

EMERGENCY VEHICLE RESPONSE

Carroll County EMS

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Vehicle Policies Overview

This document provides model policies and procedures required to support the safe and effective operation of all emergency vehicles; this includes ambulances, command and support units, privately owned vehicles (POVs), and any other vehicles operated by ambulance service members in the performance of their duties.

- **Basic Driving Policies** – Driver qualifications and training, skills maintenance; duties and responsibilities; general traffic laws; reporting safety problems and violations.
- **Emergency Response Policies** – Authorized emergency response, special driver qualifications, applicable traffic laws, and ambulance service driving policies, use of warning devices.
- **Riding Emergency Vehicles** – Permitted vehicle occupants, passenger behavior, and safety in emergency vehicles.
- **Special Safety Considerations** – Scene safety, backing up, parking, operation in high-risk areas.
- **Vehicle Accident Reporting and Investigation** – Accident scene procedures (information gathering, injury assessment, notification, etc.), reporting forms and documentation requirements, post-accident investigation (examination of scene, interviews with participants and witnesses, etc.), report preparation and dissemination.
- **Use of Personal Vehicles** – Authorized use and response, driver behavior, roadway operations, permitted vehicle occupants, reporting safety problems and violations.

Seatbelt Policy

Purpose:

To establish appropriate and safe behavior regarding the use of safety belts when operating or riding in an emergency vehicle.

Scope:

All personnel

Policy:

All persons driving or riding in ambulance service vehicles shall be seated in approved riding positions with seatbelts or safety restraints fastened at all times when the vehicle is in motion.

The driver shall not begin to move the vehicle until all passengers are seated and properly secured. All passengers shall remain seated and secured as long as the vehicle is in motion. Seatbelts shall not be loosened or released while enroute to dress or don equipment.

Members shall not attempt to mount or dismount from a moving vehicle under any circumstances.

Exception:

An EMS member who is providing direct patient care inside an ambulance shall be permitted to release momentarily the seat belt while the vehicle is in motion – **IF IT IS ESSENTIAL TO PROVIDE PATIENT CARE**. When the procedure has been completed, the ambulance service member shall refasten the seatbelt. Time without the protection of a seat belt shall be minimized.

Emergency, Non-Emergency Response Policy

Purpose:

To prioritize the response of emergency vehicles to ensure maximum utilization of resources and that units respond in a mode that corresponds with the prioritization level of the emergency request.

Scope:

All personnel

Policy:

The state traffic laws should be consulted to determine the legal definitions that apply to authorized emergency response.

The determination of which types of calls justify emergency response must consider local factors and traffic conditions. In some cases, the difference between emergency response and non-emergency response could be measured in seconds, while in other cases the difference could be several minutes. In jurisdictions where traffic congestion is a major problem, a “reduced speed policy” shall be implemented to reduce the risks of emergency response, while maintaining the ability to move through traffic.

Standardized triage protocols should be used to classify medical incidents. Emergency response shall be used for only patients with true emergent conditions. All other responses shall be considered non-emergency’s and respond appropriately.

Regulatory & Statute Compliance

The Iowa traffic laws include specific provisions for emergency vehicles, while they are engaged in emergency operations. The Carroll County EMS policies and procedures specify when and how these exceptions will be applied. The ambulance service driving policies and standard operating procedures may be, in some cases, more restrictive than state traffic laws.

Responding to emergency incidents does not in any manner reduce the responsibility to operate vehicles safely. While prompt response to emergency incidents is an organizational priority, safety is always a higher priority. The responding units must arrive safely at the location where they are needed before they can deliver the required services. Unsafe operation of an emergency vehicle creates an unacceptable risk to ambulance service members, to the public, and to the individuals who are in need of assistance.

The motor vehicle laws of Iowa grant specific allowances and exemptions to emergency vehicles, when they are responding to emergency incidents and using the required warning devices. These provisions only apply to officially recognized emergency vehicles, while they are responding to emergency incidents in compliance with all of the applicable laws and regulations.

Notwithstanding such allowances and exemptions, the driver of the emergency vehicle is required to operate responsibly at all times. The emergency vehicle driver has a duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all other persons and property.

