



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

SAN JUAN ISLAND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
SAN JUAN COUNTY PUBLIC HOSPITAL DISTRICT NO.1

VEHICLE SAFETY AND OPERATIONS

SOG #
111-09

APPROVED: Chief Jim Cole

ISSUED
4/11/2006 Revised
3/19/2008

REVISED
03/31/2009

PURPOSE:

San Juan Island EMS has an obligation to insure that any driver of EMS vehicles is well trained, in good physical condition, has a proper safe driving attitude and is capable of handling a vehicle with a high degree of skill and common sense. These factors show that not everyone will qualify as a driver. Many personnel who do not qualify as a driver excel in other EMS duties and should not feel discouraged.

SCOPE:

This guideline is to be followed by all members of this EMS regardless of the municipality in which the emergency is located. Authority to deviate from this guideline rests solely with the Chief unless authorized elsewhere.

SECTION 111-06-1 EMS DRIVERS

1. No person shall drive an EMS vehicle under emergency conditions (Code Red) prior to being authorized by the Chief.
2. No person under the age of 21 shall operate an EMS vehicle at any time unless authorized by the Chief or designee.
3. No person may drive an EMS vehicle without a valid U.S. driver license.
4. All drivers (see 1 above) shall:
 - A. Successfully complete Emergency Vehicle Incident Prevention as prescribed by W.S.F.S.T.
 - B. Be re-evaluated and re-qualified every four years as per W.S.F.S.T. rules, RCWs and WACs.
 - C. Receive individual EMS driver training if required by the Chief or his/her designee.
5. Physical Condition:
 - A. EMS drivers shall be deemed medically capable and should not drive if there is any concern of seizures or illness.
- (6) Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (suspension of license within the previous three years).

B. No person shall operate an EMS vehicle or equipment or report to a drill, emergency scene or EMS sponsored event while under the influence of intoxicants, prescription medications which may impair, or controlled substance. (Refer to Policy AD-8).

C. Every EMS volunteer must carry proof of insurance on his/her own vehicle in accordance with Washington State Law and operate that vehicle within required guidelines.

SECTION 111-06-2 APPARATUS CONDITION IN THE STATION

1. Parking Brake:
The parking brake shall be set prior to shut-down of the vehicle during the parking guideline. Doing so will insure that the brake is set while the vehicle is at rest and that the vehicle is in a safe mode for the starting guideline.
2. Seat belts:
Seat belts shall be left in a position which will enable the next user to buckle up the belt with the least possible motion.
3. Switch Positions:
Switches shall be left in the off position.
4. Transmission Positions:
The vehicle shall be placed in "Park."

SECTION 111-06-3 PREPLANNED ROUTES

Emergency response routes shall be pre-selected prior to the emergency vehicle responding. **KNOW EXACTLY WHERE YOU ARE GOING BEFORE YOU RESPOND!**

1. Four basic factors to be considered:
 - A. Location of emergency, its entrances and exits.
 - B. Events affecting traffic flow-construction, power lines down, etc.
 - C. Characteristics of local roads and streets.
 - D. Road conditions, time of day (school zones, community events, etc.).

SECTION 111-06-4 SEAT BELTS

Seat belts *shall* be worn by all personnel when the emergency vehicle is in motion when possible. There may be times when patient care requires the release of attendant seatbelts. This should be minimized when possible. Let the driver know when occupants are not belted.

The patient shall be restrained on the gurney utilizing all of the restraint devices whenever the patient is on the gurney. This includes the shoulder straps. There may be times when the shoulder straps will inhibit patient care, in these instances; these additional restraints should be carefully tucked away as to not hinder the safe operation of the cot.

SECTION 111-06-5 USE OF SIGNALING EQUIPMENT

Red lights and siren shall be operated when responding under emergency (Code Red) conditions. Headlights shall be on at all times when the ambulance is turned on and out of the bay. Do not use constant high beams, and dim as necessary.

SECTION 111-06-6 RESPONSE SPEED

1. To assure a safe response to emergencies, vehicles shall be operated with judgment rather than with speed. All personnel responding shall use caution and shall keep safety in mind. Conditions affecting driving such as road, weather, traffic signals and traffic congestion may dictate further reductions in speed.
2. When not responding to alarms, drivers shall obey all traffic laws.
3. Speed at Uncontrolled Intersections- Extreme caution must be used as the right-of-way shall not automatically be assumed. Speed shall be dictated by traffic and weather conditions and the emergency vehicle shall be under control and have the capability of stopping at any point in the intersection short of a collision.
4. The speed limit should only be exceeded when weather, traffic, and vehicle conditions safely allow an increased rate of speed. Generally, emergency vehicles should not exceed 10-12 miles over the posted speed limit in optimal conditions because of their high centers of gravity and increased braking distance needs. When hazardous or congested roads exist, the emergency vehicle operator should consider traveling at a reduced rate of speed when conditions warrant (i.e. wet or icy conditions.) The driver must always show “due regard” when driving in any condition. Remember that you are only requesting the right of way and should not assume that it has been given until demonstrated by traffic response.

