

Alton Fire & Rescue Department Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG)

SOG 1.3.6 Driver Safety (Reference SOP 1.3.6)

PURPOSE: To ensure the conformance to the safe operation of all fire & rescue department vehicles.

SCOPE: Driver/operators of all Department vehicles

SPECIFICS:

- It is the responsibility of the driver of each Alton Fire & Rescue vehicle to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with New Hampshire Laws and in conformance with the guidelines of the following areas to be considered.

- Areas to be considered:
 - Emergency response policy
 - Specific rules for emergency response
 - "On Scene" driving
 - "Routine" response and normal driving
 - Backing
 - Accidents
 - Personally owned vehicle (POV)

DATE: Approved: 12/19/2005; Revised August 25, 2009

Alton Fire & Rescue Department

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

SOP 1.3.6 Driver Safety

PURPOSE: To establish the driving policy and specific responsibilities for the safety of all fire department vehicles.

SCOPE: Driver/operators of all Department vehicles

SPECIFICS:

It is the responsibility of the driver of each Alton Fire & Rescue vehicle to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated in compliance with New Hampshire Revised Statutes. This code provides specific legal exceptions to regular traffic regulations which apply to Alton Fire & Rescue vehicles only when responding to an emergency incident or when transporting a patient to a medical facility. "Emergency" response (Code 3) does not absolve the driver of any responsibility to drive with due regard for public safety. The driver of the emergency vehicle is responsible for its safe operation at all times. The officer in charge of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance of this procedure.

Major Objectives:

- Emergency response policy
- Specific rules for emergency response
- "On Scene" driving
- "Routine" response and normal driving
- Backing

- Accidents
- Private vehicle response

Emergency Response Policy:

Alton Fire & Rescue 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 enroute to an emergency incident.

PROMPT, SAFE RESPONSE SHALL BE ATTAINED BY:

- Leaving the station in a STANDARD manner:
 - Quickly mounting apparatus with protective clothing donned
 - All personnel on board, seated and belted
 - Station doors fully opened and compartment doors are closed
- Driving defensively and professionally, at a speed appropriate for conditions.
- Knowing where we are going.
- 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:

- Leaving quarters before crew has mounted safely and before bay doors are fully open.
- Driving too fast for conditions.

- Driving recklessly or without due regard for safety.
- Taking unnecessary chances with negative right – of – way intersections.
- Intimidating or scaring other drivers.

Specific Rules for “Emergency” Response:

When responding, “Emergency” warning lights must be on and sirens must be sounded to warn drivers of other vehicles, as required by the New Hampshire Revised Statutes.

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 professionally and defensively to be prepared for the unexpected, or inappropriate actions of others.

Alton Fire and Rescue vehicles traveling over the posted speed limits incur an additional liability to the safety of others, as speed limits are designed for the passenger vehicles and not heavy, slow handling fire apparatus. For this reason, speed exceeding over 10 mph over the posted speed limit is considered past the apparatus’s safe driving capabilities. Under less favorable conditions, the posted speed limit is the absolute maximum permissible. Less favorable conditions include but are not limited to: heavy traffic, limited visibility, poor road surface (washboard, potholes, wet, icy, snow covered, etc.)

Intersections present the greatest potential danger to emergency vehicles. When approaching and crossing an intersection with the right – of – way, drivers, shall not exceed the posted speed limit. When emergency vehicles must use on-coming traffic lanes to approach controlled intersections, (traffic light or stop sign) they must account for all traffic lanes before proceeding through the intersection at a speed allowing for subsequent stop. This included occasions when the emergency vehicle has green traffic lights.

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 traffic in all lanes yielding the right – of – way.

When the negative right – of – way intersection is visibly unoccupied and there is no traffic approaching the intersection, the emergency vehicle may slow to a safe speed (allowing the subsequent stops) as they proceed through the intersection. “Emergency Response” is authorized only in conjecture with emergency incidents. Unnecessary emergency response shall be avoided. In order to avoid any unnecessary emergency response, the following rule shall apply: When the first unit on the scene reports “nothing showing” or an equivalent report, the officer shall advise additional units to respond “with traffic” (no siren, no warning lights) whenever appropriate.

During an “emergency response”, fire vehicles should avoid passing other emergency vehicles. If passing is necessary, permission must be obtained through radio communications.

“On Scene” Driving

The unique hazards of driving fire apparatus adjacent to the fire/rescue ground, is that the driver is required to use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to stop the apparatus immediately, if the situation requires this.

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 and warning lights shall 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. Headlights of apparatus pointed against traffic shall be turned off to avoid “blinding” on-coming drivers. Utilize spotlights on traffic cones to direct traffic around the scene.

