
	<b>TRAVIS COUNTY ESD #5 MANCHACA FIRE RESCUE Department Policy</b>	<b>B201</b>
	Authorized by:  Fire Chief Chris Barron	<b>Effective:</b> 1-1-2020 <b>Rescinds:</b> C-1.10 <b>Reference:</b> C-1.10, AFD B201 <b>Application:</b> All Personnel
<b>Safe Apparatus Operations</b>		

## I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and rules on the safe operation of department vehicles for the safety of the members and the community we serve.

## II. Background

Nearly every request for service involves the driving, positioning, and operation of an apparatus. While state law and department policy allow certain permissions to assist in our response, we are all ultimately responsible for operating vehicles with due regard for the safety of our crews and the public we serve. The apparatus driver has a direct responsibility for the operation of the apparatus, but the Officer is responsible for the oversight of driver's actions and the crew as a whole plays various roles in assisting the driver with the safe operation of the apparatus.

## III. Policy

### A. Terminology.

1. **Apparatus.** A specialized fire service vehicle such as an engine, tender, brush truck, or aerial device.
2. **Vehicle.** Any street legal automobile or UTV owned or operated by the Department.
3. **Driver.** For the purposes of this policy, the term Driver refers to any member that has the responsibility to drive and operate an apparatus, regardless of rank.
4. **Code 1.** Operation of a vehicle without the use of lights or siren
5. **Code 2.** Operation of a vehicle with emergency lights activated, but no siren activated.
6. **Code 3.** Operation of a vehicle with emergency lights and siren activated.
7. **Level of Response.** The determination as to the response to an incident by factors such as predetermined response plan, dispatch information, or Officer discretion.

## B. Pre-response / Pre-movement.

1. **Apparatus checks.** Personnel should perform apparatus checks per department policy. Drivers should ensure that apparatus within their area of responsibility are ready for response and any defects are addressed.
2. **Pre-trip check.** Before an apparatus is driven, a 360-degree safety survey of the apparatus should take place. The check should include visual inspection of the front, rear, left and right sides, as well as under and above the apparatus. This inspection is intended to identify hazards such as open compartments, unsecured equipment, fluid leaks, ground and overhead clearances, traffic hazards, and other potential hazards. The check may be performed solely by the driver or with the cooperation of other crew members with those members reporting the results of their area of responsibility before the apparatus is moved. This check should occur under all circumstances including when the apparatus is in station. Exceptions to this check are considered exceedingly rare (such as a flame front impinging on the apparatus).
3. **Route.** The driver should know the destination and the best route to get there before responding. If the driver is not familiar with the location, they should look it up or confirm that the officer is able to guide them to the scene.
  - a. **Routing considerations.** Proper routing to the scene may include considerations for hazards such as school zones, construction areas, and traffic patterns.
4. **Seat belts.** Each individual in a vehicle is responsible for being properly seated and belted before the vehicle is placed in motion. The driver shall confirm that everyone is belted before moving the vehicle. An officer shall not issue an order to move a vehicle with persons unbelted.
5. **Bay doors.** A vehicle shall not be driven through a bay door opening while the bay door is in motion. The vehicle operator shall not activate the bay door remote while the vehicle is within the bay door threshold. A vehicle shall not be parked in any position where a bay door may come in contact with the vehicle.

## C. Response / Driving.

1. **Level of response.**
  - a. **Code 3 response.** An vehicle responding to an emergency incident shall respond code 3 unless one of the following apply:
    - 1) The call type is designated as a Code 1 response by policy, response plan, or dispatch designation.
    - 2) The vehicle is responding in a residential area with no traffic present.

