



New York State
Department of Health
Bureau of Emergency Medical Services

POLICY STATEMENT

Supercedes/Updates:

No. 89-04

Date: 03/15/89

**Re: Sample Standard
Operating Procedure to
Follow in Respect to
Backing and Parking the
Ambulance**

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SUBJECT: Sample Standard Operating Procedure to Follow in Respect to Backing and Parking the Ambulance

Policy

In response to the often questioned concerns of ambulance operators on procedures for backing and parking ambulances and in preparation for the Ambulance Accident Prevention Seminar (AAPS), the following guidelines have been prepared so they could easily be adapted into each service's standard operating procedures.

Backing the Ambulance

1. Backing of the ambulance should be avoided whenever possible. Where backing is unavoidable, a spotter or an assistant outside the vehicle should be used.
2. In addition, a spotter should be used when vehicles must negotiate forward turns with restrictive side clearances and where height clearances are uncertain. The purpose of the spotter is to expand the driver's sense for the right, left, front and rear space cushions.
3. Under circumstances where the ambulance is staffed by only the driver (e.g., all other personnel are inside the residence with the patient), the driver should attempt to utilize any available emergency services personnel to act as spotters. Where no personnel are available to assist, the driver shall park the vehicle, get out, and make a complete survey of the space cushion around all four sides of the vehicle to determine if any obstructions are present before proceeding to back the ambulance.
4. Spotters are never permitted to ride the tailboard or running boards while the vehicle is in motion. The spotter should be in a visible safe zone positioning him/herself ten (10) to fifteen (15) feet at the left rear of the ambulance.

5. The vehicle should not be backed until the spotter is in position in the safe zone and has communicated his/her approval to begin backing by way of a hand signal, and voice, when possible. Spotters should remain visible to the driver in the safe zone. Anytime the driver loses sight of the spotter, the vehicle should be stopped immediately until the spotter is again visible and the communication to continue backing is processed. This is definitely not a high-speed maneuver. It should be done very slowly and cautiously.

Parking the Ambulance

1. Always park the ambulance in a hazard-free area to protect the crew, patient and the ambulance (e.g., at a motor vehicle accident pull past the accident, avoiding fuel spills, and park the vehicle off the road on the shoulder).
2. When parking to the driver's blind side a spotter should be used.
3. When parking in a parking space or driveway, back into the parking area so that you have a safe and efficient exit.

General Rules for Drivers and Spotters

1. Never be in a rush when backing or parking!
2. Do not start to back or park when unsure of the area.
3. Do not put the ambulance into reverse gear until it has come to a complete stop.
4. When it is dark outside use the side and rear spotlights when backing to light the area.
5. If the vehicle has a backup alarm that can be disengaged, it should always be in the on position before backing the vehicle.

Standard Signals for Spotters

1. Straight Back – One hand above the head with palm toward face, waving back. Other hand at your side.
2. Turn – Both arms pointing the same direction with index fingers extended.
3. Stop – Both arms crossed with hands in fists. Be sure to reinforce the signal by yelling the stop order loud enough so the driver can hear.
4. Night Backing – Signals are the same. The spotter should assure that the spotlights on the rear of the ambulance are turned on before allowing the vehicle to be backed. A flashlight, wand type is useful, maybe carried but at no time will it be directed towards the mirrors.