SECTION 111-06-7 RESPONDING CODE RED in the Ambulance

1. Driver and Right-seater responsibilities:
 - a. The driver will not operate radios, operate the siren controls, read maps or conduct any activity other than driving. If desired, the driver may switch the siren control to “HF” (“hands-free”) so that he/she can operate the siren using the steering-wheel controls.
 - b. The right-seater shall operate the radios, talk on the radios, operate the siren controls (except as noted above) and do the map reading.
 - c. Intersections: The driver will audibly clear left and right at intersections as will the right-seater.
2. Driver-only operations:
 - a. In general, both a driver and right seater should be in the cab for code red operation. If only a driver is present, the response should be reduced to code yellow unless specifically requested otherwise by the duty paramedic.

SECTION 111-06-7 BACKING THE EMERGENCY VEHICLE

1. When backing apparatus, a minimum of one person shall be stationed at the rear, in a position to communicate with the driver and act as a guide. The guide shall be positioned at the left rear or right rear of the apparatus, as conditions dictate. This rule applies to backing into the bay, when a backer is available.
2. If communications between the driver and the guide are lost, the driver shall bring the apparatus to an immediate halt. The apparatus shall remain stopped until communication between the driver and guide is restored. If it is impossible to obtain a guide and it is absolutely necessary to back the apparatus, the driver shall get out of the vehicle and check the area prior to backing.
3. Backing shall be done slowly. Drivers shall use vehicle backup sounding alarms and guides, using standard hand signals for maneuvering the apparatus when prudent.

SECTION 111-06-8 PARKING AT EMERGENCY SCENES (See addendum at end)

1. All apparatus at emergency scenes shall be parked in a manner which will permit as free a flow of traffic, including EMS traffic, as possible, consistent with the emergency. See addendum.
2. When apparatus is at an emergency location and not legally parked, all emergency lights shall be left on. Traffic cones or flares shall be set when the situation warrants it. Headlights shall be left in the dim position with the engine running.
3. Ambulance should remain running unless contraindicated by exhaust hazard or other reason. Vehicle should remain lighted with emergency lighting when blocking roadway or otherwise parked in a non-traditional way. Lighting should also continue to be utilized when it may alert other responders to the presence of the scene.

SECTION 111-06-9 OPERATIONS AT SCHOOL BUSES, HAZARDOUS AREAS

1. When approaching a school bus which is displaying flashing lights to load or unload passengers, all emergency lights and siren shall be switched off and the apparatus brought to a complete stop until such time that the bus ceases to display its warning signals and all pedestrians are clear of the roadway.
2. When horses with riders on the roadway are approached, reduce response to Code Yellow until well past, then resume Code Red response.
3. While responding Code Red through a school zone, all lighting and sirens are to be in continuous operation. Personnel should never exceed the posted School speed limit under any circumstance.

SECTION 111-06-10 AUTHORIZED RIDERS

No person other than EMS personnel shall be permitted to ride on ambulance calls, except when authorized to do so by the Chief or on call paramedic as necessary for patient care.

SECTION 111-06-11 ACCIDENT REPORTING

1. It is the responsibility of each member of EMS to report immediately any and all accidents to the Chief and Paramedic on the call.
2. It is the responsibility of the driver of an EMS vehicle involved in an accident to complete all the required forms immediately following the accident.
3. Vehicle Accident Reports:
 - A. At the scene- The unit involved shall notify the Sheriff's Dispatch as follows:
 - (1) Exact location of the accident.
 - (2) Nature of the accident; pedestrian, two-car, etc.
 - (3) Number of injuries and assistance required; aid car, tow truck, etc.
 - B. Upon notification, the Sheriff's Dispatch will be requested to:
 - (1) Dispatch required assistance.
 - (2) Dispatch another ambulance to the original call, if necessary.
 - (3) Advise the Duty Paramedic and Chief immediately if not on the call.
4. The unit involved will render assistance or aid to the injured.
5. The unit involved will continue response to the dispatched emergency only under the following conditions:
 - A. Where possible, will continue after:
 1. Assigning one member with a portable radio and a first-aid kit to render assistance and initiate accident investigation.
 2. Conducting mechanical check of the vehicle to determine that any damage incurred will not affect vehicle operation.
 3. SPECIAL CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO BRAKES, STEERING, LIGHTS, RADIATOR,ETC.
 - B. Apparatus will be placed out-of-service under the following conditions:
 1. Serious injury or suspected death.
 2. Serious damage to property.
 3. Damage to the apparatus where, in the opinion of the driver, the vehicle can not safely continue response, i.e., damage to steering, brakes, lights, etc.
 4. If the vehicle is unable to respond to the emergency, leave in place until released by the Sheriff.
6. The unit will initiate accident investigation:
 - A. Obtain names, addresses and phone numbers of any witnesses.

