

ESCAMBIA COUNTY FIRE-RESCUE

Standard Operating Guidelines

K. W. Perkins

, Fire Chief

3300.060

Backing Fire Apparatus

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PURPOSE

On occasion, fire apparatus must be backed in order to position it properly at an emergency scene, upon leaving an emergency, when backing into assigned quarters, or other situations.

OBJECTIVE

To provide personnel with guidelines that establish safe practices to ensure emergency apparatus are safely moved when operating in reverse mode.

SCOPE

All Personnel

BACKING FIRE APPARATUS

The safest method of backing fire apparatus is to not back it at all! Drivers shall avoid, as much as possible, traveling or parking fire apparatus in manner that will require backing.

USE OF SPOTTERS

Before backing any fire department 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 shall be assigned when backing large or heavy apparatus—one covering each side of the vehicle. When available, a third spotter can be used to monitor traffic or, especially in the case of aerial apparatus, watch the front of the vehicle for overhead obstructions.

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 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 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 very slow speed and with extreme caution, prepared to stop immediately if necessary.

HAND SIGNALS

Spotters may communicate with apparatus drivers through the following standardized hand 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 in the same direction of the turn with index fingers extended. Prior to backing, the apparatus driver should advise the spotter which way the turn will be made. The spotter then assists the driver in backing the apparatus. Prior to backing the driver's intentions must be verbally communicated to the spotter.

Stop: Both arms raised above the head, crossed with hands in a fist.

BACKING AT NIGHT

Hand signals will be the same. The spotter will ensure that available spotlights on the rear of the apparatus are turned on before allowing apparatus to be backed. The spotter may carry a flashlight, but at no time will it be directed toward the mirrors of the apparatus.

If possible, spotters should use 2 flashlights with colored cones to signal at night.