

Emergency Operations

Chapter 7

7.1 Emergency Operations

All emergency incident operations shall be conducted according to department policy.

7.2 Apparatus Response

No department vehicles will respond unless dispatched by the ECC. Automotive equipment will be driven in a safe and sane manner always. Emergency response does not justify excessive speed. Unsafe operation of any vehicle will not be tolerated. Unsafe operation of department apparatus will result in Disciplinary Action.

Prior to responding to emergency incidents within the VFC's response area's, VFC's shall staff their apparatus with the below minimum staffing levels based on specific fire apparatus.

- Water Tender: 1 person minimum, 2 personnel preferred
- Engine (type 2): 1 person minimum, 2 or more personnel preferred
- Engine (type 3): 1 person minimum, 3 or more personnel preferred
- Engine (type 6): 1 person minimum, 2 or more personnel preferred. The type 6 engine also responds to calls as a squad (Structure fires, EMS, TC, etc.)
- Squad: 1 person minimum, 2 personnel or more preferred

Only one VFF per apparatus can be paid operator wages.

Prior to responding to emergency incidents outside of the VFC's response area's, VFC's shall staff their apparatus with the below minimum staffing levels based on specific fire apparatus.

- Water Tender: 1 person minimum, 2 personnel preferred
- Engine (type 2): 2 personnel minimum, more personnel preferred
- Engine (type 3): 2 personnel minimum, 3 or more personnel preferred

Engine (type 6): 2 personnel minimum with more personnel preferred for wildland fires. The type 6 engine also responds to calls as a squad (Structure fires, EMS, TC, etc.) and can respond with 1 person minimum with more personnel preferred.

Squad: 1 personnel minimum, 2 personnel or more preferred

Only one VFF per apparatus can be paid operator wages.

7.3 Code-3 Driving

Code-3 driving is the operation of a vehicle with red lights and siren. Only authorized emergency vehicles may be driven Code-3 and must be operated in accordance with department policy. All emergency warning lights and sirens must be approved by the automotive fleet manager. Code 3 status does not exempt any driver from the legal responsibility to consider the safety of others. The basic speed law of the CVC prohibits any driver from driving faster than traffic, road, and weather conditions safely allow regardless of the emergency.

The driver/operator of the emergency vehicle is discouraged from operating the radio and logging times while driving.

All vehicle operators must comply with the CVC and department policy on emergency vehicle operations.

7.4 “Drive to Arrive”

The operators of emergency vehicles will adhere to the general orders for emergency response for the department as listed below.

General Orders

California Vehicle Code allows the drivers of authorized emergency vehicles, when responding to emergencies, certain exemptions to the laws as it pertains to speed and other traffic restrictions. It does not relieve the driver from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway nor protect the driver from the consequences of an arbitrary and careless exercise of exemption privileges.

Drivers must be aware of the limitations of visible and audible warning devices, such as red lights and siren. The safety of the general public must take precedence in all cases over the response speed of emergency vehicles.

The following is established in accordance with the California Vehicle Code:

- The fact alone that a vehicle is an authorized emergency vehicle does not relieve the driver from the duty to comply with the rules of the road.

- In crossing an intersection Code 3, the speed of the emergency vehicle shall not be greater than that enabling the vehicle to stop without collision should the right-of-way be violated. In no case should a vehicle proceed through a red light or stop sign at a speed greater than 5 miles per hour. At times it may be necessary to come to a complete stop at an intersection and then cautiously proceed after it has been determined that the intersection is clear.
- Do not pull up immediately behind a vehicle and suddenly sound the siren. The driver may stop right in front of you.
- Do not pass on the right unless no other option is available, then only at safe speeds and after you are positive that the car you are passing will not pull to the right as you go by.
- Do not sound the siren at its highest pitch continuously. Fluctuate it throughout the tonal range.
- Keep near the center of the roadway so that on-coming vehicles can see the red lights approaching.
- Do not closely follow another emergency vehicle. A motorist may yield to the first emergency vehicle and then pull out in front of you.
- The best route of travel for making emergency response often entails driving on a freeway. Use of red lights and siren on a freeway is not required provided that the vehicle is not exceeding the posted speed limit or disregarding other traffic regulations. The unnecessary use of the siren and red lights on a freeway may cause confusion on the part of other traffic, which can impede the safe flow of traffic.
- The use of the air horn will be kept to a minimum. Excessive use of the air horn may drown out the siren. During Code 3 responses, the device should be used only when approaching intersections and then two or three short blasts should suffice.
- When responding Code 3, whether during the day or at night, headlights should be lighted. This provides an additional margin of safety by assisting in drawing attention to the apparatus.
- Code-3 status does not give an emergency driver the right of way unless other drivers hear the siren and see the red lights. Because it is difficult to tell when other drivers are aware of an emergency, all emergency drivers will assume at all times they do not have the right of way.
- Normally, one emergency vehicle will not overtake and pass another while both vehicles are responding Code-3. A possible exception to this policy is during operation on a multi-lane roadway.

