



## Driving Emergency Response

### 1. PURPOSE

- (a) To outline the requirements for safe driving of vehicles when responding to an emergency incident.

### 2. APPLICATION

- (a) Applies to QFES Fire Officers and RFSQ Volunteers.

### 3. DIRECTIVE

#### 3.1 Road Rules

- (a) Drivers of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) vehicles, or other vehicles, attending an incident will obey the Queensland and Australian road rules as prescribed in the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management - Road Rules) Regulation 2009* and the *Australian Road Rules 2009*.
- (b) Compliance with either the Queensland or the Australian road rules by an emergency service's vehicle means that it may legally operate in any state in Australia, taking into consideration the requirements that other Australian territories and states may differ slightly from Queensland.
- (c) Some limited exemptions do apply for drivers of emergency vehicles. Also included are requirements upon civilian drivers that are designed to assist in the safe passage of emergency vehicles when responding. (Refer to section 4).

#### 3.2 Exemption for Emergency Appliances

- (a) The *Australian Road Rules 2009* and the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management Road Rules) Regulation 2009* contain exemptions for emergency vehicles when responding to an emergency.
- (b) A provision of the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management Road Rules) Regulation 2009* does not apply to the driver of an emergency vehicle if, in the circumstances that:
- the driver is taking reasonable care; and
  - it is reasonable that the provision may not apply; and
  - if the vehicle is a motor vehicle that is moving - the vehicle is displaying a red flashing light or sounding an alarm.

*Note: that is turnout mode of response (refer to Incident Directive 9.3 - Response Classifications)*

- (c) These exemptions do not override the road rules or the criminal code in respect to safe driving behaviors.
- (d) These exemptions do not apply to rural volunteers driving emergency vehicles by the definition of emergency worker within the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management Road Rules) Regulation 2009 Schedule 5 Dictionary* which states that an,

**emergency worker means—**

*(a) an officer of the Queensland Ambulance Service or an ambulance service of another State; or*

*(b) a fire officer under the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 or a fire and rescue service of another State; or*

*(c) an officer or employee of another entity with the written permission of the commissioner.*

- (e) By the definition as stated in 3.2 (d), rural volunteers can drive emergency vehicles displaying a red and blue flashing light or sounding an alarm whilst responding to an emergency but must comply with all relevant road rules.

### **3.3 Safe Driving**

- (a) Fire officers and volunteers that operate QFES vehicles that are attending an incident will do so in a manner that will not cause harm, injury or death to themselves, other personnel or members of the public.
- (b) Furthermore personnel that operate QFES vehicles that are attending an incident will do so in a manner that will not damage the attending vehicle, other mobile property or any structure.

### **3.4 Towing Trailers**

- (a) Fire officers and volunteers that are required to tow trailers for attendance must familiarise themselves with the Control Measures outlined in ***Incident Action Guide 1.2 - Proceeding to Incidents***.

### **3.5 Controlled Intersections**

- (a) In cases of response driving whilst under audible and visual warning devices, the vehicle must come to a complete stop at controlled intersections (red traffic lights and stop signs).
- (b) The driver may then only continue when every line of potential traffic has been accounted for and in such a way that is not dangerous to the public.

### **3.6 Seat Belts**

- (a) Fire officers and volunteers must wear seat belts (where seat belts are fitted) whilst any QFES vehicle is in motion.
- (b) QFES recognises, however, that an emergent operational need may require the Officer-in-charge of a vehicle operating in off-road conditions to place a person on the back of the vehicle to conduct fire suppression activities such as when using the vehicle's hose reels (***refer to Incident Directive 10.1 - Working on Back of***).

### **3.7 Alcohol and Drugs**

- (a) Fire officers and volunteers responding to any incident must not operate any vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration exceeding zero percent (0%).
- (b) Drivers are not to operate any QFES vehicle whilst under the influence of any other substance (including prescribed medication or narcotic drugs), which have the capacity to adversely affect their work performance or driving ability.
- (c) Infringements are grounds for disciplinary action under the Code of Conduct and could be cited in any legal proceedings before a Court of Law.

### **3.8 Directions to Drivers of QFES Vehicles**

- (a) The Officer-in-charge has a responsibility to ensure the safety of the crew and members of the public and may give directions to the driver. If, in the Officer-in-charge's opinion, the driver is not driving the vehicle in accordance with the best practice requirements of the QFES, as published in this document, the Officer-in-charge has a responsibility and is empowered by this procedure to give the necessary directions to the driver to ensure compliance.

### 3.9 Reversing of QFES Vehicles

- (a) Wherever possible, drivers of QFES vehicles must ensure that another person is available to guide the driver during all reversing manoeuvres.
- (b) If another person is not available to assist, the driver shall dismount from the vehicle and inspect the area into which it is intended to reverse the vehicle in to.

