



## Elgin Fire Department

**Operations**

**Safety - Apparatus & Vehicle  
Operations**

**Policy # 2021.03**

**Issued: 02/12/07**

**Subject: Apparatus and Vehicle Operations**

**Purpose:** To define responsibilities of personnel operating fire department apparatus and vehicles and identify department expectations towards ensuring safe driving practices. This policy is written to comply with NFPA 1451 and 1500.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all uniformed personnel of the Elgin Fire Department

---

### **Definitions**

#### Apparatus

A specialized emergency vehicle used for rescue, fire suppression, EMS or other specialized function. Generally, not a common type of passenger vehicle.

#### Code 2

Driving in a non-urgent mode, no warning lights and/or siren in use.

#### Code 3

Driving during emergency responses, warning lights and siren used.

#### Emergency vehicle

For the purpose of this policy, use of the term "emergency vehicle" is to include both apparatus and vehicles.

#### Favorable conditions

Driving conditions that include light traffic, good roads, good visibility, dry pavement, and no road construction.

#### Vehicle

A passenger type vehicle used for routine driving and selected emergency response.

## **Policy**

### Introduction

The safe operation of an emergency vehicle depends heavily on the ability and experience of the driver and the added resources and direction of the officer. All drivers shall maintain control of the vehicle in a manner as to provide the maximum level of safety for both their passengers and the general public. Drivers should be aware that civilian vehicle operators may not react in the manner in which is expected or felt to be appropriate. An attempt should be made to have options available when passing or overtaking vehicles. If another vehicle fails to yield the right of way to an emergency vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver can not force or assume the right of way.

The driver of an emergency vehicle shall be directly responsible for its safe operation. When the driver is under the direct supervision of an officer or acting officer, that officer or acting officer shall also assume responsibility for the actions of the driver.

### General driving requirements

Emergency vehicles shall only be operated and driven by department members or authorized maintenance personnel. Drivers shall meet the State of Illinois drivers license requirements along with the Elgin Fire Department's driver training requirements.

Fire department personnel shall have the appropriate level of driver's license for the type(s) of apparatus or vehicles they are expected to operate. Any member who has allowed their license to expire, be suspended or revoked shall not drive department apparatus or vehicles and shall immediately report this to their Battalion Chief. Non-sworn personnel shall report this to their immediate supervisor.

Smoking is prohibited inside any department apparatus or vehicle.

Vehicle headlights shall be utilized by all department apparatus and vehicles in both emergency and non-emergency driving situations.

Engines, trucks, and squads shall use the parking brake when parked whether in or out of the station.

### Driver responsibilities

- Driver's first priority shall be for the safe arrival of the emergency vehicle at the emergency scene
- Driver shall not move an emergency vehicle until all personnel are seated and secured with seat belts and in approved riding positions

- During emergency response, drivers shall bring the emergency vehicle to a complete stop, prior to proceeding, for any of the following:
  - Red traffic lights
  - Stop signs
  - Blind intersections where there is no traffic control (traffic light or stop sign) in any direction
  - Prior to entering a controlled intersection (traffic light or stop sign) when traveling in oncoming lanes or on a painted or raised median
  - When other intersection or road hazards are present
  - When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing red warning lights and/or with deployed stop signal arm (stop sign)
  - When encountering activated railroad crossings
  - When directed by the company officer or a law enforcement officer
- After stopping at a red light or stop sign account for all lanes of traffic prior to proceeding
- During non-emergency travel, drivers shall obey all traffic control signals
- The driver shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles and pedestrians

#### Officer responsibility

The officer or acting officer riding in the front passenger seat takes on the role of co-driver. While not in physical control of the operation of the emergency vehicle, the officer provides an additional set of eyes and ears for the driver and shall also be responsible for making certain that the driver operates the vehicle in a safe manner that is consistent with this and any other appropriate policies.

- Officer shall ensure that all personnel on the vehicle are seated and secured with seat belts and in approved riding positions prior to movement of the emergency vehicle
- Officer shall ensure driver is operating the vehicle in a safe and prudent manner during response in accordance with departmental policy and state law
- Officer shall issue warnings about road and physical hazards to the driver
- Officer shall direct the driver to cease any unsafe driving, such as excess speed or unsafe intersection practices
- Officer shall, when practical, operate the radio, audio and visual warning devices during response
- Officer shall check the map book or MCT to assist the driver in determining the safest and most direct route to the emergency scene

#### Warning Lights

When responding Code 3, warning lights and headlights shall be used and the siren shall be sounded to warn drivers of other vehicles, as required by the Illinois Vehicle Code.

