

Tempe Fire Department Policies and Procedures
Code 3 Driving
211.01
Rev 6-26-01

PURPOSE

To provide rules and information pertinent to the safe operation and response of emergency vehicles.

GUIDELINES

It is the responsibility of every member of the Department to be familiar with and adhere to Section 28-624 and Section 28-775 of the Arizona Revised Statute, Operation of Emergency Vehicles (located at the end of this policy).

The following are guidelines for driving Code 3 that will assist you in driving with “due regard” for not only the public, but the other members of your crew as well.

When driving to an emergency, drive to the left and pass on the left. In a multi-lane roadway, drive in the left hand portion of the farthest left lane. This helps people in front of you to see you better. It also gives the appearance of wishing to pass.

To lessen the possibility of accidents, personnel responding to alarms should be aware of traffic, road, and weather conditions as they affect defensive driving practices. These conditions may require speed to be well under the posted limit. Apparatus responding Code 3 shall not exceed the posted speed limit by more than ten miles per hour.

Personnel should be alert to the fact that the public is oftentimes startled by emergency vehicles and as a result may increase chances of having an accident with fire apparatus or another civilian vehicle.

In order to minimize the interruption of traffic flow, apparatus responding to an emergency should attempt to travel by the same route as much as possible.

Whether driving Code 3 or in normal traffic, attempt to maintain an empty space around your vehicle. Keep your options open. Watch behind and to the sides. When a critical situation arises, the driver who provides an escape route can usually avoid or reduce the severity of the collision.

Make sure other drivers see you. It is your responsibility to make sure your actions can be easily seen and interpreted by other on the road. You must signal your intentions and position your vehicle in a manner that allows your moves to be clearly understood. Don't stay in someone else's blind spot.

Intersections

When approaching intersections, overtake vehicles on the left, even if you plan to turn right. When entering an intersection against a red light, stop before entering the crosswalk and make sure it's clear. If it is clear, drive through the crosswalk and forward as far as you safely can to signal your intent to enter the intersection to oncoming traffic. Proceed only when all traffic has stopped. Look left, then right, then left again. Traffic approaching the left is the initial hazard when entering an intersection. If you can't see a lane of traffic because its view is blocked, drive far enough forward to ascertain that it is either clear or that the traffic in it has stopped before proceeding past it.

Entering an intersection where the light is about to complete its cycle is very dangerous. Some drivers will be timing the lights and cruise through without looking and some others will be pushing to beat the red. These drivers may not see you in their hurry to beat the light and may speed up when you are expecting them to slow down and stop. Don't proceed against the light until you can account for all lanes of oncoming traffic and all traffic has stopped.

Entering an intersection with a green light is hazardous because many times in order to pass on the left you must pass cars in the left turn lane and enter the intersection directly facing oncoming traffic. Never exceed 20 mph when driving on the wrong side of the road. Watch the traffic in the left turn lane, as well as, the oncoming traffic – some cars may be turning before the intersection, and seeing oncoming traffic stop and being unaware of your presence, turn directly into your path.

As you approach an intersection with a green light you can get an idea of where the cycle is by looking at the crosswalk light. If it is in the “walk” mode the light will stay green for a while. If it has just changed to “don’t walk,” the light will be green for a short time. If the traffic light is green and the crosswalk sign says “don’t walk,” the light could change at any time and you must prepare for that.

When units are responding in a convoy-type manner (one or more units following closely behind an initial unit), those following the first unit need not come to a complete stop, but may proceed through the intersection providing it is safe to do so.

Don’t overdrive a situation to make time. Your speed will do you no good if you are in an accident as a result of it. The heavier the traffic, the more potential for an accident, and the slower you need to drive to prevent it.

Exceptions exist to the rule “always pass on the left.” One would be a situation in which the left lane in your direction of travel is occupied, the traffic in it is stopped, the right lanes are open and there is heavy oncoming traffic. If the traffic stopped in the left lane makes no move to the right and the oncoming traffic stops (filling all oncoming lanes), as a last resort you may pass slowly, as far right as possible. Proceed with caution and be aware of any traffic approaching from behind. This is a dangerous situation.

Any exception to the “always pass on the left” rule must be accompanied by a heightened sense of awareness and caution. You should never casually pass traffic on the right when driving Code 3.

The following are guidelines for use of traffic signal preemption.

