

Section III

Vehicle Operations

III(A) VEHICLE OPERATION

1. EMS Personnel are required to operate vehicles with courtesy, public image, and cost savings in mind at all times.
2. Personnel are responsible for condition and cleanliness of assigned vehicle and equipment.
3. Personnel driving EMS vehicles have the responsibility for safe operation of the vehicle. Drivers shall abide by all North Carolina and local traffic regulations.
4. Seat belts will be worn at all times by EMS personnel and passengers riding in the cab.
5. EMS personnel will make a daily check of vehicle to ensure mechanical readiness.
 - a. Personnel are expected to ensure that the vehicle is safe to operate. Mechanical difficulties must be reported immediately to the shift supervisor. EMS personnel may refuse to drive a vehicle they believe is unsafe: a written statement of the situation and justification must be submitted to the EMS Supervisor.
6. ONLY Buncombe County Employees will drive EMS vehicles, with the following exceptions:
 - a. Patient care situations requiring both EMS personnel, i.e. cardiac/respiratory arrest, RSI, CPAP.
 - b. Trauma meeting "Load and Go" treatment protocols that requires both EMS personnel to treat the patient.
 - c. Persons or situations directed by EMS management staff.
7. Fire department, rescue squad, or law enforcement personnel may drive the unit to the hospital when one of the above conditions is met. The EMS crew should ask for an experienced driver and assure the driver is familiar with the operation of the vehicle before departure.

8. BACKING POLICY

a. General Rules:

- 1) If you can avoid backing, don't back!
- 2) Never hurry when backing, move slowly.
- 3) Do not back when unsure of the area.
- 4) If no spotter is available:
 - a) Reconsider. Is backing really necessary?
 - b) Make a reasonable attempt to get someone to act as a spotter.
 - c) If a spotter cannot be obtained, walk around the unit and survey the backing area. Be sure to check overhead clearance.
 - d) If patient care responsibilities prevent the attendant from spotting, the driver may proceed with backing only if the above procedures are followed.

b. Driver Responsibilities:

- 1) Bring the unit to a complete stop before backing.
- 2) Ensure that a spotter is eight to ten feet at the rear of the unit, visible from the left hand mirror.
- 3) IF YOU CANNOT SEE THE SPOTTER, DO NOT BACK. Driver should lower the window to hear spotter.
- 4) Driver and spotter must maintain contact at all times.
- 5) Driver and spotter must agree on hand signals.
- 6) The spotter signals the driver to back up.
- 7) Ensure that both sides, the front end, and all mirrors clear obstacles.

c. Spotter responsibilities:

- 1) Get out of the unit and survey the right side, overhead, and rear area for obstacles that would damage the unit.
 - 2) Place yourself eight to ten feet to the left rear of the unit.
 - 3) Make sure the driver can see you.
 - 4) Agree with driver on hand signals and use them.
 - 5) Maintain contact with driver at all times.
 - 6) Consider using handheld radio on EMS Direct to communicate with driver.
9. Parking brakes are to be applied at any time that an EMS vehicle is unattended or when the unit is idling, i.e. standbys.
 10. Battery switches are to be turned off when a vehicle is not in operation.
 11. Shore lines will be connected at all times while the vehicle is in quarters.
 12. EMS personnel on duty will call the vehicle mileage to the EOC by telephone, MCT, or radio within thirty minutes of 0730 and 1930 hrs.
 13. EMS personnel will not add extra equipment to a vehicle without approval from an EMS supervisor or the Emergency Services Director.
 14. The engine or other systems of an EMS vehicle will not be altered by EMS crews.
 15. Fuel will be purchased at an authorized purchase point only.
 16. The on-duty crew is responsible for maintaining adequate fuel in the unit; it should never be less than one-half.
 17. Oil and transmission fluid will be procured at the direction of the EMS Supervisor on duty.
 18. Personnel are to purchase fuel with the vehicle's assigned credit card, signing receipt if needed.

- a. If the unit's credit card fails to work, the on duty supervisor will be contacted to bring master credit card to the store, to pay for purchase.
19. Snow chains are required on vehicles when conditions dictate. Additionally, EMS crews may be instructed to apply chains at supervisor's discretion. The on-duty crew shall assure the correct chains are present for the truck when snow is forecast within 24 to 48 hours.
20. EMS vehicles will be used strictly for the business of Buncombe County.
- a. Movement of a vehicle for any reason other than for calls, meals or touring the districts shall have prior approval of the EMS supervisor.
21. One passenger will be allowed to accompany a patient at the discretion of the EMS crew. The passenger will ride in the vehicle cab. Passengers are not allowed in the patient compartment with adult patients.
- a. At the attending paramedic's discretion, one parent of a child may accompany the patient in the patient compartment. If the situation is of a life threatening nature, the parent must ride in the vehicle cab.
 - b. Families and friends should be cautioned not to closely follow EMS units on emergency transports.
22. Buncombe EMS vehicles shall be operated with due regard for the safety of others to and from the emergency scene.
- a. On emergency calls, units shall use emergency lights, headlights, and siren.
 - b. EMERGENCY RESPONSE INTERSECTION CROSSING POLICY.
 - 1) Crossing on Green:
 - a) Slow down
 - b) Take foot off accelerator
 - c) Look in all three directions
 - d) Be aware of oncoming vehicles turning in front of the unit.
 - e) Proceed with caution.
 - 2) Crossing on Red/Stop sign:
 - a) Slow to less than 10 mph
 - b) Establish eye contact with drivers of other vehicles.

