APPARATUS DRIVING AND OPERATION

PURPOSE

To ensure that all Fire Department Apparatus and personally owned vehicles (POVs) engaged in firefighting duties will be driven and operated by trained individuals, stressing safety and quality performance at emergency and non-emergency events.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Requirements for Driving and Operating all Fire Department Apparatus are as follows:

1. All Emergency Vehicles and POVs shall be driven with due regard for the safety of all persons and property at all times!
3. Must have a valid Michigan Drivers License and a good driving record.
4. Fire Apparatus and/or POVs engaged with fire department duties shall not be operated or driven when the member is under the influence of any foreign substances that may alter their mental or physical status. (Illegal substances, alcohol, medications, etc.) When there is a reasonable suspicion of a firefighter under the influence of a foreign substance the Fire Chief may order a drug test be conducted.
5. Drivers shall be directly responsible for the vehicles safe operation under all conditions. Typically when drivers are responding to emergencies, the vehicles shall not exceed the posted speed limited by 10 mph.
6. Drivers must comply with the standards incorporated in all STFD Driving Policies.
7. Employees must have authorization or approval by the Fire Chief or his designee, to drive or operate any fire department vehicle, apparatus, POVs engaged in emergency response or equipment.
8. An approved department Driver can allow an unapproved member to operate apparatus for training purposes under his/her direct supervision with the approval of the Training Officer or the Chief.
9. A Fire Officer has the authority to temporary supersede this policy provided there is sound reasoning behind his/her decision.
10. Nothing in this Policy shall relieve the driver of his/her duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons. Nor shall it protect the driver from the consequences of his/her reckless disregard for the safety of others.
11. Firefighters shall not drive fire apparatus the without obtaining the approval of the Fire Chief unless under the supervision of a driver trainer.
PREPARING TO DRIVE

1. Safety belts and restraints shall be used in all apparatus/POVs when the vehicle is in motion.
2. Before the batteries are turned on or the engine is started, disconnect the 110VAC-power cord. (Reduces possibility of battery conditioner damage.)
3. Prior to an apparatus leaving the station, it must have at minimum one adequately trained personnel on-board.

DRIVING

1. When responding to emergency calls, all driving is to be in accordance with the Michigan Vehicle Code, Public Act 300.
2. The driver of any fire apparatus/POVs will turn on all emergency lights and headlights, while running an Emergency Response. Remember, you are asking for permission to have the right of way while running with lights and sirens.
3. The driver may exceed the posted speed limit not to exceed 10 mph, so long as life or property is not endangered.
4. The driver may proceed past a red or stop signal, but only after stopping and assuring it is safe to proceed through the intersection. All drivers shall come to a complete stop at blind intersections before proceeding.
5. The driver may disregard regulations governing direction of movement, or turning in specified directions provided he/she does not endanger Life or Property.
6. Drivers should always pass other vehicles on the left side of the vehicle being passed because state law instructs other vehicles to yield to the right for emergency vehicles. When conditions only allow for passing on the right, it must be done with extreme caution.
7. Emergency vehicles must never pass a school bus while the bus has its red flashing lights on. You must come to a complete stop and proceed with caution after the bus driver gives you permission to do so.
8. Extreme caution should be used when following other emergency vehicles. Fire apparatus are very heavy and need greater stopping distance.
9. Crossing the centerline or using the left turn lane is permitted when all normal traffic lanes are blocked. Drivers must be sure that all on-coming traffic lanes are stopped along with turning traffic. In this case, drivers must proceed slow enough to stop to avoid vehicles turning left and also oncoming vehicles making right turns into your path of travel.
10. Drivers should only use designated median turn-around when it is necessary to change directions on an expressway. Medians and shoulders should be avoided because of debris, soft surfaces, and narrow clearances.
11. Apparatus and POVs drivers must reduce their speed proportionally due to deteriorating weather, driving through school zones and other pertinent conditions.
12. An apparatus and/or POV driver can only pass another emergency vehicle if he/she receives permission of the vehicle being passed. It must be accomplished in a safe manner.
13. When apparatus and/or POVs are taken off road:
   a. The officer should evaluate the need for off road use.
   b. Identify hazards (i.e. firmness of soil, stumps, rocks, fences, etc.)
   c. Establish best routes.
   d. Use spotters in front of vehicle.
   e. No exterior passengers.