- b. **Reduction from code 3 to code 1.** There are circumstances where a reduction from code 3 to code 1 is warranted. This situations include:
    - 1) **Congested intersections.** In highly congested intersections, the most appropriate action may be to reduce to code 1 and wait for the traffic light to cycle. (see III.C.6.a, below)
    - 2) **Direction from first on scene.** The Officer may consider reducing to code 1 when hearing a report on nothing showing from the first arriving unit at single family structures and small commercial buildings. Officers shall reduce their response to code 1 when the on scene resource announces a reduction to code 1.
    - 3) **Highway traffic flow.** Most apparatus have top speeds that are below the posted speed on area freeways. If the apparatus is able to respond unimpeded by the flow of traffic, the officer should consider reducing the response to code 1 until traffic flow begins to impede the response.
    - 4) **Officer discretion.** The Officer may determine that the risk of the code 3 response does not out weight the benefit and order a reduction to code 1. This may be based on history with a location, dispatch information, or other factors.
  - c. **Code 1 or 2 response.** If a vehicle is responding code 1 or code 2, it shall be operated following all applicable traffic laws and not utilize any exceptions afforded to emergency vehicles by Texas traffic law (i.e. using opposing lanes, exceeding posted speed, proceeding through intersections against the light, etc.)
  - d. **Inappropriate use of emergency warnings.** Neither the driver nor officer position should use emergency lighting in an inappropriate manner or use the siren or air horn in a manner that may be considered inappropriate or in retribution against other drivers.
- 2. **Due regard.** Driver's shall operate their vehicle using defensive driving principles, operating at a safe speed for the conditions present, maintaining control of the vehicle, and with due regard for the safety of others.
  - 3. **Headlights.** Apparatus should be driven with the headlights on at all times to increase visibility.
  - 4. **Posted speed.** Drivers shall recognize that posted speed limits are guides for regular passenger vehicles and not vehicles with the size and weight of fire apparatus.
    - a. **Cautionary speeds.** Drivers will observe the cautionary speeds posted for curves and turns as a maximum recommended speed and navigate these areas at a speed that is appropriate for proper control of the vehicle in its travel lane.
  - 5. **Driver's focus.** The driver's primary focus should be on the task of driving. If there is another member riding with the driver, they should assist the response by assisting with tasks such as

operating emergency lights and siren, provide additional assistance with navigating intersections and through heavy traffic, and ensuring a ground guide is provided as needed.

- a. **Personal electronic devices.** The driver shall not use personal electronic devices other than mapping applications while driving an apparatus. Any mapping application should be operating in a mode that does not require manipulation of the device once the vehicle is in motion. Other members of the crew should refrain from the use of personal electronic devices while riding in an apparatus unless there is a business need and authorized by the Officer.
6. **Intersections.** Drivers operating code 3 shall come to a complete stop at stop signs and red traffic lights and confirm that other vehicles in all lanes have acknowledged the presence of the emergency vehicle before proceeding through the intersection or portion thereof. Drivers should proceed cautiously through uncontrolled or green light intersections, covering the brake and watching for hazards.
    - a. **Congested intersections.** If the lanes of an approaching intersection are congested and the safe use of the opposing lane is not feasible, the driver should consider shutting off the siren and warning lights until they have the green light. The intent is to prevent other vehicles from attempting to yield to the emergency vehicle by proceeding into an intersection against the light (being “pushed” by the emergency vehicle).
  7. **Opposing Traffic.** Drivers may proceed in the opposing traffic lane (including the center turn lane) only when the following conditions are met:
    - a. There is no other practical path of travel in the regular traffic lanes
    - b. The roadway and any intersections allow for proper visibility of the emergency vehicle and approaching traffic
    - c. The vehicle is responding code 3
    - d. The vehicle is operated at a reduced speed to account for unexpected traffic movement
  8. **School Zones.** Drivers shall not exceed the posted speed limit in an active school zone regardless of their level of response.
  9. **School Busses.** Drivers shall not pass a school bus while its red lights are flashing regardless of their level of response.
  10. **Multi-unit response.** When responding in convoy with other emergency vehicles, trailing vehicles must avoid tailgating to allow reaction time in case the leading vehicle has to make a sudden change in direction or speed. Additionally, every driver must be observant of their travel path and not assume that a leading apparatus has cleared the way for them. Often, the general public resumes normal behavior after the lead apparatus passes, not considering that another vehicle is approaching.
  11. **Passing another emergency vehicle.** Although rare, there may be occasions where one it is reasonable for one responding emergency vehicle to pass another. When doing so it is ideal for

