelts and in approved riding positions.

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code, Title 75, Chapter 35, Section 3105, emergency vehicles are authorized to proceed past a red signal indication or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation. The Jefferson Township Fire Company shall further adopt that during an emergency response, drivers shall bring the emergency vehicle to a complete stop, priokr to proceeding, for any of the following:

- Red traffic lights
- Stop signs
- Blind intersections where there is no traffic control (traffic light or stop sign) in any direction
- Prior to entering a controlled intersection (traffic light or stop sign) when traveling in oncoming lanes or on a painted or raised median
- When other intersection or road hazards are present
- When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing red warning lights and/or with deployed stop signal arm (stop sign)
- When encountering activated railroad crossings
- When directed by the company officer or a law enforcement officer
- After stopping at a red light or stop sign account for all lanes of traffic prior to proceeding

During non-emergency travel, drivers shall obey all traffic control signals and traffic laws.

The driver shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles and pedestrians.

Officer Responsibility:

The officer or acting officer riding in the front passenger seat is the ranking officer and provides an additional set of eyes and ears for the driver and shall also be responsible for making certain that the driver operates the vehicle in a safe manner that is consistent with this, and any other appropriate, policies. The officer shall:

- Ensure that all personnel on the vehicle are seated and secured with seat belts and in approved riding positions prior to movement of the emergency vehicle
- Ensure driver is operating the vehicle in a safe and prudent manner during response in accordance with departmental policy and state law
- Issue warnings about road and physical hazards to the driver
- Direct the driver to cease any unsafe driving, such as excess speed or unsafe intersection practices
- Operate the radio, and all audio and visual warning devices as needed during the response
- Assist the driver in determining the safest and most direct route to the emergency scene

Emergency Vehicle Warning Devices:

When responding to an emergency, warning lights and headlights shall be used and the siren shall be sounded as a warning to drivers and pedestrians. Drivers shall have a firm understanding that the use of sirens and warning lights does not legally allow right-of-way to an emergency vehicle, but that these devices simply request the right-of-way from other drivers, based on their awareness of the emergency vehicle presence. Drivers must make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers and they must always drive defensively and be prepared for the unexpected actions of others.

Speed Limit:

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code, Title 75, Chapter 35, Section 3105, emergency vehicles are authorized to exceed posted speed limits when responding to an emergency, so long as the driver does not endanger life or property. The Jefferson Township Fire Company shall further adopt that apparatus and vehicle are only authorized to exceed posted speed limits when responding to an emergency, under favorable conditions. This applies only with light traffic, good roads, good visibility, dry pavement, and no road construction. **The maximum speed limit shall not exceed 10 mph over the posted speed limit.**

Under less than favorable conditions, the posted speed limit shall be the maximum permissible speed.

The posted advisory speed for a curve shall be considered the maximum allowable speed under all conditions, regardless of response condition.

When an emergency vehicle must travel in oncoming traffic lane or on a painted or raised median in the immediate approach to an intersection, they shall slow to a speed that will allow for the complete stop that is required prior to entering the intersection.

When an emergency vehicle must travel in oncoming traffic lane for longer distances than the immediate approach to an intersection, the maximum speed is the posted speed limit.

Intersections:

Intersections present the greatest potential danger to an emergency vehicle. When approaching and crossing a controlled intersection with the right-of-way (green light), drivers shall not exceed the posted speed limit.

When emergency vehicles must use oncoming traffic lanes or a painted or raised median to approach controlled intersections (traffic light or stop sign), they must come to a complete stop before proceeding through the intersection, including occasions when the emergency vehicle has green traffic lights.

When approaching a right-of-way intersection (red light, stop sign), the vehicle shall come to a complete stop and proceed only when the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way.

Emergency Vehicle Pre-emption (EVP) Intersections:

Drivers must be very cautious when approaching an intersection with an EVP device. When approaching an EVP equipped intersection, the apparatus should be given a green traffic light. If the traffic light does not turn green, the Driver should proceed as normal for a red traffic light.

Passing other Vehicles:

During an emergency response, drivers shall avoid passing other responding emergency vehicles unless the driver of the lead vehicle has indicated that the other may pass. A following vehicle may contact a leading vehicle by radio to request permission to pass.

Traffic laws require that private vehicles slow down and pull to the right when they see an emergency vehicle approaching. It shall be the standard practice of the Jefferson Township Fire Company to pass vehicles on the left. The exception to this is only in situations when doing so would create a safety hazard greater than passing on the right (risk vs. benefit). **If it is necessary to pass on the right, the driver shall slow to a speed that allows for a safe and complete stop if necessary.**

Railroad Crossings:

Drivers shall use caution and ensure that it is safe to proceed prior to crossing any railroad tracks. Apparatus shall not drive around crossing gates that have been lowered, or proceed through a crossing with activated signals (non-gated). The only exceptions shall be:

- When it has been confirmed by railroad personnel that the gates or signal are activated due to a malfunction or maintenance
- When there appears to be an obvious malfunction and the company officer has left the vehicle and has visually confirmed the absence of any approaching trains in either direction

School Buses:

Emergency vehicles shall not pass a school bus that has stopped with red lights flashing to load or discharge passengers, unless the bus driver clearly signals that it is safe to pass.

