



VALENCIA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS STANDARDS

Effective Date: 08/01/2017

Article 1.7

Revised Date:

DRIVING (X) POLICY () GUIDELINE () DIRECTIVE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Operational Guideline is to establish a standard to ensure the safety of all VCFD emergency response personnel and the public to adhere to when responding to and returning from emergency incidents.

POLICY

All members of VCFD need to meet the following requirements in order to drive and operate any department vehicles.

1. Driver/Operator must have a valid New Mexico Driver's License.
2. If driving a vehicle that weights over 26,001 Pounds they must have a Class A, B or E License.
3. Driver/Operator must have taken the IFSAC Emergency Driver Operator, CEVO 3, or VFIS courses and have taken a refresher course every 2 years.
4. Driver/Operator must have been signed off by the department/district before operating the different types of vehicles that VCFD has.
5. Driver/Operator must be 18 years old.

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of drivers of all VCFD vehicles and apparatus to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with the New Mexico Motor Vehicle Code. This code provides specific legal exceptions to regular traffic regulations, which apply to fire department vehicles **only when responding to an emergency incident. Emergency response (Code 3) does not absolve the driver of any responsibility to drive with due regard for the safety of others. The driver of the emergency vehicle is responsible for its safe operation at all times.**

The decision to respond non-emergent (Code-1) or emergent (Code-3) shall be left to the discretion of the company officer or senior firefighter. This decision will be made using the information such as but is not limited to the time of call, type of call, specific information given by dispatch or other caller, condition of victim(s), weather conditions etc.

When responding Code 3, warning lights must be on and sirens must be sounded to warn drivers of other vehicles, as required by the New Mexico Motor Vehicle Code.



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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. Emergency vehicle drivers must make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers, and must drive defensively to be prepared for the unexpected inappropriate actions of others.

VCFD vehicles and apparatus are authorized to exceed posted speed limit by 10 miles per hour only when responding Code 3 under favorable conditions. This applies only when traffic conditions allow, good roads, good visibility and dry pavement. Water tenders can be downgraded at Code 1 per IC/Water Ops.

Emergency vehicles and apparatus should avoid traveling in oncoming traffic lanes unless it is necessary at a speed not to exceed 5 mph.

Intersections

Intersections present the greatest potential danger to emergency vehicles. When approaching and crossing an intersection with the right-of-way (green light), drivers shall reduce speed and enter the intersection with extreme caution.

When approaching a negative right-of-way intersection (red light, stop sign) the vehicle may proceed **only** when the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way. When approaching a blocked intersection, shutoff all emergency warning equipment and wait for the light to turn green. Once the intersection has been cleared, then the emergency warning equipment can be reactivated. DO NOT push traffic through a red intersection.

School Zone

All VCFD vehicles and apparatus will shut down emergency equipment and proceed through school zones at the posted speed limit when school zone warning lights are activated.

Backing

Drivers shall avoid backing whenever possible: Where backing is unavoidable, spotters shall be used. If no spotter is available, the driver shall dismount and walk completely around apparatus to determine if obstructions are present before backing.



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Seat Belts

All VCFD members are required to use seat belts at all times when operating a VCFD vehicle or apparatus. All vehicle and apparatus drivers will confirm that all personnel and riders are on-board, properly attired, with seat belts on, before the vehicle is permitted to move. All personnel shall ride only in regular seats provided with seat belts. Riding on tailboards or other exposed positions is not permitted on any vehicle at any time.

Passing

During an emergency response, VCFD vehicles and apparatus should avoid passing other emergency vehicles. If passing is necessary, permission must be obtained through radio communications.

Fire Grounds

The unique hazard 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. 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.

Accident Scenes

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, the vehicle headlights should be turned off and vehicle mounted floodlights and any other scene lighting available shall be used to illuminate the scene (See Apparatus Parking and Safe Parking at Vehicle Accidents).

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.

The officer in charge or driver of the vehicle or apparatus is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance of this procedure.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE POLICY

VCFD vehicles and apparatus 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.



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Prompt, Safe Response Shall be attained by:

1. Leaving the station in a standard manner:

- Quickly mounting apparatus
- All personnel on board, seated and belts on
- Station doors fully open before pulling out

2. Driving defensively and professionally at safe speeds.

3. Knowing where you are going.

4. Using warning devices to move around traffic and to request the right-of-way in a safe and predictable manner.

FAST RESPONSE SHALL NOT BE ATTAINED BY:

1. Leaving quarters before crew has mounted safely and before apparatus doors are fully opened.
2. Driving too fast for conditions.
3. Driving in oncoming traffic lanes.
4. Driving recklessly or without regard for safety.
5. Taking unnecessary chances with negative right-of-way intersections.
6. Intimidating or scaring other drivers.
7. Code 3 responses through school zones

EMERGENCY RESPONSE CRITERIA

1. Maximum 10 mph over posted speed limit only when traffic conditions allow, good roads, good visibility and dry pavement.
2. When traveling in center traffic lanes, 20 mph maximum.
3. Reduce speed when entering intersections with green light.
4. Shutdown emergency equipment when approaching a blocked intersection.
5. Respond Code 1 on I-25 when traffic is flowing normally (75 mph) and on current patient condition.