

# Bethel Fire Department

## Vehicle Operations - SOG

### D-001

#### **Purpose and Policy**

The safe operation of every vehicle in the department's fleet is of utmost importance in our main mission of safeguarding lives and property. Ensuring the safe arrival and operability of the vehicles on an emergency scene is our foremost priority. To this end, this department has developed the following guidelines. These guidelines cover only a small part of total vehicle operations with common sense and established laws being equal contributors to an overall vehicle operations plan.

This department also recognizes the impact these vehicles have when interacting with others on the roadway, and will be operated in a respectful fashion with the driver always operating in a defensive mode. Vehicle operation will be conducted under one of three possible scenarios:

- A. Non-Emergency – No lights or siren, normal mode, go with traffic; a non emergency response.
- B. Run with Traffic Emergency – Lights no siren, fast mode only where safe or possible, obey all traffic laws, go with the traffic flow; a less critical emergency that will not be affected by standard time of travel, situation is not a true emergency.
- C. Code – Lights and siren, fast mode, a true emergency situation, operates with Due Regard for other vehicles.

True Emergency – A situation in which there is a high probability of death or serious injury to an individual, or extensive loss of property and action by an emergency vehicle operator may reduce the seriousness of the situation.

Due Regard – Driving in such a manner as to avoid any predictable collision.

#### **Procedures**

Prior to any operation all operators are required to:

1. Check around the vehicle to see that there are no obstructions, all compartment doors are closed, clearance is adequate, and electrical cables and/or exhaust connections are detached or ready for automatic detachment.
2. Ascertain all passengers are seated and secured with seat belts.
3. Turn on all lights required based on outside conditions and type of run. Headlights will be on every time the vehicle goes in motion, emergency or non-emergency.
4. Prior to backing, a spotter or 'ground guide' will be present to assist. No vehicle should be moved in reverse without a competent spotter in place.
5. Notify the OIC or dispatcher of the vehicles departure from the station or scene.

#### During Non-Emergency Travel:

1. Drivers should obey all traffic control signals, speed limits, and rules-of-the-Road of all jurisdictions traveling in or involved.
2. Emergency warning lights should not be on. When backing the vehicle on a roadway or busy parking area or lot, all emergency lights will be turned on for safety purposes.
3. No audible signals should be used except the horn when necessary in a non-emergency.
4. The vehicle will be brought to a complete stop at all railroad crossings and proceed on only after the driver is certain it is clear.

#### During Emergency Response:

1. Drivers should bring the vehicle to a complete stop and proceed on only when safe under the following circumstances:
  - When directed by law enforcement
  - Red Traffic Lights
  - Stop Signs
  - Negative Right-of-Way intersections
  - Blind intersections
  - When the driver cannot account for all lanes if traffic is in an intersection
  - When any intersection is not completely clear of traffic or pedestrians
  - When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing lights
  - At a railroad grade crossing
2. Drivers should ONLY proceed through an intersection when the driver can account for all lanes of traffic.
3. Vehicles should not attempt to circumvent any traffic law without the use of audible AND visual warning devices. These devices should conform to NFPA standard 1901.
4. Extra space should be maintained between two emergency vehicles traveling in the same direction. Traffic will likely move after the first vehicle has exited the intersection making it imperative for the second vehicle to come to a complete stop. Escorts should be discouraged for this same reason.
5. Per 23 VSA, §1015, Authorized Emergency Vehicles, the driver of an authorized vehicle, when responding to an emergency scene, but not returning from, may exceed the posted speed limit. The exemptions granted to an authorized motor vehicle apply only when the vehicle has an approved Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles Light Permit and is making use of both audible and visual signals.

**IN CASE OF ACCIDENT: SEE VEHICLE ACCIDENT PROCEDURES**

**Final Statement**

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure safe response under all conditions for all personnel involved as well as the public. These are the bare minimum all drivers should follow under all conditions. It must be understood that the use of audio and visual warning devices are only a request to the other vehicles on the road to give us the right of way. Running with traffic, lights on no audio warnings is very acceptable when told to or during less than critical response as decided by the Officer-in-Charge or by the call itself. Safety is the key word in these operations.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fire Chief

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_