

PA FIRE POLICE

Safety Practices for the Fire Police Officers

By Tony Riccardi - PA State Fire Academy Approved Fire Police Instructor

During your tour of duty as a fire police officer, you may become involved with aggressive drivers. Keep in mind that the motorist of today is more inclined to become aggressive because of the distraction of other drivers, time schedules, road construction and, of course, emergencies of various types.

It is easy for motorists to plan for delays such as construction, what they cannot plan for are emergencies that either require detours and/or closed to traffic altogether. This is when motorists are more likely to become angry and, in all likelihood, take this anger out on the fire police officer.

If you are the fire police officer facing this type of conduct you know it is not pleasant. The motorist is going to insist that they be permitted to use the route they always use and may even defy the fire police officer and attempt to drive where they are not permitted to travel.

These are the times when being a fire police officer can be extremely difficult. You may have been instructed to stop all traffic, detour the vehicles onto a different road, or other such orders. Under these circumstances it is easy to wonder why the motorist just doesn't comply; after all they should understand that, shouldn't they!

If we had the answer to those questions we might be able to make your job a lot easier. Instead, we can only offer information that may make the frustration easier to handle. As we indicated last month, motorists are required to obey your signals, the problem is, they don't want to, just as they don't obey other rules of the highway.

What is the solution? There are two possible answers:

First, get angry with the motorist, yell and scream at them, and completely lose your cool. That ought to take care of the problem, they will

surely obey you now, problem is, this method is more likely to cause more problems than it will solve.

Second, consider that "people react negatively to anything they don't understand." Now substitute your own name for the word people and you will see that we all do the same and act the same when confronted with situations we don't like.

Let's take a look at how we all tend to conduct ourselves in these situations.

Anyone who's been stuck in rush-hour traffic knows that driving provides special opportunities for almost anyone to become hostile.

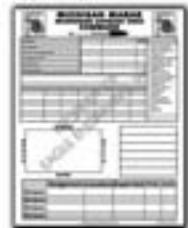
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When you're in a hurry – on someone else's schedule – you don't think rationally.

A mismatch between goals and reality – what you want and what you've got – engenders frustration.

That's the first step toward anger and irrationality.

Fire Police Officers often become the recipient of such conduct as the frustrated driver takes out their anger on whoever is conveniently available – hence the fire police officer.

It is important for fire police officers to know that this anger is not necessarily aimed at them but at the situation in which the driver finds themselves.

This doesn't make it any easier to handle – but it should aid the fire police officer in knowing why the driver is acting rudely and aggressively.

In many instances – the frustration and anger is made worse by the reciprocal conduct of the fire police officer.

Therefore – the fire police officer – who should be acting in a professional manner –

must work hard at maintaining their patience and composure with such drivers.

Remember – you want the driver to cooperate and follow your orders – this won't happen if you add to their already frustrating experience.

There are other instances where drivers become angry and frustrated when they are not sure where a road – to which they have been re-routed- will take them.

This represents the biggest complaint from fire police officers who state that they don't have time to assist people seeking information. The obvious question is "Why not?"

These are the instances where you can do much to enhance the image of the fire police officer.

Drivers are already frustrated by the delay or having to travel an unknown route, your assistance can be a calming factor as well as an opportunity to show the public that fire police can and will be helpful.

Don't miss the opportunity to create good public relations – it will pay off in the long run!



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