

Vehicle Operation

Supersedes: 11-21-05

Effective: 11-23-08

1. Department members operating a BEMS owned vehicle while not in emergency response shall obey all posted traffic regulations and restrictions, as specified in Massachusetts General Law, including among other things compliance with traffic signals, posted speed limits, and stop signs. Department members not in compliance will be subject to all fines and penalties associated with any infractions of the vehicle and traffic laws. The following provisions of Chapters 89 of the Massachusetts General Laws apply to the operation of ambulances and other emergency vehicles during responses. All members should be familiar with the following laws.
 - 1.1. *Chapter 89, Section 7.* The members and apparatus of a fire department while going to a fire or responding to an alarm, police patrol vehicles and ambulances, and ambulances on a call for the purpose of hospitalizing a sick or injured person shall have the right of way through any street, way, lane or alley. Whoever willfully obstructs or retards the passage of any of the foregoing in the exercise of such right shall be punished by a fine of fifty dollars or by imprisonment for not more than three months for the first offense and by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars or by imprisonment for up to one year for a second and subsequent offenses; provided, however, that for a third or subsequent offense the court or the registry of motor vehicles, in addition to any such fine or imprisonment, may suspend the license of the person so convicted and may order mandatory classroom retraining in motor vehicle and traffic laws;
 - 1.2. *Chapter 89, Section 7A.* Upon the approach of any fire apparatus, police vehicle, ambulance or disaster vehicle which is going to a fire or responding to call, alarm or emergency situation, every person driving a vehicle on a way shall immediately drive said vehicle as far as possible toward the right-hand curb or side of said way and shall keep the same at a standstill until such fire apparatus, police vehicle, ambulance or disaster vehicle has passed. No person shall drive a vehicle over a hose of a fire department without the consent of a member of such department. No person shall drive a vehicle within three hundred feet of any fire apparatus going to a fire or responding to an alarm, nor drive said vehicle, or park or leave the same unattended, within eight hundred feet of a fire or within the fire lanes established by the fire department, or upon or beside any traveled way, whether public or private, leading to the scene of a fire, in such a manner as to obstruct the approach to the fire of any fire apparatus or any ambulance, safety or police vehicle, or of any vehicle bearing an official fire or police department designation. Authorized police or fire department personnel may tow a vehicle found to be in violation of the provisions of this section or which is illegally parked or standing in a fire lane as established by the fire

department, whether or not a fire is in progress, and such personnel shall not be subject to the provisions of section one hundred and twenty D of chapter two hundred and sixty-six. No person shall operate a motor vehicle behind any such fire apparatus, ambulance, safety or police vehicle, or any vehicle bearing an official fire or police department designation which is operating with emergency systems on, for a distance of three hundred feet. Violation of any provision of this section shall be punished by a fine of not more than one hundred dollars.

1.3. *Chapter 89, Section 7B.* The driver of a vehicle of a fire, police or recognized protective department and the driver of an ambulance shall be subject to the provisions of any statute, rule, regulation, ordinance or by-law relating to the operation or parking of vehicles, except that a driver of fire apparatus while going to a fire or responding to an alarm, or the driver of a vehicle of a police or recognized protective department or the driver of an ambulance, in an emergency and while in performance of a public duty or while transporting a sick or injured person to a hospital or other destination where professional medical services are available, may drive such vehicle at a speed in excess of the applicable speed limit if he exercises caution and due regard under the circumstances for the safety of persons and property, and may drive such vehicle through an intersection of ways contrary to any traffic signs or signals regulating traffic at such intersection if he first brings such vehicle to a full stop and then proceeds with caution and due regard for the safety of persons and property, unless otherwise directed by a police officer regulating traffic at such intersection. The driver of any such approaching emergency vehicle shall comply with the provisions of section fourteen of chapter ninety when approaching a school bus which has stopped to allow passengers to alight or board from the same, and whose red lamps are flashing;

2. Vehicle Parking and Idling

2.1. Massachusetts law prohibits unnecessary idling of vehicles for more than 5 minutes (MGL CH. 90 Sect 16A). In addition to causing pollutants to enter the atmosphere, prolonged vehicle idling wastes fuel and causes increased wear on the engine. Unless engaged in an operation for which engine power is necessary for an associated power need other than movement, such as to maintain climate control or electrical power, Department vehicles should not idle unnecessarily. This is especially true when vehicles are parked near a hospital emergency room or ambulance satellite station where fumes may be drawn into the building.