The Iowa traffic laws require an emergency vehicle to be equipped with warning lights and audible warning devices (*refer to the applicable state law to determine what is required, what is permitted, and what is prohibited.*) The traffic laws also require drivers to yield the right-of-way to an emergency vehicle when the warning lights and audible warning devices are in operation.

The use of warning lights and audible warning devices does not automatically grant the right-of-way to an emergency vehicle. These devices are intended to make other drivers aware of the presence of an emergency vehicle. Other drivers are required to yield the right-of-way to an emergency vehicle; however, they cannot be expected to yield the right-of-way if they do not see or are not aware of the emergency vehicle.

The emergency vehicle driver must never assume that another vehicle will yield the right-of-way; it is always the emergency vehicle driver's responsibility to ensure that the other driver has yielded the right-of-way. The emergency vehicle driver is responsible for operating in a safe and prudent manner, recognizing that other drivers could be distracted, inattentive, or simply uncooperative. The emergency vehicle driver is not permitted to employ aggressive driving techniques to force another driver to yield the right-of-way.

While responding in an emergency mode, drivers are required to make their presence evident using audible and visual warning devices. Emergency vehicle drivers should also endeavor to make their intentions as clear as possible and their vehicles as visible as possible to other drivers.

Traffic Laws – Emergency Vehicles

The Carroll County EMS has established the following policies that apply to employees/members who are driving ambulance in an emergency response mode. (The same policies apply to the emergency operation of any other vehicle within the scope of a driver's ambulance service duties.)

Use of Warning Device Policy

Purpose:

To establish a policy for the use of warning devices.

Scope:

All personnel

Policy:

Warning lights and audible warning devices shall be used when ambulance are responding in an emergency mode. Both warning lights and audible devices must be operated in order to meet the legal definition of an emergency vehicle.

Warning lights shall be used at all times when ambulance vehicles are operating in an emergency response mode. Audible warning devices (siren and/or horn) shall be used as necessary to warn other drivers and pedestrians of the approach of an emergency vehicle and request the right-of-way. Audible warning devices shall be used in moderation when they are not required to provide warning (light traffic or open road situations).

Audible warning devices shall not be used when a vehicle is operating in a non-emergency mode. Warning lights shall be used when the ambulance is maneuvering or stopped in a location where it creates a traffic hazard.

Speed Limitations Policy

Purpose:

To establish practices that address the speed of emergency vehicles to increase the ability of the driver/operator to maintain safe control the vehicle at all times.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

The driver shall never exceed a speed that is safe and prudent, based on road and weather conditions and other circumstances, including the design and capabilities of the vehicle. The posted speed limit may be exceeded only when the required warning devices are in use and when weather, traffic, and road conditions are favorable. The posted speed limit shall not be exceeded under any other conditions.

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- When conditions are unfavorable, speed shall be determined by the weather conditions.
- The posted advisory speed for a curve shall be considered the maximum allowable speed under all conditions, regardless of response condition.
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Intersection Navigation Policy

Purpose:

To establish procedures and guidelines for the safe operation of all emergency vehicles and apparatus when negotiating intersections.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

The emergency vehicle shall come to a full stop before entering a negative right-of-way intersection (red light, flashing red light, or stop sign), blind intersection, or any intersection where hazards are present and/or the driver cannot account for all oncoming traffic lanes. The emergency vehicle shall not enter the intersection until all approaching traffic has yielded the right-of-way and it is safe to proceed. The emergency vehicle driver shall ensure that all approaching vehicles in all lanes have yielded the right-of-way before advancing.

If necessary, due to traffic conditions or visual obstructions, the emergency vehicle driver shall cross the intersection in stages, treating each lane as a separate intersection. The driver shall stop the vehicle, as necessary, to ensure that each lane may be crossed safely

When passing through an intersection where the emergency vehicle has the right-of-way, by virtue of a green light in the direction of travel and/or a stop signal (stop sign) for cross-traffic, the emergency vehicle shall not exceed the posted speed limit. Emergency vehicle drivers should not assume that oncoming/opposing traffic has stopped, even when facing a green signal or "clear" route; emergency vehicle drivers must visually confirm that oncoming/opposing traffic is stopped while approaching any intersection, and be prepared to stop immediately, if necessary.

