

**Forest Service Handbook  
National Headquarters - Washington Office  
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**Forest Service Handbook 5109.16 – Fire Management Equipment, Supplies and Chemicals  
Chapter 30 – Emergency Lighting and Siren Equipment**

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**Approved by:** James E. Hubbard, Deputy Chief, S&PF

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**Responsible Staff:**

**Last Change:**

**Superseded Document(s):**

**Digest:** Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

**5109.16:** Establishes new handbook “FSH 5109.16, Fire Management Equipment, Supplies and Chemicals” and sets forth revises direction previously in FSM 5160.

**Zero Code:** Establishes codes and captions, and sets forth direction.

**10:** Establishes codes and captions for “Fire Management Equipment”, and sets forth direction.

**20:** Establishes codes and captions for “Fire Management Chemicals”, and sets forth direction.

**30:** Establishes codes and captions for “Emergency Lighting and Siren Equipment”, and sets forth direction.

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## **31 - Equipment**

### **31.1 - Installation of Emergency Lighting and Siren Equipment**

Emergency lighting and siren equipment must only be installed on vehicles as identified in national fire vehicle specifications and these vehicles must meet applicable NFPA 1906 requirements for optical and audible warning devices and reflective striping (FSM 5126.11). Pre-national standard, fire vehicles may maintain existing emergency lighting and siren equipment until the next replacement cycle.

## **32 - Training and Certification**

### **32.1 - Screening of Emergency Vehicle Operators**

Regions must document an operational plan which includes a risk assessment for the selection, screening and supervision of Emergency Vehicle Operators.

1. The operational plan must include screening of potential operators based on years of driving experience, a history of license suspensions or traffic violations, and other risk factors.
2. A driver's qualification file for each certified Emergency Vehicle Operator must be maintained (as an option, this file may be a sub-section within the individual's incident qualifications master record file) (FSH 5109.17).
3. Forests must verify that the prospective Emergency Vehicle Operator meets the requirements defined in FSH 7109.19 and is qualified to drive Forest Service emergency vehicles.
4. Forests must, where possible, subscribe to a pull notice program with their state's department of motor vehicles. This subscription provides an automatic notification to the Forest of driving infractions incurred by subscribed employees.
5. Forests that do not or cannot subscribe to a pull notice program must annually require that each Emergency Vehicle Operator submit a State Department of Motor Vehicles report listing all non-contested or convicted traffic violations received within the previous year. Benefiting program funds must pay for the reports that are a required part of an employee's job (FSM 6511.31i). Keep the report in the employee's driver's qualification file and review prior to the issuance or renewal of the U.S. Government Motor Vehicle Operator Identification Card (OF 346).

### **32.2 - Training**

Candidates for Emergency Vehicle Operator certification must pass an initial Emergency Vehicle Operator training program. Emergency Vehicle Operators must take refresher training at least every three years to maintain their certification.

1. Emergency Vehicle Operator certification training programs must be guided by the requirements described in NFPA 1002 and NFPA 1451 to the extent reasonable and applicable to Forest Service wildland fire operations.
2. Emergency Vehicle Operator certification training programs must include a proficiency test that demonstrates the operator can competently perform the requisite skills contained in NFPA 1002 for wildland fire apparatus. The initial proficiency testing must be in the same class of vehicle for which the employee is certified to operate.
3. Candidates must obtain certification training at a regional engine academy, an Emergency Vehicle Operator course (EVOC), a Code 3 driving simulator, a municipal fire department, an EMS training institute or other similar facility meeting the above standards. Regions may designate trained personnel to provide equivalent training.

### **32.3 - Physical Fitness Standard**

The current position-specific fitness requirements and State issued driving license constitute the physical fitness standards for Emergency Vehicle Operators. All other general licensing requirements found in FSH 7109.19 Chapter 60 apply.

### **32.4 - Certification**

The Forest Lead Licensing Examiner must certify Emergency Vehicle Operators with the concurrence of the Unit Fire Program Manager. Forests must not certify an Emergency Vehicle Operator less than 21 years of age.

Certification as an Emergency Vehicle Operator must be revoked immediately if the employee no longer meets the certification requirements defined in FSH 7109.19 (example: a revoked or restricted state driver license). Certification as an Emergency Vehicle Operator must also be revoked if the employee fails to take refresher training within the required interval.

