

POLICY ON SAFE DRIVING AND HANDLING OF EMERGENCY SERVICES VEHICLES

Item B-PS (44b-2005) MC 10/11/2005	EMERGENCY SERVICES: POLICY ON SAFE DRIVING AND HANDLING OF EMERGENCY SERVICES VEHICLES
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RESOLVED:

1. **That** the contents of the report regarding the policy (SOP: Standard Operating Procedures) on safe driving and handling of Emergency Services vehicles **BE NOTED**.
2. **That** the policy (SOP: Standard Operating Procedures) on safe driving and handling of Emergency Services vehicles attached as **Annexure "A"** to the report, **BE APPROVED**.

PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT: EMERGENCY SERVICES DIVISION

POLICY: (STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE) SAFE DRIVING AND HANDLING OF EMERGENCY VEHICLES

PURPOSE

To set the standard operating procedures for the safe driving and handling of emergency vehicles.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1. National Road Traffic Act, (Act no. 93 of 1996)
2. National Road Traffic Regulations, 1996
3. Occupational Health and Safety Act 83 of 1993
4. Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, (Act no. 130 of 1993)
5. The Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality Occupational Health and Safety Policy
6. Driver Training Policy of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality
7. Loss Control Policy of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality
8. EMM Insurance and Risk Management Policy
9. MOA between Ekurhuleni Municipal Municipality and Provincial Health on the rendering of EMS
10. Standing Orders: Emergency Services

PREAMBLE

It is the responsibility of the driver of each Emergency Services Vehicle to drive safely and prudently at all times. Vehicles shall be operated and driven in compliance with the National Road Traffic Act, (Act no. 93 of 1996). This act provides specific legal exceptions to regular traffic regulations which apply to Emergency Services vehicles only when responding to an emergency incident or when transporting a patient to a medical facility. Emergency Response does not absolve the driver of any responsibility to drive with due caution. The driver of the emergency vehicle is responsible for its safe operation at all times.

A. EMERGENCY VEHICLE DRIVER REQUIREMENTS

1. No employee is allowed to drive any emergency vehicle if he/she does not possess a valid and appropriate driver's license for the category of vehicle in question as prescribed by the National Road Traffic Regulations.
2. No employee is allowed to drive any emergency vehicle if he/she has not received the necessary training to drive the specific category of emergency vehicle in question.
3. No employee shall drive any emergency vehicle if he/she has not been evaluated and authorised by the relevant authority to drive the specific category of the vehicle in question.
4. Every driver of an emergency vehicle shall be issued with a card indicating the specific categories of vehicles he/she is authorised to drive.
5. No employee shall drive any emergency vehicle without a valid Professional Driving Permit (PrDP).
6. Every driver of an emergency vehicle shall have at his/her possession a drivers' license document/card at all times when driving an emergency vehicle.
7. Any authorised driver, of any specific category of emergency vehicle who is under/or has taken any prescribed medication shall indicate so to the shift officer in charge and provide particulars of such medication taken before attempting to drive any emergency vehicle.
8. No Employee under the influence of alcohol is allowed to drive any emergency vehicle or to come on shift at all.
9. No employee participating in a car allowance scheme shall drive any emergency vehicle for private use except with the permission of the Director Emergency Service or his nominee or except when an emergency situation necessitates or dictates as such and this can be proven.

10. Drivers who were tested and authorised to drive specific categories of emergency vehicles based on the policies of erstwhile Councils will automatically be re-accredited after verification of the validity of the license has been conducted by the official delegated by the Director Emergency Services. Where only informal training was provided to such employees they will be re-accredited, formal training will be administered and official testing will be conducted by authorised testing authority.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DRIVER WITH RESPECT TO THE VEHICLE AND ITS UTILIZATION

