

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service FIRE CHIEF'S GENERAL ORDER

FCGO: 18-03

June 28, 2018

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TO: All MCFRS Personnel

FROM: Fire Chief Scott E. Goldstein 

SUBJECT: Utility Task Vehicle Use

Utility Task Vehicles (UTV) are characterized by side-by-side or bench seating and are equipped with seat belts for the operator and passengers. UTV also typically include some form of occupant enclosure consisting of roll-over protection structures, roofs, passenger doors or nets, windshields, and other means of protecting the occupants or vehicle cargo.

While many of the safe operating concepts are similar, electric-powered vehicles and vehicles designed for use on improved surfaces, such as golf cart style vehicles, are not addressed by this Fire Chief's General Order.

In order to ensure the safety of MCFRS personnel, the following protocols will be followed during all UTV operations:

1. Keep all body parts inside the vehicle at all times.
2. All UTV's will be equipped with roll-over protection for occupants. Each passenger must ride in a seat. Where a seat is equipped with a safety belt, it must be worn during transit.
3. Operation of UTV's within the travel lanes of a public roadway is to be avoided, when practical.
 - a. UTV will be transported via truck or trailer to the trailhead or as near as practical to the off-road area to avoid traveling on public roadways. For events with defined perimeters that include road closures, the UTV will be delivered to or within the perimeter of the event.
 - b. If during an incident or training when a roadway must be crossed, the crossing pattern must be perpendicular to the road with the shortest possible exposure to traffic.
 - c. The UTV may travel directly adjacent to an open public roadway where a shoulder or non-travel lane is available. The travel area must be clearly separated from open travel lanes by roadway markings, curbs, gutters, cones, or other readily identifiable means.

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- d. Restriction of travel on public roadways does not apply when operating within the perimeter of a defined public event, parade/festival/etc, where the road is not open to normal traffic.
4. Vehicle speeds must be reasonable and match the conditions. Excessive speeds reduce reaction time and increase the potential for a rollover. Never operate a vehicle on unsafe terrain or at excessive speeds.
5. All vehicles must be loaded and operated within manufacturer specifications. All cargo, equipment, and personnel must be secured in the vehicle prior to transit on any type of surface. Manufacturer-recommended payloads and towing capacities must not be exceeded.
6. Crews deployed on an UTV must have a means to maintain communication and accountability with supervisors and, or, PSCC at all times. By the nature of the UTV, operational areas may be remote and personnel must remain aware of communication limitations. Incident Commanders or supervisors must have a plan for accounting for deployed UTV and their crews. UTV crews should consist of at least two personnel whenever practical. It is recognized that UTV performing shuttle functions may operate with a driver only.
7. Authorization to operate MCFRS UTV will only be granted to personnel who have successfully completed an applicable MCFRS or LFRD training program as defined in policy 23-07AMII *Drivers Certification Procedures*.

When operating UTV off-road, on unimproved surfaces, or through brush or wooded areas, the following additional protocols apply:

8. All personnel riding in the UTV will wear, at a minimum, helmet, ANSI Z87.1 rated eye protection, and work gloves. High visibility attire will be worn as described in other MCFRS guiding documents.
9. During off-road transit all windshields and side screens or nets must be in place to protect the vehicle occupants against encroaching brush or tree branches. Operators must remain aware of vehicle accessories, such as warning or scene lights, that may be exposed or damaged by lack of clearance to fixed objects.

Please direct any questions to the Special Operation Section Chief at 240-777-2444.