

Procedure for safe reversing and other vehicle manoeuvres

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Owner: **Assistant Director, Health, Safety and Wellbeing**
Responsible work team: **Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

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1 Scope

- 1.1 This policy covers all vehicle manoeuvres, particularly reversing, on LFB premises carried out by employees of LFB.
- 1.2 Nearly a quarter of all deaths involving vehicles at work occur while vehicles are reversing. Although no LFB personnel have been killed during reversing manoeuvres a number have been injured. Collisions during reversing and other slow speed manoeuvres make up a disproportionate percentage of all LFB traffic collisions with the majority occurring at fire stations.

2 References

- 2.1 The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.
- 2.2 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- 2.3 The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, as amended by The Quarries, Miscellaneous Health and Safety Provisions Regulations 1995 and Approved Code of Practice.
- 2.4 The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996. Guidance on Regulations L64 and LFB Policy number 464 - Safety signs and signals procedure.
- 2.5 Reversing vehicles, HSE Books (March 2002) INDG148.
- 2.6 Waste and recycling vehicles in street collection, HSE.
- 2.7 HSE, Workplace Transport Safety: An Overview INDG 199.
- 2.8 The Highway Code.
- 2.9 Roadcraft: The Essential Police Driver's Handbook.
- 2.10 Policy number 368 - Health, safety and environmental event investigation policy (personal injuries, near misses and traffic accidents).
- 2.11 Policy number 49 - Watchroom duties - Operating Procedures, paragraph 24; Maintenance of Important Information in the watch room.

3 Definitions

Attendant: The person(s) giving direction and/or indication to the driver of a vehicle. For consistency in this policy the term attendant will be used throughout.

4 Procedure

Legislation

- 4.1 This policy takes account of all the legislation and guidance documents included in section 2 above.

Responsibility

Assistant Director/Commissioner

- 4.2 The Assistant Director/Commissioner or a person nominated by the Assistant Director/Commissioner is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of this procedure are implemented and that managers have sufficient resources, information and training to enable them to discharge their duty at locations under their responsibility.

Persons in control of premises

- 4.3 At fire stations, the objective should be to **introduce one-way systems** that make use of the station yard to ensure fire appliances can drive on to the premises and into appliance bays without the need to reverse. These one-way system arrangements should be enforced at all times particularly during night shifts. Information on one-way systems in force at LFB premises should be recorded in the Important Information Folder in the station watch room.
- 4.4 Traffic routes within premises should be kept clear at all times and marked/signed where necessary to indicate where vehicles should be parked (reference 2.4). Areas around pole drops, areas that could be obstructed by poor vehicle parking or open vehicle doors should be marked to show that the particular areas must be kept clear. If there is a need for pedestrians to walk through appliance bays or station yards the route that keeps them separate from moving vehicles must be marked and where possible protected by barriers. Unless otherwise stated, the marking around pole drops, appliances and for pedestrians shall be yellow hatchings.

Managers

- 4.5 Managers must ensure that personnel under their control have received instruction locally, in accordance with this procedure, and that supporting information is available about how vehicles can be manoeuvred safely. Sub/Station Officers must ensure that local arrangements for vehicle manoeuvring are brought to the attention of stand-by personnel, particularly drivers, to ensure compliance with them.
- 4.6 Managers must also ensure that traffic routes are unobstructed, and any one-way systems implemented at their locations are observed at all times.
- 4.7 Managers must ensure that this procedure is implemented on all occasions when it is necessary to reverse/manoeuvre a vehicle, irrespective of location, time of day or weather conditions.

Employees

- 4.8 Employees will undertake instruction/training in accordance with this procedure plus any supporting material to ensure that they can manoeuvre vehicles and/or give directions and/or instructions to a driver to ensure that a vehicle can be reversed or manoeuvred safely. This training must be recorded in ITR and station diary.
- 4.9 Employees must observe all local requirements regarding traffic routes and one-way systems in force at any premises. When at premises other than their normal place of duty employees must ensure that they know the local arrangements regarding one-way systems, traffic routes and the operation of powered appliance bay doors.
- 4.10 Employees must implement this procedure on all occasions when it is necessary to reverse/manoeuvre a vehicle, irrespective of location, time of day or weather conditions.

