

DRIVING

A. Purpose:

The driving guideline is to provide a method to insure that members of the Ponderosa Fire Department are safe and conscientious drivers, and to provide for the safety of the general public when our members are driving the apparatus or their personal vehicles.

B. General:

1. DWI or DUI - No member will drive emergency if he/she has been convicted of DWI/DUI during the past three years. A member must wait three years from the date of the offense (or date of conviction) before re-applying for emergency driving status. If a member is convicted of a second DWI/DUI within five years of the first conviction, the member is terminated.
2. Traffic Violations/Accidents - It will be the responsibility of each member to report traffic convictions and accidents to the Office Manager. Failure to provide said information will be detrimental to the member when his/her driving record is reviewed.
3. A semi-annual review will be used to determine a member's emergency driving status. The reviews will be conducted in May and November of each year.
4. The Office Manager will obtain each member's driving record during the first week of the above months. The Command Staff will then determine each member's points as applies to the Driver Evaluation Guideline. These findings will be presented at an officers' meeting for review.
5. The aforementioned point system will be used to determine if members are allowed to use warning devices (lights & siren) to respond to emergency calls. See Driver Evaluation Guideline.

C. Apparatus:

1. Only those firefighters specifically approved by the Command Staff may drive apparatus. Drivers must obtain the appropriate license for the type of vehicle being driven and may request reimbursement for the upgrade.
2. The apparatus driver's sole responsibility will be the safe driving of the equipment. The front seat passenger should operate all emergency equipment as well as continuous monitoring of traffic conditions and communicating with the driver.

3. Seat belts shall be worn by all firefighters in route and returning from all mobile apparatus assignments. All firefighters in the cab and jump seats shall remain seated with seat belts in use until the apparatus comes to a complete stop. Under no circumstances should personnel exit or mount the apparatus while in motion.
4. The driver shall be primarily concerned with safely driving the apparatus. The driver should not operate sirens, air horns, or radio. The driver is to continually monitor driving conditions and listen for instructions. The driver shall be the initial pump operator, if the apparatus is so equipped.
5. The right side cab seat is reserved for the senior officer at the time of response. Those lower in rank shall vacate the seat, if requested.
6. Tailboard riding positions are prohibited.
7. **Any time a PFD apparatus is backing, a ground guide is required. The Plymovent will be used each time the apparatus is backed into the station.** Staff vehicles do not require a ground guide. The person in the right front seat will insure that a ground guide and or a plymovent operator is provided. No other personnel shall exit the apparatus until the air brake has been applied. If there are no passengers on the apparatus, the driver should exercise due caution while backing.
8. The ground guide should have a hand held radio on primary when performing duties as ground guide. Other frequencies may be used, but care must be taken to reset the radio to the proper channel.
9. Any PFD personnel who are at a fire station and hear a backup alarm have the responsibility to check and see that any and all apparatus in reverse have a ground guide. If an apparatus is found to not have a ground guide, then he/she shall immediately assume the role of ground guide.
10. At night a hand light and rear lighting will be utilized for lighting the ground behind the apparatus.
11. In the event the driver is the only person on the apparatus, the operator will position the apparatus on the apron to provide a straight back-in, once the driver has positioned the apparatus he/she should exit the apparatus, check behind the apparatus for obstructions and to insure the apparatus is aligned properly with the bay. Once this is accomplished the operator may back the vehicle into the bay.
12. During hose packing operations, tailboard work positions are permissible if done under the direction of a ground guide with visual and radio contact with the vehicle's operator.

13. If an apparatus is involved in any accident in which direct contact is made with another object, the driver is under immediate driving suspension until officers' review. (see Accident and Investigation)
14. High water conditions may exist throughout the area during storms and runoff periods. The following list of considerations is to be taken into account for emergency and non-emergency response. In most cases, PFD apparatus will have very few problems "navigating our waters". The following guidelines are to be adhered to for preventing apparatus damage, preventing accidents, and still providing timely response. The objective is to arrive safely!