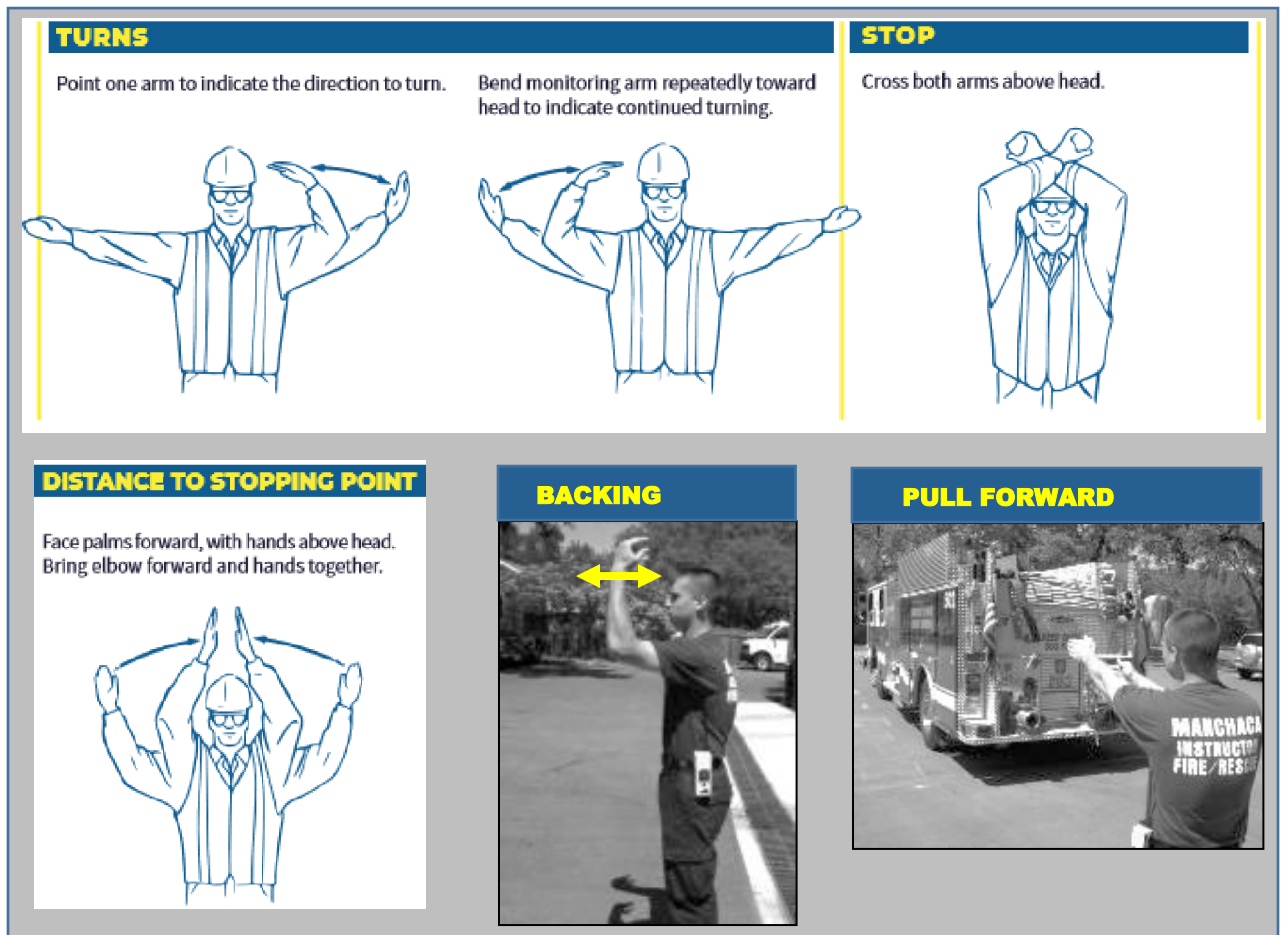
the two vehicles to communicate directly by radio. However, a pass may be initiated if the leading apparatus provides a clear indication of its intent to be passed (pulling over, the driver waving the other vehicle around, etc.)

