



CHEROKEE COUNTY FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES / GUIDELINES

Section - 1100: Apparatus Vehicle Operations

Subj: Emergency Vehicle Response

SOG: 1100.01

Date: June 23, 2008

I. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to inform all personnel of the responsibility associated with the day to day operation of a department emergency vehicle. It shall establish guidelines to be utilized in the decision making process to respond their perspective emergency vehicle during emergency and non-emergency responses as well as identify serious safety issues associated with its operation.

II. **Scope:** This SOP applies to all drivers of Cherokee County Fire-Emergency Services emergency response vehicles.

III. **Implementation Procedures:**

- A. It is the responsibility of all Cherokee County Fire-Emergency Services personnel to read and become familiar with this policy when it goes into effect and is posted on the Fire-Emergency Services Bulletin Board of the Cherokee County Fire-Emergency Services e-mail system. If there are any questions related to this policy, personnel should contact their supervisor, in writing or via e-mail, to request clarification or training.
- B. It is the Operations Chief's responsibility to see that personnel receive any necessary training.
- C. It is the Operations Chief's responsibility to see that this policy is added to the SOP section of the Fire-Emergency Services Bulletin Board and that any old policies relating to this topic are removed. If personnel become aware of contradicting policies as it relates to this SOP, they should notify their supervisor, in writing or via e-mail. The supervisor will carry the concerns to the proper authority that will review the policies and make any necessary changes to the appropriate policies.
- D. A hard copy of this policy shall be available for all employees to read at Headquarters.

IV. Policy

A. Initial Response

1. During the initial response of apparatus, there shall be two identified modes of response which are the “emergency mode” and “non-emergency mode”. This section shall serve as guidelines for the “mode” of the response vehicle during the initial response and after arrival of the “first due” apparatus.

2. Structure Fires - Unconfirmed

a. Upon the initial dispatch of an “unconfirmed” structure fire, the “mode” of response will be modified to a partial assignment responding in the “emergency” mode. This will be referred to as the “modified response”. This modification will be based upon the information received from the dispatch center. Some examples that will modify the response mode are:

- Smoke in the oven
- Smoke Odor
- Hot Outlets
- Smoke Investigation
- No visible signs of fire

b. The following is the “modified response” until the arrival of the first apparatus “on scene”.

1st Due Engine	Emergency
2 nd Due Engine	Emergency
1 st Due Batt Chief	Emergency
1 st Due Squad	Emergency
1 st Due Ladder	Non-Emergency
3 rd Due Engine	Non-Emergency
T-21	Non-Emergency
Air-8	Non-Emergency
Med-Con	Non-Emergency
Any/All Others	Non-Emergency

c. The first due Battalion Chief and Company Officers retain the authority to make the decision to change the response mode at any time based on updated information that would give indication that there is a “working fire”. A common sense approach to reduce the number of vehicles responding “emergency,” when it actually appears it is not necessary is the overall goal. This action is only a “pro-active” approach to reduce the risk of injuries to responding personnel and citizens of the community.

- d. If there are signs of fire upon the arrival and report of the first apparatus, the full “structure fire” assignment shall “upgrade” to the “emergency” response mode. The incident commander should also give direction to upgrade the response.

3. **Structure Fires – Confirmed/Fire Conditions Present**

- a. Upon the initial dispatch of a “confirmed” structure fire where fire, smoke, flames visible etc. is reported, the full “structure fire” assignment is authorized to respond in the “emergency mode”.
- b. If the first arriving apparatus report any signs of “fire” conditions, all responding personnel and apparatus are authorized to continue in the “emergency mode” unless directed otherwise by the Incident Commander.
- c. If there are “no signs” of fire upon the arrival and report of the first arriving apparatus, appropriate responding apparatus and personnel shall “downgrade” to the “modified response” and designated apparatus shall reduce to the “non emergency” mode until additional information is received from on-scene personnel.