A. High Water:

1. Reduce speed to 5 mph or less
2. After entering the high water, apply brakes slightly to dry out linings.
3. After exiting high water, apply the brakes to verify proper brake performance.
4. Drive slowly! Do not produce a wave effect, as damage to other vehicles and property will occur.
5. Most water induced mechanical failures in vehicles are caused from excess speed and high water being sprayed by the vehicle's engine cooling fan.
6. Never park in high water areas since water will infiltrate chassis and wiring components.

B. Heavy rains, slick streets, icy conditions:

1. Extreme caution is to be observed.
2. Reduce top speed substantially.
3. Do not tailgate--keep at least one hundred feet distance.
4. Utilize extreme caution while braking.
5. All apparatus equipped with retarders shall be in the "low" power position or "off".

D. Operation of Personal Vehicles:

1. All members driving their personal vehicles to the scene of an emergency shall obey all Texas State Laws and Statutes. All personally owned and operated vehicles utilized for transporting PFD personnel and/or equipment and used for authorized departmental functions shall meet or exceed any applicable local, state, or federal laws. This specifically relates to State of Texas inspections, driver's license, insurance, licensing of the vehicle, and any other item relating to the condition and safety of the vehicle.
2. All personnel in POV's must yield the right of way to all fire, EMS, and police units in emergency responses.
3. Firefighters are not to park their POV's within the area used for apparatus use or staging. POV's are to only park on the right side of the roadway away from

the scene. Utilize a driveway, parking lot or other open space away from the emergency.

4. All active members should display a departmental supplied identification decal on their POV. The location should be on driver's side rear window. No other PFD identification materials may be used without the consent of the Fire Chief. Upon the sale of the vehicle or membership termination the individual shall remove any and all PFD markings.
5. Members (this excludes firefighter candidates and junior members) may install approved audible and visual warning devices on their personal cars if they so desire and at their own expense. These devices shall meet all Laws Applicable to Emergency Vehicles. The Command Staff must approve the individual's use of personal warning devices on an individual basis.
6. Members having audible and visual warning devices meeting these requirements shall drive their personal vehicles in a safe and prudent manner when making a response to the scene of an emergency and they shall follow all the restrictions of Laws Applicable to Emergency Vehicles.
7. Only those vehicles meeting the requirements of the Laws Applicable to Emergency Vehicles shall respond emergency under any circumstances. Both visual and audible devices must be used.
8. The use of audible and/or visual warning devices for other than sanctioned departmental emergencies may result in disciplinary action. Any member responding emergency without approved equipment is subject to the full punishment under the law.
9. Command Staff & Lieutenants may respond emergency traffic to any and all incidents.
10. Still Alarms
 - a. Members shall only respond emergency traffic to the station. No member shall respond emergency traffic direct to an incident. When the apparatus responds members shall downgrade and divert to scene.
11. In District Box Alarms and Entrapments
 - a. Members shall respond emergency traffic to the station. When the apparatus responds members may divert and respond emergency traffic direct to the incident.

12. Out of District Box Alarms and Entrapments

- a. Members shall only respond emergency traffic to station. No member shall respond emergency traffic direct to an incident. When the apparatus responds reduce to non emergency and continue to the station to staff the station.

13. Only members approved by the Command Staff may deviate from the above response guidelines

14. Any member not complying with any of the above is subject to disciplinary action.

15. Personal Vehicle Driving Enforcement

- a. The Command Staff shall be the ruling authority for all personal vehicle driving infractions and complaints.
- b. If a complaint is received regarding a personal vehicle the Command Staff shall obtain all necessary information regarding the complaint including a discussion with the complainant and driver.
- c. The primary purpose will be concerned with the manner in which members drive their personal vehicles while representing the Ponderosa Fire Department and with the type, number, or quality of the emergency equipment used.
- d. Disciplinary action by the Command Staff shall be in addition to any action taken by those empowered to uphold laws.

