



INFORMATION BULLETIN

*Wayne Goodwin, Commissioner of Insurance
N.C. State Fire Marshal*

Responding to Fires On or Near Roadways

This information bulletin is intended to provide information to North Carolina fire and rescue agencies about important safety precautions for responding to fires on or near roadways.

Fire and rescue personnel are potentially at risk of being struck by a vehicle when working on or near a roadway. Weather, lighting, traffic and other conditions may make it difficult for drivers to see and avoid responders or emergency vehicles. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, an average of seven firefighters are killed per year as the result of being struck by a vehicle — either their own or a passenger vehicle — while on duty.

The N.C. Department of Insurance Office of State Fire Marshal wants to remind all fire and rescue personnel to use the following guidelines when responding to fire incidents on or near roadways:

- Ensure that firefighters responding to a scene control oncoming traffic first, before responding to the emergency. When in doubt, contact law enforcement and shut down the entire roadway.
- Whenever possible, move personnel and responding fire vehicles far off the roadway, because smoke from nearby fires can quickly obscure drivers' vision.
- Ensure that all members receive training for responding to roadway incidents, with specific instruction on positioning apparatus to protect emergency workers from oncoming traffic.
- Ensure that all fire and rescue personnel operating at an incident that places them in potential conflict with motor vehicles wear a garment with fluorescent and retro-reflective material.
- Even if they are wearing safety apparel, remind fire personnel to not assume drivers will slow down or that they have seen personnel in the roadway. Smoke can quickly impair drivers' vision or cloak responders and their equipment.
- Develop pre-incident plans regarding response protocols, scene safety and traffic control for roadway emergency work zones in conjunction with public safety agencies, traffic management organizations and private sector responders.
- Develop and train members on a situational awareness program that addresses hazards specific to working in a roadway emergency work zone.
- When responding to smoke-induced fog incidents, remind your members that if they can't see through the fog that they should not drive through it or allow other vehicles to proceed.
- Ensure that drivers use a well-trained spotter when backing up emergency response vehicles at accident or fire sites.

For more information, contact Wayne Bailey at the North Carolina Department of Insurance Office of State Fire Marshal at (919) 661-5880 or visit our website at www.ncdoi.com/OSFM.