Traveling in Opposing Traffic Lanes

Purpose:

To establish practices that address when an emergency vehicle must travel in an opposing lane.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

Operating emergency vehicles in opposing traffic lanes is extremely hazardous under all conditions and should only be considered under exceptional circumstances (i.e., if there is no alternate route of travel).

When approaching a controlled intersection (traffic lights or stop signs) in an opposing traffic lane or center turn lane, the emergency vehicle shall come to a full stop before entering the intersection, if the traffic light is red in the direction of travel.

Note– Please refer to your state motor vehicle code to ascertain whether or not emergency vehicle travel in opposing traffic lanes is allowed under the law.

Travel in an Opposing Direction

Purpose:

To establish safe practices that address when an emergency vehicle must travel against the traffic flow on a one-way street.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

Operating emergency vehicles against the normal flow of traffic is extremely hazardous under all conditions and should only be considered under exceptional circumstances (i.e., if there is no alternate route of travel).

Travel against the normal direction of traffic flow on a one-way street shall be limited to short distances. Emergency vehicle drivers must proceed slowly and with extreme caution in these situations.

The emergency vehicle must come to a full stop before entering an intersection while traveling in an opposing direction.

Note– Please refer to your state motor vehicle code to ascertain whether or not emergency vehicle travel against the normal traffic flow (i.e., the “wrong way” along a one-way street) is allowed under the law.

Passing Traffic in an Emergency Vehicle

Purpose:

To establish safe practices that address when an emergency vehicle must pass traffic moving in the same direction.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

When overtaking traffic that is moving in the same direction, the emergency vehicle driver shall give other drivers an opportunity to yield the right-of-way before passing. If it is necessary to pass a vehicle that has not yielded the right-of-way, the emergency vehicle shall provide as wide a clearance as possible.

A ambulance service emergency vehicle shall not overtake another emergency vehicle that is traveling in the same direction unless the driver of the lead vehicle has indicated that the other may pass. A following vehicle may contact a leading vehicle by radio to request permission to pass.

Railroad Crossing Policy

Purpose:

To establish safe practices that address when an emergency vehicle comes to an unguarded railway grade crossing.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

The emergency vehicle shall come to a full stop at unguarded railway grade crossings. Caution shall be exercised at grade crossings where warning lights and/or gates are provided.

It is not always possible to hear an approaching train, due to the Doppler Effect* and the type of locomotives used on some rail lines (particularly electric locomotives); otherwise “normal” appearing highway vehicles, equipped with rail wheels, are also used by railroads and may be encountered at grade crossings. Emergency vehicle drivers should become familiar with the specific characteristics of the rail lines in their area.

Warning devices and crossing gates are generally reliable, but can fail due to the harsh conditions to which they are exposed—these devices are designed to fail in the “safe” mode. When approaching a grade crossing with lowered gates and/or active lights and no apparent rail traffic, the emergency vehicle shall come to a full stop prior to the crossing; before proceeding, the emergency vehicle driver shall visually confirm that no train or other rail vehicle is approaching on the tracks. Complete confirmation may require that members physically dismount the vehicle to visually check the tracks.

**The “Doppler Effect” is the perceptible change in the frequency and wavelength of a sound wave as it moves relative to an observer.*

Stopped School Bus

Purpose:

To establish safe practices that address when an emergency vehicle comes to a school bus that has stopped with red lights flashing.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

The emergency vehicle shall not pass a school bus that has stopped with red lights flashing to load or discharge passengers, unless the bus driver clearly signals that it is safe to pass.

When clearly signaled by the bus driver that it is safe to pass a stopped school bus, the emergency vehicle shall proceed slowly and with extreme caution past the school bus; all members must be vigilant for children while approaching and passing the bus. The emergency vehicle driver must be prepared to stop immediately while approaching, passing, and leaving the area in which the school bus is stopped.

Pedestrian Crosswalk

Purpose:

To establish safe practices that address when an emergency vehicle comes to a pedestrian crosswalk.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

The emergency vehicle shall not exceed the posted speed limit when approaching a pedestrian crosswalk. If the crosswalk is occupied, the emergency vehicle shall slow down and be prepared to stop if the pedestrian does not yield the right-of-way.

