

Stillwater Fire District
Stillwater, New York

Fire District Policy and Procedure Policy

Number: 4 of 2007

Policy Name: Use of Vehicles Owned by the District

Date Issued: June 11, 2007

Effective: June 11, 2007

Revised: June 2013

Review Date: January 2017

I. PURPOSE

- A. This policy has been resolved to provide guidance for the use of district owned vehicles and to provide a policy as to what the district will provide for vehicles not owned by the District in accordance with authority vested in the District by Section 176 Article 11 of Town Law.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. District Owned Vehicles
 - 1. All of the vehicles purchased, owned, operated and maintained by the Stillwater Fire District.
 - 2. The Board of Fire Commissioners shall be here after referred to as "The Board"
- B. Policy includes any and all attachment hereto.

III. POLICY

- A. Vehicles owned by the District shall be used for emergency purposes when dispatched by Saratoga County Fire Control under the provisions of the County dispatch and Mutual Aid Plan.
 - 1. Vehicles shall not be driven out of the fire district except for the following circumstances;
 - a. When dispatched for an emergency by the County.
 - b. For repairs with the knowledge of the Chief or his designee.
 - i. When taken out of service for repairs an internal notification protocol shall be initiated so that the chief officers and commissioners are aware of the apparatus out of service.
 - ii. County emergency communications shall be notified when appropriate.
 - c. For training with the knowledge of the Chief or his designee.
 - d. For parades, funerals or other fire service activities with permission of the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Chief.
 - e. For sanctioned fire service activity such as, workshops, training, conferences, fire service expositions, and official meetings upon notification and concurrence of the Commissioners and Chief Officers.

- f. It is understood that District vehicles may be required for district or company business related missions and are presumed to be able to freely pass through an adjacent fire district to access parts of the Stillwater Fire District. Business missions shall be performed upon notification of a chief officer or commissioner and shall not place the vehicle in a location or circumstance which creates the appearance or actuality of impropriety
2. Any other use of District owned vehicles shall require knowledge and concurrence of the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Chief Officers.
3. Persons other than fire company members may ride in vehicles owned by the district with the permission of the officer in charge of the apparatus with concurrence of the operator of the vehicle.
 - a. Persons other than fire company members may operate vehicles owned by the district for the purpose of repairing the apparatus, or to conduct or receive training with the permission of a chief officer.
4. The units designated as the Chief's cars may be driven up to 25 miles outside the fire district without permission. A log book shall be maintained for each vehicle. Log entries shall include date, beginning mileage, ending mileage, operator's name, mission, *fuel obtained in number of gallons including location and destination*.
5. Persons other than qualified fire company members may not operate a vehicle owned by the district on an emergency incident unless there are extremely exigent circumstances *which shall be justified and documented after the incident*.
6. Vehicles not owned by the Fire District but operated by a Chief Officers in lieu of the provided chiefs car shall be provided 19 gallons of fuel per week (a total of 780 gallons annually) from a source identified by the Board of Fire Commissioners. If the fire district is required to issue an IRS 1099 form the recipient shall be responsible for any applicable taxes as a result of this benefit.
7. Vehicles not owned by the Fire District used by the Chief Officers may be provided warning lights, radios and audible devices including installation and removal upon presentation of an estimate of cost and pre-approval by the Board of Fire Commissioners.
8. Members of the fire company shall not interfere with or give direction to contract employees or modify the condition, extent or intent of any work that has been contracted for the maintenance or repair of vehicles owned by the Board.
 - a. Any issues relating to the quality of contract work or conduct of contract employees shall be brought to the attention of the Board in writing and shall include specific dates, locations, names and circumstances.

