
Apparatus / Vehicle Backing

906.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to help members avoid the dangers inherent to vehicle backing operations and reduce the high incidence of firefighter injuries and fatalities.

906.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Apparatus - Any district vehicle that is designed and equipped to support firefighting and rescue operations, including those equipped with an aerial ladder, elevating platform or water tower that may position members, handle materials, provide continuous egress or discharge water at positions elevated from the ground.

Driver - The member charged with driving the vehicle or apparatus. This member is in control of the vehicle or apparatus and therefore is responsible for its movement.

Officer - The member responsible for the operation of the vehicle or apparatus and its personnel. The Officer may also be the driver.

Spotter - A member designated to direct the driver while backing up the vehicle or apparatus. This position may be referred to as a back-up person.

Vehicle - Any automobile or light utility vehicle owned or leased by the Fresno County Fire Protection District and used for department business.

906.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Fresno County Fire Protection District that operators, when feasible, will drive around the block rather than backing an apparatus or vehicle. Hose lines shall be picked up by driving forward over the hose rather than backing.

906.3 OFFICER AND DRIVER RESPONSIBILITIES

Firefighter safety is extremely important. Backing operations are the most common cause of fire service vehicle collisions. Training and awareness of the potential dangers of backing operations is anticipated to reduce the incidence of firefighter injuries and fatalities.

Before backing-up an apparatus or vehicle, all potential backing-up impediments should be reviewed to ensure that obstructions are clear to avoid a collision.

The officer and/or driver is responsible for deploying spotters when backing-up or as necessary to allow the safe movement of an apparatus.

The driver should not move the vehicle or apparatus until the spotters have been deployed in a backing-up situation.

If the driver loses sight of the spotter, the member shall stop apparatus until the spotter is back in sight.

Apparatus / Vehicle Backing

If more than one spotter is being used, the driver will need to maintain contact with both spotters. This means shifting attention from one spotter to another frequently so as to safely move the apparatus, while maintaining the safety of the spotters. This will require the apparatus to be moving at a slower than normal rate.

If at any time the driver feels that the situation is not safe, he/she should stop the vehicle or apparatus until the situation is corrected. This may mean getting out and physically walking around the apparatus or down the road in the direction the apparatus is headed.

906.4 SPOTTER RESPONSIBILITIES

Spotters are generally used when backing-up large vehicles or fire apparatus.

Voice communication between the spotter and driver is good, but the driver may not hear the spotter over the noise of the vehicle or apparatus and other background noise. The use of portable radios to communicate between the spotter and driver may prove beneficial in certain circumstances. The spotters and the driver should maintain radio contact as well as eye contact.

In congested or tight areas, one spotter may be needed at the rear and one at the front of the vehicle being moved either forward or backward. Spotters should also be used when going forward in tight areas.

Spotter responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) Be constantly aware of the surroundings while performing this function.
- (b) Look and listen for other vehicles and people that may enter the path of the vehicle or apparatus that is backing up.
- (c) Stop any oncoming hazard or stop the vehicle or apparatus being backed-up.
- (d) Be aware of objects in the path of the vehicle or apparatus and direct the driver safely around them.
- (e) Be attentive to ground level obstructions as well as overhead hazards (e.g., tree branches, wires, signs, canopies, ladders).
- (f) Maintain visual contact with the driver at all times.
- (g) Be in the line-of-sight of the mirrors of the vehicle or apparatus being backed-up at all times.
- (h) Illuminate him/herself at night with a rear spotlight or flashlight, to remain visible to the driver.
- (i) Use hand signals to direct the driver. Hand signals should be somewhat exaggerated for clear understanding by the driver.
- (j) Stand on the ground; never on the apparatus.
- (k) Practice skills as time permits.