



# FIRE & EMS BULLETIN



## SPECIAL EVENTS: APPARATUS & STATION BEST PRACTICES

Municipalities across New Jersey hold special events where the community is invited into local fire and EMS stations or to tour or touch fire trucks and ambulances. Special events include:

- Open houses
- Touch-a-Truck
- Night Out
- Parades
- Community festivals

It is essential for fire and EMS leaders to remember that stations and emergency vehicles are not designed for untrained adults and certainly not children. Before stations and vehicles are made accessible to the public, certain precautions must be taken. This bulletin will discuss best practices for different special events.

### Special Events

Any member participating in an event where children will be present should complete Protecting Children from Abuse training offered through the MEL Safety Institute (MSI). The MSI provides an appendix to its Protecting Children from Abuse model policy for Fire and EMS agencies on the [Fire and EMS webpage](#).

### Parades

If non-firefighters or EMTs will be riding in fire trucks or ambulances, they should be in enclosed cabs under the direct supervision of an adult member of the agency. 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.

No one should throw candy or other objects from the truck or ambulance. 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 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 driver's view. Consider equipping walkers with a whistle or radio to alert the driver to stop the vehicle immediately.

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

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?

### Open Houses

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.

The apparatus should also be checked before the event. Will non-members be permitted in the cab and passenger areas? Only parents or adult guardians should assist children into the cab or passenger areas. If the parent or guardian cannot physically assist the child into the cab, a firefighter or EMT should only assist the child in the presence of the parent or guardian.

To avoid cross-contamination, special attention must be paid to the cleanliness and sanitization of ambulances' passenger and patient areas if non-members are permitted to enter.

Remove the key or turn off the battery switch to prevent accidental starting. Secure or remove loose objects and tools that untrained adults or children may enter in the cab or passenger areas.

Will cabinets be open, and the contents accessible? If cabinets are open, especially if they are left open, secure the equipment from falling onto a child, unauthorized use, or theft. Ensure power equipment is de-energized. If practical, assign a member to monitor a set of cabinets.

### **Touch-a-Truck**

If the apparatus is participating in a larger festival, such as Touch-a-Truck, never leave the vehicle unattended. If the vehicle will not be moved during the event, chock the wheels.

If adults or children will be allowed to enter the vehicle or if cabinets will be open and contents on display, follow the best practices provided above for vehicles during open houses.

### **Fire Truck & Ambulance Rides**

If the ride will be over local roads, all riders must be seated and wearing a seatbelt. A member should be assigned to the riding area, in a seat, and wearing a seatbelt to monitor the group. A second adult, a member or parent, should also be in the passenger area to provide two-deep supervision.

If the ride will be at parade speed (about 5 mph) in a park or closed parking lot, riders must still be in the enclosed passenger area with 2 adults. Fire and EMS leaders should consider the length of the ride, the surface of the park or parking lot, layout of the car or passenger area, and other factors when deciding what other safeguards are needed.

If aerials will be used to give rides, all riders should be properly tethered in the basket. Follow the manufacturer's maximum load rating. Consider limiting the height of the ride. Do not put the basket onto a roof or similar area. Climbing ladders is discouraged.

### **Simulated Fire & EMS Activities**

Fire or EMS agencies may want to demonstrate their tools or skills, or include untrained adults and children in the demonstrations. This can be an effective community relations tool. However, significant safeguards must be taken to ensure successful demonstrations and appropriate safety for participants.

Assign a responsible agency officer to act as a Safety Officer for the planning phase and the duration of the demonstration. The person should have an understanding of age-appropriate activities for different age groups.

If children will hold a charged hose, have a written policy on pump pressure, taking into account nozzle reaction forces, for children of different ages.

Children may not be used as victims. Do not use adults as victims in any hazardous or potentially hazardous scenario.

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