

GENERAL ORDER



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
FIRE/EMS DEPARTMENT



G.O. Number: 5-18

Effective Date: February 1, 2002

Section: Health and Safety

Subject: Driving Regulations (Revised)

By Order of the Fire Chief: Ronald D. Blackwell

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to reduce injuries and financial loss by establishing procedures to reduce vehicle accidents. This Order establishes minimum qualifications for drivers, general driving rules, emergency response procedures, and suspension of driving privileges.

II. PROCEDURES

A. Qualifications for Drivers

1. All personnel, as a condition of driving, are required to understand and obey all local, state, and federal laws and regulations as they pertain to driving.
2. All personnel who drive a Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department vehicle shall possess a valid driver's license from their state or jurisdiction of residence classed for the particular type of vehicle to be driven. Personnel shall comply with all requirements established by the issuing state/jurisdiction for the appropriate class of license.
3. All personnel who tiller a Fire/EMS Department vehicle shall possess a valid Class B license from Maryland, or an equivalent from their state or jurisdiction of residence.
4. Personnel shall comply with all requirements established by the Fire/EMS Department for the safe operation of motor vehicles regardless of vehicle ownership and/or insurance coverage.

5. Drivers of all Fire/EMS Department vehicles, non-emergency and emergency response types, must be an employee/member of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department, at least 18 years of age, and meet the minimum training requirements set forth in this Order.
6. All drivers shall successfully complete the following training requirements:
 - a. Departmental approved Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (EVOC).
 - b. At least ten (10) hours or one hundred (100) miles of behind the wheel training (per type of vehicle).

B. General Driving Rules

1. Vehicle drivers shall operate apparatus in such a manner as to not discredit themselves or the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department.
2. There shall be no back/side step riding on any Fire/EMS apparatus.
3. Drivers shall not attempt to drive any Fire/EMS Department vehicle while under the influence of any alcoholic beverage or after taking any medicine, drug, or compound which may impair their senses or interfere with their ability to operate such vehicle.
4. All persons shall be sitting in seats and shall wear seat belts at all times while the vehicle is in motion.
5. Drivers shall not move apparatus without first checking around the entire vehicle to ensure that all personnel are secured (seated/belted).
6. Protective equipment and hearing protection shall be worn in accordance with General Order 5-3 while the vehicle is in motion. Vehicle drivers may dispense with the wearing of full protective gear, but shall have such gear available on the apparatus. A helmet shall be worn by the driver on open cab apparatus.
7. Apparatus shall not be placed in such a position as to endanger either personnel or apparatus. Apparatus taken off the road shall be maneuvered with extreme caution and discretion. Drivers shall carefully check the ground conditions prior to going off road and shall do so only when necessary.

8. Apparatus drivers shall back their vehicles safely and only after the unit officer-in-charge (OIC) has dismounted and proceeded to the rear of the apparatus to provide backing directions. The unit OIC must maintain visual contact with the driver. All other personnel shall remain on the apparatus until directed by the unit OIC to dismount. In the event the driver is alone, he/she should obtain backing assistance. If no assistance is available, the vehicle can be backed exercising extreme caution. Prior to backing, the driver must dismount the vehicle and check around the entire vehicle to ensure that the vehicle can be backed in a safe manner.
9. Apparatus drivers shall place a wheel chock in the proper position immediately after stopping and dismounting from the cab of the vehicle, other than when in quarters. Hand or foot brakes, spring parking brakes, and "PARK" position on automatic transmissions shall not be the sole means for holding vehicles stationary.
10. Vehicles emerging from an alley, driveway, or building shall stop immediately prior to driving onto a sidewalk or roadway, and shall yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and other vehicles to avoid collisions.
11. When a vehicle is to be driven using chains, the maximum speed shall not exceed 30 MPH.
12. Drivers and officers shall not drive, or knowingly permit a vehicle to be driven, which is in such an unsafe condition as to endanger any person or property, or is in violation of any Fire/EMS General Order.
13. The driver of a Fire/EMS Department vehicle that is involved in an accident shall follow the procedures as outlined in General Order 5-2. Fire/EMS vehicle drivers who are involved in accidents shall be subject to drug and alcohol screening, as set forth under the provisions of General Order 5-7, Substance Abuse Policy.
14. Drivers shall use extreme caution when operating apparatus in low overhead areas and narrow spaces. When safe passage of the apparatus is questionable, the driver shall stop and allow the OIC to dismount and guide the driver through such spaces. Should safe passage be questionable through such areas, an alternate route shall be sought.
15. Vehicles shall not park in designated fire lanes and posted no parking or designated handicap areas when on routine non-emergency business, such as preplans, errands, etc.