2.2. Within the City of Boston, department vehicles may park on the street in spaces that are posted "Commercial Loading Zones" or spaces posted as "Reserved for City Vehicles Only". Commercial parking is in various locations and parking for City vehicles only is located on portions of several streets in downtown: Court, Devonshire, Water, Hawley, and Kilby Streets. Drivers are prohibited from parking a department vehicle in a manner that may cause a "Public Safety Violation" unless on scene at a designated medical or other similar emergency. Drivers are prohibited from:

- Double parking
- Parking in No Stopping/No Standing zones
- Parking within twenty feet of an intersection
- Parking in a Bus Stop
- Parking within a pedestrian crosswalk
- Parking less than ten feet from a fire lane
- Parking on a sidewalk
- Parking in a handicap zone or blocking a handicap ramp
- Parking next to a fire hydrant
- Parking in a space designated on for HP/V Plate Parking

Drivers must comply with the parking regulations of any municipality in which they drive. Any driver who receives a parking ticket or causes a department vehicle to be towed because he/she has caused a "Public Safety Violation" will be responsible for all payments related to the infraction. If the ticket was issued in error, the employee should contact the Office of the General Counsel.

3. Seat and Shoulder Belts

- 3.1. All Department members, passengers, and observers riding in the cabs of ambulances, supervisory vehicles, or special service units, shall wear fastened seat and shoulder belts while the vehicle is in motion.
- 3.2. Seatbelts shall be worn by all occupants in the patient care compartment unless impractical to provide patient care. Patients or family members who are transported on the jump seat/bench seat in a sitting position must be belted in with the seat belt.
- 3.3. Patients transported by stretcher must have at least three strap type restraining devices (chest, hip, and knee) to prevent longitudinal or transverse dislodgment of the patient during transit. Additionally, the head of the cot shall be furnished with upper torso (over shoulder) restraints that mitigate forward motion of the patient during severe braking or in a frontal impact crash. If use of the shoulder harness is precluded due to patient care needs (CPR, Defibrillation, shoulder/clavicle injury), this must be noted on the patient care report. When appropriate, children should be transported in a child safety seat.
- 3.4. It shall be the responsibility of the vehicle operator to ensure that all passengers and patients are properly secured prior to moving the vehicle. If a family member or friend who wishes to accompany the patient refuses to wear a seat belt, the operator shall inform the person that Department policy prohibits people from riding in an ambulance without a seat belt. If the person continues to refuse, the operator shall not transport such person;
- 3.5. Children under the age of twelve (12) should not be transported in the cab of a vehicle equipped with a passenger side airbag except in extreme circumstances. Children under the age of twelve should be properly secured in the rear seats of vehicles.

