

**PHOENIX REGIONAL
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

SPOTTING FIRE DEPARTMENT APPARATUS

M.P. 205.08A

08/20-R

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APPARATUS BACKING/FORWARD MOVEMENT – DRIVERS AND SPOTTERS

Backing of Fire Department apparatus should be avoided whenever possible. Where backing is unavoidable spotters shall be used. In addition, spotters shall be used when apparatus must negotiate forward turns with restrictive side clearances and where height clearances are uncertain.

Under circumstances where the apparatus is manned by only the driver, that driver shall attempt to utilize any available fire department personnel to act as spotters. Where no personnel are available to assist, the driver shall get out of the apparatus and make a complete 360-degree survey of the area around the apparatus to determine if any obstructions are present.

Spotters will discuss the backing plan with the driver before proceeding. A primary spotter will be designated, and the communication/warning process will be agreed upon prior to backing. The primary spotter is usually located at the left rear corner of the apparatus, but this position will be designated according to the safest backing plan agreed upon. Both door windows (driver and front passenger) should be in the down position to allow for maximum communication/hearing between spotters and the engineer/driver. Fire radio volumes will be turned down and the driver will take their headset off.

Where engine or ladder apparatus are backed, all crew members (except the driver/tiller person) will dismount the apparatus and act as spotters, including the Company Officer. Spotters should be located at as many corners as possible with at least one spotter at the left rear corner of the apparatus. Where only a single spotter is available, the spotter will coordinate with the driver to negotiate the apparatus most successfully. Rear spotters will remain a reasonably safe distance (10-15 feet) behind the apparatus and be in position to visualize the driver's eyes in the side mirror.

The apparatus shall not be backed until all spotters are in position and communicate their approval to start the backing. Spotters will remain visible to the engineer/driver. Anytime the driver loses sight of the primary spotter, the apparatus shall be stopped immediately until the spotter is visible, and the communication to continue backing is processed. Drivers will not back the apparatus faster than the spotters can safely walk backwards, allowing them to stay a safe distance from the apparatus. Spotters must be aware of approaching hazards and never place themselves between the moving apparatus and an object.

When the apparatus must be backed where other vehicle traffic exists, the emergency lights (if equipped) shall be operating and orange safety vests shall be worn by all spotters.

At night, the apparatus flood lights (if equipped) should be utilized to light surrounding objects and the spotter's location. The spotters should never use flashlights to signal the driver.

The Company Officer is responsible for compliance with this procedure and the safe backing of the apparatus.

SIGNALS

STRAIGHT BACK: Two hands above the head with palms toward face, waving back.

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STOP: Both arms crossed with hands making a fist. Be sure to yell the stop order loud enough that the engineer/driver can hear the warning.

TURN: Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended. (The direction that was agreed upon through prior verbal communication).

HARD TURN: Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended with animated and exaggerated motion away from the body.

STRAIGHTEN APPARATUS: Arms and hands animated pointing up and down.

HANDOFF: Point to your eyes and then to the other spotter that the driver should look at.

LOOK AT THIS: If the spotter sees that the apparatus is approaching an object the driver may not see, **STOP** the driver and point to your eyes and then point to the object you want the driver to see.

DIMINISHING CLEARANCE: Arms out wide, as the distance gets closer, so should your arms, and at shoulder width the spotter should change the signal to **STOP**.

SLOW: If the driver is backing too fast, put your hands forward, pushing down, or stop the driver and have a discussion at the driver's window.

For further information visit <http://www.phoenixfireops.com/drivers-training> to watch the video on Safe Backing of Apparatus.