It may be safe for one Code-3 vehicle to pass another Code-3 vehicle.
Permission to pass must be obtained from the forward vehicle, prior to passing.

7.5 Emergency Incident Operations

From time to time a VFF operator/engineer will be the first to arrive at scene of an incident and will be the Incident Commander (IC). In order to gain necessary operational experience, it is permissible for the VFF to continue as the IC while under direct or indirect career staff supervision. Anytime the IC is relieved by a ranking officer, the relieved officer shall be informed either face to face, or if necessary by radio.

7.6 Concluding Emergency Operations

Unless excused, all VFF's will assist in picking up at the scene of an incident.

Unless excused, all VFF's will return to quarters and assist in returning all apparatus and equipment to a clean/readiness condition. After late evening responses, full detail cleaning may be postponed until later in the day.

The department recognizes that certain VFF's may need to be excused from an incident prior to its conclusion because of illness, education, employment, or child care issues. The VFF shall inform the IC of his need to leave the incident early.

VFF's that are not excused and fail to return and assist with clean-up shall only be compensated for actual work performed. Repeated unexcused failures to return and assist with clean-up may result in Disciplinary Action.

7.7 Equipment Contracts and State Hire Fire Apparatus

CAL FIRE will enter into specific contracts for rental of department owned fire apparatus. These contracts will follow state hiring guidelines. Formal contracts are entered into via the department's Private Equipment Hiring Coordinator on a regular basis.

7.8 VFF Responses

While it is the intent of the department to recruit, train, and maintain a highly motivated workforce of VFF's, it is also the intent to manage and maximize the cost effectiveness of this resource. VFF incident response will occur by pre-defined criteria that assures cost efficient and effective VFF utilization.

The following response criteria will guide VFF responses within the department.

Dispatch Nomenclature:

VFC (i.e., CO74) will include all VFF personnel.

VFF Apparatus (i.e., Water Tender 74) will include the apparatus and the pre-determined minimum staffing (see 6.24).

Dispatch Guidelines:

VFF incident responses will be based on alert notification from the Emergency Command Center (ECC). VFF's will not routinely respond to incidents without being dispatched by the ECC. Exceptions include a VFF is close to the call and can render aid.

Automatic Station Coverage

Automatic station coverage with VFF's will not normally occur. When it is necessary and requested through the ECC, the ECC will specify specific apparatus to be staffed.

Unauthorized VFF Responses

VFF responses outside of the criteria defined in these procedures are not authorized unless there is a legitimate reason, normally based on the VFF's close proximity to the incident or the urgent need for assistance.

7.9 Private Vehicle Response Requirements

Unsafe operation or violation of the California Vehicle Code (CVC) while operating a private vehicle while performing as a VFF will result in Disciplinary Action (see 4.11). The CVC specifically prohibits private vehicles from using emergency type warning lights (red and blue) and sirens.

Driving and Parking

All VFF's will maintain safe and courteous driving habits. The public and other agencies opinions of the fire service can be greatly influenced by personnel driving to and from emergency incidents. More importantly, driving in violation of the Vehicle Code is unsafe to the driver and other drivers/pedestrians on the roadways.

VFF's responding to any incident in a personal vehicle must drive in a safe and courteous manner, observing all traffic laws of the California Vehicle Code.

