



Safety Bulletin

Occupational Health & Safety Committee Briefing

Date: September 28, 2018

Number: 18.004

Effective Date: September 28, 2018

Expiration Date: N/A

Approved By: Darren L. Stevens, Fire Rescue Chief

During the September health and safety committee meeting various recorded accidents and injuries were reviewed. After reviewing the incidents, a list of trends and concerns were formulated based on the incidents. This safety bulletin was assembled to aid in prevention of similar accidents and injuries. The topics include vehicle operation, scene surveys, securing objects, upcoming winter driving, and proper hand washing.

Operating apparatus:

- Operating emergency vehicles on roadways requires the driver to take into account varying characteristics of the vehicle they may be driving that day. The operator should be familiar with the capabilities of the truck they are operating. Examples of these characteristics would be air brake versus hydraulic braked vehicles, increased length or width, tandem axle trucks, and increased stopping distances versus normal passenger vehicles.
- Larger and heavier vehicles such as fire apparatus require great stopping distances at excessive speeds. According to the Virginia Commercial Driver's manual, a vehicle traveling 55mph requires a minimum stopping distance of 419 feet on dry roads. This distance is based on an average weight with all brakes in fully functional order.
- To aid in vehicle control, the driver should match vehicle speed to road conditions and operate the vehicle in due regard for the safety of others. A vehicle increasing their speed from 20 to 40 mph multiplies the stopping distance by 4 times. Always leave room for the vehicle to stop or leave an exit point.

Scene survey:

- With the adverse weather conditions there have been many opportunities for apparatus to become stuck or strike objects due to a poor scene survey. Prior to committing an apparatus to a position off of a solid road surface, the driver should survey the immediate area. Walk the area and note any objects in the way and note the stability of the roadway (wet/dry or sink holes/ditches).
- When exiting the scene, use spotters when available and ensure a quick 360 walk around the apparatus is completed. An item may have been placed near the unit which was not previously there.

Securing objects:

- Objects which are removed from inside or outside the vehicle should be properly stowed/secured prior to moving the vehicle. Please ensure that items are placed back in a secured fashion and not “shoved” in a compartment awaiting the next person. If tools need to be rearranged or moved to fit the compartment, contact the station officer to discuss moving the tools to a safer location.
- Also, many devices have been found loose on the inside of medic units. Please secure items such as bags, life packs, and other objects with the seatbelts if available or stow in a compartment. Loose objects or unsecured objects will become projectiles in an accident, increasing the chance of injury.

Winter weather

- With winter weather approaching, considerations should be given to storm preparation in the station and how to alter driving habits to meet the road conditions. If road conditions are deteriorating, the speed the vehicle is traveling should also decrease. Stopping distances can double on wet roadways and speed should be cut down by one third to allow for this according to the Virginia Commercial Drivers Manual. With snow on the roadway, the speed of the vehicle should be cut in half at a minimal and even put at a crawling pace to remain in control.
- In the station, it should be verified that the vehicle is ready for winter weather by checking various items. This small checklist should include but not be limited to: windshield washer fluid, antifreeze level, drop chain presence and functionality, wiper functionality, tire tread wear, ice scrapers, headlights, and tire chains or cable chains with tensioners.
- Operating vehicles on snow covered roads in the daytime or night can be extremely treacherous. It is important that crews have all the necessary equipment and that it is functioning properly. They should also have a thorough understanding of the difficulties of operating vehicles during snow events. These difficulties include limited visibility, decreased traction, muffled sirens from snow, and extreme cold. Please review proper winter weather vehicle operating techniques and tire chains to be utilized by your specific apparatus.

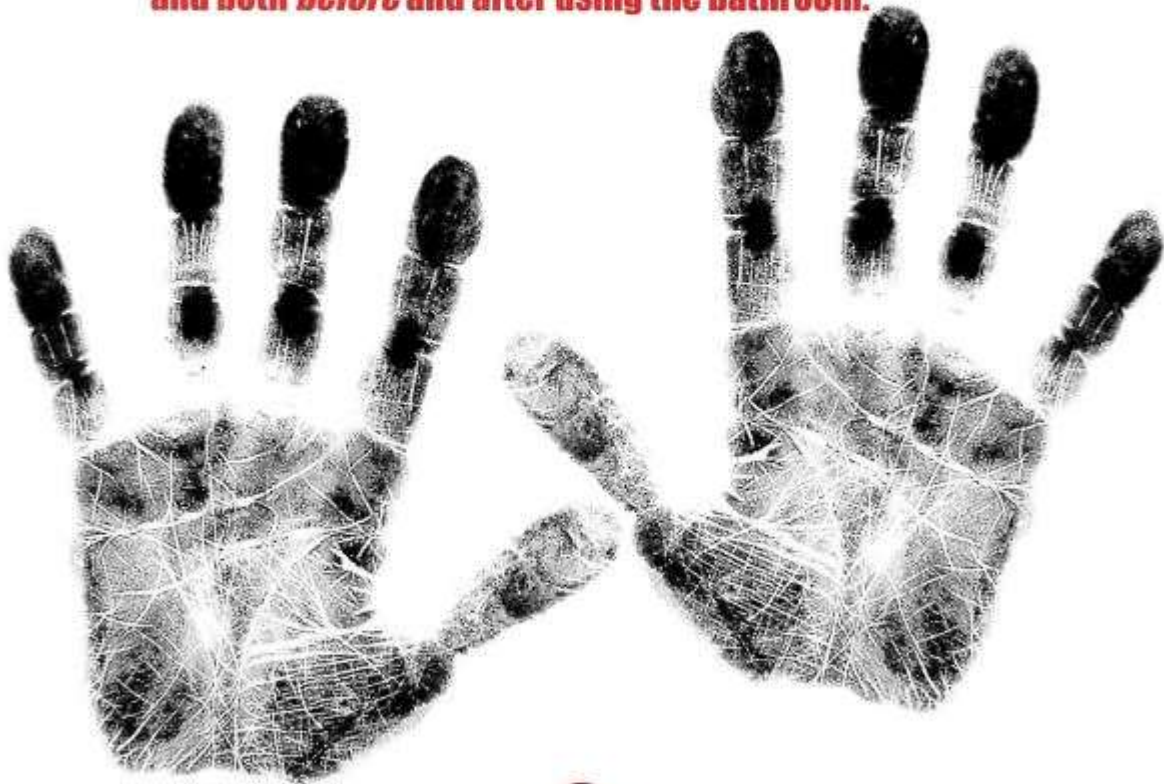
Hand washing

- Not only is cleaning your gear important but handling it and washing your hands is as well. When touching equipment, gear, or apparatus ensure you wash your hands sooner rather than later. Wash your hands before using the restroom and after as you could be spreading carcinogens and germs throughout the facilities and to your own body parts. For additional information see firefightercancersupport.org and please post the signage below in the stations and bathrooms.

Questions regarding this bulletin should be directed to Battalion Chief Johnson or Lieutenant Jonathan Frinks.

DID YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?

Washing your hands helps prevent the spread of viruses, bacteria, and *carcinogens*. Wash your hands after any contact with turnout gear, radios and other equipment, and both *before* and after using the bathroom.



NO FIRE GEAR BEYOND THIS POINT

