

MOUNTAIN BROOK FIRE DEPARTMENT	
POLICY NO. <u>105.03</u>	VOLUME: <u>I</u>
SUBJECT: <u>Driver Safety</u>	
SIGNED: <u>ROBERT W. EZEKIEL, FIRE CHIEF</u>	<u>3/12/2007</u> DATE

SCOPE AND PURPOSE:

The need for the safe operation of fire department vehicles cannot be overstated. The lives of each member of the department riding on the apparatus as well as the lively hood of family members is at risk every time a vehicle responds to an emergency (firefighter injury and death statistics attest to this fact yearly). Additionally, the lives of the general public is at risk during these responses.

Fire department Apparatus Operators shoulder a great responsibility in responding to emergencies. A sense of urgency to get to the scene quickly to make a difference must be balanced against the risks associated with responding in sometimes less than favorable conditions.

In an effort to give guidance to those personnel that do shoulder the driver responsibility and to give a common understanding to what is essentially common sense in written form, the following guidelines are adopted by the Mountain Brook Fire Department.

POLICY:

It is the responsibility of the driver of each Fire Department vehicle to drive with due regard. Due regard means that a reasonable and careful person in similar circumstances would act in a manner that is safe and considerate to others.

Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with the Alabama 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 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.

Whenever a unit is on the road, night or day, the headlights should be on. This increases the visibility of the unit to other drivers. When making an emergency response, warning lights must be on and sirens must be sounded to warn drivers of other vehicles as required by the Alabama Motor Vehicle Code (when there is no traffic such as is the case in the early morning hours, warning lights without siren is acceptable).

MOUNTAIN BROOK FIRE DEPARTMENT

POLICY NO. 105.03

VOLUME: I

PAGE: 2

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.

Fire Department vehicles are authorized to exceed posted speed limits, as long as life and property are not endangered, only when making an emergency response under favorable conditions. This applies only with light traffic, good roads, good visibility and dry pavement. Under these conditions a maximum of 10 mph over the posted speed limit is authorized.

Under less than favorable conditions (weather, traffic, road), the posted speed limit is the absolute maximum permissible.

When traction enhancement devices are used during snow and icy conditions the maximum speed permissible shall be 25 mph for any emergency vehicle.

Emergency vehicles using center and oncoming traffic lanes to maneuver around other vehicles during an emergency response face an increased opportunity for accidents; therefore, drivers should have a heightened awareness for driving defensively and should not exceed the posted speed limit.

Intersections present the greatest potential danger to emergency vehicles. When approaching and crossing a four-way intersection with the right-of-way, drivers shall not exceed the posted speed limit.

When emergency vehicles must use center or oncoming traffic lanes to approach controlled intersections (traffic light or stop sign), they should use due regard and account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way, before proceeding through the intersection (when the emergency vehicle has green traffic lights).

When approaching a negative right-of-way intersection (red light, stop sign) during an emergency response, the driver of the emergency vehicle must use due regard and account for all pedestrians and oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way before proceeding through the intersection. This may include action up to and including coming to a complete stop before slowly proceeding.

Emergency response is authorized only in conjunction with emergency incidents. Unnecessary emergency response shall be avoided. In order to avoid any unnecessary emergency response, the following rules shall apply:

MOUNTAIN BROOK FIRE DEPARTMENT

POLICY NO. 105.03 VOLUME: I PAGE: 3

- When the first unit reports on the scene with "nothing showing" or an equivalent report, any additional units shall continue but shall not exceed the posted speed limit.
- The Incident Commander will advise additional units to proceed with traffic whenever appropriate.

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

All employees are required to use seat belts at all times when operating a City vehicle equipped with seat belts. Anyone riding as a passenger in a City vehicle is also required to use seat belts. The Company Officer will confirm that all personnel and riders are on-board, 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.

The use of smoking related tobacco products by the driver or other passengers can lead to vehicle accidents and employee injuries; therefore, smoking will not be allowed in any fire department vehicle under any circumstances.

During an emergency response, fire vehicles should avoid passing other emergency vehicles. If passing is necessary, permission must be obtained through radio communications between the two apparatus.

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. 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.

When stopped at the scene of an incident, vehicles should be placed to protect personnel who may be working in the street. 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 traffic vest or turnouts.

MOUNTAIN BROOK FIRE DEPARTMENT

POLICY NO. 105.03 VOLUME: I PAGE: 4

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 of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance of this procedure.

Fire Department 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.

A 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
2. Driving defensively and professionally at reasonable speeds and maintaining a safe following distance. (Use the “4-second rule”. Stay at least 4 seconds behind another vehicle in the same lane).
3. Knowing where we are going.
4. Using warning devices to move around traffic and to request the right-of-way in a safe and predictable manner.

Emergency Response Criteria (Summary):

- Maximum 10 mph over posted speed limit.
- Traveling in center or oncoming traffic lanes have a heightened awareness and do not exceed posted speed limit.
- Traveling in center or oncoming traffic at intersections with lights/stop signs, proceed only after all traffic is found to be yielding the right-of-way to the emergency vehicle.
- Posted speed limit when entering intersections with green light.
- Account for all pedestrians and vehicular traffic yielding the right-of-way at all red lights/stop signs before proceeding.