When clearly signaled by the bus driver that it is safe to pass a stopped school bus, the emergency vehicle shall proceed slowly and with extreme caution past the school bus; all members must be vigilant for children while approaching and passing the bus. The vehicle and apparatus drivers must be prepared to stop immediately while approaching, passing, and leaving the area in which the school bus is stopped.

Law Enforcement Direction:

The emergency vehicle shall comply with the directions of a sworn law enforcement officer, including a signal to stop.

Law enforcement officials may also direct the specific positioning, or repositioning, of emergency vehicles on an incident scene to maintain traffic flow, reduce bottlenecks, enhance scene safety, and prevent secondary collisions. Compliance with such direction is generally required of emergency vehicle drivers and their supervisors or chiefs; if a difference of opinion regarding scene safety arises, it should be raised in a cooperative fashion with the ranking law enforcement officer on the scene.

Driving at On-Scene Incident Operations:

The unique hazards of driving on or adjacent to an incident scene requires that drivers use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to react to unexpected actions and circumstances. Drivers must consider the dangers the moving vehicle poses to fireground personnel and to other vehicles on scene. In addition, spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency may inadvertently step in front of or behind a moving or stationary vehicle.

When stopped at the scene of an incident, vehicles shall be placed to protect personnel working in the street and warning lights shall be used to make approaching traffic aware of the incident. Safety cone shall be placed to further ensure the safety of personnel.

At night, vehicle mounted floodlights and any other lighting available shall be used to illuminate the scene.

If it is not necessary to park apparatus or vehicles in or near traffic lanes, they shall be pulled off the road to parking lots, curbs, etc. whenever possible.

Backing:

Before backing a fire department vehicle, the driver shall ensure that the intended path is clear of hazards or obstructions.

One or more spotters shall be employed as guides in all situations. Two spotters should be assigned when backing large or heavy apparatus—one covering each side of the vehicle. When available, a third spotter can be used to monitor traffic.

A spotter is responsible for guiding the driver and ensuring that any potential hazards are avoided. Standard signals shall be used to communicate with the driver during the backing maneuver; hand signals or voice signals transmitted over a portable radio can be employed for this purpose. The spotter shall direct the driver to stop at any time the backing maneuver cannot be completed safely.

The spotter(s) shall be on the ground, to the rear of the vehicle, and shall remain visible to the driver at all times. If the driver loses sight of the spotter(s) at any time, the driver shall immediately stop the vehicle. Portable radios or tethered vehicle-mounted intercom systems are recommended for spotters' safety. At no time are cameras or other safety devices a substitute for a spotter. (NFPA 1500 requires at least one spotter to have contact with the driver.)

If it is essential to back a vehicle with limited rearward visibility and no spotter is available, the driver shall stop, dismount, and visually perform a 360-degree check around the vehicle before backing, with emphasis on the area behind and to both sides. After checking the area, the driver shall back the vehicle at slow speed and with extreme caution, prepared to stop immediately, if necessary.

Signals

Straight Back:

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

Turn:

Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended. (Driver will advise the spotter which way the turn will be made. The spotter then assists the driver in backing apparatus. The driver's intentions must be verbally communicated to the spotter.) f

Stop:

Both arms crossed with hands in fist. Be sure to yell the stop order loud enough that the driver can hear the warning.

*Night Backing Signals will be the same. The spotter will ensure that the spotlights on rear of apparatus are turned on before allowing apparatus to be backed. A flashlight may be carried, but at no time will it be directed toward the mirror.

Wheel Chocks:

Wheel chocks shall be utilized on apparatus as follows:

- Wheel chocks shall be utilized (when so equipped) at all times, regardless of the grade, when the vehicle is parked and not in station
- Wheel chocks shall be set in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendation

While a seating assignment can be designated for the placement and removal of wheel chocks, the task is ultimately the responsibility of the driver.

Vehicle Retarders and Jake Brakes:

Vehicles and apparatus equipped with engine, transmission or driveline retarders or Jake brakes shall operate with the retarder in the "on" or "high" position. Due to the slippery nature of wet, snow or ice covered roads, the retarder or brake is to be placed in the "off" position when encountering these conditions. The retarders or Jake brakes shall be returned to the "on" or "high" position once conditions permit or the vehicle is placed back in service at the station.

Aggressive Driving:

Emergency apparatus and vehicle drivers shall not employ aggressive driving techniques to force other drivers to yield the right-of-way.

Emergency apparatus and vehicles must be operated with due regard for the safety of civilian traffic at all times, and under all circumstances; the elimination of aggressive driving techniques is also critical for protecting the safety of other crew members assigned to the vehicle.