- Traffic signal preemption is installed in an effort to reduce emergency response time and to enhance response safely.
- Upon approaching and entering an intersection, vehicle speed may not exceed the legally posted speed limit for that traffic corridor. In heavy traffic situations, speeds well below the posted limit may be required upon intersection approach.
- With the “Opticom” system, it is important to drive by the indications you see. The system is working only if you see it cycle for your approach.
- Traffic light preemption is to be used during emergency response only. Use at any other time is prohibited.

Any driver involved in an accident under any conditions will be held accountable.

Definitions

- Code 3 – Red lights and sirens
- Code 2 – No red lights or sirens. However, apparatus should respond immediately and not permit delays.

Code 2 Responses

- Whenever the dispatcher directs a Code 2 response.
- When “Command,” or officer on the scene, directs a Code 2 response.
- Smoke detector sounding, nothing visible and no odor of smoke.

- Leaky hydrants, unless the public is endangered.
- Strange odor in an area outside a building.
- Smell of smoke outside building, nothing visible
- Broken water pipe or flooding condition where damage is already complete.
- Arcing wires.

Code 3 Responses

- 1st Alarm, 2 & 1, EMS, and still alarms.
- Some special duty alarms, depending on incident.
- Sprinkler head discharging or fire alarm sounding.
- Broken water pipe, flooding condition that may cause further damage or may be hazardous. (Example: Energized electrical equipment)
- Lock out – when someone is endangered. (Examples: Child in car/bathroom, invalid in house/room, etc.)
- Smoke smell in building.
- Smell of gas in building.
- Smell of gas outside building.

AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLES (A.R.S. 28-624)

The driver of any emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call or when in the pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of law or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in this section, but subject to the conditions stated in this section.

The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle may, while operating at least one lighted lamp displaying a red or red and blue light or lens visible under normal atmospheric conditions from a distance of 500 feet to the front of the vehicle:

- Park or stand, irrespective of this chapter.
- Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.
- Exceed the prima facie speed limits so long as he does not endanger life or property.
- Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

The exemptions granted by this section to an authorized emergency vehicle apply only when the driver of the vehicle while in motion sounds an audible signal by bell, siren, or exhaust whistle as may be reasonably necessary and when the vehicle is equipped with at least one lighted lamp displaying a red or red and blue light or lens visible under normal atmospheric conditions from a distance of 500 feet to the front of the vehicle, except that an authorized emergency vehicle operated as a police vehicle need not be equipped with or display a red or red and blue light or lens visible from the front of the vehicle.

The provisions of this section do not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons nor do these provisions protect the driver from the consequences of his reckless disregard for the safety of others.

CODE 3 RESPONSE BY STAFF PERSONNEL

The "On Call" Deputy Chief may respond Code 3 when responding to the scene of an incident. For certain specific types of calls the appropriate section chief may respond Code 3 using discretion (MED1A: EMS Chief, Haz Mat or Rescue: Special Ops Chief). All other staff personnel (Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs, Fire Prevention personnel, Support Services, etc.) are typically expected to go Code 2 when responding to an incident. When a Deputy Chief has reason to believe that he/she is the closest fire officer to an incident, then a Code 3 response is appropriate. In the event of a second alarm (or greater) fire, all staff personnel may respond Code 3 if so equipped.

It should be noted that the general intent of this section is to minimize the total number of Code 3 responses thereby limiting exposure and increasing safety for ourselves and the public.

OPERATION OF VEHICLES ON APPROACH OF AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLES (A.R.S. 28-775)

Upon the immediate approach of an authorized emergency vehicle equipped with at least one lighted lamp exhibiting a red or red and blue light or lens visible under normal atmospheric conditions from a distance of 500 feet to the front of the vehicle, other than a police vehicle when operating as an authorized emergency vehicle, and when the driver is giving audible signal by siren, exhaust whistle, or bell:

- The driver of every vehicle shall yield the right-of-way and shall immediately drive to a position parallel to, and as close as possible to the right hand edge or curb of the roadway, clear of any intersection and shall stop and remain in that position except when otherwise directed by a police officer.
- The driver of any vehicle other than one on official business shall not follow any fire apparatus traveling in response to a fire alarm, closer than 500 feet or drive into or park the vehicle within the block where the fire apparatus has stopped in answer to a fire alarm.

This section does not operate to relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway.

RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Rules and Regulations	103.00, Article 38
Fireground Safety	205.07
Driver Training	403.01
Off Duty Response	104.07