1. It is the responsibility of the driver booked on any emergency vehicle or allocated to an emergency vehicle to ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy and safe to drive on public roads before such a vehicle is actually taken onto the roads.
2. All vehicles are to be checked by respective drivers at the commencement of a shift according to the standard vehicle inventory list and the first line inspection sheet of the preventative maintenance procedures. Any defects are to be reported immediately to the officer in a prescribed manner.
3. No unauthorised or purposeless driving of emergency vehicles is permitted.
4. It is the responsibility of the Emergency Services vehicle drivers to ensure that all trips/usage are recorded on the prescribed vehicle occurrence/logbook or trip sheet.
5. Driver of emergency vehicle shall not allow on board any private people other than emergency personnel except with permission from the relevant Manager or except when an emergency situation dictates it necessary.
6. The driver shall ensure that passengers including the driver are wearing seat belts every time the vehicle is in motion.
7. If the vehicle in question is an ambulance, the driver shall not allow the assistant to leave the patient in the patient compartment alone in order to

sit next to the driver. The assistant shall always be with the patient until the patient is delivered at the destination.

8. No driver of an emergency vehicle shall utilise an emergency vehicle for private and/or other purposes other than in the execution of duties for which the vehicle is meant for or without permission from the Director Emergency Services or his/her nominee.
9. No driver of an emergency vehicle is allowed to transport members of his/her family in an emergency vehicle except in an emergency situation and where permission to do so has been obtained.
10. No emergency vehicles shall be utilised outside the boundaries of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality for any purpose except with permission obtained as per prescribed by Council Policies or except when an emergency situation necessitates as such.
11. All emergency vehicles shall not be parked unnecessarily in the sun or in any bad weather conditions in the presence of machine bays and appropriate carports.
12. It is the responsibility of the driver of an emergency vehicle that is on standby to ensure that the place where the vehicle is parked overnight, weekends etc. is secure and is inspected and authority is given for the vehicle to be parked at/in such a place.
13. Keys for emergency vehicle shall not be left in the vehicles unless the vehicle is parked in a secure machine bay or except when operational requirement dictates as such.
14. Any emergency vehicle that becomes defective to an extent that it cannot be driven shall not be left alone and unattended to. The driver shall ensure that he/she remains with the vehicle until removed or repaired.
15. All repairs to Emergency Vehicles shall be arranged through Logistics Division of Emergency Services where a standard works request will be

made out to the EMM Fleet Management Division where repairs will be conducted or be facilitated from.

16. No emergency vehicle shall be driven on Public Roads without a valid license.
17. It is the responsibility of the driver of an emergency vehicle with the assistance of the supervisor and the crew where applicable to ensure that an emergency vehicle remains clean and tidy at all times after incidents.
18. Eating, smoking and drinking is not allowed in an emergency vehicle.
19. Emergency vehicles shall not be excessively revved unnecessarily.
20. No wheel spinning on emergency vehicles unless the situation, which can be proven dictates as such.
21. Drivers of Councils vehicles must adhere to procedures regarding downloading of on-board computers as prescribed.
22. Council Emergency vehicles may in non emergency situations be used with care and strictly according to the rules of the Road Traffic Act.
23. All other Council Policies pertaining to Council vehicles shall be adhered to by the driver of an emergency vehicle at all times.

C. EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Emergency Services vehicle shall be operated in a manner that provides for the safety of all person and property. Safe arrival at an incident shall always have priority over unnecessary speeding and reckless driving en-route to an emergency incident.

1. **Prompt, Safe Response shall be attained by:**
 - a. Leaving the station is a standard manner:
 - √ quickly mounting the vehicle,
 - √ all personnel on board, seated an seat belts on,
 - √ station door fully open.

- b. Driving defensively and professionally at reasonable speeds.
- c. Ensuring that destination is clear and best route is known.
- d. Using warning devices to move around traffic and to request the right-of-way in a safe and predictable manner.

2. Response shall not be attained by:

- a. Leaving the station before crews has mounted safely and before machine bay doors are fully open.
- b. Driving too fast for conditions.
- c. Driving recklessly or without regard for safety.
- d. Intimidating or scaring other drivers.
- e. Taking unnecessary chances with negative right of way intersections.

