



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

EMERGENCY RESPONSE DRIVING

ISSUED: **August 1, 2018**

Supersedes: January 1, 2015

REASON FOR CHANGE: Add Policy note 7, reformat procedure note 13

OBJECTIVE:

This policy establishes District expectations regarding operation of department vehicles and privately owned vehicles (POVs) during emergency response situations.

REFERENCES: Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS) 42-4-108, and 42-4-222

POLICY:

1. It is the responsibility of the driver of each Poudre Canyon Fire Protection District (PCFPD) vehicle to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with pertinent provisions of the Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS). The CRS provides specific exemptions to regular traffic regulations, with these changes applying to PCFPD vehicles (Authorized Emergency Vehicles) only when responding to an emergency call or a fire alarm.
2. PCFPD personnel shall be trained on the operation of a vehicle before driving it in an emergency response situation.
3. All drivers of PCFPD vehicles shall have a valid driver's license.
4. All personnel riding in or operating any PCFPD vehicle shall wear the vehicle's seatbelt while the vehicle is moving. The driver shall not move the vehicle until all passengers are properly wearing their seatbelts. Seatbelt shall remain fastened any time the vehicle is in motion.
5. At all times, drivers shall operate within the limits of their ability, the limits of the vehicle, and the limits imposed by traffic and weather conditions. Drivers shall adjust their speeds to compensate for wet roads, darkness, snow, ice, fog or any other condition that makes normal emergency vehicle operation more dangerous.
6. The driver of the emergency vehicle is responsible for its safe operation at all times. The ability to safely control and maneuver a vehicle is one of the most critical aspects of a driver's responsibilities. The first goal of the driver is to get the vehicle and its crew to the scene in an expedient, safe and effective manner.
7. The driver shall not be the sole occupant of the vehicle except in the following situations:
 - a. When driving to rendezvous with other department or mutual aid partner vehicles at scene or staged away from scene.

- b. When driving in convoy with other department or mutual aid partner vehicles.
 - c. When driving to a traffic accident on a public roadway
 - d. When investigating a smoke report. Driver may confirm or refute fire on radio, but shall not attack until accompanied by other qualified personnel.
 - e. When directed by officer of the department. A vehicle should not leave with a single occupant unless the driver can positively impact the emergency situation.
8. The driver of a privately owned vehicle (POV) with approved emergency lights (CRS 42-4-222) shall follow this procedure when using said lights.
 9. The driver of a POV without emergency lights or when not using emergency lights shall follow State of Colorado rules and regulations (CRS 42)

PROCEDURE:

1. When responding to an emergency, PCFPD vehicles may exceed posted speed limits when safe to do so based on road conditions, traffic volume and other factors, and only when the vehicle is making use of lights or lights and siren. The posted speed limit may only be exceeded when it can be done safely and without endangering PCFPD personnel, the public or property, and in no case should the posted speed limit be exceeded by more than 25 miles an hour. The use of audible/visual signal devices only requests the right-of-way from other drivers, based on their awareness of the emergency vehicle presence; other drivers might not yield right-of-way when emergency lights and sirens are in use.
2. Drivers should use caution when encountering a negative right-of-way situation. When approaching an intersection controlled by a traffic signal with a red light, a stop sign or a negative right-of-way, the PCFPD driver shall be prepared and have the ability to stop before entering the intersection. Before proceeding through the intersection, the driver needs to ensure the intersection is safely controlled
3. A school-zone speed limit is in force when the zone flashing lights are activated or, if the zone does not have flashing lights, during the designated times on a posted school-zone sign. When approaching and proceeding through active school zones, drivers shall not exceed the posted speed limit. Drivers should be mindful that young children may run toward emergency response vehicles. Audible signals may be discontinued to avoid attracting children to the apparatus.
4. When encountering a stopped school bus with the red visual signal lights and stop signal arm actuated on a roadway, drivers shall bring the vehicle to a complete stop and proceed only after the lights and stop arm are no longer actuated.
5. When necessary while responding to an emergency, drivers may disregard regulations governing parking, directions of movement or turning in specified (posted) directions.
6. During emergency response, drivers should avoid passing other emergency vehicles. If unavoidable, the passing arrangement should be coordinated through radio communications.

7. Due to the distractions caused by the emergency, drivers should be particularly cautious when moving a vehicle at the scene or within the general area of an incident.
8. Because the driver's attention should be on driving, the front seat passenger should be responsible for radio communications.
9. When driving in a trailing position in a convoy at night, allow extra clearance for the vehicle in front of you. Emergency lights are very distracting in rear view mirrors and in front of you.
10. No one should drive an emergency vehicle if impaired in any way.
11. Each Station shall develop a procedure to determine if other personnel are responding to a call but have not yet arrived at the station. Effort should be made to avoid leaving responders without transport to the scene.
12. A vehicle may leave the station without waiting for other responders if all seating positions are occupied.
13. When responding emergent to one of our mutual aid partners, PCFPD drivers may encounter situations that are not present in our district:
 - a. As stated in the CRS, "the driver of a vehicle with separate roadways need not stop upon meeting or passing a school bus which is on a different roadway." For purpose of this Operational Directive, "separate roadways" mean a highway that is divided into two or more roadways by a depressed, raised or other intervening space serving as a clearly indicated dividing section or island. Medians that are merely painted on the pavement but not depressed, raised or otherwise physically separated, are not considered as forming separate roadways
 - b. Before proceeding through a railroad crossing, the driver, along with the front seat passenger, should account for clearance in both directions. The driver shall not proceed through an activated crossing light or go around railroad crossing arms that are activated unless the arms are malfunctioning
 - c. The driver must be focused and give his or her undivided attention to intersection management any time a PCFPD vehicle is approaching and entering an intersection while responding to an emergency. The driver should account for clearance in all traffic lanes and also for pedestrian traffic, to determine if the intersection is clear to proceed. The front seat passenger may also assist when feasible.
 - d. When possible, drivers should attempt to travel in the lane closest to the centerline to increase visibility at intersections, reduce the hazard of parked vehicles pulling into their path and allow moving vehicles to pull to the right. Since the CRS requires motorists to pull to the right to allow emergency vehicles to pass on the left while responding to an emergency, PCFPD drivers need to use extreme caution if passing to the right of other vehicles.