14. Drivers are responsible for any apparatus movement and should use a guide, whenever possible, before moving a vehicle in reverse. Drivers must stop and investigate immediately when the guide is no longer in full view.

15. Should any fire department apparatus or POV become involved in an accident during a response, the responding vehicle will immediately stop, render any aid that is possible, contact the Chief or his designated immediately. The firefighter will immediately contact the local police department for a report. Note see below for additional details.

SCENE OPERATIONS

1. On arrival of the first apparatus, the apparatus driver must position the apparatus in a manner that allows for its efficient use, that avoids unsafe conditions, (overhead wires, HazMat, wind direction, other apparatus placement, etc.) and according to the orders of the Incident Commander. Vehicles should be parked in a manner to protect the First Responders. Responding POV shall be parked in a manner that does not hinder responding fire apparatus. Note it is acceptable that a POV can be used to protect responders.

2. Upon arrival of the first firefighter with a 800 mhz radio at a fire/medical, Central Dispatch shall be given a scene size-up. At this time other vehicles should be instructed to respond “Priority Three” whenever is appropriate for the emergency.

3. Upon arrival at the scene, vehicles not legally parked shall display emergency lighting to warn oncoming traffic.

4. When laying hose, the driver, will not exceed 7 mph when displaying hose (brisk walk).

5. As apparatus leaves the scene dispatch should be notified, especially if clearing the call. When several vehicles are leaving the scene at the same time, one truck can clear all the vehicles.

STAGING OF APPARATUS

1. When the officer of the first arriving apparatus orders all others to stage on arrival they should:
   a. Maintain a position of approximately 500 to 1000 feet from the scene or the distance instructed by Officer in Charge.
   b. Minimize traffic obstructions.
   c. Position away from intersections.
   d. Maintain a state of readiness i.e. stay with the vehicle.
2. Designated Staging:
   a. Use commercial parking lots or other areas with a firm surface and good accessibility.
   b. Should be in an open area.
3. Staging Rules:
   a. Stay with apparatus and prepare for immediate deployment.
   b. Position apparatus with adequate spacing so it and equipment are accessible and available for assignment.

**STATION RETURN**

1. Engine Shut Down: Because of the nature of diesel engines, the shut down procedure for all diesel engines will be: Upon returning to the station, leave apparatus parked outside, idling for approximately 5 minute before pulling inside and shutting down (Driver shall remain in the apparatus during this time!). This time will minimize the accumulation of diesel smoke and soot inside the building while allowing a cool down period for the diesels.)
2. After any damage to fire department vehicles or equipment, the driver shall submit a report that explains the circumstances. This report will be turned into the Fire Chief or appropriate officer as soon as possible.
3. Driver shall check to insure all emergency lighting switches, including the master switch, have been shut off.
4. Driver will make sure all equipment has been cleaned and returned to the proper apparatus. Other firefighters will assist as needed.
5. Do not connect the 110VAC-power cord until the engine has stopped and the battery switch has been turned off. (Reduces possibility of battery conditioner damage.)
6. At this time driver should also make sure that all paper work is completed and placed in the proper areas, this includes the mileage log.
7. The driver shall ensure that the vehicle is at least 50% full of fuel. Mileage shall be logged on all Township vehicles using customary STFD established practices.

**RESPONSE CODES**

**Normal Traffic also known as Priority 3:** No emergency lights or sirens, obey all traffic laws and speed limits.

**Emergency Response also known as Priority 1:** This Response includes the use of headlights, emergency lights, sirens, and operation of vehicles at a speed that will not endanger life or property. (Must be compliant with Michigan Vehicle Code Act 300 P.A. 1949.)

**Priority 1:** See above definition for emergency response

**Priority 2:** Emergency lights without sirens. As a matter of policy STFD will NOT drive Priority 2.

**Priority 3:** No emergency lights or sirens, obey all traffic laws & speed limits, and continue to the scene.
**Priority 4:** No emergency lights or sirens, obey all traffic laws & speed limits, and proceed to one’s respective station. When Command requests Priority 4, all responding vehicles shall return to the station except for Officers who may use their discretion to continue onward.

