



NON-FIREFIGHTERS IN STATION & ON FIRE APPARATUS BEST PRACTICES

Parades, open houses, firehouse tours, scout outings, and other events that invite members of the public to fire or EMS stations are important public relations tools. However, inviting children and their parents into the station or onto the vehicles places an additional 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.

Children in the firehouse present a unique exposure that requires special attention. Leaders should review the best practices in the Protecting & Safe Treatment of Minors model policy and appendix on [MSI Fire and EMS](#). Members who will be participating in an event with children present should watch the Protecting Children video on [MSI Video](#).

Fire and EMS agencies should be conducting regular building inspections (the Safety Director suggests monthly). These inspections focus on the safety of firefighters who are trained and familiar with the station and its equipment. However, the focus of inspections should change 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 that non-members will be moving through the cab and passenger areas. Cabinets may be open, and the contents accessible. Again, this presents a different hazard from those faced by 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 the equipment to prevent it from falling onto a child or being stolen. 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 wear 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 hose beds) and on back steps or running boards, and from running. If aerials are used for 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 children of various ages.

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 by members walking the parade route. Even if articles are not being handed out, consider having members walk along the parade route as an extra set of eyes if a child darts out from the sidewalk, out of the driver's view. One walker should be equipped with a whistle or a radio to alert the driver to stop the vehicle immediately.

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.