3. En-Route to an Emergency

- a. When responding to an emergency, warning lights must be on and sirens must be sounding to warn drivers of other vehicles.
- b. Emergency vehicle drivers must make every possible effort to make their presence and intended actions known to other drivers, and must drive defensively to be prepared for the unexpected inappropriate actions of others.
- c. Though drivers of emergency vehicles are authorised to exceed posted speed limits when responding to an emergency, this applies only when it is safe to do so and only with light traffic, good roads, good visibility and dry roads.
- d. Under less than favourable conditions, the posted speed limits shall be adhered to at all times.
- e. When approaching and crossing an intersection with the right-of-way, driver shall not exceed the posted speed limits.
- f. When approaching a negative right-of-way intersection (red light or stop sign) the vehicle shall come to a complete stop and may proceed only when the driver can account for all oncoming traffic in all lanes yielding the right-of-way.
- g. When emergency vehicles must use centre or oncoming traffic lanes to approach controlled intersections (traffic light or stop) they must come to a complete stop before proceeding through the intersection,

including occasions when the emergency vehicle has green traffic lights.

- h. During an emergency response, emergency vehicles should avoid passing or overtaking other emergency vehicles. If passing or overtaking is necessary, permission must be obtained through radio communications.
- i. All personnel shall ride only in regular seats provided with the seat belts. Riding on tailboards or other exposed positions is not permitted on any emergency vehicle at anytime.

4. Procedure for accidents en-route

All accidents occurring to emergency vehicles while on route to an emergency or to an ambulance on its way to hospital with a patient shall be handled as follows:

- a. The driver shall report the accident to the Communication Centre and immediately request the Communication Centre to call SAPS as well as an Internal Investigator from Metropolitan Police and the responsible official from the Fleet Workshop (Forman, Inspector or Manger) to visit the scene of the accident.
- b. Vehicle involved shall not be moved until the SAPS and Metro Police arrive and instructed for the removal of vehicles. Where vehicles are completely obstructing traffic, such vehicles can be moved out of the road slightly after their positions have been clearly and visibly marked on the road surface by the person moving these vehicles in order to allow for traffic flow.
- c. In the following instances, the driver/operator of emergency vehicle, may proceed with his/her trip provided the vehicle can still be driven safely after the accident and no injuries are sustained by the crew;
 - (i) An ambulance on its way to a patient or on its way to the hospital with the patient.
 - (ii) A fire engine or other specialised emergency services vehicle on its way to an emergency incident.

In the event where an emergency vehicle is not safe to drive after being involved in accident and can not proceed to its destination, an

alternative available emergency vehicle shall be dispatched to the original incident from the nearest fire station to the incident.

- d. In the event of any serious mechanical damages or defects to the vehicle occurred the removal of vehicles involved shall be authorised by the officer from Internal Investigation or SAPS after the preliminary investigation. The representative from the Workshop will arrange for the removal of the vehicle to the closest Fleet Workshop. The necessary incident reports must be completed and all documentation should be forwarded to the Fleet Workshop for processing within 48 hours after the accident took place.
- e. In the event of an emergency vehicle being involved in an accident outside the boundaries of EMM the relevant Traffic Enforcement Agency or SAPS shall be notified of the accident. On arrival back at the fire station in the EMM area, the necessary reports shall be submitted by the driver through his/her immediate supervisor to the Internal Investigation Unit of EMM and to the Logistical Division of Emergency Services from where it should be sent to the Fleet Workshop where it would be processed for insurance purposes.
- f. In all accidents involving emergency vehicles, the Operational Coordinator on duty shall ensure that the following persons are notified:
 - (i) All relevant Managers of the District where the vehicle is stationed who shall inform the superiors.
 - (ii) Logistical Division or Standby person.
 - (iii) Standby Officer for the District (Night and Weekends)
 - (iv) Standby Officer for the Region (Night and Weekends) Standby Officer for the Metro (Night and Weekends)
 - (v) The Director Emergency Services (Night and Weekends)
 - (vi) The Manager EMS in case of an EMS vehicle (Night and Weekends)
- g. No Driver/Operator/Crew member of any emergency vehicle involved in an accident shall admit guilt at any stage at the incident.
- h. The Driver/Operator/Crew is not permitted to speak to the media about the accident.
- i. In the event of the Driver/Operator of an emergency vehicle being prosecuted or a civil action being instituted against him/her, it is imperative that such legal action/proceedings to be reported to the

Head of Emergency Services as soon as the notice to launch such action become known.