Specific responsibilities

Drivers

- 4.11 The driver has a responsibility to ensure that their vehicle is manoeuvred in a safe manner at all times. On all occasions before moving off, the driver must ensure that all equipment has been stowed correctly and that lockers are closed securely.
- 4.12 Except when the appliance is crewed by one person manoeuvring/reversing an appliance at a location away from an LFB premises, the following must be implemented on all occasions when an appliance needs to be reversed or manoeuvred (see also appendix 1).

- The driver must ensure that the attendant(s) is/are placed in the optimum position(s) to view the area over which the appliance is to travel and is able to give clear audible instructions whilst the appliance is moving.
- The driver must not begin to manoeuvre the vehicle if an attendant is not in view - either directly or in a mirror or cannot be heard easily. During the manoeuvre if an attendant moves from view (either directly or in a mirror) or appears too close to the vehicle the driver **must stop**.
- Manoeuvres must not commence until the attendant(s) has indicated they are ready and that it is safe to do so.
- The vehicle must be manoeuvred no faster than a slow walking pace.
- Reversing through a restricted opening should, so far as practicable, be done in a straight line.

Sub/Station Officers and Leading firefighters

- 4.13 Sub/Station Officers and Leading firefighters are responsible for ensuring that this procedure is implemented **every time** a vehicle has to be reversed or if the driver requests assistance.
- Sub/Station Officers must include training in reversing/manoeuvring procedures, including the use of correct hand signals and the positioning of attendants, into station training programmes.
 - Sub/Station Officers and Leading firefighters must ensure that all personnel under their control understand their responsibility to assist the driver of a vehicle when reversing.

Attendant

- 4.14 The attendant(s) is/are responsible for ensuring they give correct and timely signals (see appendix 1) and instructions to the driver.
- The attendant(s) must wear hi-visibility clothing (hi-visibility vests) so they are visible to the driver, other road users, and pedestrians at all times.
 - The attendant(s) must stand 5 – 10 metres back and 1 metre out from the side of the vehicle (and if possible be on the pavement) to be clear of any danger from the manoeuvring vehicle. This positioning should enable increased situational awareness relating to other traffic and other hazards (reference 2.6).
 - If an attendant loses sight of the vehicle mirror when it is being reversed, **they cannot be seen by the driver** and must shout "**STOP**" to stop the vehicle.
 - The attendant(s) must be always positioned so that they can be heard and can be seen clearly by the driver. An attendant must never walk backwards when giving signals.
 - Where necessary an attendant might need to stop traffic and pedestrians in the vicinity of the Brigade vehicle; this must be done before the vehicle begins to manoeuvre/reverse. However, they must be aware of the need to signal to the driver to stop if a dangerous situation arises.
 - The attendant(s) must give signals to the driver in sufficient time to allow the driver to react.



5 Policies affected

- 5.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with Policy number 813 - Driving Brigade vehicles - NOG and Policy number 0977 – All incident considerations - NOG.

Appendix 1 - General principles to ensure safe reversing manoeuvres

Under no circumstances are reversing manoeuvres to be undertaken until the driver and attendants are clear about how the manoeuvre is going to be executed and the attendants are in position.

- The driver must always reverse slowly.
- The driver must ensure they have an unobstructed view **before** starting the manoeuvre.
- The attendant must use clear standard signals (see appendix 2) and must remain visible at all times while standing in a safe position from where they observe the route to be travelled and not be in the way. High visibility clothing must be worn when carrying out this task.
- If the driver has any doubts about the route to be travelled, they must physically check the route **before** they start reversing the vehicle.
- Drivers must use mirrors to maximum advantage but should not completely rely on them. If in doubt drivers must stop and look.
- Drivers must wind the door window(s) down and ensure that they can hear instructions from attendant(s) and be more aware of their surroundings.

