



CAL FIRE



****INCLEMENT WEATHER DRIVING AWARENESS****

The risks associated with operating motor vehicles, whether under emergency conditions or not, are present every day. However, the type and amount of risk varies seasonally throughout the year. These risks are escalated given the presence of inclement weather and various driving conditions experienced by employees statewide. As a result of these increased risks, the following information is being provided for all employees to review and discuss as a means of increasing driver awareness and enhance the overall safety of personnel and the citizens we serve.

THE FACTS:

- Vehicle accidents have become the second leading cause of firefighter fatalities on a nationwide basis.
- The majority of firefighter fatalities resulting from vehicle accidents were/are needless and preventable.
- The leading causes of vehicle accidents involving fatalities are unsafe speed and failure to use seatbelts.
- Although emergency vehicles are exempt from many traffic laws while being operated in an emergency mode, they are never exempt from safety, responsibility, or liability.
- Road conditions play a major role in accidents but are enhanced by other contributing factors such as driver fatigue, mental/emotional status, cell phone or other wireless device use, and vehicle condition.
- Even though vehicles may be equipped with four wheel drive and mud-and-snow rated tires, all vehicles in areas subject to roadway controls must still carry tire chains for at least two of the driving wheels.

THE POLICIES:

- CAL FIRE policies on safe vehicle operations are found in Handbooks 1700, 4000, 6700, and 7000.
- Vehicles are always to be operated in a manner providing maximum protection for the general public.
- All CAL FIRE employees operating Department vehicles must be appropriately licensed for the vehicle being operated and maintain a current DGS Defensive Driver's Certificate.
- Department vehicles must be current with all mandatory Daily, Compliance, Safety, and Administrative inspections as well as have a driver's signature on the ME-101/ME-102 cards attesting to the vehicle's sound mechanical condition prior to daily operation.
- Emergency Code-3 operation is only permissible when authorized by an Emergency Command Center.
- While operating in emergency mode, intersections are never to be transversed at such a speed that would not allow the vehicle to come to a complete stop should the vehicle's right of way be violated.
- Passing vehicles on the right side during emergency operations should be avoided and done with extreme caution when no other means of passing exists.

THE LAWS:

- **22350 VC** "Basic Speed Law; No person shall drive a vehicle upon a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable or prudent having due regard for weather, visibility, the traffic on, and the surface and width of, the highway, and in no event at a speed which endangers the safety of persons or property.
- **23123 VC** "A person shall not operate a motor vehicle while using a wireless telephone unless it is designed and configured to allow hands free listening and talking and is used in that manner while driving." (Effective January 1, 2007 and Enforced starting July 1, 2008)
- **24400 VC** "Headlights must be operated during darkness, or inclement weather, or both. Inclement weather is defined as either a condition that prevents a driver from clearly discerning a person or another vehicle from a distance of 1000 feet or a condition requiring the windshield wipers to be in continuous use due to rain, mist, snow, fog, or other precipitation or atmospheric moisture."
- **27315 VC** "Motor Vehicle Safety Act;" requiring the mandatory use of seatbelts for driver and all passengers when a vehicle is in motion.