9. Prior to driving district owned vehicles members must obtain an approval of their DMV driving record history through the District's insurance carrier and or the NYS DMV LENS program.
 - a. Members shall fill out a Disclosure and Release form provided by the District's insurance carrier and return it to the Board for processing prior to operating any District vehicle.
 - b. If approved by the insurance carrier, the member's name shall be added to the list of approved trainees and posted by the Board.
 - i. Having an acceptable drive history allows the candidate to begin the driver training process developed by the Line Officers with the Board's approval.
 - c. If at any time a driver is found to have a license that is revoked or suspended, they shall report same to the Board and shall not be eligible to drive vehicles owned or operated by the District until they have a valid license.
10. Fire district vehicles shall not be used in a situation where there may be ethical implications of personal use of a publicly funded piece of equipment used for other than fire and rescue purposes.
 - a. Other fire companies who are interested in the design, use or purpose of apparatus purchased and owned by the fire district are welcome to view the equipment and its operation at a location within the fire district and upon notification of the Commissioners.
11. Operators and passengers of all fire district vehicles or apparatus are to wear seat belts at all times during the operation of the vehicle and are not subject to the exemption afforded by V&T Law.

IV. PROCEDURE

- A. When a vehicle is taken out of the district, permission is required with the concurrence of the Board and Chief Officer and shall be noted in the vehicle log book. It shall be the responsibility of the Commissioner and Chief Officer to make the subsequent notifications as appropriate.
- B. All vehicle drivers shall comply with the vehicle operation in Attachment 1 and the Company SOGs as approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners.
- C. Vehicle shall be operated with due diligence at all times and drivers shall be responsible for the safe operation of the vehicle at all times.
 - 1 Vehicles leaving the district shall follow the radio protocols as prescribed by the Saratoga County Fire Dispatch Center or County Radio Procedures Manual or radio procedures prescribed by an adjacent jurisdiction.

V. VEHICLE LOGS

- A. Each vehicle owned and operated by the Stillwater Fire District shall contain a log book maintained by the operator or officer on board the vehicle.

1. A log book provided by the Fire District shall be filled out each time the vehicle leaves its respective station on an incident or detail. The log book entry shall provide the following information:
 - a. Beginning mileage
 - b. Ending mileage
 - c. Driver of the vehicle
 - d. Names of persons on board the vehicle
 - e. Amount of fuel in gallons added to the vehicle.
 - f. Location of the incident.
 - g. Purpose or the use of the vehicle
 - h. Any service rendered to the vehicle by the operator.
 - i. Any damage or missing equipment from the vehicle.
 - j. Any other pertinent information relating to the vehicle, its equipments or staff on board.

VI. MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

- A. The Board of Fire Commissioners shall be immediately informed of any motor vehicle accident with any degree of damage involving a district owned vehicle or any vehicle including personal vehicles involved in an accident responding to a fire service related function as soon as practical after the occurrence of the accident.
- B. The driver of any District owned vehicle involved in an accident shall be immediately suspended from driving any apparatus until an investigation by the Board is completed. Accidents are defined to include but are not exclusively mishaps which involve damage to any District owned vehicle, trailer, or facility to any degree.
 - i. The Chief Officers are responsible for filing a written accident report to the Board of Fire Commissioners within 24 hours of the accident with a district owned vehicle. Reports shall include typed written statements by the driver and Officer in charge of the vehicle at the time of the incident as well as all other pertinent information.
 - ii. Accident reports shall include all circumstances of the accident, injuries sustained by involved parties, damages to vehicles or infrastructure, time of day, location, incident response mode, reason for the use of the vehicle, maps of the incident, copies of police reports and statements of parties involved including all members aboard the apparatus or witnesses.
 - iii. Accidents involving district owned vehicles shall be investigated by the Board and a determination shall be made whether the accident was preventable.
 - 1). The Board will develop remedial action in the case of preventable accidents including additional education, suspensions or any other recommendations deemed appropriate by the Board.
 - 2). The Chief or their representative shall be held responsible for enforcement of any remedial action recommended by the Board of Fire Commissioners.

- C. Motor Vehicle incidents are those incidents which do not include damage to a motor vehicle owned by the Fire District. Incidents are considered to be reckless operation, near misses or reprimandable actions by a driver of Fire District Apparatus as determined by the officer on board or as a complaint by a member riding in the vehicle as a crew member. Incidents of this nature shall be documented in the member's personnel file.
 - 1. After three such incidents, the member shall be bared from driving until they attend a training refresher course and testing.
 - 2. If there is another reportable incident after subsequent retraining and testing, the driver shall be permanently barred from driving Fire District Vehicles.

VII. PENALTIES

- A. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action by the Board of Fire Commissioners pursuant to Town Law including letter of counseling with recommended action, suspension of driving privileges or suspension up to and including dismissal from the fire company depending on the severity of the offense and the need for escalation of discipline due to repeat offenses.

By Order of Board of Fire Commissioners
Stillwater Fire District

Chairman Board of Fire Commissioners

Attachment 1

Stillwater Fire District Apparatus Driver Training Policy

A. DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS

- a. Age & Experience: The Stillwater Fire District shall permit operators to be trained to drive District owned vehicles upon reaching 18 years of age but shall not operate a vehicle during a response to incidents under any circumstances until they reach the age of 21 and are on the approved driver's list. Also due to the stress related to emergency vehicle operation, a person shall have at least 2 years normal driving experience before being permitted to train to operate emergency vehicles.
- b. Past Driving Record: The Stillwater Fire District shall screen drivers by obtaining an DMV report annually and shall publish a list of acceptable drivers based on driving record and recommendations by the District's insurance carrier or the LENS system.
- c. Driver License: Any driver candidate shall present a currently valid driver's license which is of adequate classification to meet state law (currently Class D) The fire district shall maintain an account with the LENS reporting program from the Department of Motor Vehicles.
- d. Physical Condition: No member shall operate a motor vehicle owned by the District if they are medically restricted from motor vehicle operation for any reason.
- e. The Chief and line officers shall be responsible for enforcing the driver qualification policies.

B. DRIVER TRAINING

- a. Each driving candidate shall pass a written test approved by the Commissioner's and administered by the Officers. The test shall cover district or company guidelines for driving, knowledge of the response area, pump and equipment operation, local and state laws applicable to driving emergency vehicles, and general information regarding the vehicle for which the test is prepared.
- b. All candidates must complete an Emergency Vehicles Operators Course (EVOC) with certificate from the District's insurance carrier or from the Office of Fire Prevention and Control prior to driving a District owned vehicle on an emergency response. Certificate shall be filed with the District Secretary and copied to the member's file.
 1. On the recommendation of the District's insurance carrier, the EVOC course should be taken every 3 years. *Drivers who fall in between the offering of this course shall obtain certification in an alternate location or must obtain certification upon the next offering of the course (no extensions)*. Final decision shall rest with the Chief and shall be dependent upon overall experience and prior Fire District driving record.
- c. Candidates shall actually drive each District vehicle on which the member wishes to be qualified with a qualified driver seated in the front seat of the vehicle.
 1. A qualified driver is defined as a driver with at least 5 years experience, who has been certified in an EVOC course, who has an acceptable driving record,