On LFB premises the following must be undertaken to ensure reversing manoeuvres are undertaken safely:

- Avoid reversing manoeuvres wherever possible; ensure the distance that has to be reversed is as short as possible.
- Where reversing is unavoidable, **organise the route** to reduce the risk, if possible allocate a reversing area that is kept free from obstructions and people.
- Ensure the area is well lit and, if necessary, marked out with stop lines and/or lines for the appliance to drive between. Any part of the structure in the vicinity of where the appliance will be reversed must be conspicuously marked.

Off LFB premises, reversing is more difficult as there is less control of the environment:

- Remove the need for reversing manoeuvres, when this is not possible ensure the distance that has to be reversed is as short as possible.
- Before the vehicle is moved ensure someone has checked the route over which the vehicle will travel and any hazards created by the environment, e.g. street furniture, other vehicles and pedestrians.

Single crewed vehicles

If the appliance is crewed by one person, the following must be observed:

- Under no circumstances is a single crewed vehicle to be reversed or manoeuvred on LFB premises without an attendant being present.
- Anticipate where you are driving the vehicle, and whenever possible do not drive into a position you will have to reverse out of.
- If you must reverse the vehicle, and you are unsure of your surroundings, physically check behind the vehicle before starting to reverse.

General principles to ensure safe manoeuvring in other circumstances

If a vehicle has to be driven through a narrow gap, unless the driver is confident they will not collide with something, they should ask for assistance. When driving through a narrow gap the driver must ensure that the attendants are clear about how the intended manoeuvre is to be executed.

- The driver must always drive slowly.
- The driver must ensure they have an unobstructed view **before** starting the manoeuvre.
- The attendant must use clear standard signals (see appendix 2) and must remain visible at all times while standing in a safe position from where they can observe the route to be travelled and not be in the way. High visibility clothing must be worn when carrying out this task.
- If the driver has any doubts about the route to be travelled, they must physically check it **before** they start manoeuvring the vehicle.
- Drivers must wind the door window(s) down and ensure that they can hear instructions from attendant(s) and be more aware of their surroundings.

General principles to ensure the safe operation of power operated appliance bay doors

At all fire stations with power operated appliance bay doors the following safety precautions must be observed:

- Pedestrian entry to/exit from the appliance bay must not to be made through powered appliance bay doors unless the doors are fully open and, if the auto facility has been used, the auto close has been disabled.
- To facilitate routine vehicle movements through the appliance bay **only the open and close** door controls should be used.
- The AUTO facility that allows the doors to open and close after a period of time (usually 2 minutes) must **only be used when the appliance is leaving the station on an emergency call.**
- The AUTO facility must only be operated when the driver of the appliance has signalled that they are ready to drive off.
- **The AUTO facility must never be used when an appliance is reversing into the appliance bay.**

Appendix 2 - Standard hand signals

STOP



Right arm up with palm towards the driver

DANGER



Both arms up with palm towards the driver

MOVE TO ATTENDANT'S RIGHT



Right arm extended with palm towards the driver

MOVE TO ATTENDANT'S LEFT



Left arm extended with palm towards the driver

MOVE TOWARDS ATTENDANT



Both arms are bent with palms facing upward. The forearms make slow movements towards the attendant's body.

HORIZONTAL DISTANCE



Use both arms to indicate the distance between the vehicle and another object.

MOVE AWAY



Both arms are bent with palms facing downward. The forearms make slow movements away from the attendant's body.

See also the DVD "Mechanical Handling, Lifting and Moving Signals", LFEPA September 2007

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	17/04/26	SDIA	L – 15/04/26	HSWIA	15/04/26	RA	N/A
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Throughout	Changes made to owner title, team and department names to reflect the changes in organisational structure and governance (the abolition of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority).	07/12/2018
Page 3 para 4.5, Page 4 para 4.13	Change of job titles due to role to rank	15/10/2019
Throughout	Reference to cancelled PN210 replaced with PN977 – All incident considerations.	22/03/2024
Throughout	Reviewed as current with changes made. Policy updated with department names and terminology.	10/06/2026

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Appliances	Driving
Vehicles	

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification