Standard Operating Guidelines

for

Emergency Vehicle Operators

and the

Use of Red Lights and Sirens

Eldorado National Forest

**Intent:**

The intent of an Emergency Vehicle Operator using optical and audio warning devices (i.e. Red Lights and Sirens or amber lights) is to warn other traffic, or gain the attention of the public to the presence of emergency vehicles during emergency situations. Use of Red Lights and Sirens shall be confined to responses of an emergency nature only. The use of emergency lighting is restricted to the need to clear right-of-way, block or divert traffic, by-pass road construction, traffic flow restrictions or whenever the risk associated with use of emergency lights and sirens are off-set by the benefits to public or firefighter safety. Above all else, drivers of FIRE vehicles must consider the safety of Forest Service personnel, the public and themselves when responding to, or engaged in emergency situations. Vehicle operators shall comply with all traffic laws, regulations, or ordinances, even in emergency driving situations (Health and Safety Code). Speed of travel will not exceed road conditions or posted speed limits.

**Task:**

* Screen and monitor Emergency Vehicle Operators to ensure they are experienced mature professionals
* Screen and monitor Emergency Vehicle Operators to ensure they will   
  respond to emergency situations with professional judgment.
* Train and test Emergency Vehicle Operators to ensure they possess the requisite knowledge and skill to operate fire apparatus both skillfully and professionally.
* Train and test in *Coaching the Emergency Vehicle Operator™* (CEVO 3) to ensure they possess the judgment to know when the tool of RL&S will enhance public safety based upon any given situation.

**Purpose:**

To enhance the safety of the public and firefighters by giving Emergency Vehicle Operators the tool of Red Lights and Sirens and the training the use the tool safely and effectively.

**Emergency Vehicle Operator:**

A Forest Service wildland firefighter trained authorized and certified to operate emergency lights and sirens while driving on public roads.

**Red Lights and Sirens:**

NFPA 1906 compliant red or red and white high intensity flashing optical warning devices (lights). This lighting is commonly found on ambulance and fire emergency vehicles. Vehicles equipped with emergency lighting shall also be equipped with NFPA 1906 compliant audio warning devices (sirens) and reflective materials. Vehicles equipped with red lights and sirens must be equipped and configured with lights, sirens and reflective marking to the standard of “Clearing Right-of-Way” as described by NFPA 1906.

**Amber Lighting:**

NFPA 1906 compliant amber (or Yellow) colored high intensity flashing lights. This lighting is commonly found on highway service vehicles such as tow trucks and road maintenance vehicles. Vehicles equipped with amber lighting must be equipped and configured with lighting and reflective marking to the standard of “Blocking Right-of-Way” as described by NFPA 1906. Amber warning lights afford no additional rights to drivers and only make emergency vehicles more visible when parked or when working in a low visibility environment.

**Manual and Handbook Direction:**

**5120.2 states**: To provide for the safe and effective use of emergency lights and sirens by establishing the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards contained in NFPA 1451 and NFPA 1002 as guidance for program management, training and certification of wildland fire Emergency Vehicle Operators.

**5127 states:** Vehicles equipped with red lights and sirens or amber lights must also be equipped with personal protective equipment to mitigate foreseeable traffic hazards including, at a minimum, reflective vests.

**Chapter 10 –Travel:**

* Safety Practices: Vehicle operators shall comply with all traffic laws, regulations, or ordinances, even in emergency driving situations.
* Where city or county ordinances require emergency vehicles using a siren and red lights to continue their route of travel regardless of traffic signals, drivers shall comply with such ordinances; however, such travel through an intersection shall never exceed 10 mph.

**Training Requirements:**

* Candidates for emergency vehicle operator certification shall pass an initial Emergency Vehicle Operator training program (CEVO 3).
* Emergency vehicle operators shall pass a recertification training at least every three years to maintain their certification.
* Emergency vehicle operator initial training programs shall be guided by the standards described in CEVO 3 as applicable to Forest Service wildland fire operations.
* Emergency vehicle operator initial and recertification training programs must include a proficiency test that demonstrates the operator can competently perform all the requisite skills contained in CEVO 3. The initial and the recertification proficiency testing must be in the same class of vehicle for which the employee will be certified to operate.
* Candidates may obtain the initial and the recertification training at a regional engine academy, a municipal fire department, an EMS training institute or other similar facility meeting the above standards.
* Recertification training may also be accomplished by completing the online CEVO2 fire course and a “ride-along” with another employee knowledgeable and skilled in emergency vehicle operations CEVO 3.
* Recertification and recertification proficiency training must occur not less than every 3 years.

**Certification of Emergency Vehicle Operators:**

Wildland fire Emergency Vehicle Operators shall be certified by their home unit. The certifying official shall be the unit’s Fire Program Manager and shall be with the concurrence of the unit’s licensing examiner. The certification; “Red Lights and Sirens” shall appear on the individual’s OF-346 and shall be restricted for the weight class of vehicle authorized. Certifying officials must have a strong working knowledge of the local and this national policy to ensure all requirements of these standards are met prior to certification. The signed OF-346 is proof of the employee’s Emergency Vehicle Operator certification.

**Screening of Emergency Vehicle Operators**

* Potential operators will be screened based on years of driving experience, a history of license suspensions or traffic violations, and other risk factors.
* The employee’s IQCS folder will contain a driver’s qualification file for each certified emergency vehicle operator.
* At a minimum, the unit will not certify emergency vehicle operators if any of the following apply:
  + Three or more moving violations in the past 3 years.
  + Three or more preventable accidents in the past 3 years.
  + One or more convictions for driving under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol in the past 3 years.
  + Less than 3 years of driving experience.

**Post-Accident Drug and Alcohol Testing Requirement**:

Drug and Alcohol testing guidance for the Forest Service is contained in Executive Order 12564, the USDA’s Plan for a Drug Free Workplace and the NFFE/FS Master Agreement and the negotiated Memorandum’s of Understanding relating to Commercial Driver’s License/Driving. Operators found to be illegally under the influence of alcohol or drugs shall have their emergency vehicle operator’s certification revoked.

**Eldorado National Forest Authorized Uses of Red Lights and Sirens:**

All emergency vehicle operators must follow policy, FSM 5100 - FIRE MANAGEMENT;

**Safety in Emergency Vehicle Operations:**

* Come to a complete stop at all stop signs and red traffic control lights.
* Come to a complete stop at any intersection where all lanes of traffic cannot be seen by the driver.
* Stop and do not pass any school bus with flashing warning lights.
* Turn off sirens and lights when approaching and passing through an active school crossing zone.
* Adhere to posted speed limits.
* Travel at or below safe speeds based on road conditions, weather conditions, visibility and vehicle configuration.
* Obey all railroad crossing signals.
* Adhere to local regulations governing emergency vehicle operation.

Eldorado National Forest authorizes the use of Red Lights and Sirens only in situations when the use of RL&S is appropriate - that is, during any period of time when the use of Red Lights and Sirens will enhance fire fighter and/or public safety. Examples are listed in the following situations below.

* While “on-scene” at an incident. This can include fire line work, water points, incident command posts, etc.
* En route to the incident site when the use of these tools enhances the overall safety of the mission.
* It is necessary for performance of the mission, or use has been requested by dispatch or duty officer.
* While en route to the incident site it is at the emergency vehicle operator’s discretion as to whether the situation warrants the use of red lights and sirens based on safety and the mission at hand.
* In accordance with National Policy, Eldorado National Forest fire vehicle operators are not permitted to drive faster than the posted speed limit. In most cases in the flow of traffic on the way to an incident would move close to the posted speed limit, it would not be necessary for fire vehicles to turn on the red lights and siren while en route. These guidelines will be explained in the Fire Management Plan under the risk management section for red lights and siren.
* While stationary red lights may be used at any time to enhance safety.
* When responding to an initial or extended attack wildland fire incident where limited visibility conditions exist due to smoke, dust, darkness, etc., or adjacent vegetation. The intent in this situation is to warn drivers coming from the opposite direction. As there is limited visibility, the speed in this situation should be below the posted speed limit.
* While “on-scene” at a prescribed burn, in which the prescribed burn activity requires very slow travel or frequent stops or parking within the traveled portion of a road.
* When necessary to move through crowds or congested traffic adjacent to the incident. Note: In this situation, speed should be well under the posted speed limit.
* When requested for crowd control and/or traffic control by a Law Enforcement, municipal fire department, or EMS official while assisting on a non-fire incident.
* Participation in parades or fire prevention events for the purpose of display, NOT travel.

**The use of Red Lights and Sirens shall NOT be used in the following situations listed below:**

* Red lights and sirens will not be used while en route to an incident when the use of these tools does not enhance the overall safety of the mission, or is not necessary to perform the mission.
* Red lights and siren will not be used when in route to a project fire, pre-positioned location, staging area, or airport for further transport. These situations are considered non-emergency incidents where time of arrival is not critical.
* Red lights and sirens will not be used off-forest while in a jurisdiction that does not allow or approve the use of red lights and sirens.