Law Enforcement Directions

Purpose:

To establish safe practices that address when a law enforcement officer gives directions to an emergency vehicle.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

The emergency vehicle shall comply with the directions of a sworn law enforcement officer, including a signal to stop.

Law enforcement officials may also direct the specific positioning, or repositioning, of emergency vehicles on an incident scene to maintain traffic flow, reduce bottlenecks, enhance scene safety, and prevent secondary collisions. Compliance with such direction is generally required of emergency vehicle drivers and their supervisors or chiefs; if a difference of opinion regarding scene safety arises, it should be raised in a cooperative fashion with the ranking law enforcement officer on the scene.

Note– State motor vehicle codes may contain provisions describing the onscene relationships between various public safety entities including ambulance services, rescue squads, law enforcement agencies, highway departments, and others; ambulance service managers, supervisors, chiefs, and emergency vehicle drivers must become familiar with these specific provisions. Establishing positive and mutually supporting relationships, through training and exercises, with law enforcement and other members of the public safety community is highly recommended.

Aggressive Driving

Purpose:

To establish safe practices that address when an emergency vehicle driver employs aggressive driving techniques.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

Emergency vehicle drivers shall not employ aggressive driving techniques to force other drivers to yield the right-of-way.

Emergency vehicles must be operated with due regard for the safety of civilian traffic at all times, and under all circumstances; the elimination of aggressive driving techniques is also critical for protecting the safety of other crew members assigned to the vehicle.

Emergency vehicle drivers have been cited, fined, and sentenced to imprisonment for causing harm through aggressive driving.

Special Driving Procedures

Backing Policy

Purpose:

To establish safe practices to ensure emergency vehicles are safely moved when operating in reverse mode.

Scope:

All Personnel.

Policy:

Before backing an ambulance service vehicle, the driver shall ensure that the intended path is clear of hazards or obstructions.

One or more spotters shall be employed as guides in all situations where the driver does not have a clear vision of the path of travel. Two spotters should be assigned when backing large or heavy apparatus—one covering each side of the vehicle.

A spotter is responsible for guiding the driver and ensuring that any potential hazards are avoided. Standard signals shall be used to communicate with the driver during the backing maneuver; hand signals or voice signals transmitted over a portable radio can be employed for this purpose. The spotter shall direct the driver to stop at any time the backing maneuver cannot be completed safely.

The spotter(s) shall be on the ground, to the rear of the vehicle, and shall remain visible to the driver at all times. If the driver loses sight of the spotter(s) at any time, the driver shall immediately stop the vehicle. Portable radios or tethered vehicle-mounted intercom systems are recommended for spotters' safety. In no case are cameras or safety devices a substitute for a spotter. (NFPA 1500 requires at least one spotter to have contact with the driver.)

If it is essential to back a vehicle with limited rearward visibility and no spotter is available, the driver shall stop, dismount, and visually perform a 360-degree check around the vehicle before backing, with emphasis on the area behind and to both sides. After checking the area, the driver shall back the vehicle at slow speed and with extreme caution, prepared to stop immediately if necessary.

Signals

- **Straight Back:** One hand above the head with palm toward face, waving back. Other hand at your side. (Left or right hand optional)
- **Turn:** Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended. (Driver will advise the spotter which way the turn will be made. The spotter then assists the driver in backing apparatus. The driver's intentions must be verbally communicated to the spotter.)
- **Stop:** Both arms crossed with hands in fist. Be sure to yell the stop order loud enough that the driver can hear the warning.

Night Backing

Signals will be the same. The spotter will ensure that the spotlights on rear of apparatus are turned on before allowing apparatus to be backed. A flashlight may be carried, but at no time will it be directed toward the mirror.

Maneuvering at an Incident Scene

Purpose:

To establish safe practices that address when maneuvering an emergency vehicle at an incident scene.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

Drivers shall exercise extreme caution while maneuvering emergency vehicles at an incident scene; other drivers and pedestrians may be distracted or preoccupied by events and a variety of hazards (e.g., downed or low-hanging wires, limited visibility, hazardous materials, etc.) may be encountered. Vehicles shall be moved slowly and cautiously, with spotters assigned to guide the driver in tight situations.

