

Purpose

Mecklenburg EMS Agency is committed to the safe transport of employees, patients, and other occupants of Agency vehicles. Therefore, all operators must adhere to the guidelines set forth in this driving policy. Questions and additional information regarding vehicle operations should be directed to the Operations Supervisor or to the Risk and Safety Office.

Agency vehicles are intended for use in the conduct of Agency related business or activities that promote the Agency or facilitate efficiency.

Vehicle Operator Requirements

In addition to the requirements set forth in Attachment A, MEDIC Motor Vehicle Record Guidelines, employees expected to operate an agency-owned vehicle for any reason must first successfully complete the approved agency driving courses with an authorized trainer or safety instructor. For non-field position specific driver's training requirements refer to Attachment B, Training Requirements for Vehicle Operations (Non-Field).

All vehicle operators (while running emergency traffic) must follow the Law of Due Regard.

- Law of Due Regard: Sufficient notice of the ambulance's approach must be given to allow the other motorist and pedestrians to yield the right of way. Failure to give notice until a collision is inevitable generally does not satisfy the principle of "due regard".

The Agency's independent insurance carrier reserves the right to declare an employee to be uninsurable based on the employee's driving/accident record. If deemed uninsurable, the employee will be unable to operate Agency vehicles.

Employees shall not operate Agency vehicles while under the influence of medications and/or substances that are known to impair central nervous system functions (i.e., judgment, physical coordination and/or reaction time). Included in the categorization are prescribed medications that carry warnings against operating vehicles or machinery. Anytime there is a suspicion of impairment, drug use, or alcohol use a drug and/or alcohol screening will be completed per the guidelines set forth in the Employee Handbook, 2.11 Drug and Alcohol Testing.

While driving routine traffic, agency employees will follow North Carolina state (in-state) vehicle operations laws.

Agency vehicles are prohibited from passing a stopped school bus with its stop sign extended (this includes routine and emergency traffic modes).

The bus driver may signal the unit to proceed around the school bus while it is stopped with the sign extended. If this occurs, proceed with extreme caution around the bus.

Agency vehicles will comply with traffic signals, signs, and school crossing guard signals in school zones during school hours and anytime children are present.

Audible and visual warning devices must be utilized together when operating in emergency mode regardless of the time of day or traffic conditions.

Vehicle Operations

Agency vehicles are prohibited from parking in fire lanes unless they are on a patient care assignment.

Every vehicle occupant must remain seated and restrained any time the vehicle is in motion. For Agency employees this means wearing a seatbelt or seat restraint. Patients are to be properly secured to the stretcher using all seat belts.

While caring for a patient, the crew members will attempt to stay restrained for as long as care will allow. It is neither possible nor practical for the caretaker to always remain restrained. If the caretaker must provide a service in which being restrained will not allow, they will carry through with the procedure and then restrain themselves using the proper safety restraints.

Pediatric patients can be transported via the Ferno Pedi-Mate properly secured to the stretcher, Ferno Pedi-Pal properly anchored to the bulkhead bench seat or, or patient provided car seat properly secured to the stretcher or bulkhead bench seat.

Emergency Traffic

- Agency vehicles shall not exceed the posted speed limit by more than ten miles per hour, with a maximum of 75 miles per hour on the interstate. When operating in school zones (during school hours) and/or in high pedestrian traffic areas, the posted speed limit must not be exceeded.
- The operator will acknowledge that by use of audible and visual warning devices, they are only asking for the right of way and are not granted it.
- The operator will always attempt to pass stopped traffic on the left side. If this is not possible, the operator will use the lane of least resistance while using extreme prejudice for the crew's safety and the safety of those in and around the unit.
- When approaching an intersection with a yellow light, red light, stop sign or with no traffic control devices, the operator will come to a complete stop and assess all lanes of travel at 5 mph one at a time for oncoming or impeding traffic. The operator will not exceed a speed of 15 miles per hour when clearing the entire intersection.
- Traveling in the opposing lane of traffic should be avoided at all costs, however, when it is warranted, the operator will not exceed a speed of 15 miles per hour. The operator will utilize both sirens (if the unit is equipped) and will utilize the air horn multiple times to alert oncoming traffic.

Prior to use of the vehicle, all warning devices (lights and sirens) shall be assessed for proper function. This will be performed at time of deployment from P100 outside of the bay.