4. Backing and Negotiating Tight Spaces.
 - 4.1. Whenever a Department ambulance not carrying a patient is backing up or negotiating a tight space, the passenger shall assist the vehicle operator in maneuvering the vehicle so as to avoid collision. The passenger will get out of the vehicle, station himself or herself at the rear of the vehicle in the view of the rear view mirror, direct the vehicle operator, and the guide oncoming traffic, as needed.
 - 4.2. Whenever a Department ambulance is backing up or negotiating a tight space while carrying a patient, the EMT-Attendant should assist the operator to the extent possible without leaving the patient. When no one is available to act as a guide, the driver must back using extreme caution and activate the vehicle back-up alarm if so equipped.
5. Use of Warning Lights and Siren
 - 5.1. Responding. Emergency warning lights and siren shall be used while on an emergency response. While enroute to an emergency, the vehicle's headlights and all emergency lights shall be illuminated. The siren should normally be continuously activated while enroute to an emergency, but this may not always be practical. For example, when operating on a limited access roadway with no other traffic in sight, or when operating on a single lane road or tunnel, the continuous use of the siren may not be necessary. Department members should exercise good judgment in the use of the siren, taking into account whether other EMS personnel are already on scene, distance from the location, traffic congestion, road conditions, and time of day. If the siren is being used intermittently, it must be in operation continuously when approaching and passing through an intersection with a red light or stop sign. One-way, no turn, and other regulations may be disregarded during emergency operation only when necessary. When disregarded, driving shall be done at a slow rate of speed, with all warning devices engaged. Vehicle operators may proceed, after coming to a complete stop, though red lights, stop signs, and other traffic control devices.
 - 5.2. Slow/Continue. When a responding unit is directed to "slow but continue" by an on scene unit, the vehicle operator shall continue operating in the emergency mode, but reduce the speed of the vehicle accordingly and comply with all traffic regulations (e.g. one way and other traffic control devices). Vehicle operators may proceed, after coming to a complete stop, though red lights, stop signs, and other traffic control devices. If the siren is being used intermittently, it must be in operation continuously when approaching and passing through an intersection with a red light or stop sign.
 - 5.3. Transport. The use of the siren and rapid transportation of a patient is rarely indicated. While warning lights should be activated during transport, Department members should exercise good judgment and discretion in the use of the siren while transporting a patient to a hospital, taking into account the patient's condition, distance to the hospital, traffic congestion, road conditions, and time of day. If the siren is being used intermittently, it must be in operation

continuously when approaching and passing through an intersection with a red light or stop sign.

6. Duty of Driver When Following Other Emergency Vehicles.

6.1. The driver of any Department vehicle shall not race or pass other responding emergency vehicles unless signaled to do so by the operator of the other vehicle(s).

6.2. A minimum distance between responding units shall be maintained. The second unit shall not pass any point on the roadway sooner than two seconds after the leading response unit has passed the same point on the roadway. Reference points shall be the rear bumper of the lead vehicle, and the front bumper of the second vehicle.

7. Securing Vehicle and Equipment.

7.1. To the extent possible, all loose equipment should be secured whenever a vehicle is in motion.

7.2. Department vehicles are to be locked whenever left unattended. If so equipped, anti-theft devices shall be engaged whenever a vehicle must be left running while unattended. The ignition key shall be removed whenever engaging an anti-theft device that allows the engine to continue running when the ignition is turned to the "off" position.

7.3. The parking brake shall be set whenever a Department vehicle is parked on an incline, or whenever a vehicle without a transmission interlock system is left unattended. (With a transmission interlock system, the gear selector cannot be moved out of Park unless the brake pedal is applied.)

8. Improper / Unauthorized Vehicle Use

8.1. A Department vehicle should not be used to chase, obstruct another motor vehicle, and/or confront its occupants. If an ambulance crew witnesses a person fleeing or driving from the scene of a crime, the appropriate police agency shall be notified via Dispatch Operations, and the relevant information given to that police agency.

8.2. The driver should use care at all times when operating a department vehicle and should not drive the vehicle over high curbing, onto sidewalks, or over the median strips of roadways, except in extreme situations. When such actions must be taken, the driver should do so slowly so as to keep the vehicle under constant control and minimize potential damage. Any known or suspected vehicle damage should be reported to a supervisor at the conclusion of the call.

8.3. Personnel should not permit an ambulance to be moved by anyone other than a Department member. However, in extreme circumstances, a Boston Police Officer or a Boston Firefighter may be authorized to reposition the vehicle, or assist by driving an ambulance not carrying a patient to a hospital.

(11-23-08 Section regarding vehicle positioning removed and put in "Vehicle Positioning / High Visibility Apparel" SOP)