

## Working Safely On or Adjacent to Roads

The ACT Rural Fire Service Chief Officer has issued this standard operating procedure under Section 38(1) of the *Emergency Act 2004* – A Chief Officer may determine standards and protocols.

### Purpose

This standard operating procedure (SOP) is to ensure that RFS members remain safe when they are required to work on or adjacent to roads. It covers safety for planned and un-planned, emergency and non-emergency activities on or adjacent to roads.

### Scope

This SOP is applicable to all personnel from the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS), as defined in the *Emergencies Act 2004*.

### Background

Safe work practices are important at all times. Working on or near roads presents an additional hazard for ACTRFS members. Under the *Work Health Safety Act 2011*, ACTRFS has a duty of care and a responsibility for the safety of its members and other persons in the vicinity while undertaking activities.

*ACT Emergencies Act 2004* confers on officers and ACTRFS members powers for the protection of life or property or to control or extinguish a fire. Under Part 3.2, Section 34, when necessary for the protection or preservation of life, property or the environment, the ACTRFS Chief Officer may direct the closure of a street to traffic and restricting movement of people, vehicles and animals. Powers of members are described in *ACTRFS Service Standard 3.1.6 Powers of Members*.

The ***ACT Road Transport (Road Rules) Regulation 2017*** provides a number of exemptions for emergency services when attending to an emergency or incident. The relevant exemptions for this SOP relate to parking and access to roads.

Under **Section 307** “Stopping and parking exemption – police or emergency vehicle or authorised person”, an emergency vehicle can stop and park contrary to signs, emergency stopping lanes, no parking areas, etc, if in the circumstances, the driver is taking reasonable care and it is reasonable that the provision should not apply. Reasonable circumstances are limited to attending to an operation or incident.

**Section 308** provides an exemption as a provision of Part 14 (Rules for pedestrians) for police officers and emergency workers on foot, while acting in the course of their duty, if they are taking reasonable care and if it is reasonable that the provision should not apply.

Noting that any exemption is dependent on members having reasonable cause for their activity and taking reasonable care, this SOP provides a risk-based procedure for working on or adjacent to roads in emergency situations. For planned operations, the normal provisions for arranging traffic management still apply, when required.

## Responsibilities

Members	Must take reasonable care at times for their own safety and that of other persons in the vicinity.
Traffic Controller	Must be qualified to conduct traffic control functions for planned operations. Must wear high-vis vest when controlling traffic for planned operations.
Observer	Must wear high-vis vest or PPC jacket when controlling traffic. Must observe backing of ACTRFS appliances onto a road.
Officer in charge (OIC) /Crew Leader	Must conduct a dynamic risk assessment before undertaking work on or adjacent to a road. Must communicate the risks to all team members before undertaking work. Must ensure all safety precautions are enacted as far as is practicable.
ACTRFS Director, Operations	Authorises planned activities and ensures all requirements for traffic management are approved prior to activity.
Incident Controller (IC) /ACT RFS Chief Officer	Authorise or delegate authorisation to conduct activity on or adjacent to road. Conducts risk assessment.

## Standard operating procedure

The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) has a responsibility to ensure the safety of all RFS members and other persons in the vicinity, while undertaking activities on or adjacent to roadways and to minimise all associated risks.

The following SOP is to assist in the protection of RFS members and other persons in the vicinity during both non-emergency and emergency operations.

## Risk management approach

ACTRFS takes a risk-based approach to working safely on or adjacent to roads for all unplanned and emergency activities. Any incidents or near misses must be reported using [RiskMan](#).

## Unplanned and emergency operations

Unplanned operations include filling a tanker from a hydrant, mechanical breakdown, reversing an appliance, etc.).

Emergency operations include working on or near roadways for a fire, incident or other emergency (such as bush fire, structure fire, motor vehicle fire, imminent danger arising out of a fire, motor vehicle accident, fuel spillage, fallen tree, power lines down, etc.).

In both cases, the IC is accountable for safety and each RFS Officer in Charge (OIC) is responsible for all members under their direct control and other persons in the area and for conducting an on-site risk assessment. (See Risk Assessment on next page.)

## Planned non-emergency operations

Follow these instructions when working on or near roadways for planned operations (such as hazard reduction activities, hydrant inspections, installing or maintaining hydrant markers or Fire Danger Rating signs).

The IC (if applicable) is accountable for safety for the non-emergency planned operation and each OIC is responsible for all firefighters under their direct control and other persons in the area.