- B. Urge witnesses to remain on the scene until the Deputy arrives.
 - C. Members are cautioned not to make any statements which may be construed as admitting guilt or laying blame for the accident.
7. Reports- Accident report forms shall be in each station. The driver shall complete the form after the accident and bring it to the EMS Office during normal business hours.

SECTION 111-06-12 OPERATIONS OF PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES

1. Use of four-way flashers in private vehicles while responding to emergencies is **unlawful. RCW 46.37.230)**
2. Every EMS volunteer must carry proof of vehicle registration and insurance on his/her personally owned vehicle in accordance with Washington State Law. (RCW 46.30.020)
3. Vehicles not licensed to the EMT should not be used for Aid Unit purposes unless fully insured for that purpose.
4. All drivers shall obey **all** traffic laws when responding to the station or to the emergency scene in their Privately Owned Vehicle (POV).
5. POVs **MAY NOT** follow emergency vehicle at an increased rate of speed and must pull to the right and yield right of way as all other traffic is expected to do.
6. EMTs found to be in violation of traffic rules while responding in their course of duty may face discipline by the Aid Unit, as well as, criminal traffic penalties as local law enforcement may deem necessary.
7. Upon arrival at the scene, all POVs shall be parked where they do not impede the flow of emergency vehicles or scene operations. POVs shall not be left in a hazardous or unsafe way, which might cause an accident or block the normal flow of traffic, unless needed for scene safety initially.
8. POVs shall utilize four-way flashers, with headlights off if there is a necessity to park in a non-standard parking space or at roadside.
9. Great care should be taken to assure that arriving emergency apparatus has the most plentiful and CLOSEST access to the patient and the scene as possible.

SECTION 111-06-13 OPERATING OTHER AGENCY APPARATUS FOR AID UNIT RESPONSE

1. When EMTs are utilizing another agency's apparatus (i.e. Fire Department or sheriff vehicles) for the purpose of responding solely as an EMT and not under Mutual Aid response, these EMTs must have the full-written authorization of their department's administration with the foreknowledge that EMS insurance will not cover the operation/liability of that vehicle or driver. The EMT shall have their Chief or Administrator contact the EMS Chief to get this approved into a written agreement.
2. EMTs approved to respond in other agency apparatus shall never respond "Code Red," but as they were operating their own POV, following all the regulations of normal driving operations.
3. EMTs shall not use their other department's personnel titles, frequencies, or guidelines while responding to or during Aid calls. If responding with radio capability, they may only use the

licensed Aid frequency, announcing “EMT Last Name)” responding/on scene as incident commander, etc.

4. If EMS personnel operate another department’s apparatus under the Mutual Aid agreement, that EMT shall be assumed to be responding as a non-EMT member of that department and governed by the guidelines of their administration.
5. If dually trained personnel initially respond with another agency, they shall report to their respective Incident Commander. If EMS personnel are still needed, that EMT may ask for clearance to report to the EMS Medical Incident Commander from their original I/C.

SECTION 111-06-14 SEVERE WEATHER PREPAREDNESS

1. When severe weather is threatening, the on-call medic shall keep apprised of the changing weather situation and make necessary plans and or arrangements for the safe and effective response of District apparatus as per their discretion.
2. When snow is to exceed 3-4 inches, at least one ambulance (if not all 3) shall be outfitted with rear tire chains as per the on call paramedic’s discretion.
3. Paramedic vehicles shall be routinely outfitted with studded snow tires during the period legally authorized under the appropriate WAC. When tires are being placed on the vehicle at the beginning of the season, the mechanic is to determine the appropriate tread depth and spike length and condition. If tires are near minimum standards, they should be replaced.
4. When snow and or ice exceed 6 inches, the paramedic vehicles shall be outfitted with rear tire chains in addition to the studded snow tires. Paramedic vehicles shall be operated in 4x4 mode as is appropriate and in careful consideration of speed dictated by road conditions and weather.
5. The on-call paramedic shall make determination of the appropriateness of apparatus to respond given weather and road conditions and may adjust normal response guidelines to increase safety and care for patients and responders.