Consistent safe driving is a condition of Emergency Vehicle Operator's certification. Emergency Vehicle Operator certification may be revoked at the discretion of the Lead Licensing Examiner, Unit Fire Management Officer, or Forest Supervisor if the employee fails to demonstrate operating proficiency. Indicators of poor operating proficiency include but are not limited to the following:

1. Failure to follow federal, state and local laws and regulations, and Forest Service policy for emergency vehicle operation;
2. Accidents or near misses; and
3. Abuse or misuse of equipment.

### **32.5 - Refresher Training**

Refresher training is required every three years to maintain certification. Training must be accomplished with classroom instruction as a minimum, or a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on training. Classroom instruction must include the following minimum topics:

1. Discussion of safety, following distances, preventable collisions and defensive driving.
2. Driving with emergency lighting and siren equipment.
3. Applying safe driving techniques.
4. Specialized local considerations.
5. Review risk management process.
6. Agency policy.
7. State and local laws and regulations.
8. Applicable case studies/lessons learned.

### **32.6 - Qualification Card**

The endorsement; “Emergency Vehicle Operator” must appear on the individuals OF 346. This endorsement on the signed OF-346 is proof of the employee’s certification as an Emergency Vehicle Operator. Other certification terminology, for example “Red Lights and Siren”, on existing OF 346’s must remain valid until the OF 346 is re-issued. Upon re-issuance the endorsement “Emergency Vehicle Operator” must appear on the OF 346.

### **32.7 - Reporting Requirements**

Emergency Vehicle Operators convicted of a moving vehicle violation must report the conviction to their immediate supervisor and the certifying official within 30 days. In addition, any driver’s license revocation must be reported to the employee’s immediate supervisor before close of business of the following scheduled work day (FSH 7109.19).

Employees with a commercial driver license (CDL) are subject to commercial driver license notification and reporting requirements (49 CFR 383.31).

### **32.8 - Post-Accident Drug and Alcohol Testing Requirement**

Drug and Alcohol testing guidance for the Forest Service is contained in Executive Order 12564, the USDA’s Plan for a Drug Free Workplace and the NFFE/FS Master Agreement and the

negotiated Memorandum's of Understanding relating to Commercial Driver License/Driving. Employees holding a CDL must comply with controlled substance testing requirements in Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 391.81 (49 CFR 391.81). Operators found to be illegally under the influence of alcohol or drugs must have their Emergency Vehicle Operator's certification revoked.

### **33 - USE**

#### **33.1 - Screening of Emergency Vehicle Operators**

1. Forests must provide sufficient oversight to ensure that Emergency Vehicle Operators demonstrate sound risk management principles in all aspects of emergency vehicle operation.
2. The use of emergency lighting and siren equipment must be guided by NFPA 1451, *Emergency Response*, to the extent reasonable and applicable to Forest Service operations and documented in annual operating plans and/or dispatch protocols.
3. Only certified Emergency Vehicle Operators may use emergency lighting and siren equipment while driving on public roads, except for authorized training exercises. Certification as an Emergency Vehicle Operator does not constitute approval for use of emergency lighting and siren equipment.
4. Vehicles equipped with emergency lighting and siren equipment may be operated by uncertified operators but may only use emergency lighting while parked to facilitate operational or safety objectives.

5. Emergency lighting and siren equipment may only be used on public roads only when the benefits to public safety justify the increased risks. Regions or Forests may restrict the use of emergency lighting and siren equipment as defined in supplemental regional or forest policy.

6. The use of emergency lighting or siren equipment is restricted to requesting right-of-way, blocking right of way, diverting traffic, traffic flow restrictions, or whenever the risks associated with the use of emergency lights and sirens are offset by the benefits to public or firefighter safety. State and local laws and policies must be considered regarding the use of emergency lighting and siren equipment near road construction activities.

a. In all cases Emergency Vehicle Operators must follow the most restrictive federal, state and local laws and regulations, and Forest Service policy while exercising due caution for life and property.

b. Emergency Vehicle Operators are required to operate at all times with the safety of pedestrians, other vehicles, and themselves as the primary objective.

c. Operators must bring the emergency vehicle to a complete stop and must not proceed until it is safe under the following conditions: any yield sign, stop sign or signal, blind intersections, intersections where the operator cannot see all lanes of traffic, a stopped school bus with red flashing warning lights, and unguarded railroad crossings. Emergency vehicles must not be driven around railroad crossing gates. Emergency vehicles must discontinue the use of emergency lighting and siren equipment at a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing and when driving through a posted school zone.

d. Operators must exercise extreme caution when passing or overtaking other vehicles.