

Personal Vehicle

A-090

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Union Vale Fire District relies heavily on the ability of their members to respond to calls, either to the scene or the station, in their personal vehicles. While this is essential to the Fire District's ability to react to emergencies in a timely manner, there are also inherent risks.

Motor Vehicle Laws

The Most significant risk associated with allowing volunteers to respond in their personal vehicles is that they may operate them as if they are emergency vehicles. All too often this leads to accidents. While motor vehicle laws vary from state to state, all states address this issue similarly: personal vehicles are not emergency vehicles and are not permitted the same, if any, exemptions to motor vehicle laws. For example, while licensed emergency vehicles are allowed to exceed the posted speed limit, move against the normal flow of traffic and proceed through a negative intersection control device, personal vehicles driven by volunteers are required to obey the state motor vehicle code.

Courtesy Lights

Some motor vehicle codes address the use of blue "courtesy lights." Basically, this is nothing more than a visual request asking other drivers to allow you to pass them upon your approach. It is not a demand for right of way, nor do they permit the driver to illegally pass or speed up to overtake any vehicle.

Standard Operating Procedures

- 1) Members responding in a personal vehicle must obey all NYS motor vehicle code with respect to courtesy light and siren privileges.
- 2) Courtesy lights must not be used by members as a license to operate their personal vehicles as if they are emergency vehicles. All courtesy lights must be approved by the chief of the department and a written permit issued. The permit should include the "rules of the road" that apply.
- 3) Members responding in personal vehicles should never exceed the posted speed limit.
- 4) Members responding in personal vehicles should come to a complete stop at all stop signs and red traffic signals and must wait for normal right of way before proceeding.
- 5) Procedures for at-the-scene parking/staging should be included in all SOPs
- 6) Individual members must have personal auto liability insurance with appropriate liability limits that protect not only the volunteer but Union Vale Fire District.
- 7) Individual members must have current registration and inspections on their personal vehicles.