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# *Communiqué*

...a technical reference bulletin by the Risk Control  
Services Department of the Glatfelter Insurance Group

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## **Driver and Officer Responsibility**

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The safe operation of an emergency vehicle depends heavily on the competency of the driver and the added resources and direction of the front seat officer. All drivers shall attempt to maintain control of the vehicle that they are operating in such a manner as to provide the maximum level of safety for both their passengers and the general public. Emergency vehicle drivers should be aware that the 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 operator fails to yield the right of way to an emergency vehicle, the emergency vehicle driver can not force the right of way, nor can you assume the right of way, therefore you do not have the right of way until the other vehicle yields to you.

### **Driver Responsibility**

- A) Driver of emergency vehicles shall be directly responsible for the safe and prudent operation of the vehicle under all conditions
- B) Driver's first priority shall be for the safe arrival of the emergency vehicle at the emergency scene
- C) Driver shall not move emergency vehicles until all personnel on the vehicle are seated and secured with seat belts and in approved riding positions
- D) During emergency response, drivers of emergency vehicle shall bring the vehicle to a complete stop for any of the following:
  - 1) When directed by a law enforcement officer
  - 2) Red traffic lights
  - 3) Stop signs
  - 4) Negative right-of-way intersection
  - 5) Blind intersections
  - 6) When the driver cannot account for all lanes of traffic in an intersection
  - 7) When other intersection hazards are present
  - 8) When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing warning lights
- E) During non-emergency travel, drivers of emergency vehicles shall obey all traffic control signals and signs and all laws and rules set forth by state or local jurisdiction

**This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review it and make the necessary modifications to meet the needs of your organization. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury to personnel and the general public from injury or property damage. For additional information on this topic, you may contact your VFIS Risk Control Representative at 1-800-233-1957**



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**Driver Responsibilities Continued**

- F) During emergency response or non-emergency travel, drivers of emergency vehicle shall come to a complete stop at all railroad grade crossing
- G) The driver shall be aware of his/her rate of closure on other vehicles and pedestrians
- H) A safe following distance is to be established and maintained, allowing 1 second of following distance for every 10 feet of vehicle length for speeds under 40 mph (add 1 additional second for every 10 mph for speeds over 40 mph)

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Whether actually an elected or appointed officer or not, the individual riding in the front passenger seat of an emergency vehicle takes on the role of co-driver. While not in physical control of the operation of the vehicle the officer provides an additional set of eyes and ears for the driver and should also be responsible for making certain that the driver operates the vehicle in a safe manner. If the driver is negligent in the operation of the vehicle and causes injury and/or property damage, the officer may also be found to be jointly negligent. Standard Operating Guidelines should address the following areas:

**Officer Responsibility**

- 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 statutes
- 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 be responsible to operate the radio and communications equipment during response
- Officer shall operate the audio and visual warning devices
- Officer shall check map book, run cards or computers aided response to assist the driver in determining the safest and most direct route to the emergency scene
- Officer shall assist the driver in intersection crossing and backing according to specific responsibilities outlined in the intersection and backing policies

Rev00/driver and officer responsibility

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