When streets have been closed to regular traffic, the emergency vehicle driver remains fully responsible for the safe and prudent operation of the vehicle at all times.

When operating at an incident scene where the streets have not been closed to regular traffic, ambulance service vehicles shall be positioned, parked, or staged in a manner that considers safety as a primary factor.

Check for Unsecured Personnel: Before moving an emergency vehicle in any location, the driver shall ensure that all occupants are seated and properly secured in approved riding positions. The driver shall also ensure that no one is in the process of mounting, dismounting, standing on top of, or on the outside of, the vehicle.

Under no circumstances shall members be allowed to ride on the outside of a moving apparatus, including the tailboard, roof.

Return to Roadway

Purpose:

To establish safe practices that address when an emergency vehicle needs to return to the roadway when the wheels leave the paved surface of the roadway.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

Ambulance service vehicle operators shall be aware of the actions to be taken if the wheels of the vehicle leave the paved surface of the roadway. In these situations, the vehicle shall be slowed to a speed below 20 miles-per-hour before any attempt is made to return it to the roadway.

Depending on road conditions and the condition of the off-road surface on which the vehicle is moving, it may be necessary to carefully bring the vehicle to a complete stop before attempting a return to the roadway.

Emergency Vehicle Drivers

Basic Driver Training

Purpose:

To establish a comprehensive basic driver training and education program that must be successfully completed by all drivers in the organization.

Scope:

All personnel who drive light duty vehicles in non-emergency mode.

Policy:

Basic driver training shall be completed before a member is authorized to drive any ambulance service vehicle or to drive a privately owned vehicle on ambulance service business. The ambulance service shall ensure that the individual is properly licensed and insured and has the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to operate a vehicle safely. The initial driver training program shall include:

- Traffic laws
- Traffic and highway safety
- Basic vehicle dynamics
- Inspection and maintenance procedures
- Competency course
- Over-the-road evaluation

Upon completion of the basic driver program, a member is authorized to drive light duty vehicles in a non-emergency mode. This classification includes passenger vehicles, SUVs, vans, and pick-up trucks. Additional training shall be required before the member is qualified to drive larger vehicles or to operate any vehicle in the emergency response mode.

The department shall periodically review the performance of each member who is authorized to drive ambulance service vehicles. The authorization to drive may be suspended or revoked as a result of such reviews and/or additional training may be required to maintain driving status. Members, who repeatedly fail to comply with ambulance service driving policies and procedures or violate traffic laws while driving ambulance service vehicles, should be re-evaluated or disciplined, if necessary.

Driver Training Program

Purpose:

To offer a comprehensive and advanced driver training program to provide members with the skills and knowledge necessary to reduce vehicle accidents and limit injuries to themselves and the public.

Scope:

All personnel who drive department vehicles in emergency mode.

Policy:

Department vehicles shall only be driven/operated by individuals who comply with the applicable state driver's license requirements and have been trained and certified to operate the particular vehicle or type/class of vehicle through the Ambulance service Driver Training Program.

The Driver Training Program will meet or exceed the guidelines set forth by the Iowa Department of Motor Vehicles Commercial Driver License Program and will prepare drivers to meet the requirements of NFPA 1002 Standard for Ambulance service Vehicle Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications.

The Department shall periodically review the performance of each member who is authorized to drive ambulances. The authorization to drive may be suspended or revoked as a result of such reviews and/or additional training may be required to maintain driving status. Members, who repeatedly fail to comply with ambulance service driving policies and procedures or violate traffic laws while driving ambulance service vehicles, should be re-evaluated or disciplined, if necessary.

Emergency Vehicle Operator's Course

Purpose:

To set forth requirements to be a driver for emergency vehicles for the Carroll County EMS

Scope:

All personnel who drive emergency vehicles for the organization.

Policy:

Before being authorized to operate any ambulance service vehicle in an emergency response mode, the member shall successfully complete an Emergency Vehicle Operator's Course (EVOC). Following completion of the EVOC program, the individual must demonstrate an appropriate understanding of the specific policies, procedures, and considerations that apply to emergency response, before being authorized to operate vehicles in an emergency response mode. A refresher EVOC training class is required at intervals of not more than three (3) years to maintain emergency vehicle operator status.