16. Smoking shall not be permitted by any member while on moving apparatus.

C. Emergency Response

The following provision under this procedure shall not relieve any driver of an emergency vehicle from exercising extreme due caution for the safety of all persons. These provisions will not protect the driver from the consequences of his/her reckless disregard for the safety of others. Drivers shall use prudence when operating any emergency vehicle. Drivers that choose to disregard provisions in this section may be held personally liable for their actions.

1. Emergency vehicle drivers may exceed the posted speed limit under the following conditions:
 - a. When exercising extreme due caution and the safety of all persons and property are not endangered.
 - b. Only when the weather and the time of day permit the driver's visibility to clearly identify and avoid potential hazards within their anticipated path of travel.
2. At night and during inclement weather, the emergency vehicle driver shall not exceed the posted speed limit and speed shall be reduced below the posted speed limit as necessary. In all instances, extreme caution will be observed.
3. Emergency vehicle drivers shall reduce the speed of the vehicle sufficiently at all intersections to negotiate a full stop when the intersection cannot be safely entered. All emergency vehicle drivers shall yield the right-of-way to any vehicle that is already in an intersection and shall not enter an intersection until all oncoming traffic has yielded the right-of-way and the intersection can be negotiated safely. Upon entering the intersection, the vehicle shall be under complete control and driven at such a speed that it can be safely stopped to avoid a collision should another vehicle enter the intersection. Emergency vehicle drivers shall realize the "right-of-way" must be granted by the other driver.
4. The driver shall operate a vehicle under emergency conditions only when audible and visual warning devices are operating, and properly dispatched by Public Safety Communications.

5. Emergency vehicle drivers shall be aware of the running routes of other companies and be alert for other responding apparatus. The right-of-way for two (2) responding pieces of apparatus shall be determined by the following sequences:
 - a. Apparatus having the right-of-way by traffic control devices.
 - b. Apparatus that will be traveling through an intersection without negotiating any turns will have preference over vehicles having to turn.
 - c. Apparatus negotiating a right hand turn at an intersection will have preference over apparatus that must turn left.
 - d. The first vehicle in the intersection shall have the right-of-way.
6. When emergency vehicle drivers that are responding behind another responding emergency vehicle shall use extreme caution. The driver shall reduce the speed of the vehicle and/or regulate the travel distance between the two vehicles to negotiate a full stop and avoid a collision if the vehicle in front stops abruptly. The vehicle driver shall be prepared to negotiate a full stop and avoid a collision if other vehicles pull into his/her path after yielding the right of way to the first vehicle.
7. Emergency vehicle drivers shall not overtake or pass other responding emergency vehicles.
8. Emergency vehicles shall be driven on the right hand side of the center line of roadways except when passing. This also applies when there is a median strip in the center of the road. Drivers shall not travel on the left side of the median strip or center dividing line unless necessary due to congested traffic. At no time shall the vehicle's speed exceed 20 miles per hour.
9. When overtaking and passing motorists, emergency vehicle drivers shall pass on the motorists' left side except when the motorists have stopped at an intersection making a left turn, or when the motorists have pulled to the extreme left of the roadway and indicated by their actions that they are aware of the emergency vehicle's presence. Drivers may then pass on the motorists' right side, but shall exercise extreme caution.