Personal Electronic Devices:

The usage of personal electronic devices including but not limited to cell phones is strictly prohibited by any individual operating any fire department apparatus or vehicle. This includes the usage of Bluetooth or wired/wireless headsets for activities including both not limited to text messaging, email, internet browsing.

Driving Record Review:

The fire department shall obtain and review a copy of the member's motor vehicle record from the state Department of Motor Vehicles prior to allowing an individual to begin driver training. Each authorized driver's Motor Vehicle Record shall be reviewed periodically (at intervals of three years or less, with annual reviews recommended) to ensure that the individual maintains safe driving habits.

An individual who has been charged with an offense that could result in a suspension or revocation of his or her driver's license should notify his or her supervisor or chief within forty-eight (48) hours. The individual may be suspended from driving emergency vehicles pending judgment, depending on the circumstances and existing department policy. Such charges would include:

- Driving while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs
- Negligent homicide or gross negligence
- Aggravated assault with a motor vehicle
- Reckless driving
- Leaving the scene of an accident

Response Guidelines:

Firefighters will respond the first due apparatus, with other responders filling out the additional apparatus response according to the following guidelines. The incident commander, at their discretion, may alter the response guidelines. If at any time, a sufficient crew/approved driver is not available for an apparatus, a support vehicle (Car or Brush Truck) may substituted and respond in its place.

- **Motor Vehicle Accident**
 1. Rescue
 2. Engine
 3. Car
 4. Brush Truck
- **Grass / Woods / Brush Fire**
 1. Brush Truck
 2. Engine
 3. Tanker
 4. Car
- **Structural Incidents**

1. Engine
 2. Tanker
 3. Rescue
 4. Car
- **Medical Emergency / Assist EMS**
 1. Car
 2. Rescue
 3. Brush Truck
 - **Vehicle Fire**
 1. Engine
 2. Tanker
 3. Rescue
 4. Car
 - **Automatic Fire / Smoke Alarm** – proper passcode/human report of no smoke or fire
 1. Car
 2. Engine
 3. Tanker
 4. Rescue
 - **Automatic Fire / Smoke Alarm** – no additional information received
 1. Engine
 2. Tanker
 3. Rescue
 4. Car

First Due Response Guideline Exceptions:

The following shall serve as appropriate exceptions to modify the above outlined first due apparatus/vehicle response guidelines without the approval of the Fire Chief/Incident Command:

1. Approved driver/operator not available
 - a. Mutual Aid Members (Personnel who are members of other fire companies who are responding in accordance with applicable mutual aid agreements), may ride in a fire company apparatus or vehicle, during response operations, as needed. In extreme circumstances, a member who has been certified as an apparatus operator by a mutual aid company may be permitted to operate Jefferson Township Fire Company vehicles, provided a Jefferson Township Fire Company apparatus operator is not available for this purpose.
2. The Command Car may respond prior to a designated first due apparatus if determined by the Fire Chief or Assistant Chief that adequate staffing is available to staff the first due apparatus and allow the Chief Officer to arrive on scene, establish incident command, perform a scene size up and assign appropriate duties to the first using apparatus. The exception of this circumstance shall be limited to a Chief Line Officer.

Driver Log Book:

Each use of company apparatus and vehicles shall be noted in the vehicle driver log book including the following information:

- Date
- Beginning Mileage
- Ending Mileage
- Operator Name
- Purpose of Use
- Equipment Usage
- Whenever fuel is added to a vehicle, the number of gallons added and the total cost of the fill- up shall also be recorded.

Non-Emergency Vehicle Usage:

Fire company apparatus and vehicles may be used for training and familiarization purposes, during non- emergency times, or to transport personnel to approved functions such as parades, funerals, meetings, training, official Fire Department business, or for other activities as authorized by the Fire Chief. If the Fire Chief is seeking approval for such activities, this approval must be granted by the President or Panel of Directors. During these times, only approved drivers, or supervised drivers- in-training may operate a fire company owned vehicle.

During non-emergency vehicle usage, the Fire Chief will designate if the vehicle is to remain in service to respond to alarms or be taken out of service for alarm response. If the vehicle is deemed to be taken out of service, the Lackawanna County Communications Center shall be contacted via telephone to update the Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD) when the vehicle is taken out of service and also when it is deemed back in service and ready to respond on a alarm.

Except in compliance with an emergency response/applicable mutual aid agreement, no fire company vehicle shall travel outside the boundaries of Jefferson Township, without specific approval by the Fire Chief.

Persons are not permitted to use fire company apparatus and vehicles for any personal reasons. This includes use of the command vehicle.

No company apparatus or vehicle shall be parked / stored / relocated to a location other than the firehouse without the prior approval of the Fire Chief, Assistant Chiefs and President. Once approved, notification of the apparatus or vehicle location shall be communicated to the Panel of Directors by the Fire Chief.

This **Apparatus & Vehicle Operations Guideline** was approved, adopted and implemented on Tuesday, October 11, 2016.

Donnie Wallace, *Fire Chief*

Richard G. Sadowski, *President*