

West Sand Lake Fire District #1

Vehicle Use Policy

Purpose:

The West Sand Lake Fire District owns and maintains a number of motor vehicles, including fire apparatus, ancillary vehicles and command vehicles, the purpose of which is to ensure that the appropriate number of firefighters shall respond to a particular emergency in a timely manner, with the necessary resources to appropriately dispose of the emergency. The Board of Commissioners has adopted this policy to ensure that these vehicles be operated and maintained in such a manner as to be ready for use for their designated purpose at any time.

Definitions:

Fire District – The West Sand Lake Fire District #1.

The Board – The Board of Commissioners, and governing body, of the Fire District.

Fire Department – The West Sand Lake Volunteer Fire Company #1.

District-Owned Vehicles – Motor vehicles which are purchased and maintained by the Fire District, including, but not limited to the following:

- **Apparatus** – Vehicles which are normally fitted or supplied with materials and equipment required for the mitigation and disposition of an emergency, regardless of its nature, at the scene of the emergency.
- **Ancillary Vehicles** – Vehicles which are fitted or supplied with materials and equipment that are used in support of emergency service operations and/or individual firefighters, such as fire police operations, rehab, etc. These vehicles may be stationed some distance from the scene of the emergency, in order to carry out specific operations in a safe manner.
- **Command Vehicles** – Vehicles which are made available to the Chief, or other appropriate line officer, specifically to transport said officer directly to the scene of an emergency.

Firefighters – Personnel who are specifically selected and trained to participate in emergency operations. These include interior or exterior firefighters, EMS personnel, fire police, and other support personnel as defined in the Constitution and By-Laws of the Fire Department and/or the policies of the Fire District.

Auxiliary Members – Members of the West Sand Lake Ladies' Auxiliary.

Associate Members – Members of the Fire Department, who are designated as "Associate," "Life," "Retired," or otherwise not normally responding as Firefighters as described above.

Officer in Charge – At the scene of an emergency, either the Chief, or the officer responsible for the response, placement, and/or staging of vehicles at the scene of an emergency, and release of said vehicles when they are no longer needed, in accordance with the Incident Command System.

Mutual Aid Personnel – Personnel who are members of other fire companies who are responding in accordance with applicable mutual aid agreements, in one or more of the above categories.

Civilians – Personnel who are not in the above categories. These include minor children of members, "Honorary" members of the Fire Department, and members of the general public.

Vehicle Use Policy:

- 1) A valid New York State driver's license, or an out-of-state license that is valid in New York State, is required at all times to operate a District-owned vehicle.
- 2) No person under the age of 21 shall operate a District-owned vehicle at any time.
- 3) Before operating a District-owned vehicle each firefighter shall permit his or her name, DOB, driver's license number, and/or other information to be transmitted to the Fire District's insurance carrier for a license record search. The Fire District shall disclose the results of this search to the Firefighter, and shall treat the results accordingly:
 - a. Acceptable – Firefighter may operate, or be trained to operate, one or more District-owned vehicles.
 - b. Borderline – Firefighter may, at his or her option, request from the authority that issued his or her license a license abstract, which said Firefighter shall submit to the Board. The Board shall evaluate the abstract to determine whether the member would be a safe operator before approving him or her to undertake driver training activities.
 - c. Unacceptable – The Board shall advise the Firefighter not to operate a motor vehicle while in response to an emergency call. This includes while in transit to the Fire Station. He or she shall not be approved for operation, or training in the operation of a District-owned vehicle, nor be permitted to operate his/her vehicle in an emergency or official capacity until a more acceptable rating is received from the insurance carrier. The

Board shall advise the Chief not to issue said individual a “blue light” card for his/her personal vehicle while this rating is in effect.

- 4) All operators of District-owned apparatus shall successfully complete an approved Emergency Vehicle Operator Course (EVOC) before beginning training.
- 5) No person shall operate a District-owned vehicle without supervision until he or she is specifically trained in its operation and in the use of its equipment (generators, pumps, lights, etc.) and has been approved by the Board of Commissioners of the Fire District.
- 6) Firefighters in training to become apparatus operators shall operate said vehicles only while under the direct supervision of a Line Officer or appointed training officer designated by the Chief.
- 7) Apparatus and ancillary vehicles may be used for training and familiarization purposes, during non-emergency times, or to transport personnel to approved functions such as parades, funerals, meetings, training, official Fire District business, or for other activities as authorized by the Chief and approved by the Board. During these times, only approved operators, or supervised operators-in-training may operate a District-owned vehicle.
- 8) During non-emergency operations, personnel who are not classified as Firefighters as described above may ride in District-owned vehicles.
- 9) No smoking is permitted in or on a District-owned vehicle at any time.
- 10) It is the policy of the Fire District that no District-owned vehicle shall exceed the posted speed limit.
- 11) No District-owned vehicle shall be moved until all occupants are seated and their seatbelts are properly fastened.
- 12) The Fire District may, at its option, make one or more Command Vehicles available to its Chief, Assistant Chief(s) or other appropriate personnel for personal use during non-emergency times. These uses may include commutation to and from work, short errands, official Fire District or Fire Department business, or other tasks from which the operator of the vehicle can be available to respond in a timely manner (at posted speeds).
 - a. The vehicle may be operated at a distance of no more than 25 miles from the Fire Station except for official Fire District business as approved by the Board.
 - b. The Board has the discretion to request that each non-emergency use of the Command Vehicle shall be noted in a log book including the following:
 - i. Date
 - ii. Beginning mileage
 - iii. Ending mileage
 - iv. Operator name
 - v. Purpose of use
 - vi. Destination
 - c. Whenever fuel is added to the vehicle, the number of gallons added and the mileage between fill-ups shall be recorded.