**ACCIDENTS INVOLVING STFD APPARATUS**

Any member(s) of the Salem Township Fire Department that are involved in a motor vehicle accident while responding to or from an alarm/emergency are required to take the following actions:

1. Stop Immediately !!
2. Render first aid to injured parties.
3. Notify dispatch with brief initial report.
4. If minor accident, leave one fire fighter at accident scene (if possible), then continue to original alarm.
5. If major accident or one with injuries, the apparatus **must** stay at accident scene.
6. Secure witnesses, however only talk to STFD Officers or Police Officer(s) handling report.
7. Do not move vehicles without police permission.
8. Notify the Incident Commander.
9. Notify the Fire Chief as soon as reasonably possible.
10. After any damage to fire department vehicles or equipment, the driver will submit a report that explains the circumstances. This report will be turned in to the Fire Chief or appropriate officer as soon as possible.
11. Note, the Fire Chief/Township Supervisor may require the employee to submit to immediate a drug/alcohol test for any accident/incident.

**DRIVER STANDARDS**

1. Must be at least 18 years of age, a member in good standing.
2. Must have a valid Michigan Drivers License.
3. Must maintain a good driving record, a DUI or OUI may result in the possible termination of employment. Lack of a valid Michigan driver’s license or five (5) or more points may result in an immediate suspension and may lead to termination. In addition, two or more serious traffic offenses within a three period may be grounds for being disqualified for driving by the Fire Chief.
4. The Secretary of State’s subscription service will be utilized to help ensure good driving records.
5. Should you be involved in an accident in which you are at fault, or receive points on your license, etc., whether in Michigan or another State, it is your responsibility to notify the Chief in writing as soon as is feasible. Failure to do so may result in discipline up to and including termination.
6. Must have successfully completed an approved Emergency Apparatus Driving Class.
7. Must understand the differences of an Emergency Response and a Normal Traffic Response, and be knowledgeable of all STFD response Policy’s as well as comply with P.A. 300 Emergency Vehicle Operation Procedures.
8. Must be trained in the operation and driving characteristics of the apparatus that is to be operated.
9. Apparatus driving and operations training must have been completed under the direction of an STFD apparatus instructor, approved by the Department Training Officer and Fire Chief. This training must be recorded & signed by the Instructor and Fire Chief.
10. Must be able to set up and operate all of the power tools and other auxiliary equipment on the apparatus that any Fire Fighter needs to use to be approved/cleared to drive and operate that apparatus.
11. Must demonstrate the proficient operation of each apparatus and its equipment.

12. **IT IS FORBIDDEN FOR ANY STFD MEMBER TO PERFORM A TASK THAT HE/SHE IS NOT QUALIFIED TO DO!**

Small Vehicle Use

In an effort to reduce response time for firefighters, STFD firefighter may be allowed to take home the Utility 906, Brush 904 and/or Utility 907 vehicles (collectively known as the small fire department vehicles).

The use and deployment of these vehicles shall be restricted as outline below.

General Small Vehicle Procedures

1. The Utility 906 and Brush 904/907 vehicles, provide a critical role in fire/rescue responses by deploying faster, help perform initial scene size up for a fire and essential life saving medical efforts in the first few minutes of a response.
2. To help ensure that the small vehicles will not be abused, the small vehicles shall not be driven outside the township radius in excess of 10 miles without the Chief’s permission. This limit on how far the vehicle may possibly leave the township ensures that a quick response is always possible.
3. The use of the small vehicles will be limited to Officers, Team Leaders or firefighters designated by the Chief. The vehicle shall be available for immediate deployment for an emergency response. If the Officer/Team Leader/Firefighter is not able to deploy the vehicle quickly, then the vehicle will return to the fire station or transferred to another approved Officer/Team Leader/Firefighter.
4. The small fire department vehicles shall not be used for any personal endeavors, except that the made be used for brief errands such as shopping, out to dinner or hardware store but keeping in line with not exceeding the 10 mile radius limit. The vehicle shall not be used for personal work such as towing/plowing or hauling.
5. The Officer/Team Leader/Firefighter will be allowed to have immediate family members travel with them in the truck, however they shall not respond higher than Priority 3 to a fire/rescue call.
6. Employees that do not abide by these general vehicle procedures are subject to loss of the privilege of driving Township vehicles and disciplinary action, up to and including their termination of employment.
7. Vehicle mileage logs shall be maintained in the same manner that mileage logs are used for the large fire apparatus.