### 3.10 Reduced Driving Conditions

- (a) Drivers are to maintain appropriate safety margins when proceeding and responding under reduced driving conditions, such as heavy traffic or adverse weather. Unavoidable delays may be encountered involving reduced driving conditions, heavy traffic or closed boom gates at rail crossings. Where this is likely to extend the travel time, the Officer-in-charge will advise Firecom with a revised estimated time of arrival at the incident.
- (b) During severe weather conditions, mobilisation plans may include a provision for the cessation of response operations at a given wind threshold. Sustained winds of 100kph generally are the accepted threshold. This “no-go” period will last until the sustained winds once again drop below the threshold. During this time, mobilisation will be “on hold” until conditions support a safe response.

### 3.11 Driver Fatigue

- (a) QFES recognises that driving can be affected by fatigue. In order to ensure that drivers are sufficiently alert, fatigue management is focused on the unique working environment of all firefighters (*refer Incident Management System 2.4 - Fatigue Management*).
- (b) It is essential that prior to the driver moving a QFES vehicle that:
  - The Officer-in-charge checks that the driver is aware and alert of the destination;
  - The driver will affirm that he/she is alert and is clear of the destination;
  - If the driver indicates it or it is the Officer-in-charge’s opinion that the driver is not alert or coherent, the Officer-in-charge will direct the driver not to proceed; and
  - If at any time whilst driving a vehicle, the driver reports that he/she is experiencing fatigue symptoms, or if this is otherwise detected by the Officer-in-charge, the driver will be directed to immediately cease driving.

### 3.12 Accidents Involving QFES Vehicles

- (a) Drivers of QFES vehicles are to adhere to *Incident Directive 8.2 - Accidents Involving QFES Vehicles* if that vehicle or appliance is involved in an accident that result in vehicle or property damage, injury or death.

### 3.13 Use of Air horns

- (a) Air horns have been fitted to QFES vehicles to supplement the existing audible warning device of a siren (wail or yelp) and their use is permitted in the following situations:
  - To assist in warning another vehicle or pedestrian of a possible collision with the fire vehicle; or
  - As a supplementary (secondary) audible warning device only whilst operating the fire appliance under response conditions.
- (b) Use of air horns is **NOT** permitted in the following situations:
  - As a tool for the intimidation of drivers of other vehicles (either vehicles driven by members of the public or other QFES vehicles);
  - To annoy or distress pedestrians or members of the public;
  - To create a nuisance; or
  - In any form of amusement.

#### 4. OTHER INFORMATION - CIVILIAN DRIVERS

- (a) QFES drivers will also be aware of the requirements upon civilian drivers that are designed to assist in the safe passage of emergency vehicles when responding to an incident. These requirements are prescribed in Sections 78 and 79 of the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management - Road Rules) Regulation 2009* and are presented below:

##### 78 Keeping Clear of Police and Emergency Vehicles

- (1) A driver must not move into the path of an approaching police or emergency vehicle that is displaying a flashing blue or red light (whether or not it is also displaying other lights) or sounding an alarm.
- (2) If a driver is in the path of an approaching police or emergency vehicle that is displaying a flashing blue or red light (whether or not it is also displaying other lights) or sounding an alarm, the driver must move out of the path of the vehicle as soon as the driver can do so safely.
- (3) This section applies to the driver despite any other section of this regulation

##### 79 Giving Way to Police and Emergency Vehicles

- (1) A driver must give way to a police or emergency vehicle that is displaying a flashing blue or red light (whether or not it is also displaying other lights) or sounding an alarm.
- (2) This section applies to the driver despite any other section that would otherwise require the driver of a police or emergency vehicle to give way to the driver.

- (b) The *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990* also provides requirements for the driver of a vehicle in Section 134(1):

##### 134 Right of way to fire officers

- (1) A driver of a vehicle (other than a train) must, to the extent practicable, give clear and uninterrupted passage to any fire officer or any person acting under the direction of a fire officer who appears to be doing any act for the purpose of controlling or extinguishing a fire or dealing with any other emergency.
- (2) A person who fails to comply with subsection (1) commits an offence against this Act.

#### 5. QFES RELEVANCY

INCDIR 8.1	URBAN OPERATIONS		RURAL OPERATIONS	RURAL FIRE BRIGADES				
	Full time	Part time	Full time	Special	iZone	Village	Rural	Primary Producer
Applicable	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Not Applicable								
May Apply *								

\* This document may apply to some Rural brigades. Check with your Senior Officer for additional information.

#### REFERENCES

The Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System  
 Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990  
 QFES Training Material  
 QFES Operational Guides  
 Transport Operations (Road Use Management Road Rules) Regulation 2009



**Lee A Johnson** AFSM MIFireE  
**Commissioner**  
**Queensland Fire and Emergency Services**