- who is familiar with the operation of the pump under emergency conditions and is familiar with a high percentage of the streets in the district.
2. Initially, driving should take place in an empty parking area.
 3. Only after the qualified driver and officers feel that the candidate is able to handle the vehicle properly, shall the candidate be permitted to operate on public roadways.
 4. The candidate shall be required to train on all different types of roads within the response area.
 5. Like vehicles may be grouped together for an aggregate for training purposes and the operation of pumps is allowed to be included in the total training time for pumpers.
 - i. For example 10-5 and 11-1 are similar vehicles with minor differences, 10-3 and 10-1 are similar handling vehicles. Individual unit training will include operation of generators, light towers, and air fill systems.
 6. Support vehicles shall also require training. At least 6 hours of operational time shall be the aggregate for all the support vehicles such as 11-2, 11-3 and F10-7. Individual training shall include operation of generators, light towers, brush fire suppression equipment and limitations associated with any of the support vehicles.
- d. The training hours with a qualified driver shall be logged in the vehicle log book on which the candidate is attempting to qualify.
 - e. The vehicle operator shall pass a final road test administered by a chief officer or designee, which will include turning, backing, distance and clearance judgment, braking, parking, three point turn and operations on any special roadway specific to the response area. Knowledge of dashboard gauges, warning lights, refueling, engine brake, automatic chain operation and warning lights shall be included in the test.
 - f. The final road test shall be documented on a check sheet and shall include the candidate's name, the responsible qualified driver, recommendations, and final score. Passing shall be considered performing 80% of the tasks on the test satisfactorily. The test document shall be entered in the member's records and maintained by the Fire District.
 - g. **Exceptions:** Drivers, who have successfully operated District owned vehicles for at least two years without incident, immediately prior to this regulation being enacted and who shall be certified by the Chief as fit to drive and operate any District owned vehicle shall be exempt from provisions (a), (c) or (d).
 1. Drivers who fall into this category and have not previously taken an EVOC course as described in (b) shall be required to attend such course when it next becomes available with certificate filed in their personnel file.
 2. Drivers who have previous experience driving District apparatus and are absent from driving for more than 1 year shall be certified as fit to drive by the Chief, have a certificate from an approved EVOC course and be required to pass the a written and road test as described in (a) and (e) above.

C. VEHICLE OPERATION

1. Vehicles shall never operate "Lights and Sirens", or Code 1, unless they are responding to a true emergency and then, only with due regard for other vehicles.

2. TRUE EMERGENCY is a situation in which there is a high probability of death or serious injury to an individual or significant property loss, and action by an emergency vehicle operator may reduce the seriousness of the situation.
3. DUE REGARD: means driving in such a manner so as to avoid any predictable collision.
4. Before any operation of a district vehicle, the operator shall be required to:
 - a. Check around (walk around) the vehicle to see that there are no obstructions, all compartment doors are shut, clearance is adequate, electric cables and exhaust connections are off or ready to self-detach.
 - b. Ascertain that all passengers are seated and secured with seat belts.
 - c. Turn on lighting appropriate for the exterior light conditions, although it is recommend that the headlights be utilized at all times while the vehicle is in motion.
 - d. Before backing, a spotter must be in place to assist. No vehicle should be moved in reverse without a competent spotter in place. If no spotter is available extreme due diligence must be exercised to avoid accidents.
5. During *non-emergency* travel:
 - a. Drivers shall obey all traffic control signals, speed limits, and rules of the road of the jurisdiction involved.
 - b. Emergency warning lights should not be on. Warning lights may be illuminated while backing into the station for safety purposes.
 - c. No audible signals should be used except for the horn.
 - d. The vehicle should come to a complete stop at all uncontrolled railroad grade crossings and proceed only when the driver is certain it is clear. A driver shall not cross over rail tracks at a controlled crossing if signals are operating.
6. During *emergency* response:
 - a. Drivers should bring the vehicle to a complete stop and proceed only when safe under the following circumstances:
 - b. When directed by a law enforcement officer
 - c. Red traffic lights
 - d. Stop signs
 - f. Blind intersections
 - g. When the driver cannot account for all lanes if traffic in an intersection
 - h. When any intersection is not completely clear of traffic or pedestrians
 - i. When encountering a stopped school bus with flashing lights
 - j. At a railroad grade crossings
 - k. Drivers should proceed through intersections with caution only when the driver can account for all lanes of traffic.
 - l. drivers shall be cognizant of the posted speed limit on the road which they are traveling and operate the apparatus accordingly.
7. Vehicles should not attempt to circumvent any traffic law without the use of audible and visual warning devices. These devices should conform to National Fire Protection Association Standard 1901.
8. Extra space should be maintained between two emergency vehicles traveling in the same direction. Traffic will likely begin to move after the first vehicle has exited the intersection, making it imperative for the second vehicle to come to a complete stop. Escorts should be discouraged for this same reason.

D. ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

1. No matter how comprehensive the driver policy is, accidents still do occur. Drivers and Officers for the Stillwater Fire District shall adhere to the following procedures:
2. Responsibilities of the Driver and Officer at the accident scene:
 - a. Stop and investigate immediately
 - b. Check for injuries of member and civilians
 - c. Notify dispatch if the accident with location, number, type and extent of injuries, any need for additional units, police and Senior officers and Commissioners.
 - d. Protect the incident scene with warning devices to prevent additional damages or injuries
 - e. Do not move the vehicles until the police have arrived. If the emergency vehicle must leave the scene, at least one member should remain
 - f. Do not discuss the accident with anyone other than the police
 - g. Obtain names and addresses of witnesses
 - h. Photos should be taken if possible
 - i. Complete an on the scene accident report form provided by the insurance carrier.
3. After the accident:
 1. A Fire District commissioner shall be notified.
 2. The District's insurance provider should be notified as soon as possible by the Fire District.
 3. The crew should be debriefed and complete written reports
 4. The driver should complete all reports mandated by law, the organization and the insurance company.
 5. Drivers involved in the accident shall be suspended until an investigation is completed by all parties.
 6. The results of the accident investigation may result in remedial action for the driver and/or officer by the Board of Fire Commissioners as appropriate.

E. GENERAL SAFETY RULES

1. The following are general provisions of the driver policy:
 - a. No persons shall be permitted to ride on a tailboard or anywhere else outside the vehicle except during hose loading operations at which time one spotter shall be directing the driver.
 - b. Hose shall be repacked by driving forward over the hose when ever possible giving the driver view of the hose and the area ahead of the vehicle.
 - b. All persons shall be seated and belted before the vehicle is placed in motion. Seat belt enforcement is the responsibility of all members particularly the driver and officer.
 - c. Releasing seat belts, while the vehicle is in motion shall not be permitted for any reason, including donning gear.
 - d. Members riding in cabs that are not enclosed on three sides and the top should be wearing helmets and eye protection.
 - e. All vehicles should be given a visual inspection at least weekly as well as within 24 hours after use or repair to identify and correct unsafe conditions.

1. Any vehicle problems or required repairs shall be noted on the apparatus repair form and submitted to the Chief. The Chief officers shall be responsible to see that repairs are made as required in consultation with the commissioners with responsibility for apparatus. A file shall be maintained by the Chief on each vehicle and shall include all repair requests and repair slips.
 - f. Any conditions that make normal or emergency operation of the vehicle unsafe shall be reported to an officer or commissioner and the vehicle shall be placed out of service until cleared for use by a responsible agent.
 - g. Persons other than members shall not be permitted to ride on vehicles during emergency response.
 - h. On fire apparatus, wheel chocks should be put into place before advancing the throttle for pump or ladder operations.
 - i. The driver shall not operate the radio while the vehicle is in motion.
 - j. When at the emergency scene, only necessary vehicle warning lights should be left on. Headlights should always be turned off while parked.
 - k. The Chief officers shall develop a annual training exercise for all apparatus drivers approved by the Commissioners. A check sheet shall be developed to document the exercise. A chief officer shall retest all approved drivers annually. The check sheet shall include driver ability, pump operation, response area, and general rules and regulations pertaining to the operation of an emergency vehicle.
2. Appropriate apparel for drivers does not mandate the use of bunker gear but shall include personal protective equipment as appropriate during the operation of the pump and it is required to be ANSI high visibility clothing or bunker gear.
3. Annual check sheets shall be signed by the driver and a chief officer.
 - a. The Chief shall cause a list of re-qualified drivers to be developed and filed with the Board annually, prior to December 31st.
 - b. Any driver found not be proficient on any vehicle will be suspended from driving on emergency calls and shall be retrained until tested and proficient.