5. Guidelines to be followed by manager on receiving the notification of an accident respond to an accident scene and -

- a. Immediately determine if the driver involved in accident is capable to continue driving. Arrange an alternative driver if not so.
- b. On arrival at the station immediately remove the driver from driving duties.
- c. Make arrangements for the driver to be re-evaluated and re-trained where required before driving the vehicle again.
- d. Ensure that all the necessary documents and reports in accordance with legislation, Council Policies and procedures, are completed and submitted properly to all relevant authorities.
- e. Ensure that all equipment belonging to the vehicle is removed from the vehicle and is stored in safe place before the vehicle is sent in for repairs.
- f. Each officer shall ensure that all documentation pertaining to emergency vehicles is up to date and ready for inspection if so required.
- g. Each officer shall pursue to receive the report of internal investigation after which such an officer will activate the implementation of the recommendations as soon as possible.

6. Arrival at an Incident

- a. The unique hazards of driving on or adjacent to an incident requires the driver to use extreme caution and to be alert and prepared to react to the unexpected.
- b. Drivers must consider the dangers their moving vehicle poses to the personnel working at the incident and spectators who may be preoccupied with the emergency, and may inadvertently step in front or behind a moving vehicle.
- c. When stopped at the scene of an incident, vehicles should be placed to protect personnel who may be working in the street and warning light shall be used to illuminate the scene. All personnel working in or near traffic lanes shall wear high visibility vests.

- d. If it is not necessary to park vehicles in or near traffic lanes, the vehicles should be pulled off the road to parking lots, curbs etc. whenever possible.
- e. The first arriving emergency vehicle at an incident; shall advise additional vehicles of the situation of the incident in order to ensure that additional vehicles do not continue to respond rapidly even if no service is required.

7. Reversing or Backing Emergency Vehicles

- a. Drivers of emergency vehicles shall avoid reversing or backing whenever possible. Where reversing or backing is unavoidable, guides or spotters shall be used.
- b. If a guide is not available, the driver shall dismount and walk completely around the vehicle to determine if obstructions are present before reversing or backing.
- c. Where fire engines or aerial ladders are to be reversed, all crew members shall dismount the vehicle and act as guides or spotters.
- d. Guides or spotters shall be located at as many corners as possible with at least one guider or spotter at the rear corner of the driver's side.
- e. Where only single guider or spotter is available, the guide or spotter should be located off the rear corner of the drivers' side and will act as the primary guide or spotter.
- f. Spotters or Guides are not permitted to ride tailboard positions while guiding an emergency vehicle.
- g. Guides or spotters will discuss the reversing or backing plan with the driver before proceeding. Communication warning process will be agreed upon prior to reversing or backing.
- h. Both windows (driver and front passenger) will be in the down position to allow for maximum communication/hearing between the guides or spotters and the driver.
- i. All two-way radios will be turned down while reversing or backing.
- j. The vehicle shall not be reversed or backed until all guides or spotters are in position and communicated their approval to start reversing or backing.
- k. Guides or spotters shall remain visible to the driver and any time the driver loses sight of the primary guide or spotter, the vehicle shall be

halted immediately until the guide or spotter is visible, and the communication to continue reversing or backing is processed.

- I. When vehicles must be reversed where often vehicle traffic exists, the vehicle's emergency lights shall be operating and safety vest shall be worn by all guides or spotters.

8. Driving back to the Fire Station

- a. The driver of an emergency vehicle shall ensure that all equipment is packed and secured in the vehicle.
- b. The driver shall ensure that all doors and bunkers are closed and everything is secured before leaving the scene.
- c. The driver shall also ensure that all crew members are seated, all doors closed and seat belts are on before leaving the incident spot.
- d. Driving back to the fire station shall be in 100% compliance to road regulations and traffic signs.
- e. No emergency lights shall be on and no siren shall be sounded.

9. Arrival back at the Fire Station

- a. The driver and crew shall ensure that the vehicle is prepared to respond to next emergency call.
- b. The vehicle shall be parked safely by the driver with the assistant of the crew members.

10. Compliance to the Policy

Every Manager/Officer is responsible to ensure that his/her subordinates comply with the contents of the policy at all times. Every Officer or Manager in charge of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of all vehicle operations and managing compliance to this policy.