



BAKERSFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT

Traffic Issues

Bakersfield City Firefighters are highly trained and skilled in maneuvering heavy fire apparatus through traffic, narrow streets, bad weather, and sometimes unpredictable driving. Fire apparatus have special preemption devices that can change traffic signals from red to green, and driving with extra caution is the Fire Department mandate, including stopping at intersections during responses.

However, the statistics show this is not always enough to get Firefighters to where they need to go without incident.

Responding to an emergency “Code 3” (with lights, sirens and other warning devices) can be one of the most dangerous aspects of a Firefighter’s job. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 33 Firefighters died in traffic-related accidents while responding to emergency calls in 2003 – the highest number since 1977. This trend may not be improving.

Problem Drivers

The Unsure: a driver that sees a large red Fire Engine bearing down on them in the rear view mirror, and stops or abruptly freezes in the middle of a road or intersection, unsure of what to do or where to go.

Don't Panic, we'll give you time...please pull to the right as soon as possible and stop!

The Inattentive: a driver that has no idea an emergency vehicle is behind them requesting the right-of-way, sirens blaring and lights flashing, and continues on their normal path of travel.

Keep your distractions to a minimum, be aware...please pull to the right as soon as possible and stop!

The Opportunist: a driver that refuses to yield, purposefully disregards the law, and uses the opportunity to pass other traffic stopped for an emergency vehicle.

Don't do this, it's against the law and a ticket will follow...please pull to the right as soon as possible and stop!

The Law

State law mandates drivers to yield to emergency vehicles. Local drivers can assist the Fire Department with the emergency response process, and protect their own safety by following and abiding by some very basic rules, as outlined in the California Department of Motor Vehicles Handbook:

DMV HANDBOOK - EMERGENCY VEHICLES

You must yield the right of way to any police car, fire engine, ambulance, or other emergency vehicle using a siren and red lights. Drive as close to the right edge of the road as possible and stop until the emergency vehicle(s) has passed.

However, never stop in an intersection. If you are in an intersection when you see an emergency vehicle, continue through the intersection and then drive to the right as soon as you can and stop. Emergency vehicles often use the wrong side of the street to continue on their way. They sometimes use a loud speaker to talk to drivers blocking their path.

It is against the law to follow within 300 feet of any emergency vehicle which is answering an emergency call.