4. **All Other Incidents**

- a. Unless otherwise directed by the dispatch center, it shall be acknowledged that apparatus and personnel initially dispatched to an emergency shall be authorized to respond in the “emergency mode”. It is again emphasized that the Battalion Chiefs and Company Officers retain the authority to change the response mode at any time dependent upon all available information. All Officers and Supervisory personnel are directed to continuously monitor and use good judgment to reduce the number of vehicles responding in the “emergency mode” when it appears it is not necessary.
- b. Typically, emergency incidents where immediate and imminent actions by Cherokee Fire personnel may be required are:
 - * Prevent, reduce or stabilize injuries to people
 - * Increase chances of human survival
 - * Reduce or stop loss of personal property from fire, natural or man made disasters.
 - * Reduce or stop environmental damage.
 - * Examples: Emergency Medical Requests; motor vehicle accidents; structure fires; hazardous materials releases; vehicle fires and brush fires.
 - * Any other incident identified by the officer in charge.

- c. Typical incidents where Cherokee County Fire personnel will routinely respond “non-emergency” are:
- Staging, including bomb threats, suicide threats/attempts, welfare checks, etc.
 - Investigations
 - Calls for service not otherwise covered in this policy
 - Patient assists without complaint of injury or illness
 - Posting assignments
 - Any other incident identified by the officer in charge

B. Apparatus Reporting En-Route

1. This section shall establish guidelines for personnel reporting that their apparatus is responding to a dispatched incident. There are numerous apparatus and personnel that may be available to respond to various incidents throughout the county. Many times, units of less importance are using “radio time” that should be utilized by “first in” apparatus. This is of primary importance for the Officer in Charge to know that first-in apparatus and personnel are “en-route”. Therefore, the following guidelines are established.

a. Structure Fire Assignment

Upon the dispatch of a “structure fire” assignment, each “first due” apparatus and responding personnel should “report by radio in the following order”:

- First Due Engine
- Second Due Engine
- Third Due Engine
- First Due Squad
- T-21
- Battalion Chief
- First Due Ladder
- Volunteer Firefighter Personnel
- All Other Support Units

- b. Upon alert and notification of the alarm, all “first due” units should monitor as each unit goes “en-route” and report their apparatus in “proper order” as indicated above. Each apparatus or unit should allow only a few moments for the other apparatus to report they are en-route in the proper order. It is the goal to allow no more that 10-15 seconds for an apparatus to report in their designated order. After the time has lapsed, the order should continue with the next apparatus.

- c. Support apparatus and personnel that are not designated part of the “first alarm” structure fire assignment should not report their response until all staffed first assignment apparatus have responded. A first alarm assignment includes:
- First Due Engine
 - Second Due Engine
 - Third Due Engine
 - First Due Ladder
 - One Squad
 - T-21
 - One Battalion Chief
 - Air-8
 - Med-Con
 - Duty Field Training/Safety Officer

V. SCENE PROCEDURES

A. Approaching and Parking At An Incident

1. The unique hazards of driving on or adjacent to the fireground requires the driver to use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to react to the unexpected.
2. Drivers must consider the dangers their moving vehicle poses to fireground personnel and spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency, and may inadvertently step in front of or behind a positioned vehicle.
3. Drivers must consider the protection of personnel and apparatus while parked at an emergency and place the apparatus with the thought of how to abandon the incident should imminent danger present itself.
4. When stopped at the scene of an incident, vehicles should be placed to protect personnel working in the street. Additionally, warning lights shall be used to alert approaching traffic of the incident. At night, vehicle mounted floodlights and any other lighting available shall be used to illuminate the scene.
5. When multiple apparatus are dispatched to an incident, all apparatus should be positioned or placed on the same side of the roadway. Driver/operators should be conscious to allow an access lane up to the scene for squads, ladders, Battalion Chief Etc. This shall apply to volunteer firefighter personnel and additional support personnel not assigned to the initial alarm assignment.
6. When utilizing mounted floodlights on scene at night, light should be projected in a “downward” direction illuminating the scene in attempt to prevent “blinding” approaching apparatus or civilian vehicles
7. On-scene apparatus “headlamps” should be set in the “dim” selection to prevent blinding approaching vehicles.