- d. In situations where one or more of the officers for whom Command Vehicles have been provided are not available for response, the Chief or the Board may designate the highest-ranking available officer to have use of one of the vehicles, until such time as one or more of the regularly-assigned officers becomes available again.
- 13) If Command Vehicles are not provided by the Fire District, the Board may authorize one or more of its Chief Officers to respond using his or her personal vehicle. The Board shall provide the necessary lights, radios, and sirens, including installation and removal, upon presentation of an estimate of cost and approval by the Board. Officers shall be provided up to 15 gallons a week (780 gallons per year maximum) of fuel from a source to be designated by the Board, payment for which shall be made upon presentation of proper receipts to the Board.
 - 14) Persons permitted to use a Command Vehicle for personal reasons, or who receive a fuel allowance for their personal vehicles, are responsible for any applicable taxes resulting from this benefit.
 - 15) Except in compliance with an applicable mutual aid agreement, or as noted above in the case of a Command Vehicle, no District owned vehicle shall travel outside the boundaries of Rensselaer County, without specific approval by the Board or, if the Board designates an individual to be in charge of emergency service apparatus and operations, the approval of that person.
 - 16) Persons who operate, supervise, or are permitted to use a District-owned vehicle shall ensure that the vehicle presents a clean, professional appearance at all times as practical, and that all of its equipment and supplies are properly cleaned, maintained, adjusted, stowed, and ready for use at any time. In the case of Fire Apparatus, this responsibility shall fall to the Line Officer and/or Engineer assigned to the vehicle. In the case of Command Vehicles, the responsibility shall fall to the officer to whom the Board assigns the vehicle.

Response Policy:

- 1) The response procedure for each apparatus shall be determined in advance by the Chief, and other Line Officers, and prominently posted in the Fire Station. This procedure will not be deviated from without specific instructions from the Chief, Officer in Charge, or other Line Officers as may be appropriate for them to do so.
- 2) The use of lights and sirens is to be minimized as much as possible. Lights and sirens should be used only to the extent that they may help provide safe and expedited passage of the vehicle to the scene of an active emergency. Wherever possible, a downgraded, "Code 2," or "non-emergency" response should be called for.
- 3) Auxiliary members, and Associate members who may assist them, may be requested to respond to the scene by the appropriate incident command officer.

These members may respond in their own vehicles or in an Ancillary or Command Vehicle (if one is to be made available for their use). No lights or sirens shall be used when responding in this capacity. Upon arrival, these members, their vehicles, and equipment shall be positioned by the officer in charge, and shall not move from said place except as directed by Incident Command.

- 4) Mutual Aid Members, as defined above, may ride in a District-owned vehicle, during response operations, as needed. In extreme circumstances, a member who has been certified as an apparatus operator by a mutual aid company may be permitted to operate District-owned vehicles, provided a West Sand Lake apparatus operator is not available for this purpose.
- 5) Only approved apparatus operators shall be permitted to operate a District-owned vehicle during an emergency operation. If an alarm is received during training operations, the vehicle shall stop, the trainer shall replace the trainee at the controls of the vehicle, and the vehicle shall continue to the place to which it has been dispatched.
- 6) When personnel other than qualified Firefighters are in a District-owned vehicle, lights and sirens shall not be used. Auxiliary members, Associate Members, and other personnel may respond in non-emergency mode, as requested by the Officer in Charge.
- 7) Civilians are not permitted to ride in District-owned vehicles while lights and sirens, including courtesy lights are in use.
 - a. It is the policy of the Fire District, under advice of our insurance carrier, which only active members of the Fire Company over the age of 16 are allowed at the scene of an alarm.
- 8) Personally-owned vehicles shall not be transported to the scene of an emergency at any time, except as approved by the Board, or as specifically requested by the Officer in Charge. The only exception to this rule is if the driver's most expeditious route to the Fire Station is blocked by the emergency.

The Fire District is the sole administrator of this policy. It will not be deviated from without specific approval by the Board of Fire Commissioners. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action by the Board of Fire Commissioners pursuant to Town Law including letter of counseling with recommended action, suspension of driving privileges or suspension up to and including dismissal from the fire company depending on the severity of the offense and the need for escalation of discipline due to repeat offenses.

By Order of Board of Fire Commissioners
West Sand Lake Fire District

Suzanne Bell
Chairman Board of Fire Commissioners

Reviewed: January 23, 2012