

APPARATUS POSITIONING WHILE OPERATING NEAR MOVING TRAFFIC STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

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I. SCOPE

This procedure identifies parking practices for fire department apparatus and vehicles that will provide maximum protection and safety for personnel operating in or near moving vehicle traffic. It also identifies several approaches for individual practices to keep firefighters safe while exposed to the hazardous environment created by moving traffic.

II. POLICY

A. It shall be the policy of the South River District Volunteer Fire Department to position apparatus and other emergency vehicles at a vehicle-related incident on any street, road, highway in a manner that best protects the incident scene and the work area. Such positioning shall afford protection to fire department personnel, rescue squad personnel, law enforcement officers, tow service operators and the motoring public from the hazards of working in or near moving traffic.

B. All personnel should understand and appreciate the high risk that personnel are exposed to when operating in or near moving vehicle traffic. Responders should always operate within a protected environment at any vehicle-related incident.

C. Always consider moving vehicles as a threat to your safety. At every vehicle-related incident, personnel are exposed to passing motorists of varying driving abilities. Approaching vehicles may be driven at speeds from a creeping pace to well beyond the posted speed limit. Motorists may be completely oblivious to your presence due to distractions caused by cell phone use, loud music, conversation, inclement weather, and terrain or building obstructions. Approaching motorists will often be looking at the scene and not the roadway in front of them. Assume that all approaching traffic is out to get you until proven otherwise.

D. Nighttime incidents requiring personnel to work in or near moving near traffic are particularly hazardous. Visibility is reduced and driver reaction time to hazards in the roadway is slowed.

III. Terminology

The following terms shall be used during incident operations, post-incident analysis, and training activities related to working in or near moving traffic.

1. **Advance Warning-** notification procedures that advise approaching motorists to transition from normal driving status to that required by the temporary emergency traffic control measures ahead of them.
2. **Block-** positioning a fire apparatus on an angle to the lanes of traffic creating a physical barrier between traffic and the work area.

3. **Buffer Zone-** the distance or space between personnel and vehicles in the protected work zone and nearby moving traffic.
4. **Flagger-** a fire department member assigned to monitor approaching traffic and activate an emergency signal if the actions of a motorist do not conform to established traffic control measures in place at the highway scene.
5. **Taper-** the action of merging several lanes of moving traffic into fewer moving lanes.
6. **Transition Zone-** the lanes of a roadway within which approaching motorists change their speed and position to comply with the traffic control measures established at an incident scene.
7. **Work Zone-** the physical area of a roadway within which emergency personnel perform their fire, EMS and rescue tasks at a vehicle-related incident.

IV. SAFETY

All emergency personnel are at great risk of injury or death while operating in or near moving traffic. There are several specific tactical procedures that should be taken to protect all crewmembers and emergency service personnel at the incident scene including;

1. Never trust approaching traffic
2. Avoid turning your back to approaching traffic
3. Establish an initial “block” with the first arriving emergency vehicle or fire apparatus
4. Always wear Class III high visibility reflective vests
5. Always wear structural firefighting helmet
6. Wear full protective clothing plus the highway safety vest at all vehicle-related emergencies between the hours of dusk and dawn or whenever lighting levels are reduced due to inclement weather conditions
7. Turn off all sources of vision impairment to approaching motorists at nighttime incidents including vehicle headlights and spotlights
8. Use fire apparatus and police vehicles to initially redirect the flow of moving traffic
9. Establish advance warning and adequate transition area traffic control measures to reduce travel speeds of approaching motorists
10. Use traffic cones and/or flares for traffic control and direction

11. Establish a fire department member assigned to the “Flagger” function to monitor approaching traffic and activate an emergency signal if the actions of a motorist do not conform to established traffic control measures in place at the highway scene, if possible

V. APPARATUS

Listed below are benchmarks for Safe Parking of apparatus and emergency vehicles when operating in or near moving traffic.

1. Always position first-arriving apparatus to protect the scene, patients, and emergency personnel.
 - a. Initial apparatus placement should provide a work area protected from traffic approaching in at least one direction.
 - b. Angle apparatus on the roadway to create a physical barrier between the crash scene and approaching traffic.
 - c. Allow apparatus placement to slow approaching motorists and re-direct them around the scene.
 - d. When practical, position apparatus in such a manner to protect the pump operator position from being exposed to approaching traffic.
2. Positioning of large apparatus must create a safe parking area for EMS units and other fire vehicles. Operating personnel, equipment and patients should be kept within the area created by the blocking apparatus at all times.
3. When blocking with apparatus to protect the emergency scene, establish a sufficient size work zone that includes all damaged vehicles, roadway debris, the patient triage and treatment area, the extrication work area, and the ambulance loading zone.
4. Ambulance should be positioned within the protected work area with their rear patient loading door area angled away from the nearest lanes of moving traffic.
5. Command shall stage unneeded emergency vehicles off the roadway or return these units to service whenever possible.
6. At all intersections, or where the incident may be near the middle lane of the roadway, two or more sides of the incident will need to be protected.
 - a. The goal is to effectively block all exposed sides of the work zone. The blocking of the work zone must be prioritized, from the most critical or highest traffic volume flow to the least critical traffic direction.
 - b. For first arriving engine companies where a charged hose line may be needed, block so that the pump panel is on the opposite side of on-coming traffic. This will protect the pump operator.

- c. At intersection incidents, consider requesting police response. Provide specific directions to the police officers as to exactly what your traffic control needs are. Ensure that police vehicles are parked in a position and location that provides additional protection of the scene.
- 7. Traffic cones or flairs shall be deployed from the rear of the blocking apparatus toward approaching traffic to increase the advance warning provided for approaching motorists. Cones identify and only suggest the transition and tapering actions that are required of the approaching motorist.
- 8. Personnel shall place cones and flares and retrieve cones while facing oncoming traffic.
- 9. Additional traffic cones shall be retrieved from law enforcement units to extend the advance warning area for approaching motorists.