VFF's must always be on the alert for responding emergency vehicles, particularly at intersections. VFF's should never follow an emergency vehicle more closely than is reasonable and safe, having regard for the traffic and road conditions. The minimum distance is 300 ft.

No private vehicle shall pass any Code-3 emergency vehicle at any time. No volunteer responding to or returning from an incident shall exceed the posted speed limit.

Under no circumstances, will any private vehicle, while in motion, display its hazard warning lamps. The use of vehicle horns and/or flashing hi-beam lights to force cars out the way is also strictly prohibited.

VFF's must use good judgment when parking their vehicle, so as not to interfere with the positioning, operation, and movement of fire, medical, and law enforcement vehicles. When possible, VFF vehicles should be parked off the road.

VFF's will display the standard "BCFD Volunteer Fire Fighter" plaque on the front dash (mirror, sun visor) once they arrive at the emergency incident. When parked, headlights shall be turned off to not cause blindness to oncoming vehicles.

Hazard warning lamps shall be used when any vehicle is parked in a hazardous location.

No volunteer should arrive prior to Fire Department equipment for hazardous materials calls or any type of incident that requires staging.

Private vehicles should park a short distance away from the incident and leave plenty of parking for emergency vehicles.

All VFF's who operate personal vehicles for department business are required to:

- Maintain a valid California Driver's License in appropriate class.
- Have on file a "Proof of Insurance" (declaration page) document with County Finance. This document is part of the application packet.
- Have on file a completed "Application for Driver Authorization" form. This document is part of the application packet (attachment 10.15, Authorization to Drive).

7.10 Incident Assignments

The following policy will be adhered to by all VFF's while responding to or working on all incidents.

Incident Scene

- VFF's riding on fire apparatus are assigned to the operator of the vehicle they are riding on.

- When arriving at an incident, report directly to the Incident Commander or the Staging Area manager, if assigned.
- Under no circumstances will a VFF perform independent action or start working at an incident without having an assigned supervisor and being incorporated into the incident accountability system.
- When assigned to a Company Officer, continue to work under his or her direction until reassigned or released.
- Obey all policies and regulations of the department and this SOP manual.
- Remain with the assigned apparatus until directed or ordered into action.
- Be on alert for other activities occurring at the incident. Do not work in conflict with them.
- While working around all fire scenes be on the alert for, and make every effort to protect the origin, preserve evidence, as to the possible cause of the fire.
- While at Traffic Collisions do not move vehicle parts from the roadway, unless they present a serious life safety hazard, until instructed to do so from your immediate supervisor (law enforcement investigation procedures).
- VFF's should make no comments/opinions regarding any of the following, except to their immediate supervisor:
 - Location of valuables
 - Cause of the fire on incident
 - Location of human bodies
 - Loss estimates
 - Suspicious nature of fire
- Any VFF finding money or other valuables, or receiving complaints of theft or loss of the same at the scene of an incident, shall report details to their immediate supervisor.
- VFF's will not remove any item or materials from the scene of an incident, regardless of the perceived non-value. VFF's observing other VFF's, employees or members of the public removing items from the incident scene shall report it promptly to their immediate supervisor.
- On long incident assignments, a volunteer operator/engineer should consider anticipated relief driver requirements. The member should inform his/her station and Career Captain, through the IC.

7.11 VFF FC-33 Requirements

A completed FC-33 (Overhead, Crew, and Equipment Time Report) will be collected and submitted through channels for every apparatus at scene of all billable fires or other billable incidents in Local Responsibility Area and State Responsibility Area.

The Incident Commander on billable incidents where there is no Personnel Time Recorder, is responsible for collection of a completed FC-33 from each unit and overhead at the scene.

Other billable incidents, regardless of responsibility area, include, but are not limited to, flood control, earthquake and other emergency related disaster assistance under requests from the Office of Emergency Services, activities involved under FEMA reimbursement criteria, and federal jurisdiction fires billable under reimbursement agreements.

7.12 Instructions for Completing FC-33's

Activity for VFC's and VFF staffed equipment on billable incidents must be reported on an FC-33. This will help support the pay documents issued to pay for such activity.

The duty day for VFF's is the calendar day, 0001 to 2400 hours. The instructions for FC-33 completion are located on the FC-33 book cover.