STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE - 1.2.2
TOPIC - ALARM RESPONSE - INCLEMENT WEATHER

PURPOSE:

To provide an appropriate level of response to alarms generated by inclement weather conditions while maintaining resources at readiness to meet other needs.

GENERAL:

Whenever the weather becomes stormy or the temperature drops below freezing we experience an increase in calls for service. Some of these responses require a major effort, while others merely need to be checked out. Weather related emergency responses often contain a unique set of conditions in addition to the primary event. It is vital that we acknowledge the fact that we are not exempt from the affects of weather, and that to be effective we must arrive safely.

GUIDELINES:

OVERVIEW:

1. Listen carefully to the dispatch message to determine what is actually required to handle the call. It may only be necessary for a unit to respond to assess the situation, and may not require a full alarm assignment.

2. Consider alternate routes of travel.

3. Drive slower rather than faster.

4. The first arriving unit will determine the need for additional response.

5. Trees that are down and obstructing routes of travel to an alarm may be cut at the discretion of the company officer, based upon an evaluation.
   Evaluation considerations:
   a. Determine that the tree is not making contact with any electric lines.
   b. Determine if equipment on the apparatus is capable and appropriate for the job.
   c. Determine if there is an experienced person to perform the work.
   d. Identify how the items that are cut can be moved out of the way safely.
   e. Determine if an alternate route would be more efficient.

Note: If the tree cannot be dealt with safely do not cut it.

6. It may be best to seek alternative routes, or request an additional alarm (or mutual aid) to get apparatus coming from another direction. You may need to abandon continuing your response.

NOTE: If the road is impassable notify dispatch that there is a potential that ground response may not be possible. Have dispatch contact those agencies that have alternative transportation capabilities and place them on standby.

HIGH WINDS

1. Watch for blowing, and falling debris.

2. Consider that power lines may be involved with debris, or may be down as a result of the weather condition.

ICE

1. Exercise extreme caution while responding through shaded or traditionally wet areas.

2. Understand that you cannot always see the ice on the road.

3. Be aware that due to the weight, and warmth of vehicles they may move or slide, after being parked. Park in such a fashion to prevent slippage.

4. Consider the effects of ice on power lines; they may be low or down.

SNOW

1. Visibility while driving may be impaired. Use low beams at night.

2. Maintain an awareness that snow is heavy and will affect the load limits on bridges.

3. Do not use response apparatus as a snow plow though you may be breaking a trail at times; be reasonable.

4. Slush may be as hazardous as ice while driving.

5. Consider the effects of snow on power lines; they may be down.

HIGH WATER

1. Be aware that the power of moving and standing water can lift and move a vehicle.

2. Avoid driving through moving or standing water whenever possible, if there is an alternate route use it.
3. Be aware that the action of moving water may have washed out the road base leaving the surface unsupported. The greatest potential for this occurrence is around culverts.

4. If you must drive through high water use these precautions:
   a. Drive slowly.
   b. Stay to the high side whenever possible.
   c. Use all warning lights.
   d. Be sure that the road exists where you are driving.
   e. Be aware of floating hazards.

5. Apparatus which has driven through excessively high water may require a thorough mechanical and fluid assessment after the emergency.