8. The front and back of the rear wheels of Engines, Ladder Trucks, and Service Trucks will be chocked when the vehicle is parked. Vehicles chocks will be tied together.
9. All personnel working in or near traffic lanes shall 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, etc., whenever possible. If it necessary to position the apparatus in traffic lanes, the apparatus will be parked in a manner to shield emergency personnel from oncoming traffic. All other incoming apparatus should position their apparatus as described in paragraph 5 above.
10. The officer in charge and/or driver of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance with this standard.
11. Heavy apparatus such as Engines, Ladders, and Tenders etc. shall not be taken completely off of an improved roadway or parking area. Most all of these apparatus are in excess of 30,000 lbs. Wet dirt/grass surfaces will not support the weight of these apparatus and shall not be parked or driven upon. Additionally, these apparatus are not authorized to cross “dirt/grass” medians of divided highways. Drivers should always be conscious of the “ground clearance” of their apparatus and prevent avoidable damage to the vehicle.
12. Heavy apparatus such as engines, ladders, tenders, etc. can damage/destroy concrete or asphalt driveways of most residences. Driver operators of heavy apparatus should not drive upon these driveways. The only exception will be incidents of fire where it is necessary for fire extinguishment. All other incidents such as EMS calls etc, drivers of heavy vehicles should park in the roadway where practical.
13. All personnel are to help coordinate and cooperate with local law enforcement officials to deal with traffic issues related to parked fire apparatus blocking roadways. As soon as the emergency is relieved, the Incident Commander should communicate with law enforcement and coordinate clearing roadways of fire apparatus as soon as practical.

B. Backing

1. Drivers should avoid backing said apparatus whenever possible: When backing is unavoidable, spotters (personnel positioned on the ground to assist the driver in maneuvering the apparatus safely) shall be used. If no spotter is available, the driver shall properly “stop” and park the apparatus, dismount and walk completely around apparatus to determine if obstructions are present before backing. When possible, spotters should cover all four corners of the vehicle when backing. A single “spotter” shall be positioned at the rear “driver’s side” (left rear corner) of the apparatus. Drivers and spotters should confirm the backing and agreed procedures verbally prior to beginning the maneuver.

WARNING: WHEN SPOTTERS ARE BEING UTILIZED, THEY MUST BE VISIBLE TO THE DRIVER AT ALL TIMES DURING BACKING/REVERSE MOTION. A SINGLE SPOTTER WILL BE POSITIONED AT THE REAR DRIVERS SIDE OF THE TRUCK, VISIBLE TO THE DRIVER BEFORE THE BACKING BEGINS. IF THE SPOTTER IS NOT VISIBLE, THE DRIVER “WILL NOT BACK THE TRUCK”! THE TRUCK “WILL” REMAIN MOTIONLESS UNTIL THE SPOTTER IS LOCATED. NO EXCEPTIONS!

2. The following points shall be followed when backing:

- A. The “driver’s” window will be down. If multiple spotters are utilized, all windows in the cab should be down.
- B. All emergency lights shall be activated if backing from a roadway or in public areas.
- C. If the driver loses sight of any spotter, the apparatus shall be stopped.
- D. Riding on the tailboard of apparatus while backing is “strictly prohibited”! The only exception is during hose loading operations where a spotter/safety is provided. NO OTHER EXCEPTIONS! At all times, the spotter must be on the ground a safe distance away from the apparatus and visible to the driver. The driver must remain focused on the spotter and be prepared to make immediate stops when signaled.
- E. Driver shall be responsible for safe backing operation.

C. Backing Hand Signals

1. **STRAIGHT BACK**

The spotter shall position one hand above the head w/palm towards the spotters face, waving back. The other hand shall be put at spotter’s side.

2. **TURN**

The spotter shall position both arms pointing direction of turn with index fingers pointed.

3. **STOP**

The spotter shall position both arms crossed, fists clenched.