- c) Wait for partner to communicate it is clear.
 - d) Proceed with caution.
- 3) Making right or left turns in front of stopped vehicles.
 - a) Come to a complete stop next to vehicle.
 - b) Establish eye contact with side vehicle's driver via your partner or yourself.
 - c) Wait for your partner to tell you it's clear.
 - d) Be aware of vehicles approaching from behind.
 - e) Proceed with caution.
- c. Special Precautions for emergency response
 - 1) Slow down to less than 20 mph prior to reaching intersection to:
 - a) Get a good view of the intersection.
 - b) Avoid startling motorists.
 - 2) Be patient, keep signaling.
 - 3) Stopped vehicles may be passed on the right when the right lane is clear. This procedure is considered safer than crossing left of center.
 - a) If possible, moving vehicles should be passed on the left.
 - b) Avoid crossing the center line into on-coming traffic if possible.
 - 4) Avoid traveling left of center unless you are certain traffic is clear.
 - 5) If you must travel left of center, do so with extreme caution, proceed VERY slowly, and stay to your far right.
 - 6) The verbal signals to be used at intersections: "Clear" and "Stop". Avoid other words that may be confused with "go" such as "whoa".
- d. Some citizens will not hear or yield to an ambulance. Tailgating such vehicles will be avoided.
- e. The unit will remain running at the emergency scene with auto throttle set to high idle and the parking brake engaged.

- f. An EMS unit that must stop in the roadway must operate all emergency lights. Generally, the ambulance should be positioned in front of other emergency vehicles at the scene since it will likely be the first to leave.
 - g. Patient assessment and emergency care are to be performed prior to turning the vehicle around, backing up driveways, etc.
 - h. EMS personnel shall not use tobacco, eat, or drink while on board EMS vehicles.
23. Misuse of an EMS vehicle or conviction of a traffic violation while operating an EMS vehicle will be considered a serious violation of department policy.
24. All vehicle radios , including the MCT modem, must be turned off prior to jumper cable attachment.
25. The vehicle driver shall be responsible for ensuring that the unit has free passage from any parking location.
26. EMS vehicles shall remain locked while on scene at any call.
27. EMS vehicles shall be parked inside after 2200 hours.
28. Soiled linen is to be stored in an outside compartment.

III (B) VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

1. During morning unit check, each vehicle's mechanical condition will be checked.
2. Routine vehicle maintenance needed should be reported directly to the EMS Supervisor each morning after checking the unit.
3. Vehicle problems should be reported immediately to the EMS Supervisor. (Also see "Vehicle Operation" section)
4. Unless so directed by the EMS supervisor, all maintenance and repairs will be handled by the Buncombe County Garage or Maintenance Departments.
 - a. Report the disposition of repairs to the EMS Supervisor for recording.
5. Until authorized by the supervisor, EMS personnel shall not take units out of service for maintenance.
6. The County Garage assigns service intervals.
7. Tires
 - a. Check air pressure daily by striking the tires with a club or similar device. A tire with sufficient pressure will cause the club to bounce. Low pressure will not cause a bounce.
8. Only the EMS Supervisor will make calls to maintenance facilities for progress updates. EMS crews will not make such calls unless instructed to do so.

Unit Swap Procedure

1. The EMS Supervisor will advise the crews into which unit to swap.
2. Both crewmembers will swap equipment and complete the unit swap checklist making sure all required equipment is transferred. Once completed, leave the form in the jump box compartment of the abandoned vehicle.

Guidelines for the abandoned vehicle:

1. Fuel tank should be full.
2. Main oxygen should be at least 1000 psi.
3. All portable oxygen bottles should be full and off.
4. Vacuum cab, console, door pockets, floor, and seats. Remove trash.
5. Wipe down all surfaces in patient compartment including floor.
6. Wipe out Jump compartment.
7. Log off Mobile CAD Terminal (MCT), power down computer and turn AC/DC converter off.

General Reminders

1. List any absent equipment on the swap form.
2. Lock the keys for the abandoned unit in the lock box. Remember to take station keys.
3. Wash the exterior of the new unit after checking in service.
4. Turn in swap checklist from new unit to the Supervisor's Office.
5. Remember to log back onto the MCT with correct unit ID and station number.