All necessary forms are located on the Shared Staff Drive

DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS

- A. To qualify to drive PFD vehicles non-emergency, and to drive POV's emergency, these minimum qualifications must be met:
1. Be 18 years old.
 2. Have taken the written Class B test and received the driving permit (PFD apparatus only).
 3. Have acceptable driving record as per related guideline.
 4. Have attended a DDC course or equivalent within the last five years.
 5. Have the approval of the respective station Captain.
 6. Have the approval of the Command Staff (POV emergency driving only).
 7. Have approved driver trainer in the officers' seat (PFD apparatus only).
- B. To qualify to drive PFD vehicles emergency status, learning and regular response, the above minimum qualifications apply and the following additional criteria must be met:
1. Class B license (as applicable to vehicle)
 2. Receive recommendation by the station Captain.
 3. Has proven proficiency in driving and operation of the apparatus systems.
 4. Approval by the Command Staff at a regular officers meeting. (Final Approval.)
 5. The Captain will retain all training documentation and provide at a regular officers meeting for approval to be added to the approved driver list.
- C. During the driver-training phase, the member must ride with an approved driver trainer in the officer's seat. Training issues to be addressed include but are not limited to all items contained in the driver training checklist.
- D. Before being allowed to drive the apparatus under emergency conditions, the member must show proficiency in operating the pump in non-complex situations. A non-complex situation is defined as a scene that does not require water relays, drafting, or the use of dry hydrants. The member should have an understanding of how to use a water manifold and gated Y.

After the Member has participated in drivers training with an approved driver trainer and has met the minimum requirements and has been recommended by a driver trainer. the driver must drive on a minimum of three emergency runs with the station Captain or designee in the officer seat. After the three responses, the Captain will re-evaluate the driver and either approve the driver for emergency response or require additional training.

After the member has obtained the minimum requirements as set forth above, and is in the evaluation phase (waiting to obtain 3 emergency responses with the Captain) the member may upon the Captain approval respond in the truck to a scene in a non-emergency mode. This may be necessary to get the apparatus to the scene in the absence of an approved driver.

DRIVER EVALUATION

A. Objective:

To establish a method of evaluating Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department members for consideration of:

1. Operating department apparatus
2. Using lights / sirens POV's
3. Maintaining membership

B. Historically, there are five factors that show a statistical significance in traffic accident phenomenon. These are length of membership, age of the driver, marital status, violations and the number of accidents. The points assigned to each category are as follows:

1. Length of Employment

Under 1 year	20
1 to 2 years	15
2 years and over	10

2. Age

Under 21	45
21 to 24	30
25 to 29	15
30 to 65	10

3. Violations

3 or more	60
2	30
1	20
0	10

4. Accidents

2 or more	60
1	30
0	10

5. Martial Status

Single/Divorced	10
Married	0

The following criteria have been established:

1. Points - if a member has 195 points or above, his/her membership will be terminated.
2. Points - Any member scoring between 125 and 195 points will have his/her driving record reviewed by the Command Staff. After review, the Command Staff will decide if the person may drive the department apparatus, or a POV utilizing emergency warning devices.

Example: A member who has been a member for 4 years, is 27 years old, has one violation, one accident, and is single. Add the appropriate category from (A) + (B) + (C) + (D) + (E) or $10+15+20+30+10 = 85$ points.

SUMMARY OF LAWS APPLICABLE TO EMERGENCY VEHICLES

CHAPTER 541, SUBCHAPTER C VEHICLES, RAIL TRANSPORTATION, AND EQUIPMENT

§ 541.201. Vehicles

In this subtitle:

A. "Authorized emergency vehicle" means:

1. a fire department or police vehicle;
2. a public or private ambulance operated by a person who has been issued a license by the Texas Department of Health;
3. a municipal department or public service corporation emergency vehicle that has been designated or authorized by the governing body of a municipality;
4. a private vehicle of a volunteer firefighter or a certified emergency medical services employee or volunteer when responding to a fire alarm or medical emergency;
5. an industrial emergency response vehicle, including an industrial ambulance, when responding to an emergency, but only if the vehicle is operated in compliance with criteria in effect September 1, 1989, and established by the Texas Industrial Fire Training Board of the State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas; or
6. a vehicle of a blood bank or tissue bank, accredited or approved under the laws of this state or the United States, when making emergency deliveries of blood, drugs, medicines, or organs.

