

The  
***Communiqué***  
...a technical reference bulletin by the Risk Control  
Services Department of the Glatfelter Insurance Group

## **Vehicle Backing Practices**

Backing an emergency vehicle is a very hazardous undertaking. There are many accidents and injuries which result from improper backing practices. Emergency vehicles of all types are especially hazardous because of the many blind spots interfering with the drivers ability to see hazards.

To reduce the risk of accident and injury, emergency service organizations should have standard operating and training guidelines which mirror the following recommended practices.

### **A) General Rules**

- 1) If you can avoid backing, don't do it!
- 2) Never be in a hurry when backing.
- 3) If there is no spotter available:
  - i) Reconsider backing up. Is it really necessary?
  - ii) Make a reasonable attempt to get someone to act as a spotter
  - iii) If a spotter cannot be obtained, get out the unit and walk around the unit completing a "circle of safety" and survey the backing area. Before proceeding to back unit, being sure to also check overhead clearance
  - iv) Give a final warning of two horn blasts just prior to backing

Rev 00/vehicle backing practices 00

**This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review it and make the necessary modifications to meet the needs of your organization. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury to personnel and the general public from injury or property damage. For additional information on this topic, you may contact your VFIS Risk Control Representative at 1-800-233-1957**



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***B) Driver Responsibilities***

- 1) Bring the unit to a complete stop
- 2) Roll window down completely
- 3) Make visual and verbal contact with the spotter. "If you cannot see or hear the spotter, do not backup!"
- 4) Driver and spotter must establish and continue eye contact in the left rear view mirror at all times
- 5) Drivers must have a thorough knowledge of spotter hand signals
- 6) The spotter hand signals to the driver indicating it is safe to begin backing
- 7) The driver gives a two blast warning on the horn just prior to backing

***C) Spotter Responsibilities:***

- 1) Conduct a "circle of safety" and survey the backing area and all other sides of the vehicle checking for hazards. Before proceeding to back unit, being sure to also check overhead clearance
- 2) Communicate any observed hazards to the driver
- 3) Place yourself eight to ten feet to the left rear of the unit
- 4) Establish visual and verbal contact with the driver and continue eye to eye contact in the left rear view mirror at all times
- 5) Be familiar with hand signals before allowing backing maneuvers to begin
- 6) Stop the driver if any hazards are observed or if you are uncertain of the direction that the driver is maneuvering

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