1. The RFS Director Operations or IC prepares a temporary traffic management plan (TTM plan) in consultation with the appropriate authorities (Roads ACT and ACT Policing). (See below for TTM plan requirements.)
2. The OIC ensure traffic cones and traffic warning signs are placed in accordance with the plan.
3. The OIC conducts a safety briefing to all participants before the operation commences.
4. All ACTRFS members must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when working on or immediately adjacent to roadways. Members must have PPE jacket and pant. (Fire ground shirt as an outer garment is not permitted.)
5. If a traffic controller is used, they must wear a high-vis vest.
6. An observer, visible to the driver at all times, must assist a reversing vehicle.
7. A high-vis vest pr PPE jacket must be worn by observer.
8. All visual warning devices fitted to the appliances (red and blue emergency beacons and hazard warning lights) shall be operating when working on or near roadways.
9. Appliances are to be safely positioned and operated in accordance with the plan.
10. Radio communication is to be maintained throughout the operation, both at the operation and with COMCEN.

## Temporary Traffic Management plans

TTM plans are used to manage the safety of the public and workers on site. They document the authorisation to install, display or interfere with, change or remove traffic control. All TTM plans must include details on:

- analysis of the risks and hazards and planned implementation of controls
- duration of operation
- extent and location of the operation
- planned notification to the public through local newspapers or radio broadcasts organised through ESA Public Information and Engagement.

Note, when these activities are performed such that no ACTRFS vehicles need to park on a roadway or directly beside a road, a risk assessment should be conducted but no traffic management plan is required. For example, a vehicle is parked on a verge or car parking area, away from traffic and the occupants do not need to go near any part of the road when alighting or accessing the vehicle. It may still be appropriate for flashing lights to be displayed.

## Risk Assessment



All risks and hazards must be analysed and appropriate controls are implemented. Risk assessment must include the following considerations:

1. Positioning of vehicle with respect to traffic, ensuring the vehicle is:
  - a. displaying flashing lights
  - b. visible to oncoming traffic, i.e., not near a blind corner
  - c. as far removed from traffic flow as possible
  - d. positioned to protect members while performing an activity (fend off position)
  - e. positioned to allow occupants to safely enter and access it.
2. Traffic warning signs or cones must be placed at appropriate places.
3. An observer, wearing a high-vis vest or PPE jacket and visible to the driver at all times, ensures that vehicles reverse safely.
4. All ACTRFS members must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when working on or near roadways. Members must have PPE jacket and pant. (Fire ground shirt as an outer garment is not permitted.)
5. If a vehicle must stop in a potentially hazardous place, for example near a curve or crest, appropriate signage, traffic cones or a prepositioned crew member must be placed to warn oncoming motorists and other traffic management options need to be considered.
6. The safety of other persons in the vicinity needs to be considered and appropriate controls put in place.
7. If necessary, for safety reasons, a road may need to be closed or partially closed on one or both directions. In the absence of appropriate traffic warning signs and cones, it may be necessary in the interests of road safety, to close the road using an appliance until the required resources become available.
8. Radio communication is to be maintained throughout the operation, both with the OIC and with COMCEN.
9. The OIC conducts a safety briefing to all participants before the operation commences.

## Traffic warning signs and cones

Tankers and medium tankers should carry five reflective 700mm cones. Light tankers should carry at least two fold-down cones. They are available from the ESA Resource Centre.

Traffic signs are not normally carried on tankers but are available for planned operations.

	<p>The TRAFFIC HAZARD AHEAD sign is for any operation that may cause a traffic hazard.</p>
	<p>The SMOKE HAZARD AHEAD sign is for any hazard reduction burn or fire where smoke is present or may become a hazard.</p>
<p>Standard cones (450 to 500mm high)</p>	<p>Should be used for low-speed urban and rural roads.</p>
<p>Large cones (over 700mm high)</p>	<p>Should be used for freeways and other high-speed roads to delineate the work area on or near the roadway.</p>


## Recommended Spacing for Traffic Cones and Traffic Warning Signs

Speed limit (kph)	Ideal taper length for cones (metres)	Minimum spacing between traffic cones (metres)	Distance of traffic warning sign from appliance (metres)
Up to 60	30	4	120
60-80	140	9	160
80-100	180	12	200
100-110	200	15	220

## Version history

Author	Version	Version Approval Date	Summary of Changes
Rohan Scott	1.0	19/10/2020	First version
Steve Quinlan	2.0	29/3/2023	Review and update Section 304 to Section 307

## Approved by

Name	Title/Role	Signature	Date
Rohan Scott	CO ACT RFS		08/02/2024

## Document Owner

Position	Section
RFS Director	Operations

Next review due: 01/02/2027

## Related documents

Document name
<a href="#">ACT Emergencies Act 2004</a>
<a href="#">ACT Road Transport (Road Rules) Regulation 2017</a>
<a href="#">Work Health and Safety Act 2011</a>
<a href="#">Riskman Incident Reporting form</a>
3.1.6 Powers of Members Service Standard
3.1.13 Driving RFS Vehicles
2.2.15 Emergency Response Driving

Signed documents will be scanned and filed in TRIM.