D. Night Backing Hand Signals

- 1. If available “load lamps” located at rear of apparatus shall be activated to enhance visibility of the “spotter”.

2. The spotter shall wear a “reflective vest” while backing apparatus during hours of darkness.
3. The spotter shall use a “handlight” using motion similar to the hand signals described in Section-C. They are as follows:
 - a. **Straight Back**
The spotter should direct the handlight toward the front of the apparatus and use a “bottom to top” or “feet to head” continuous motion visible to the driver. Avoid light contact with driver’s mirror. Verbal commands should also be given to the driver.
 - b. **Turn**
The spotter should hold and point the arm on the side the turn needs to go. If the truck needs to go right, the right arm should point right. The hand light should be held in the opposite hand and directed at the front of the truck using “left to right” motion with the light. Avoid light contact with driver’s mirror. Verbal commands should also be given to the driver.
 - c. **STOP**
With one hand, the spotter should hold and direct the handlight directly into the “driver’s side” mirror and “hold it steady” to give a “blind effect.” The spotter should hold up his opposite arm with palm forward to indicate “stop the vehicle. A STEADY-STILL LIGHT AIMED AT THE DRIVER GIVES IMMEDIATE INDICATION TO STOP THE APPARATUS. Verbal commands should also be given to the driver.

WARNING: THE SPOTTER MUST BE VISIBLE AT ALL TIMES DURING ANY “FORWARD” OR “BACKING” MOTION OF THE APPARATUS DURING HOURS OF DARKNESS. IF THE SPOTTER IS NOT VISIBLE, THE TRUCK IS TO REMAIN STOPPED/MOTIONLESS.

4. When there are personnel available to be a spotter, no Cherokee County Fire & Emergency Services apparatus is to be backed ‘without the spotter’ which includes “squads”. Engine personnel on the scene with “squads” shall be responsible for providing a spotter for squads when they are patient loaded and backing the squad is required to leave the scene.
5. Cherokee County vehicles with 360-degree view of their surroundings from the driver’s position are the only authorized exceptions to this standard. (I.e. Staff vehicles, Chief Car, etc.)
6. The officer in charge and/or driver of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance with this standard.

E. Hose Loading

1. Hose loading operations shall be permitted to be performed on moving fire apparatus only when ALL of the following conditions are complied with:

- a. There shall be a member, other than those loading hose, assigned as a spotter/safety observer. This observer shall have an unobstructed view of the hose loading operation and be in visual and voice contact with the apparatus operator at all times. ALL apparatus windows shall be rolled down.
 - b. If hose loading operations is at night, the spotter shall be required to wear a reflective vest, visible to the driver.
 - c. Non-Fire Department vehicular traffic shall be excluded from the area or under the control of authorized traffic control personnel.
 - d. Members actively loading hose shall be permitted to be in the hose bed, but shall not stand while the apparatus is in motion.
 - e. Members in the hose bed “shall” wear their issued PPE “helmet” while loading hose.
 - f. The apparatus shall not be driven over 5 M.P.H.
 - g. The apparatus shall not be moved, forward or reverse, to load hose if a spotter is not visible to the driver! This is a serious safety concern for all personnel assisting with loading hose.
2. The officer in charge and/or driver of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance with this standard.

WARNING: THE BACKING OF AN APPARATUS WITHOUT A VISIBLE SPOTTER/SAFETY OBSERVER WHILE LOADING HOSE IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED! IF AT ANYTIME THE DRIVER LOSES VISIBILITY OF THE SPOTTER, THE APPARATUS IS TO COME TO A COMPLETE STOP! THE APPARATUS IS TO REMAIN STOPPED UNTIL THE SPOTTER IS IN PLACE. VIOLATION OF THIS PROCEDURE SHALL BE CONSIDERED A “SERIOUS” SAFETY VIOLATION WHICH MAY RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST THE DRIVER.

