

POLICY: EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hadley Township Fire Department
Policy #101

I. PURPOSE

To establish a vehicle driving policy including specific responsibilities for safe operation of all Hadley Township Fire Department vehicles and approved personally owned vehicles during incident response.

II. SCOPE

All Fire Department personnel required or approved to drive department apparatus or respond to emergency incidents shall adhere to this policy. This document supersedes all previous documents pertaining to vehicular emergency response and becomes effective immediately.

III. GENERAL

A. Driving Guidelines

1. You must be authorized to drive fire department vehicles before doing so.
2. It is the responsibility of the driver of any vehicle driven to support Fire Department operations to do so in a safe and prudent manner at all times.
3. All vehicles shall be operated in compliance with applicable Michigan Statutes (Public Act 300). This statute provides specific legal exceptions to regular vehicle regulations applicable to vehicles responding to an emergency incident.
4. Driving to incidents shall be categorized based on the nature of the situation. The categories are defined as:
 - a. "NON EMERGENCY RESPONSE" - Routine response. Proceeding with caution, obeying all traffic regulations and without activating any emergency warning equipment.
 - b. "EMERGENCY RESPONSE" – Responding to a toned alarm indicating an emergency situation. Responding with all emergency warning equipment operating.
5. **"Emergency" driving does not allow the operator of any vehicle, departmental or personal, to drive without due care and caution. The regard for the public safety shall always be the primary consideration.**
6. Safe arrival shall always take precedence over speed and maneuvering en route to an emergency incident.
7. All occupants of any responding vehicle will be in the passenger compartment of the vehicle and use safety belts.

B. Emergency Response Policy

1. Drivers shall attain a prompt safe response by:
 - a. Drivers will wait for a passenger as long as reasonable. If a passenger is present he/she shall make all radio communications.

- b. Familiarizing themselves with the safest and quickest routes. Drivers should be aware of routes and roadways with inherent hazards, such as schools, hospitals, construction zones, exceptionally heavy traffic and geographic features that may cause hazards.
 - c. Insuring that all occupants of the vehicle are safety belted prior to any vehicle movement.
 - d. Assuring that all vehicle doors are closed and station doors are fully opened prior to vehicle movement.
 - e. Driving defensively and professionally at an appropriate speed that reflects the existing road and traffic conditions. At no time will responding vehicles be driven in excess of the posted speed limit.
 - f. Using warning devices to move around and request the right-of-way in a safe and predictable manner.
2. Drivers shall NOT:
- a. Drive faster than traffic and road conditions warrant or take unnecessary risks during negative right-of-way situations. Public safety shall always take precedence over speed and maneuvering.
 - b. Leave their vehicle unless instructed to do so by a commanding officer.
 - c. Respond "Emergency" with any occupants in the vehicle who are not members or reserve members of the Hadley Township Fire Department or not a member of a mutual aide department.
3. Specific Rules:
- a. When not utilizing all emergency warning equipment, all applicable traffic regulations shall be observed.
 - b. **At all intersections**, the driver must account for all traffic lanes prior to entering an intersection. If the intersection is a negative right of way (red light, stop sign, etc.), the driver must stop prior to entering the intersection and may proceed only if ALL traffic lanes have yielded. Drivers must slow to a safe speed when approaching intersections with poor visibility of cross traffic.
 - c. Emergency vehicles are required to pass other vehicles on the left. In any case where an emergency vehicle passes another vehicle on the right, an additional responsibility is incurred which may result in increased liability and other legal sanctions against the driver.
 - d. During an emergency response, fire vehicles shall avoid passing other emergency vehicles that may be responding.
 - e. Vehicles involved in an emergency response shall stop at all railroad crossings before crossing the railroad tracks. This is due to the fact that lights and sirens may mask an on-coming train. Operators shall not rely on the signaling devices alone. The operator shall obtain a confirmed visual clearance of the tracks prior to crossing.
 - f. When approaching a school crossing zone or a school bus with flashing red lights, the operator shall obey all applicable traffic regulations, including stopping and speed limits, regardless of the emergency response.
 - g. When responding thru a construction zone the operator shall obey all applicable traffic regulations including speed limits. Drivers shall exercise extra caution.

- h. Immediate discontinuance of emergency response shall occur upon receipt of communication that such a response is no longer required. The operator must resume routine travel and follow all applicable traffic regulations immediately upon receipt of such communications.

