



NON-FIREFIGHTERS ON FIRE APPARATUS BEST PRACTICES

Parades, open houses, firehouse tours, scout outings, and other events where members of the public are invited to the fire or EMS stations are important public relations tools. However, inviting children and their parents into the station or onto the vehicles places an extra duty to ensure the activity is conducted in a manner that protects the safety of the guests and minimizes exposure to the fire or EMS agency. The following best practices are recommended for an enjoyable and safe event.

Members participating in an event where children will be present should have all personnel complete Protecting Children from Abuse training available offered through the [MEL Safety Institute \(MSI\)](#).

Fire and EMS agencies should conduct regular (monthly is suggested) building inspections. This becomes even more critical when the public is invited onto the grounds. Before the event, walk through all areas and double-check that the station is ready to receive visitors, especially inquisitive and excitable children. Check exterior and interior walking surfaces for slip-trip-fall hazards. Secure or post signs for areas not available to the public.

Similarly, the apparatus should also be checked before the event. Keep in mind non-members will be moving through the cab and passenger areas. Cabinets may be open, and the contents accessible. This presents a different hazard than those to trained firefighters. Secure loose articles. Remove the key or turn off the battery switch to prevent accidental starting. If the vehicle will not be moved during the event, chock the wheels. If cabinets will be opened, especially if they will be left open, secure equipment from falling onto a child or theft. If practical, assign a member to monitor a set of cabinets. Ensure power equipment is de-energized.

If the apparatus is participating in a larger festival, such as Touch-a-Truck, never leave the vehicle unattended.

Parades present additional hazards. Be sure vehicles are in proper operating condition. Front-line vehicles are often well-maintained, but what about antique or parade apparatus? Are the brakes, steering, and other mechanical systems in good operating condition?

All riders should be seated and wearing a seatbelt when the vehicle is moving. Members should also be assigned to the riding area to provide adult supervision. Children and other guests should be prohibited from riding on top of apparatus (such as in hose beds) and on back steps or running boards. If aerials are being used to give rides, all riders should be properly secured in the basket. Do not put the basket onto a roof or similar area. Climbing ladders is discouraged. If children will hold a charged hose, have a written policy on pump pressure for various aged children.

Parade organizers often prohibit throwing candy or other items from the apparatus. If candy or other trinkets are to be distributed, they should be given out by members who are walking the parade route. Even if articles are not being handed out, consider the practice of having members walking along the parade route as an extra set of eyes if a child darts out from the sidewalk behind the view of the driver. One walker should be equipped with a whistle or radio to alert the driver to immediately stop the vehicle.

Do not discharge water onto spectators. Be judicial in the use of sirens and air horns.

Fire and EMS agencies are urged to contact their risk manager with specific questions or concerns.