Driving Record Review

Purpose:

To set forth qualifications and requirements to be a driver for emergency vehicles for the Carroll County EMS

Scope:

All personnel who drive emergency vehicles for the organization.

Policy:

The department Director shall obtain and review a copy of the member's motor vehicle record from the state Department of Motor Vehicles prior to allowing an individual to begin driver training. Each authorized driver's Motor Vehicle Record shall be reviewed periodically (at intervals of three years or less, with annual reviews recommended) to ensure that the individual maintains safe driving habits.

An individual who has been charged with an offense that could result in a suspension or revocation of his or her driver's license should notify his or her supervisor or chief within 48 hours. The individual may be suspended from driving emergency vehicles pending judgment, depending on the circumstances and existing department policy. Such charges would include:

- Driving while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs
- Negligent homicide or gross negligence
- Aggravated assault with a motor vehicle
- Reckless driving
- Leaving the scene of an accident

Alcohol & Substance Abuse Policy

Purpose:

To eliminate the abusive use of alcohol and illegal drugs through education, rehabilitation, and supervision techniques.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

EMS Personnel are not permitted to be on duty, to respond to emergency incidents, to drive or operate ambulance service vehicles, nor to perform any other duty-related functions while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

EMS Personnel shall not perform any duty-related functions for a minimum of eight (8) hours following the consumption of any alcoholic beverages. A longer period waiting period may be required to ensure that the individual is free of impairment. A blood alcohol concentration of 0.02 percent or higher, while on duty, shall create the presumption that the member is under the influence of alcohol.

The driver and the officer in charge of any Carroll County EMS vehicle that is involved in an accident that causes measurable property damage, injury or death shall be tested for the presence of alcohol or drugs with the least possible delay. In addition, a chief officer may require a member to be tested for the presence of drugs or alcohol at any time, upon reasonable suspicion that the member could be under the influence of such substances.

Privately Owned Vehicle Response

Privately Owned Vehicle Response Policy

Purpose:

To establish guidelines governing the response to department events/incidents in privately owned vehicles (POVs).

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

Personnel must follow all laws and regulations for the State of Iowa that apply to non-emergency vehicles, unless the state statute allows POVs to operate as an emergency vehicle.

Please reference the following state regulation:

1. Iowa Code

321.231 Authorized emergency vehicles and police bicycles.

1. The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call or when in the pursuit of an actual or suspected perpetrator of a felony or in response to an incident dangerous to the public or when responding to, but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in this section.
2. The driver of any authorized emergency vehicle may:
 - a. Park or stand an authorized emergency vehicle, irrespective of the provisions of this chapter.
 - b. Disregard laws or regulations governing direction of movement for the minimum distance necessary before an alternative route that conforms to the traffic laws and regulations is available.
3. The driver of a fire department vehicle, police vehicle, or ambulance, or a peace officer riding a police bicycle in the line of duty may do any of the following:
 - a. Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.
 - b. Exceed the maximum speed limits so long as the driver does not endanger life or property.
4. The exemptions granted to an authorized emergency vehicle under subsection 2 and for a fire department vehicle, police vehicle, or ambulance as provided in subsection 3 shall apply only when such vehicle is making use of an audible signaling device meeting the requirements of section 321.433 or a visual signaling device, except that use of an audible or visual signaling device shall not be required when exercising the exemption granted under subsection 3, paragraph "b" of this section when the vehicle is operated by a peace officer, pursuing a suspected violator of the speed restrictions imposed by or pursuant to this chapter, for the purpose of determining the speed of travel of such suspected violator.
5. The foregoing provisions shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle or the rider of a police bicycle from the duty to drive or ride with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such provisions protect the driver or rider from the consequences of the driver's or rider's reckless disregard for the safety of others.

Authorization to Operate a POV as an Emergency Vehicle

Purpose:

To establish guidelines governing the official authorization allowing personnel to respond to department events/incidents in privately owned vehicles (POVs).

