

Risk Control Alert

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Emergency Vehicle Rollover Crashes On Drastic Increase VFIS Urges Immediate Changes in Emergency Response

The frequency of rollovers involving emergency vehicles is increasing at an alarming rate. It has become such a national concern that the U.S. Fire Administration is preparing to release a comprehensive report addressing this growing problem.

The facts are alarming

- Many rollovers do not involve other vehicles.
- Most are attributed to emergency vehicle driver error.
- Nearly all emergency vehicle rollover crashes are clearly preventable.

Vehicles most likely to be involved in a rollover crash include

- Tankers/Pumper Tankers (1,000 gallons or over)
- Ambulances
- Aerial Devices

Predominant scenarios include

- Too much speed when entering a turn/curve (particularly left to right corners)
- Right side tires leave the paved surface and sink into a soft shoulder
- Right side tires leave the paved surface, and the driver improperly attempts to bring the vehicle back onto the paved surface

The best way to address any problem is to understand why it occurs. Some common factors that contribute to emergency vehicle rollovers are

- ✦ *Driving too fast! Driving too fast! Driving too fast!*
- ✦ The driver doesn't understand the physical dynamics involved with operating heavy vehicles with a high center of gravity. When combined with high speed, these factors can easily cause excessive body roll, leading to rollover.
- ✦ The vehicle takes up most of the normal lane width, leaving very little room for navigational changes within the lanes of travel – particularly on secondary and rural roads.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NIOSH

- ✦ Lack of emergency vehicle driver training.
- ✦ Inadequate – or poorly enforced – management controls (standard operating procedures/guidelines).

VFIS strongly urges all emergency service organizations to take immediate steps to reduce the potential for rollover crashes.



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At minimum the following four steps, should be taken now. But don't stop here. You need to follow up with a comprehensive program that addresses all aspects of this critical issue.

1 Constantly reinforce to all emergency vehicle drivers the need to slow down and keep both their emotions and the speed of their vehicle under control. You cannot help to protect lives and property if you become a casualty enroute.

2 Develop emergency vehicle response guidelines that specifically address rollover avoidance.

3 Adopt a written emergency vehicle driver training program, and require all new drivers to successfully complete it before responding to any emergency calls.

4 Establish a system of ongoing driver training in which all drivers must periodically participate.



Things Not to Do

- Do not attempt to steer back onto the road surface at full speed or under acceleration.
- Do not make any sudden or drastic steering movements.
- Do not apply full braking.
- Do not attempt to accelerate up and over the surface dropoff.

Want to learn more about emergency vehicle rollovers? VFIS recommends that you review information on the NIOSH website at www.cdc.gov/niosh/firehome.html.

For assistance in developing emergency response standard operating guidelines or for VFIS Emergency Vehicle Driver Training Programs, call (800)-233-1957 or visit our website at www.vfis.com.

Safe Driving Pointers

VFIS believes the following pointers will increase your emergency vehicle drivers' ability to maintain control of their vehicle should they run off the road surface. These should be included in your organization's driver training program.

Things to Do

- Take your foot off of the accelerator and allow the vehicle to slow down gradually.
- Do not apply full braking! Use soft application of the brakes, natural decelerations and downshifting to bring the vehicle to a safe speed or stop.
- Under soft shoulder conditions feather the accelerator to help maintain control of the vehicle while slowing.
- Once the vehicle has been stopped or been brought down to a safe speed, gently steer the vehicle back onto the road surface using a lower gear to assist in overcoming the surface dropoff or soft shoulder.



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