10. Emergency vehicle drivers may travel against traffic on one-way streets and lanes only when the emergency is in that section of that street or lane, not as a means of taking a shorter route. Whenever it is necessary to travel the wrong way on a one-way thoroughfare, they shall reduce the speed of the vehicle to negotiate a full stop to avoid a collision and proceed with extreme caution. At no time during this shall the vehicle's speed exceed 20 miles per hour.
11. The use of audible and visual emergency warning signals shall not be permitted on a moving emergency vehicle while involved in non-emergency activity.
12. Emergency vehicle drivers shall not proceed across a railroad crossing if the warning devices are operating or the gates are lowered unless the OIC dismounts from the vehicle, checks to see that a train is not approaching, crosses the tracks, and signals that it is safe for the vehicle to cross. The OIC shall not re-enter the vehicle until it is completely across the tracks.
13. Emergency vehicle drivers shall stop for all school buses displaying flashing lights, and shall proceed only after the driver of the school bus signals that it is safe to do so and all flashing lights are turned off.
14. When approaching the scene of any emergency, emergency vehicle drivers shall slow down well in advance so as not to endanger personnel and equipment already on the scene as well as citizen spectators. Apparatus shall be parked in accordance with the officer's instructions. Every attempt shall be made to avoid blocking roadways so as not to impede other apparatus.
15. When laying out, the unit OIC shall make verbal and visual contact with the layout crewmember. The officer is responsible for ensuring that the vehicle can safely proceed to the emergency.
16. **Apparatus shall be utilized as a barrier from oncoming traffic whenever possible. When acting as a barrier, apparatus warning lights shall remain on, and at least three (3) fluorescent and retro-reflective warning devices such as traffic cones, illuminated warning devices such as highway flares, or other appropriate warning devices shall be used to warn oncoming traffic of the emergency operations and the hazards to personnel operating at the incident.**

D. Administration

1. The Fire/EMS Department will participate in the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) Driver's License Flag Program to keep track of the driving activity of all career employees and volunteer members. This program notes any positive and negative actions applicable to an individual's driver's license, such as the accumulation of moving violation points, suspended and/or revoked licenses.
2. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) office will maintain a complete record of the driving status of all employees and members by receiving regular activity reports from the Maryland MVA. Drivers residing out-of-state shall present a certified copy of their driving record annually to OSH. The Maryland MVA point system will be used for all violations. Points will be cleared after two (2) years.
3. Administrative Procedure 610, issued by the Chief Administrative Officer, establishes the following point standards:
 - a. Career and volunteer members who have accumulated four (4) points shall receive a letter from OSH advising them of their driving record and be counseled by their career supervisor/volunteer chief. The career supervisor/volunteer chief shall be required to complete a counseling form (Attachment #1) and return it to OSH. The appropriate Lieutenant Colonel, Major, and Volunteer Chief shall also be notified.
 - b. Career and volunteer members who have accumulated six (6) or more points shall receive a letter from OSH advising them of their driving record and shall not be permitted to drive any Fire/EMS Department vehicle until the points return to four (4) or less. The career supervisor/volunteer chief shall be required to complete a counseling form with the employee/member and return it to OSH. Employees/members shall also be required to attend a Driver Improvement Course recognized by the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department. The appropriate Lieutenant Colonel, Major, and Volunteer Chief shall also be notified.

c. Career and volunteer members who have eight (8) or more points, or a suspended/revoked license, shall not be permitted to drive/operate any Fire/EMS Department vehicle. They shall receive a counseling form through their supervisor/volunteer chief and must attend a complete Fire/EMS Department or equivalent Emergency Vehicle Operator's Course (EVOC). The loss of driving privileges may result in additional Departmental action due to the inability of the employee/member to perform his/her job requirements.

Career employees shall be placed on their own leave. After thirty (30) days, if they fail to regain a valid license, career employees are subject to dismissal and volunteer members can be permanently removed from driving operations.

d. If an employee or member fails to notify the Fire/EMS Department about a suspension/revocation, they shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. The appropriate Lieutenant Colonel, Major, and Volunteer Chief shall also be notified.

e. Career employees and volunteer members who have had their license reinstated shall receive a letter from OSH advising them of their reinstated driving license. The appropriate Lieutenant Colonel, Major, and Volunteer Chief shall also be notified.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. All career and volunteer drivers shall be responsible to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons.

B. All career and volunteer members that drive Fire/EMS vehicles shall be required to comply with this General Order.

C. All career and volunteer supervisors are responsible to ensure that all career and volunteer members under their supervision are aware of and comply with the provisions of this General Order.

D. The County Fire Chief, or his designee, shall be responsible for providing authorization to all career and volunteer members to drive vehicles owned/operated/insured or maintained by or under the authority of Prince George's County Government.

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IV. RECISION

This General Order rescinds General Order 81.09, Driving Regulations, effective October 25, 1981; Interim Revisions, effective September 23, 1983; Updated Interim Revision, effective July 12, 1996.

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