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

- Driver must own and operate a vehicle that complies with all state and local regulations, including, but not limited to; valid insurance & inspection.
- Driver must read and demonstrate an understanding of the Department's policies regarding use of "lights & sirens."
- The POV must be in proper mechanical condition and the warning devices in compliance with the applicable laws.
- Driver must wear a seatbelt at all times while operating the vehicle.
- Driver must complete an Emergency Vehicle Operator Course (EVOC).
- Driver must submit to a medical examination, skills evaluation, and driving record check.

Courtesy/Warning Light Policy

Purpose:

To establish guidelines governing the use of a “Courtesy/Warning Light” in privately owned vehicles (POVs) responding to an incident.

Scope:

All personnel who are authorized to respond to an incident in a POV.

Policy:

To ensure the safety of its members, the authorization for use of a “Courtesy/Warning Light” must be approved by the department.

Installation and use of warning lights on privately owned vehicles must be in accordance with state laws and regulations.

An authorized driver may use colored warning lights on privately owned vehicles to request the right-of-way when responding to emergency incidents. The use of a courtesy/warning light does not provide any special privileges or exemptions to traffic laws. Other drivers are not required to yield the right-of-way to a vehicle that has a courtesy light in operation. The only purpose of the warning light is to request that other drivers yield the right-of-way; the POV driver is required to comply with all traffic laws.

The Department will revoke the authorization to use a warning/courtesy light if a member fails to comply with all of the requirements and legal limitations.

Accident Reporting & Investigation

Purpose:

To provide a standard system to report and investigate all department vehicular accidents and near misses (departmental or personal). (A near miss incident is defined as an incident in which no property damage and no personal injury occurred, but where, given a slight shift in time, position, or other circumstances, damage or injury would or may have occurred.)

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

All Department vehicular accidents should be reported to the communications center immediately.

The report should include the following:

- Unit ID or Apparatus Number
- Exact accident location
- An indication for need for additional medical assistance (e.g., BLS, ALS, etc...)
- An estimate of the extent and nature of the injuries and vehicle damage
- Indication on whether the vehicle is drivable
- Indication of need for cover assignment

While at the accident scene:

- Initiate appropriate medical care
- Do not discuss the incident with anyone other than fire and police representatives
- Do not move your vehicle unless it is creating a traffic hazard
- If you must move your vehicle, chalk the position of your tires prior to moving.
- Obtain witness names and contact information
- Remain at the scene until the police and fire representatives have completed their investigation

Based on the reported information, the Communications Center will:

- Dispatch any needed medical assistance
- Notify the Police Dispatcher of the incident
- Notify Department Director/ Supervisor

All department vehicle accidents will be investigated. The process will include the following:

- Fact Finding Review
 - Separate interviews with the driver, all crew members, accident witnesses
 - Notes recorded at each interview
 - Contact Information recorded at each interview
- Notification of any applicable City/Town Agencies (e.g., Risk Management, Insurance Adjuster, etc...)
- Department employees involved in the incident should be isolated from the general public, the other parties involved in the incident, and the media.
- Members may be placed on Administrative Leave or directed to take a leave of absence during the initial investigative process.

The investigating officer should attempt to collect the following:

- Photographs/Video of the incident
- Police Report
- Name and badge of investigating Police Officer
- Names and contact information for all parties involved (including witnesses)
- Applicable City/Town/Department Accident Reports/Forms

Roadway and Roadside Scene Safety Policy

Purpose:

To establish guidelines for protection of personnel and incident victims at all roadway or roadside incident scenes.

Scope:

All personnel.

Policy:

This procedure identifies parking practices for Carroll County EMS 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.

It shall be the policy of the Carroll County EMS to position emergency vehicles at a vehicle-related incident on any street, road, highway, or expressway in a manner that best protects the incident scene and the work area. Such positioning shall afford protection to ambulance service personnel, law enforcement officers, tow service operators and the motoring public from the hazards of working in or near moving traffic.

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 roadway incident.

Always consider moving vehicles as a threat to your safety. At every vehicle-related emergency scene, personnel are exposed to passing motorists of varying driving abilities. At any time, a motorist may be driving without a legal driver's license.

Approaching vehicles may be driven at speeds from a creeping pace to well beyond the posted speed limit. Some of these vehicle operators may be vision impaired, under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, or have a medical condition that affects their judgment or abilities. In addition, 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.

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.