**CHAPTER 545, SUBCHAPTER B
DRIVING ON RIGHT SIDE OF ROADWAY AND PASSING**

§ 545.058. Driving on Improved Shoulder

- A. A limitation in this section on driving on an improved shoulder does not apply to:
1. an authorized emergency vehicle responding to a call;
 2. a police patrol; or
 3. a bicycle.

**SUBCHAPTER H
SPEED RESTRICTIONS**

§ 545.365. Speed Limit Exception for Emergencies; Municipal Regulation

- A. The regulation of the speed of a vehicle under this subchapter does not apply to:
1. an authorized emergency vehicle responding to a call;
 2. a police patrol; or
 3. a physician or ambulance responding to an emergency call.
- B. A municipality by ordinance may regulate the speed of:
1. an ambulance;
 2. an emergency medical services vehicle; or
 3. an authorized vehicle operated by a blood or tissue bank.

**SUBCHAPTER I
MISCELLANEOUS RULES**

§ 545.407. Following or Obstructing Fire Apparatus or Ambulance

- A. An operator, unless on official business, may not follow closer than 500 feet a fire apparatus responding to a fire alarm or drive into or park the vehicle in the block where the fire apparatus has stopped to answer a fire alarm.
- B. An operator may not:

1. follow closer than 500 feet an ambulance that is flashing red lights unless the operator is on official business; or
2. drive or park the vehicle where an ambulance has been summoned for an emergency call in a manner intended to interfere with the arrival or departure of the ambulance.

§ 545.408. Crossing Fire Hose

An operator may not, without the consent of the fire department official in command, drive over an unprotected hose of a fire department if the hose is on a street or private driveway and is intended for use at a fire or alarm of fire.

CHAPTER 546 OPERATION OF AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLES AND CERTAIN OTHER VEHICLES

SUBCHAPTER A. AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLES

§ 546.001. Permissible Conduct

A. In operating an authorized emergency vehicle the operator may:

1. park or stand, irrespective of another provision of this subtitle;
2. proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, after slowing as necessary for safe operation;
3. exceed a maximum speed limit, except as provided by an ordinance adopted under Section 545.365, as long as the operator does not endanger life or property; and
4. disregard a regulation governing the direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

§ 546.003. Audible or Visual Signals Required

Except as provided by Section 546.004, the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle engaging in conduct permitted by Section 546.001 shall use, at the discretion of the operator in accordance with policies of the department or the local government that employs the operator, audible or visual signals that meet the pertinent requirements of Sections 547.305 and 547.702.

§ 546.005. Duty of Care

A. This chapter does not relieve the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle from:

1. the duty to operate the vehicle with appropriate regard for the safety of all persons; or
2. the consequences of reckless disregard for the safety of others.

§ 547.702. Additional Equipment Requirements for Authorized Emergency Vehicles

- B. An authorized emergency vehicle may be equipped with a siren, exhaust whistle, or bell:
1. of a type approved by the department; and
 2. that emits a sound audible under normal conditions at a distance of at least 500 feet.
- C. The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle shall use the siren, whistle, or bell when necessary to warn other vehicle operators or pedestrians of the approach of the emergency vehicle.
- D. Except as provided by this section, an authorized emergency vehicle shall be equipped with signal lamps that:
1. are mounted as high and as widely spaced laterally as practicable;
 2. display four alternately flashing red lights, two located on the front at the same level and two located on the rear at the same level; and
 3. emit a light visible at a distance of 500 feet in normal sunlight.
- E. A private vehicle operated by a volunteer firefighter responding to a fire alarm or a medical emergency may, but is not required to, be equipped with signal lamps that comply with the requirements of Subsection (c).
- F. A private vehicle operated by a volunteer firefighter responding to a fire alarm or a medical emergency may be equipped with a signal lamp that is temporarily attached to the vehicle roof and flashes a red light visible at a distance of at least 500 feet in normal sunlight.
- G. A police vehicle may, but is not required to, be equipped with signal lamps that comply with Subsection (c).