C. Incident Scene

1. The unique hazards of driving on or near the incident location require operators to use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to react to the unexpected.
2. Drivers must consider the dangers their moving vehicles pose to other fire personnel and on-lookers that may be preoccupied with the emergency and may step into the path of a moving vehicle.
3. Apparatus shall be stopped so that the apparatus will protect working personnel from vehicle traffic and other hazards. Flashing or rotating warning lights shall be utilized to warn approaching traffic of the incident.
4. Any on-scene backing shall be done with a spotter whenever possible. If a spotter is not available, the operator shall perform a 360-degree walk-around and visual clearance check prior to backing.
5. The parking brake shall be employed before the driver leaves his seat. Wheel chocks will be set before the driver continues with other operations.
6. Drivers will ensure all equipment removed from their apparatus is accounted for before leaving the scene to return to the hall.

D. Upon Returning to the Fire Hall

1. Drivers will ensure that all equipment is returned to their apparatus and is ready for service in good working order.
2. Drivers must complete the appropriate apparatus check sheet.
3. If any vehicle problems are encountered during the incident, the driver will give a report to the commanding officer.
4. All trucks must be washed and dried unless it is deemed unnecessary by the commanding officer.

E. Incident Response with Personally Owned Vehicles (POV)

1. Authorized emergency responses of POVs are subject to the following compliance:
 - a. All operators shall have attained the minimum training level of Fire Fighter I and II and/or MFR and a departmentally approved emergency driving class and/or the approval of the chief.
 - b. All POVs shall be equipped with appropriate and departmentally approved emergency warning equipment.
 - c. The owner of any POV shall be responsible that any vehicle used for response is appropriately registered with the State of Michigan as required by law. It shall be the responsibility of the POV driver/owner to provide proof that the minimum amount of insurance required by state statute is in effect.
 - d. The owner of any POV shall be responsible for maintaining the safe mechanical condition of that vehicle. The Fire Chief reserves the right to remove any POV from emergency service.
 - e. The Fire Chief will conduct an annual inspection of all POV with emergency warning equipment. The inspection will coincide with drivers training in March or April. POV with emergency warning equipment must be in safe mechanical condition and possess proof of appropriate documents.

- f. All personnel authorized to respond emergency shall respond in accordance with state statute which sets forth legal guidelines for emergency vehicle response.
 - g. At all times POVs will be driven defensively and professionally at an appropriate speed that reflects the existing road and traffic conditions.
 - h. When approaching a school crossing zone or a school bus with flashing red lights, the operator shall obey all applicable traffic regulations, including stopping and speed limits, regardless of the emergency response.
 - i. When responding thru a construction zone the operator shall obey all applicable traffic regulations including speed limits. Drivers shall exercise extra caution.
 - j. Even though an officer or fire fighter is legally engaged in emergency response, he is not relieved of his duty to drive with "due regard" for the safety of all persons, nor is he protected from the consequences of any reckless disregard for the safety of others.
2. Specific POV response guidelines:
- a. Mandatory use of seat belts for all occupants.
 - b. POV drivers may not respond "Emergency" when any occupants of the vehicle are not members or reserve members of the Hadley Township Fire Department or not a member of a mutual aid department.
 - c. Emergency response is only permitted from the area bordered by and including, Lippincott road to the north, Lapeer road (M24) to the east, Ortonville road (M15) to the west and Oakwood road to the south.
 - d. Immediate discontinuance of emergency response shall occur upon receipt of communication that such response is no longer required. The operator must resume routine travel and follow all applicable traffic regulations immediately upon receipt of such communications.
 - e. Drivers shall maintain a minimum of 100 to 150 foot separation between vehicles when following another emergency response vehicle.
 - f. Passing of other responding emergency vehicles is forbidden unless instructed to do so by the driver of the slower emergency vehicle.
 - g. Any POV bearing fire department identification (including emergency warning lights) is commonly perceived by the general public as a symbol of the fire department. Therefore, these vehicles must be driven in accordance with fire department guidelines at all times.
 - h. Whenever reasonably possible vehicles should abide by the following parking guidelines.
 - (a) Vehicles should be parked on the same side of the road as the incident.
 - (b) Vehicles should not block any portion of the traffic lanes.
 - (c) Additional arriving vehicles should park in adjacent driveways without blocking the driveway.
 - (d) When it is necessary to park in the road, vehicles should be stopped so that the vehicle will protect working personnel from vehicle traffic and other hazards. Flashing or rotating warning lights shall be utilized to warn approaching traffic of the incident.