

# **BLACKWOOD FIRE COMPANY OPERATING GUIDELINE**

## **1.3 INCIDENT RESPONSE – RESPONSE PRIORITIES**

### Definitions

- Emergency Speed – All warning lights in operation, audible warning devices used as necessary to request the right of way. Regardless of warning devices or extent of emergency, the driver will exercise due regard for all other motorists and pedestrians, and will comply with all applicable New Jersey Motor Vehicle laws.
- Reduced Speed – No warning lights or audible warning devices are to be used. Driver will not request or attempt to gain the right of way. Apparatus will travel with normal flow of traffic.
- Approach Speed – Greatly reduced speed, warning lights in operation. Audible devices used sparingly but as required.

### Discussion

The mission of the Blackwood Fire Company is to protect the lives and property of those individuals requiring our service. This mission must be balanced against the safety of our members and the need to be able to act on arrival. Response priorities are established based on a combination experience and known or reported conditions. Response priorities can vary greatly based on reports and personal experience. The IC, company officer and/or driver are expected to assess each response and assign a priority based on these factors. All decisions must be made based on the departmental risk versus gain concept.

- 1.3.1 To maintain a common vocabulary with the Camden County Radio Manual, the term “speed” is used in this Operating Guideline. Speed is a relative term based on various incident response factors. In this Operating Guideline the term “priorities” could be substituted for “speed”
- 1.3.2 Qualified apparatus drivers have the responsibility to deliver the apparatus and crew safely to the incident scene. The driver must coordinate with the apparatus officer to determine the correct route and appropriate priority for the incident.

1.3.3 Factors involved in determining the response speed and travel route include:

- Weather conditions
- Traffic congestion
- Type of incident
- Location of the incident

1.3.4 The following incident types will generally warrant an emergency priority unless modifying orders or reports are received:

- Fires
- Rescues
- Motor Vehicle crashes with injury
- Hazardous Materials Assignments
- Life Threatening Medical Incidents (first responder)
- Interior Fumes
- Emergency Assignments

1.3.5 The following incident types will generally warrant a reduced priority unless modifying orders or reports are received:

- Investigations
- Alarm Systems with no follow up
- Wires
- Highway Hazard
- CO Detector activation with no symptoms
- Service Assignments
- Cover Assignments

1.3.6 Apparatus shall approach incident scenes slowly and cautiously to allow a proper assessment of conditions and to account for traffic and other activity related to the emergency incident. Apparatus approaching a scene on "Reduced Speed" may utilize warning devices as needed to safely maneuver around congested traffic in the area (see Approach Speed). Regardless of the response mode, the use of audible warning devices shall be curtailed upon approach to the scene to avoid interfering with emergency communications.

- An example of approach speed while on emergency speed: TL84 arrives at a working house fire. E-842 is on location deploying hose. Police and bystanders are in the area, command is established. TL 84 would enter the fire block SLOWLY and CAUTIOUSLY, using audible devices sparingly (as needed to warn pedestrians and/or other motorists, but with discretion to avoid interfering with emergency communications)

- An example of approach speed while on reduced speed: R-84 is responding on a highway hazard, approaching the scene they find traffic backed up ½ mile; R-84 is needed for lighting or spill control. They may activate warning devices and SLOWLY and CAUTIOUSLY maneuver around the stopped traffic to approach the scene.
- 1.3.7 Response priority should be assessed at all times. For instance, companies responding at emergency speed to a car fire would go to reduced speed on a police report of an overheated vehicle.
- 1.3.8 The amount of apparatus responding at emergency speed should also be continually assessed throughout the response. If E841 is responding at emergency speed to a dumpster fire with no exposures on College Drive, they may assume reduced speed upon the response of E842.
- 1.3.9 The above paragraphs are based on operating experience and the potential of the incident to affect life and property. This OG in no way addresses every eventuality. Regardless of the priority used, the driver bears the ultimate responsibility for delivering the apparatus and crew in a safe manner. The officer is responsible for monitoring the actions of the driver and ensuring that he/she is complying with all applicable state laws and safety guidelines. Use of warning devices does not guarantee a safe response. Prudent driver actions and officer guidance are required to ensure a safe response.

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