**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 vehicles presence.

Drivers must make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers. They must drive defensively and be prepared for the unexpected actions of others.

### Speed Limit

In accordance with the Illinois Vehicle Code, emergency vehicles are authorized to exceed posted speed limits when responding Code 3 under favorable conditions. This applies only with light traffic, good roads, good visibility, dry pavement, and no road construction.

**The maximum speed limit shall not exceed 10 mph over the posted speed limit. At no time shall speed exceed 55 mph.**

Under less than favorable conditions, the posted speed limit is the absolute maximum permissible.

When emergency vehicles must travel in oncoming traffic lanes or on a painted or raised median in the immediate approach to an intersection, they shall slow to a speed that will allow for the complete stop that is required prior to entering the intersection.

When emergency vehicles must travel in oncoming traffic lanes for longer distances than the immediate approach to an intersection, the maximum speed is the posted speed limit.

### Intersections

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

When emergency vehicles must use oncoming traffic lanes or a painted or raised median to approach controlled intersections (traffic light or stop sign), they must come to a complete stop before proceeding through the intersection, including 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 proceed only when the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way.

### Emergency Vehicle Pre-emption (EVP) Intersections

Drivers must be very cautious when approaching an intersection with an EVP device. When approaching an EVP equipped intersection, the apparatus *should* be given a green traffic light. If the traffic light does not turn green, another emergency vehicle may have been given priority or there may be a problem with the EVP device or the vehicle.

### Passing other vehicles

During an emergency response, drivers shall avoid passing other responding emergency vehicles.

The Illinois Vehicle Code requires private vehicles to slow down and pull to the right when they see an emergency vehicle approaching. It shall be the standard practice of the Elgin Fire Department to pass vehicles on the left. The exception to this is only in situations where doing so would create a safety hazard greater than passing on the right (risk vs. benefit).

**If it is necessary to pass on the right the driver shall slow to a speed that allows for a safe and complete stop if necessary.**

### Railroad crossings

Drivers shall use caution and ensure that it is safe to proceed prior to crossing any railroad tracks. Apparatus shall not drive around crossing gates that have been lowered, or proceed through a crossing with activated signals (non-gated). The only exceptions shall be:

- when it has been confirmed by railroad personnel that the gates or signal are activated due to a malfunction or maintenance
- when there appears to be an obvious malfunction and the company officer has left the vehicle and has visually confirmed the absence of any approaching trains in either direction

### Code 3/Code 2 response or transport

Fire incidents – when a company has arrived on scene and determined that the situation may require additional companies, but the level of urgency does not warrant a Code 3 response, the IC has the option of requesting a Code 2 response from certain or all units.

EMS incidents – Code 2 transport of patients should be utilized when appropriate to reduce unnecessary use of Code 3.

### Vehicle retarders and Jake brakes

Vehicles and apparatus equipped with engine, transmission or driveline retarders or Jake brakes shall operate with the retarder in the “on” or “high” position. Due to the slippery nature of wet, snow or ice covered roads, the retarder or brake is to be placed in the “off” position when encountering these conditions.

### Fireground Operations

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 fireground personnel.

In addition, spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency may inadvertently step in front of or behind a moving vehicle.

When stopped at the scene of an incident, vehicles shall be placed to protect personnel who may be working in the street and 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, with the exception of vehicle headlights which should be shut off when possible.

If it is not necessary to park apparatus or vehicles in or near traffic lanes, they shall be pulled off the road to parking lots, curbs, etc. whenever possible.

#### Wheel chocks

Wheel chocks shall be utilized on apparatus as follows:

- Wheel chocks shall be utilized (when so equipped) at all times when the vehicle is parked and not in quarters
- Truck apparatus wheel chocks shall be set in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendation (both front wheels)
- Placement and removal of wheel chocks is the responsibility of the apparatus driver

By the order of: Michael W. Falone  
Fire Chief

Date: 02/12/07