

Operating Guideline # 404

Reversing Vehicles

October 8, 2019



PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to establish guidelines to protect firefighters and the general public from accidents occurring while apparatus is being backed up.

ISSUE/RATIONALE:

Far too often firefighters are injured and killed due to this simple activity. We need to concentrate on this operation due to the potential for catastrophic injury.

GUIDELINE:

General

1. Whenever possible, do not back up fire apparatus. When parking, attempt to park the vehicle so that backing up will not be necessary when it departs.
2. If the vehicle must be backed up on a travelled portion of the roadway, come to a complete stop and activate all emergency lights before backing. The EVO must be directed by a firefighter who is visible in the driver's rear view mirror wearing a supplied traffic safety vest. If the person directing the apparatus disappears from view in the mirror, the apparatus shall come to a stop. Consideration should be given to the use of a portable radio for the firefighter directing the apparatus.
3. Personnel who are directing should avoid stopping traffic unless it is absolutely necessary, and if possible, should not position themselves in the travelled portion of the road. Where it IS necessary to stand on the travelled portion of the roadway, the firefighter directing the apparatus shall wear an approved traffic safety vest and be equipped with a flashlight when directing apparatus at night or during inclement weather conditions that reduce visibility.
4. Personnel directing the driver; will move with the vehicle as it backs up in order to remain visible in the rear view mirror and ensure that no pedestrians or obstructions will enter the path of travel.
5. When attempting to back an apparatus back into the fire hall, the EVO shall bring the apparatus to a full stop in front of the station, on the side of the roadway. This will allow firefighters to dismount the apparatus safely and assist the EVO while guiding him while backing up. Firefighters posted on either side of the vehicle, **but not on the roadway**, should assist the EVO in determining when it is safe to pull onto the road. Flashlights may be used when visibility is poor and traffic safety vests must be worn. The duty of the firefighters assisting in backing up is to control pedestrian traffic and by using agreed upon hand signals to assist the EVO to back the vehicle onto the ramp and into the station. In some instances it may be necessary for firefighters to stop traffic. Traffic and road conditions must be evaluated before firefighters venture onto the road. If roads are slippery or traffic heavy, firefighters should use extreme caution before entering the travelled portion of the roadway.

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Note: Backing apparatus into the fire hall is not considered an emergency scene. Traffic is only required to obey red flashing signals of fire apparatus when responding to an emergency.

6. Prior to the vehicle being put in motion in reverse, the horn shall be sounded twice.

Hand Signals

7. The directing firefighter shall be visible in the driver's side rear-view mirror at all times and use seven uniform hand signals to communicate with the driver.

a. Stop – right hand upraised with palm facing driver – advises the driver to bring the apparatus to a stop and await a further command.

b. Shutdown – right hand with the hand open with palm down, a back and forth motion across the throat – advises the driver to set the parking brake and/or turn off the apparatus engine depending on the situation.

c. Back Up – right hand upraised with the palm facing the directing firefighter, move the hand in a circular motion towards the driver and back to the directing firefighter – advises the driver to begin moving the apparatus back towards the directing firefighter.

d. Ahead - right hand with the fingers clenched in a fist, fingers facing the driver, extend the index finger vertical, move the hand in a back and forth motion pointing towards the driver – advises the driver to begin moving the apparatus forwards away from the directing firefighter.

e. Straighten – right hand with the fingers extended and closed, move the hand up and down in a “chopping” motion – advises the driver to straighten up the front wheels in line with the axis of the apparatus.

f. Left – right hand with the fingers clenched in a fist, extend the index finger and point to the left – advises the driver to turn the front wheels to move the rear of the apparatus in the direction the directing firefighter is pointing.

g. Right - right hand with the fingers clenched in a fist, extend the index finger and point to the right – advises the driver to turn the front wheels to move the rear of the apparatus in the direction the directing firefighter is pointing.

8. The directing firefighter shall give the hand signal and will continue to show the signal until the driver begins to follow the command. The directing firefighter will stop showing the signal at that time. The driver will continue performing the command until he/she are given another command by the directing firefighter.

RESPONSIBILITY:

It is the responsibility of all Emergency Operations Division staff of the Muskoka Lakes Fire Department to comply with the provisions of this Operating Guideline.