VI Vehicle Response

1. Intersections present the greatest potential danger to emergency vehicles. Drivers MUST be prepared for the unexpected actions of other drivers and pedestrians
2. When approaching an intersection, the emergency vehicle operator or Company Officer shall select or change the tone of the electronic siren to the “yelp” or warble” mode until at least the apparatus has cleared the intersection. It is desirable for the Company Officer to control siren operations so that the driver can concentrate on maintaining safe control of the moving apparatus. This includes the control of the electronic and mechanical sirens.

3. The apparatus should keep a distance of at least 100 feet between their apparatus and any other emergency vehicle that may be approaching the intersection.
4. When approaching and crossing an intersection with the right-of-way, drivers shall not exceed the posted speed limit and shall move their foot from the accelerator and cover the brake pedal and proceed cautiously.
5. When emergency vehicles must use center or oncoming traffic lanes 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.
6. When approaching a negative right-of-way intersection (red light, stop sign) the vehicle shall come to a complete stop and may proceed only when the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way. The driver must ensure “due regard” for the safety of others when negotiating “negative right-of-way” intersections.
7. The Emergency Vehicle Driver/Operator SHALL bring the vehicle to a complete stop for any of the following:
 - a. When directed by a law enforcement officer.
 - b. Red traffic lights
 - c. Stop Signs
 - d. Negative right-of-way intersections
 - e. Blind intersections
 - f. Anytime the driver cannot account for all lanes of traffic in an intersection.
 - g. When other intersection hazards are present.
 - h. When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing warning lights.
 - i. When encountering an unguarded railroad crossing.
8. Use of cellular phones/devices while driving/operating emergency apparatus is prohibited. Exception shall be granted, as necessary, to drivers of vehicles with 360 degree visibility such as administration personnel and Battalion Chiefs vehicles only.
9. The officer in charge and/or driver of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance with this standard.

A. Maximum Speed Limit

1. Fire department vehicles are authorized to exceed posted speed limits **only** when responding “Emergency” under favorable conditions. This applies **only** with light traffic, good roads, good visibility, and dry roadways. Under favorable conditions, as a general rule, emergency vehicles should not exceed 10 mph over the posted speed limit.

2. Under less than favorable conditions, the posted speed limit is the absolute maximum permissible. Dependent on roadway conditions and inclement weather, it may require vehicle speed to be less than the posted speed limit. Drivers are to use good judgment, extreme caution and reduced speed on wet or compromised roadways.
3. The officer in charge and/ or driver of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance with this standard.

B. Passing

1. During an emergency response, fire-ems emergency vehicles shall not pass other emergency vehicles. If passing becomes necessary, authorization/coordination must be obtained through radio communications between each of the responding vehicles. If unsafe conditions are present, passing another emergency vehicle shall be prohibited.
2. Volunteer firefighter personnel are prohibited from passing emergency vehicles.
3. The officer in charge and/or driver of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance with this standard.
3. Emergency apparatus shall not “pass” a stopped school bus until it is determined safe to proceed. Listed below are the guidelines for passing a stopped school bus.
 - a. Rear Approach – The driver of an emergency vehicle that approaches a stopped school bus from the “rear” shall immediately reduce their speed to a “crawl” and prepare to stop behind the school bus. When it is determined that it is safe and clear to enter the “on-coming” lane or additional lane of travel in the same direction, the driver shall proceed slowly to a position near the drivers seat of the school bus and come to a “complete stop”. The driver of the school bus must be visible to the driver of the emergency apparatus. The emergency apparatus shall remain stopped until he receives a signal from the school bus driver that it is safe to proceed slow and safely past the school bus.
 - b. Front Approach – The driver of an emergency vehicle that approaches a stopped school bus from the “front” shall immediately reduce their speed to a “crawl” and prepare to stop. The emergency apparatus shall come to a “complete stop” a distance not less than approximately 50 feet. The driver of the school bus must be visible to the driver of the emergency apparatus. The emergency apparatus shall remain stopped until he receives a signal from the school bus driver that it is safe to proceed past the school bus.
 - c. It shall the responsibility of all personnel on board the emergency apparatus to assist the driver with close observation of the immediate area. All personnel on board are directed to help constantly scan as much of the immediate area as possible until the apparatus has cleared location.

