

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Intersection Practices

Intersections are the locations responsible for the largest percentage of major accidents involving emergency vehicles. Even with the use of warning devices, intersections pose a serious threat to the safety of both emergency service personnel as well as the general public. All emergency service organizations should adopt and practice intersection operating guidelines during all emergency responses. Your emergency services organization should review the following best practices and compare them to your organization's SOGs, state statutes and applicable standards. Prior to implementation the SOGs should be reviewed by legal counsel.

Controlled Intersections

Any intersection controlled by a stop sign, yield sign, yellow traffic light or a red traffic light requires **Prudent Action** by the emergency vehicle driver. The following steps should be taken:

- Do not rely on warning devices to clear traffic
- Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast etc.) as well as driver options
- Begin to slow down well before reaching the intersection and cover the brake pedal with the drivers foot, continue to scan in 4 directions (left, right, front,, back)
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200' from intersection
- Scan intersection for possible passing options (pass on right, left, wait, etc.) avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible
- During emergency response be prepared to bring the vehicle to a complete stop for any of the following:
 - When directed by a law enforcement officer
 - Red traffic lights
 - Stop signs
 - Negative right-of-way intersection
 - When the driver cannot account for visible traffic in the lanes of traffic in an intersection
 - When other intersection hazards are present
 - When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing warning lights
- Establish eye contact with other vehicle drivers; have partner communicate all is clear; reconfirm all visible traffic is stopped
- Account for traffic one lane of traffic at a time treating each lane of traffic as a separate intersection

At any time an emergency vehicle driver approaches an unguarded rail crossing he/she shall bring the apparatus or vehicle he/she is operating to a complete stop before entering the grade crossing. In addition the emergency vehicle driver shall perform the following prior to proceeding:

- turn off all sirens and air horns
- operator the motor at idle speed
- turn off any other sound producing equipment or accessories
- open the windows and listen for a train's horn

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

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Uncontrolled Intersections

Any intersection that does not offer a control device (stop sign, yield or traffic signal) in the direction of travel of the emergency vehicle or where a traffic control signal is green upon the approach of the emergency vehicle all emergency vehicle drivers should do the following:

- Scan the intersection for possible hazards (right turns on red, pedestrians, vehicles traveling fast, etc.). Observe traffic in all 4 directions (left, right, front, rear)
- Slow down if any potential hazards are detected and cover the brake pedal with the driver's foot.
- Change the siren cadence not less than 200' from intersection
- Avoid using the opposing lane of traffic if at all possible.

Emergency vehicle drivers should always be prepared to slow or bring their vehicle to a stop. 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.