

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 6-7

ISSUE: **DRIVING SKILLS FOR EMERGENCY APPARATUS RESPONSE**

Firefighters are called upon to drive a variety of Fire Department vehicles under both routine and emergency response conditions. These vehicles can range from off-road vehicles such as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), utility vehicles (UTVs) and snowmobiles, to automobiles and heavy trucks; each vehicle has different control and handling characteristics.

Employers have duties under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHS Act) including, but not limited to: acquainting a worker or a person in authority over a worker with any hazard in the work; providing information, instruction and supervision to workers; and taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker.

To prevent injury to firefighters and to reduce the chance of vehicle accidents, firefighters should receive training on every vehicle they are expected to drive and operate in the course of their duties.

It is recommended that firefighters should receive both theoretical and practical training in the defensive driving skills as outlined below:

- the effect of weight and speed on braking and stopping distances
- the effects of centrifugal force on vehicles during turning
- for off-road vehicles, the effects of slope on roll over
- for off-road vehicles, fire department limitations on terrain to be traversed
- the effect of inertia and weight distribution related to changing the heading or direction of a vehicle
- the effect of tire friction related to driving traction, braking traction and cornering traction
- the effect of various weather conditions on the braking, steering control and stopping distances and the ability of workers to recognize and adapt to these conditions
- driving strategies to prevent accidents should include the following skills:

- a serpentine exercise – change of direction
- an evasive exercise – steering around an object
- controlled braking exercise
- backing exercise
- off-road vehicles should be driven on terrain conditions that may be encountered in emergency situations.

Where practical, firefighters should receive further training in the following:

- skid control
- off-road recovery exercise.

Employers should allow sufficient time when scheduling the practical driving skills portion of the course to enable employees to master their defensive driving skills.

Driving of aerial devices and tankers requires additional training due to the size and weight of these units.

Employers should consider implementing a “graduated program” for all employees who are required to drive heavier-than-normal vehicles or specialized vehicles. By implementing a “graduated program”, those employees who will be operating various types of apparatus can be given the appropriate training specific to the apparatus.

Where vehicles are equipped with seat belts, they should be used in accordance with the manufacturers’ instructions and the requirements of the *Highway Traffic Act* (HTA).

The HTA, Reg. 610 Safety Helmets made under the HTA, Reg. 863 made under the Off-Road Vehicles Act, and Reg. 804 made under the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act should be consulted with respect to helmet requirements. Helmets should be used in accordance with the manufacturers’ instructions.

References:

OHSA Clauses 25 (2)(a), (d) and (h)
GN # 1-1 Fire Truck Occupant Safety
GN # 6-25 Safety Considerations for Fire Department Tankers