WARNING: IT SHALL BE THE POSITION OF CHEROKEE FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES THAT APPROACHING A “STOPPED” SCHOOL BUS ON THE ROADWAY IS AN INDICATION THAT IT HAS UNLOADED CHILDREN. CONSIDERATION SHALL BE GIVEN TO THE FACT THAT THERE ARE “CHILDREN” IN THE AREA AND EMERGENCY VEHICLES ATTRACT THE ATTENTION AND CURIOSITY OF A CHILD. DRIVERS ARE TO USE EXTREME CAUTION AND PROCEED SLOWLY IN THIS IMMEDIATE AREA AND BE PREPARED TO MAKE A SUDDEN STOP FOR A CHILD THAT MAY STEP INTO THE ROADWAY.

C. Response

1. During Non-Emergency travel, the driver/ operator shall obey all traffic control signs and signals.
2. Emergency response is authorized only when responding to an emergency or responding to a medical facility from the scene of an emergency.
3. Emergency response does not absolve the driver of his/her responsibility to drive with” due regard for the safety of others”.
4. The driver of the emergency vehicle is responsible for its safe operation at all times.
5. When responding “Emergency,” warning lights and sirens must be activated to warn drivers of other vehicles, as required by the Georgia Motor Vehicle Code 40-6-6.
6. 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.
7. Emergency vehicle drivers shall make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers, and will drive defensively to be prepared for the unexpected or inappropriate actions of others.
8. Cherokee County Fire- Emergency Service Department vehicles shall be operated in a manner that provides for the safety of all persons and property. *Safe arrival always has priority over unnecessary speed en route to an emergency incident.*
9. Volunteer firefighter personnel operating their personal owned vehicles while responding to an incident shall operate that vehicle in a manner that provides for the safety of all persons and property. *Safe arrival always has priority over unnecessary speed en route to an emergency incident.*

10. Drivers SHALL NOT move a fire department vehicle until they:

- a. Complete a 360-degree “Walk Around” of the apparatus before mounting to ensure all compartment doors and externally mounted equipment are secure.

WARNING: Driver/operators who fail to comply with section 9a above which results in damage to the vehicle or other property shall be subject to adverse disciplinary action.

- b. Ensure all personnel on board are seated and properly secured in their seat belts.
- c. Apparatus bay doors are fully open and not moving.
- d. Know the safest route to the emergency.

10. A Timely Safe Response SHALL NOT be achieved by:

- a. Leaving the station before crews are properly seated and belted
- b. Driving too fast for conditions.
- c. Driving recklessly.
- d. Taking chances at intersections.
- e. Intimidating other motorists.
- f. Failing to use accepted defensive driving practices and principles.
- g. Rushing to “beat” other apparatus to be first due.

D. Seat Belt Use

1. An ejection of personnel during an apparatus accident is a national concern of the fire service. For this very reason, seat belt use is required for ALL personnel on board apparatus.
2. Anyone riding as a passenger/attendant in a County vehicle is also required to use seat belts; i.e., ambulance, engine, ladder, utility service van, staff vehicle, etc.
3. The Company Officer/Driver of the vehicle will confirm that all personnel and riders are on-board, properly attired, with seat belts on, before the vehicle is permitted to move.

4. All personnel shall ride “only” in regular seats provided with seat belts. Riding on the outside of Cherokee County Fire- Emergency Services vehicles is prohibited. This includes going to, coming from, and participating in parades, funerals, or public relations/education events. Firefighters will not ride on the outside of the apparatus in order to fight wild land fires.
5. Personnel performing necessary emergency medical care while the vehicle is in motion should be secured to the vehicle by a seat belt, or by a safety harness designed for occupant restraint where provided or available. Patient care must take precedence whenever necessary. Use all due caution to ensure that the patient and the patient caregiver are as safe as possible.
6. *See Hose Loading
7. The Operations Chief must approve special events that may require a passenger to be unrestrained.