CARVER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Guidelines

Section 3.13 – Opticom Traffic Advisor **June 15, 2013**

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to provide guidance to the Emergency Vehicle Operator (EVO) while responding to emergency calls. EVO's have the responsibility of responding in a safe manner to all emergency incidents, for the safety and protection of themselves, their passengers, and the general public. The safe arrival of emergency vehicles at the scene is the first priority.

1.1 GENERAL

The Opticom® Traffic Emitter is a device used by emergency vehicles to change the traffic lights in your travel direction from red to green. A special pulsating strobe light emitter mounted on the apparatus controls this activation. The emitter sends a signal to the traffic receiver mounted on top of the traffic lights, when the receiver activates a white strobe will flash on the light pole and within 5 seconds, this activation will turn the traffic light in your direction green, turning red in all other directions. This will allow traffic in your direction to move with the green light. This does not assume that the civilian drivers know why they have a green light or that emergency vehicles are approaching.

An issue with the Opticom® traffic system is the sense of safety by the EVO. When activated the rapid changing of the traffic lights from green to red then back again may cause civilian drivers to become confused or ignorant of the traffic light color. In addition, EVO's responding from another direction my visualize the white strobe activation and feel they have captured they system when they have not. Opticom® traffic emitters operate on a first come first serve basis. Once a transmitter captures the light, no other transmitter will function.

1.2 OPTICOM SYSTEM OPERATION

01. The driver activates the emergency lights of a vehicle equipped with the Opticom® system. This will activate the Opticom® strobe light on the front of the vehicle.

02. The vehicle approaches an intersection equipped with the Opticom®. When the receiver detects the signal from the emergency vehicle it is acknowledged by activating a white strobe light mounted in the intersection.

03. Approximately 5 seconds after receipt of the signal the system will change the traffic lights so that the emergency vehicle receives a green light and all other travel lanes receive a red light.

04. The system works intersection by intersection. Where there are long clear lines of sight the transmitter on the vehicle may simultaneously activate multiple intersections.

05. The system will automatically reset after the emergency vehicle passes through the intersection or turns away.

06. The operator shall turn the Opticom® off when on scene.

1.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE OPTICOM SYSTEM

01. The system does not supersede any existing traffic laws. EVO's shall respond appropriately to traffic signals and signs.

02. The system actually increases the demand for EVO's to use extreme care and caution when proceeding through and intersection during a response.

03. Often, drivers are familiar with the timing sequence of a light. They know that the light will stay green for them for a given period of time. Once it turns green the driver may not look at the light again. The Opticom® system will change a green light to red in 5 seconds or less. EVO's must anticipate that other drivers may not be aware of the signal change and as such my pull out in front of the emergency vehicle.

04. Adverse weather conditions may cause the Opticom® to not operate properly.

1.4 GUIDELINE

01. EVO'S while responding to an incident shall utilize the Opticom® transmitters when responding through traffic lights. The transmitters should be activated when the traffic lights are in site to give enough time for activation.

02. EVO's shall utilize extreme caution when approaching intersections, and, at all times, slow to speeds not more than 10 mph. In the case where your vision is blinded or diminished, EVO's shall make a complete stop even though the Opticom® may have given you the green light. EVO's shall keep in mind that the Opticom® system does not provide a "magic pathway" for an emergency vehicle to safely speed through. It is a tool, just as the emergency lights and siren.

03. Any vehicle performing an emergency response shall have all emergency warning lights activated during the response. The siren shall be utilized whenever necessary to make the presence of the emergency vehicle known to the other drivers. Emergency lights and sirens are only a request for other vehicles and pedestrians to give way. Normal rules of the road, speed limits, traveling within marked lanes, proceeding through intersections, shall not be deviated from unless it is safe, prudent and legal to do so.

1.5 ENFORCEMENT

No SOG could ever anticipate every situation that might arise in a profession such as emergency services where the demands are so unpredictable. Nevertheless, it is expected that this guideline will be comprehensive enough to educate and protect Fire Officers and Firefighters about the dangers of emergency vehicle operations and the Opticom® system. Primary responsibility for adherence to this SOG rests with the EVO. Responsibility for full compliance rests with the apparatus commander. Authority to deviate from this procedure rests solely with the Chief of Department who bears full responsibility for the results of any deviation.