If it is not necessary to park vehicles in or near traffic lanes, the vehicle should b pulled off the road to parking lots, curbs, etc., when possible.

Responding “With Traffic” and Normal Driving:

All Alton Fire & Rescue members are required to use seat belts at all times when operating a department vehicle equipped with seat belts. Anyone riding as a passenger in a department vehicle is also required to use seat belts. The person in the officer seat shall confirm that all personnel and riders are on-board, properly attired, with seat belts on, before the apparatus 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. The tailboard may be used as a traveling work platform while loading large diameter hose. Drivers of apparatus used for this procedure must maintain visual contact with the work crew and not exceed idle speed.

All personnel are encouraged to reduce the chances for damage and/or injury by establishing safe driving/operating habits. These habits include but are not limited to:

- All personnel shall advise the driver/operator anytime equipment is to be removed from the apparatus.
- Designated drivers will be the only personnel authorized to move apparatus.
- Perform a "360 degree walk around check" of the apparatus prior to moving vehicle; items to be checked include closed compartments, securely mounted equipment, obstructions blocking vehicle movement, etc.
- Maintaining adequate "traffic cushion" while enroute to ensure readiness at all times; 20 – 30 feet cushion when stopped in traffic, avenue of ext when in traffic, etc.

Backing:

Drivers shall avoid backing whenever possible. Where backing is unavoidable, a guide shall be used. If no guide is available, the driver shall dismount and walk completely around the apparatus to determine if obstructions are present before backing; then back to the visible side (left side). Vehicles with unobstructed clear vision through the rear window (staff

cars, pick-up trucks, etc.) may back utilizing the vehicles mirrors and rear window.

Accidents:

Anytime an Alton Fire and Rescue vehicle is involved in an accident, the driver shall:

- Notify dispatch of response status; out of service, assigned to subsequent accident and your location.
- Notify dispatch of the accident and any requirement to treat and/or transport patients.
- Request response from a Chief Officer and Alton Fire & Rescue. All reports required by state, local and department shall be completed and filed appropriately and promptly.

Private Owner Vehicle Response:

Private owner vehicle (POV) used by call company to respond to emergency incident locations or the fire station shall comply with the New Hampshire Revised Statutes. This required compliance with the guidelines listed previously in this SOG.

Additional POV's shall:

Never exceed 10mph over the posted speed limit under favorable conditions. Less favorable conditions require an appropriately lower speed. Less favorable conditions include but are not limited to: heavy traffic, limited visibility, poor road surface (washboard, potholes, wet, icy or snow covered, etc.).

Use of seat belts by all occupants is required for all Fire Department related uses of POV's.

"Emergency Response" is prohibited when POV's contain passengers other than Alton Fire & Rescue members.

In the event of an accident, request the police agency to notify Dispatch. Dispatch shall notify Alton Fire & Rescue of the accident, and AFD will send an officer to gather information and complete the AFD accident report.

Response to the fire station is required unless the incident location is adjacent to your response route, or additional "on scene" personnel are requested.

Personnel requested to respond to the "scene of an emergency" in POV just comply with the following guidelines:

POV's shall be kept to one side of the road and should be parked in an orderly manner not to impede operations traffic.

Park away from the incident area; this distance will vary depending on the nature and location of operations. Rural water supply requires room for tankers, wildfires are unpredictable and at times, travel beyond the original operational area, access for apparatus and/or ambulance are the highest priority.

259:28 Emergency Vehicles.

"Emergency Vehicles" shall mean all vehicles of fire departments and police departments and such ambulances and emergency vehicles of municipal departments or public service corporations as authorized by the director.

265:8 Emergency Vehicles

I. A person driving an emergency vehicle, as defined in RSA 259:28, when responding to an emergency call or when in the pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in this section, but subject to the conditions herein stated.

II. The driver of an emergency vehicle may:

- (a) Park or stand not with standing the provisions of Title XXI.
- (b) Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing
down as may be necessary for safe operation.

(c) Exceed the maximum speed limits so long as he/she does not endanger life

or property.

(d) Disregard rules governing direction of movement or turning in specified

directions.

III. The exemptions herein granted to an emergency vehicle shall apply only when such vehicle is making use of audible or visual emergency signals, or, in the case of fire fighter or other volunteer emergency personnel, when such vehicle is making use of audible or visual emergency signals, or when an emergency vehicle is in pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law.

IV. Any person engaged in part-time law enforcement and who uses his own vehicle shall not display driving emergency light when not on duty.

V. The provisions of RSA 265:8, II and III shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such provisions protect the driver from the consequences of his reckless disregard for the safety of others.

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