**D. On scene or arrival at destination.**

1. **Parking.** When parked, the apparatus brake should be set and wheel chocks deployed if equipped. Two wheel chocks should be used, one to the front and one to the rear of a drive wheel. Use of wheel chocks may be omitted in the apparatus bay and on the station apron when the pump is not engaged.
  - a. **Emergency lighting.** If a department vehicle is parked on a roadway, at minimum, the four-way flashers should be activated unless they are parked in a shielded position. Additional warning lights may be utilized as the situation warrants.
  - b. **Reduction in lighting.** Once parked on a scene, emergency vehicles should reduce their emergency lighting from the “response mode” to a lesser level. The goal is to provide appropriate scene warning but lessen confusion and visual impairment of other drivers through the overuse of emergency lighting.
2. **Positioning.** Scene positioning should take into account the tactical use of the vehicle as well as protection of the scene for emergency responders.
  - a. **Roadway incidents.** Apparatus responding to roadway incidents should operate in accordance with Best Practices A711, Roadway Incidents. In addition to A711, responders shall also address the following:
    - 1) **Additional visibility measures.** Traffic cones should be considered to establish an upstream taper to direct traffic and as a line along the workspace boundary to serve as a visual indicator for other vehicles and responders working in the roadway. At night, the addition of scene floodlights to illuminate the workspace should be considered. When available, a responder should be designated as a spotter to watch for traffic hazards that could endanger the scene.
    - 2) **Intersections.** For incidents in intersections, the scene may need to be blocked from multiple directions to provide a protected workspace.
    - 3) **PPE.** Responders not involved in firefighting operations should wear traffic vests when on the roadway.
    - 4) **Demobilization.** Resources that are no longer needed on a roadway scene should be cleared as soon as practical to reduce exposure on the roadway. As the scene is demobilized, the placement of apparatus and cones may need to be adjusted to maintain a protected workspace. When retrieving cones, the responder should do so facing oncoming traffic.

## E. Backing.

1. **Avoidance of backing.** Consideration should be given to parking vehicles so that backing is not needed.
2. **Ground guides.** When backing an apparatus a backing guide shall be used if personnel are available. The Officer will ensure that that a guide or guides are used as the situation dictates. A guide should be considered when backing any department vehicle when personnel are available. A guide should also be considered for tight maneuvering situations when moving forward or judging overhead, side, or underside clearance as well.
  - a. **PPE.** If operating in a roadway or other space with uncontrolled vehicular traffic, the ground guide should wear a traffic vest. At night, the ground guide should have a flashlight. The flashlight should not be pointed at the driver or into the driver's mirror.
  - b. **Positioning.** A single ground guide should be positioned at the rear of the vehicle on the driver's side a minimum of ten feet behind the vehicle for backing. This places the guide in direct visual contact with the driver via the side mirror and a distance behind the vehicle to have situational awareness and a safety buffer from being struck by the vehicle. Other guides may be positioned at various locations depending on hazards present. The guide will not ride on any portion of the vehicle.
  - c. **Contact with driver.** The driver and guide must maintain continuous visual contact while the vehicle is in motion. If the driver loses visual contact with the guide, the driver shall stop the vehicle immediately. If the driver does not understand the direction given by the guide or disagrees with the direction given, the vehicle should be stopped and the situation discussed until clear.
  - d. **Communication with driver.** If the apparatus intercom system is available for use by the ground guide, it should be used if practical to do so. Whether the intercom system is used or not, these standard hand signals shall be used in backing a vehicle.



3. **Backing without a guide.** If a ground guide is not available, the driver should ensure they are aware of their surroundings, 360 degrees around the vehicle as well as underside and overhead clearances. If unsure, the driver should perform a 360 survey around the vehicle for hazards.
4. **Camera use.** Vehicle cameras should be used as a tool in safe backing practices. The driver should not solely rely on cameras, but rather use them in conjunction with other tools such as backing guides, mirrors, scene lighting, and 360 surveys around the vehicle.

**F. General.**

1. **Impairment.** No driver shall operate a vehicle while under the influence or impaired by any substance, legal or illegal, prescribed or over the counter. Additionally, no member shall operate a vehicle if they are too injured or too ill to safely operate the vehicle.
2. **Responsibilities.** The driver is responsible for the safe and lawful operation of the vehicle. The Officer is responsible for the oversight of the driver's actions and to order a stop of any unsafe actions.
3. **POV response.** Members will not respond directly to an incident unless specifically requested to do so by an officer or the incident commander. Members are not authorized to possess or use

emergency lighting or sirens on their personal vehicle unless specifically authorized by the Chief of Department.

4. **Certification and qualification.** In order for a member to operate an apparatus (engine, tender, brush truck), they must be certified as a TCFP Driver/Operator – Pumper. Additionally, the member must be qualified by the successful completion of a task book for the apparatus type they are operating.