



COVID-19: Driver instruction & vehicle movement

April 2020

Introduction

Whilst current Government guidelines on social distancing and personal hygiene remain in place, it is prudent to offer advice on the general principles to be adopted for journeys utilising Fire and Rescue Service vehicles during the current pandemic.

Only essential driving should be undertaken which includes responding to incidents, high risk prevention and protection activity, core training, driving and driver refresher training along with community pandemic support work.

Responding to Operational Incidents, High Risk Prevention and Protection Activity

When responding to operational incidents or conducting prevention and protection activity it will be necessary for the crew to share the space in the appliance cab and it will not always be possible to maintain social distancing guidelines of two metres separation.

There are measures that the appliance crew can take to reduce the risk in this situation:

En-route

- Follow Government guidance on basic hygiene.
- Ensure an air flow within the cab at all times by opening windows.
- Do not wear contaminated clothing in the cab, follow the NFCC operational procedure for PPE if potentially exposed to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 at an incident.

Post-Incident

- Decontaminate equipment before returning it to the appliance.
- Ensure all disposable and non-disposable items of PPE, used to control exposure to the virus, are bagged as per decontamination guidance prior to returning to the appliance.
- Use hand gel to decontaminate your hands before remounting the appliance

On Return

- Follow the Clean Cab policy, decontaminating all potentially contaminated surfaces such as doors, handles, switches, radio, MDT, seats and steering wheel at the end of each shift and when required following and incident.

Should a member of the crew report symptoms of Covid-19 infection whilst responding to an incident or high risk prevention or protection activity they must don a FFP3 face mask and blue nitrile gloves for the return journey to the station or home if an alternative means of transport cannot be found.

The appliance cab must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected at the earliest opportunity.

Core Operational Training

The Fire and Rescue Service National Occupational Standards provide the platform on which training is based. This needs to be translated into how firefighters work at incidents. It is therefore deemed essential that Fire and Rescue Services need to maintain skills and core training competencies throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Core operational training may require appliance vehicle movements, and it may be necessary for the crew to share the space in the appliance cab as it will not always be possible to maintain social distancing guidelines of two metres separation. Operational staff should during any necessary vehicle movement for training, follow the guidance as detailed in section Responding to Operational Incidents, High Risk Prevention & Protection Activity.

To support the safety of staff in undertaking their responsibilities the following guidelines should be considered if utilising a Service or Private vehicle for travel to a training venue:

En-route

- Follow Government guidance on basic hygiene.
- Where possible, try to limit staff to one per vehicle when driving cars.
- Adhere to social distancing whenever possible so if more than one person is to travel, try to use a larger vehicle. Example – van or minibus.
- Maintain an air flow in the vehicle by opening windows at all times. This will reduce the possibility of any contamination both for the driver and subsequent users.
- Wipe down surfaces internally and externally on the vehicle before and after taking ownership.
- Do not wear contaminated clothing in the vehicle, follow the NFCC operational procedure for PPE if potentially exposed to suspected, confirmed or not suspected COVID-19 contacts during community work.

Post-Training / Attendance

- Decontaminate any equipment before returning it to the vehicle.
- Ensure all disposable and non-disposable items of PPE, used to control exposure to the virus, are bagged as per decontamination guidance prior to returning to the vehicle.
- Use hand gel to decontaminate your hands before re-entering the vehicle.

On Return

- Follow the clean vehicle policy, decontaminating all potentially contaminated surfaces such as doors, handles, switches, seats and steering wheel at the end of each shift and when required following a visit.

Driver Training and Driver Recertification/Refresher

Driving training should be focused on essential courses that provide resilience to the Fire & Rescue Service.

Driver recertification and refresher training for blue light response has a national recommendation to be revalidated before five years, for those FRS's that refresh in a shorter time period, may want to consider an extension to within five years during this period.

For essential courses, the number of driving instructors and trainees must be kept to a minimum through the adoption of a one to one instructor/student ratio.

Driver training courses, wherever possible, should be undertaken on a fire appliance and not a car to increase the social distancing between the instructor and student. This will also provide a greater volume of air space in the cab which should be kept ventilated at all times by opening the windows.

During training, regular breaks should be undertaken in fresh air and social distancing rules should continue to be observed.

If the student demonstrates that they have developed their skills, knowledge and understanding of driving the vehicle, whilst meeting the learning, development and assessment outcomes ahead of the planned delivery timetable, this may enable the instructor to deliver the training in a reduced period, shortening the length of time that the Instructor and the trainee need to spend in the vehicle together.

Driver Training.

It is appreciated that whilst the driver is undergoing practical training, social separation distancing is impractical. There are measures that Instructor and trainee can take to reduce the risk of contracting the Covid-19 infection

- Follow Government guidance on basic hygiene.

- Maintain an air flow in the vehicle by opening windows at all times. This will reduce the possibility of any contamination both for the driver and subsequent users.
- Wipe down surfaces internally and externally on the vehicle before and after use.
- Do not wear contaminated clothing in the vehicle, follow the NFCC operational procedure for PPE if potentially exposed to suspected, confirmed or not suspected COVID-19 contacts during community work.

If, during training, the instructor or student considers that they are beginning to display symptoms of COVID-19 they must report this immediately, stop at a safe location and exit the vehicle.

The instructor or student must don a FFP3 face mask and blue nitrile gloves for the return journey to the station or home if an alternative means of transport cannot be found.

The appliance cab must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected at the earliest opportunity.

COVID-19 Community Support Work

The NFCC recognise that work is currently being undertaken by members of Fire and Rescue Services staff to support other agencies and the vulnerable within our communities. This work is deemed as essential.

To support the safety of staff in undertaking their responsibilities the guidelines detailed in Core Operational Training should be considered if utilising a Service or Private vehicle.