Cell phone use, including blue tooth or other hands-free devices, and texting is strictly prohibited while operating an Agency owned/leased vehicle. Cell phone use of both members of the crew is strictly prohibited while the unit is being operated in an emergency mode. Company cell phone use, by the passenger, will only be allowed in the event of a failure of the dispatch system. Cell phone use by supervisors, managers and directors should be kept to a minimum and only used when necessary.

The mobile mapping terminal is only to be operated by the passenger in the unit while the unit is in motion. There are instances when the mobile mapping terminal will need to be used without a passenger in the cab of the unit. At this time, use of mobile mapping will be kept to a minimum while operating the ambulance.

Vehicle Operations

Mobile radio use will be conducted by the passenger in the unit while the unit is in motion. If the mobile radio must be used by the driver, it will be done with extreme prejudice to the safety of the crew, passengers, and those around the unit.

Use of tobacco products and e-cigarettes are prohibited inside any Agency owned/leased vehicle.

Vehicle Accidents

Failure on the part of any agency employee (driver, witness, passenger, etc.) to immediately report to a supervisor and CMED any vehicle collision or property damage will be subject to disciplinary action that may include termination.

- Upon the occurrence of an incident, the Crew Chief, Team Leader, or Agency employee will contact CMED immediately and advise them of the unit's status. If there are any injuries, have law enforcement respond to the scene. The agency vehicle will remain on scene until law enforcement and the on-duty supervisor arrive, unless advised otherwise. If vehicles involved are operable, they will be moved out of the lane of travel and into a safer area. Refer to RS-002-1 Vehicle Accident Policy for additional information.

At no time during a response or during routine operations will it be permissible to cross a median with an agency vehicle. This is due to the unknown and non-standard heights of concrete medians in Mecklenburg County. It is also not permissible to cross grass or other style medians due to the unknown composition and the chance of getting an agency vehicle stuck.

- If an agency vehicle becomes stuck on or in a median, this will be considered a preventable accident and will be subject to disciplinary action.

Agency ambulances must utilize a backer/spotter when available.

- Backing accidents that are deemed preventable may result in both employees receiving corrective action following the PIPD process. Refer to RS-002-1 Vehicle Accident Policy for additional information.
- Spotters must be placed on the driver's side rear of the unit. This will ensure full vision of the spotter by the driver.
 - The spotter must be in place prior to the unit being placed into reverse.
 - Universal hand signals shall be used by the spotter to communicate with the driver. Refer to Appendix A, Proper Backing Hand Signals, of this document.
 - The unit must not exceed 1-2 mph while in reverse.
 - Use a backing spotter every time and everywhere you back with the following exception:
 - If you need to back on a busy highway or Interstate, use your lights and sirens and back with due regard. Do not get out of the ambulance in traffic to push the spotter button.

Employees must adhere to all safe parking principals which include:

- Apply parking brake.
- Apply appropriate transmission (park or neutral).
- Apply safe positioning of vehicle at scenes and posts to allow easy egress.
- Activate high idle while on calls.
- Keep vehicle locked while unattended.
- Connect shoreline when appropriate.
- Use appropriate warning lights while parked, if applicable

Vehicle Operations

Employees are encouraged to park in areas where backing can be avoided, and egress is not compromised.

Employees will maintain a following distance of 6 seconds while in an Agency owned/leased vehicle. This distance will increase by the following for each change in driving conditions:

- Rain conditions - add one second.
- Snow conditions - add two seconds.
- Ice conditions - add three seconds.
- Use personal prudence with any non-listed situations.

The Agency reserves the right to require drivers to attend re-training anytime it is deemed necessary.

Agency policy allows a passenger to accompany a patient in the ambulance. Crews should attempt to accommodate any reasonable request to accompany a patient. A passenger should be placed in the front-rightseat of the ambulance and secured with a seat belt. The Crew Chief can allow the accompanying person to ride in the patient compartment if doing so is beneficial to patient care (parent of young child, interpreter for non-English speaking patients, etc.).

The Crew Chief can also elect to allow more than one (1) passenger to accompany the patient if doing so will allow more expedient care and provides the appropriate support to the patient and/or family members. (THIS IS A DECISION THAT IS LEFT TO THE DISCRETION OF THE CREW CHIEF). All passengers must be secured with a seat belt. To the greatest extent possible, pediatric passengers will be placed in a car seat.

A Crew Chief may refuse to allow someone to accompany a patient when the requesting passenger is disruptive, intoxicated or a threat to the safety of the patient and crew. A passenger should not be allowed if they have a negative impact on treatment or transportation of a priority patient. These are the only appropriate circumstances to refuse a passenger.