BROOKLAND FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Brookland, Arkansas

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STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR PROBATIONARY DRIVING

1. Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to establish safe operating expectations and restrictions for probationary members while responding to emergencies or operating District vehicles. The protection of the public, members, and equipment takes priority over response time.

2. Scope

This guideline applies to all probationary members of the Brookland Fire Protection District, including probationary firefighters, EMS personnel, support personnel, and any member who has not been formally cleared by the Fire Chief or designee to operate District apparatus.

Brookland Fire Protection District provides fire-protection services in Craighead County, Arkansas. (mcclibrary.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net)

3. Policy

- Probationary members shall not operate any District-owned fire apparatus or emergency vehicle in emergency mode unless specifically authorized under a supervised training assignment by the Fire Chief or designee.
- Probationary members responding in privately owned vehicles shall obey all traffic laws and shall not drive in a reckless, aggressive, or unsafe manner.
- No emergency incident justifies unsafe driving.

4. Definitions

- Emergency Mode: Operation of an authorized emergency vehicle while using emergency warning devices, including emergency lights and audible warning devices, while responding to an emergency incident.

- Probationary Member: Any member serving an initial probationary period or who has not completed the District's approved driver/operator qualification process.
- Qualified Driver/Operator: A member who has been approved by the Fire Chief or designee to operate a specific class of District vehicle or apparatus.
- Supervised Driver Training: Apparatus-operation training conducted with a qualified instructor, officer, or approved driver/operator present and directly supervising the probationary member.

5. Probationary-Member Restrictions

5.1 District Apparatus

Probationary members shall not:

- Operate warning lights, sirens, air horns, or other emergency-warning equipment unless directed during supervised training.
- Back any apparatus unless a spotter is available. This does not apply to light vehicles being backed into a station. Every effort shall be made to have a spotter.
- Move apparatus on District property, at an incident scene, or during training without authorization from an officer or qualified driver/operator.
- Operate a District vehicle while impaired, fatigued, distracted, or otherwise unable to drive safely.

5.2 Privately Owned Vehicles

When responding to the station, scene, or other assigned location in a privately owned vehicle, probationary members shall:

- Obey all posted speed limits, traffic-control devices, and traffic laws.
- Wear a seat belt at all times.
- Not claim emergency-vehicle privileges.
- Not pass vehicles in an unsafe manner.
- Not proceed through stop signs or red lights without coming to a complete stop and yielding as required by law.
- Not use a cellular phone, portable radio, or other device in a manner that distracts from driving.
- Not use emergency lights, sirens, or other warning devices unless specifically authorized by law and District policy.
- Park only in a location that does not block responding apparatus, hydrants, driveways, emergency access routes, or the incident scene.

6. Emergency Response Expectations

Probationary members shall remember the following:

1. Arrive safely. A delayed response is preferable to a motor-vehicle crash.
2. Maintain control. Drive for the road, weather, traffic, visibility, and vehicle conditions.

3. Use seat belts. Every vehicle occupant shall be seated and properly restrained before the vehicle moves.
4. Avoid distractions. The driver's primary responsibility is operating the vehicle safely.
5. Follow command direction. A probationary member shall comply with directions from the officer in charge, apparatus driver, or incident commander.
6. Report unsafe conditions. Members shall promptly report unsafe driving, equipment defects, collisions, near misses, or damage to an officer.
7. Never use electronic devices while operating a vehicle. Pull over if necessary.

7. Supervised Driver Training

A probationary member may operate a District vehicle only as part of a documented and approved training program.

Before operating an apparatus during training, the probationary member shall:

- Possess a valid driver's license appropriate for the vehicle being operated.
- Receive authorization from the Fire Chief or designee.
- Be accompanied by an approved instructor, officer, or qualified driver/operator.
- Complete a vehicle familiarization orientation.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the vehicle's dimensions, braking characteristics, turning radius, warning devices, backing procedures, and safety equipment.
- Complete all required pre-trip and post-trip inspections.
- Operate only under conditions appropriate to the member's current level of training and demonstrated skill.

Probationary driver training shall begin in a controlled environment and progress to public-road operation only after the supervising instructor determines the member can safely perform the required tasks.

8. Emergency Driving Qualification

A probationary member may be considered for emergency-driver qualification only after completing the District's approved driver/operator training process, which should include:

- Verification of an acceptable driving record.
- Completion of District-approved emergency vehicle driver training.
- Familiarization with each class of apparatus the member may operate.
- Practical driving evaluation by a qualified evaluator.
- Demonstrated proficiency in backing, parking, maneuvering, braking, intersection management, and defensive driving.
- Review of District emergency-response policies and Arkansas traffic laws.
- Written approval by the Fire Chief or designee.

Qualification to drive one vehicle does not automatically authorize a member to drive another vehicle or apparatus class.

9. Arkansas Legal Requirements

District emergency-vehicle operations shall comply with applicable Arkansas law. Arkansas law permits certain emergency-vehicle exemptions during legitimate emergency responses when required warning devices are used, but it does not relieve the driver of the duty to use due regard for the safety of all persons or protect a driver from the consequences of reckless disregard for safety. (arkleg.state.ar.us)

This guideline is more restrictive than any legal privilege that may apply. When in doubt, members shall operate their vehicles in the safest possible manner.

10. Collisions, Damage, and Near Misses

Any probationary member involved in, witnessing, or becoming aware of a vehicle collision, vehicle damage, or near-miss event involving District operations shall:

1. Stop and ensure the scene is safe, when applicable.
2. Notify the officer in charge or Fire Chief as soon as possible.
3. Request law enforcement or additional assistance when needed.
4. Complete required District documentation before the end of the member's duty period or as soon as practicable.
5. Participate in post-incident review, remedial training, or evaluation as directed.

No member shall attempt to conceal vehicle damage, a collision, or unsafe driving behavior.

11. Violations

Violation of this guideline may result in:

- Removal from driving duties.
- Remedial training.
- Extension of probationary status.
- Suspension of apparatus-operating privileges.
- Discipline consistent with District policy.
- Termination from the department.

12. Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the Brookland Fire Protection District Guideline for Emergency Driving for Probationary Members.

Member Name: _____

Member Signature: _____

Date: _____

Officer/Witness: _____

Date: _____