



Frontline

Westerville Division of Fire Newsletter

Station 111
400 W. Main Street
Station 112
727 E. Schrock Road
Station 113
355 N. Spring Road
Emergencies
9-1-1
Non-emergencies
(614) 901-6600

Share the Road: See Lights, Move Right

The Fire Division responds to numerous requests for service every day. The simplest and most meaningful way you can help us is to safely maneuver your car to the right and come to a complete stop as soon as you notice an emergency vehicle using lights and sirens. This is not just a help to firefighters and paramedics: it is the law.

The Ohio State Motor Vehicle Code states that upon the approach of a public safety vehicle "the driver of every other vehicle shall yield the right of way, immediately drive to a position parallel to, and as close as possible to, the right edge or curb of the highway clear of any intersection, and stop and remain in such position until the public safety vehicle has passed."

Firefighters are fully aware the sight and sound of a fire engine or medic rapidly approaching may catch some drivers off guard. As a precaution, first responders routinely train on safe driving practices. Emergency vehicle operators will always attempt to pass traffic on the left because other vehicles are expected to move to the right. Occasionally, an emergency

vehicle must drive left of center and travel against traffic. In this case, they are careful to avoid collisions by driving slowly when traveling against traffic and coming to a stop at intersections.

DO pull to the right and come to a complete stop. Remember, when you see/hear one emergency vehicle, a second or third is often approaching, sometimes from a different direction.

DO avoid driving distractions, such as listening to loud music or talking on the phone.

DO NOT slam on the breaks and stop in the middle of the road.

DO NOT make sudden moves or turns to the left.

DO NOT tailgate, follow an emergency vehicle or attempt to race ahead.



In an emergency, seconds can make the ultimate difference. The cooperation of all vehicles is necessary to help emergency vehicles quickly and safely navigate to their destinations.



Chief Ingles

Two-Tiered EMS Service Boosts Efficiency

I am frequently asked why the Westerville Division of Fire sends two emergency medical service (EMS) vehicles to respond to medical emergency calls. The two-tiered system has been in effect since 2007 and relies on advanced life support (ALS) and basic life support (BLS) vehicles to properly scale response efforts to the unique needs of the patient.

Before 2007, we routinely dispatched an ALS vehicle with a fire engine to equip medical response teams with resources needed to assist with patient handling and care. ALS vehicles were staffed by paramedics trained in advanced life-saving practices such as cardiac monitoring and administration of medications, while fire trucks were staffed with emergency medical technicians (EMTs) who could provide assistance when needed.

Through analysis of call data, we discovered ALS vehicles were at times unavailable for other calls because they were either responding to other emergencies or transporting patients. In these situations, we relied on mutual aid EMS from third-party partners. It was determined the use of a smaller BLS vehicle in lieu of a fire engine would have the added benefit of reducing both maintenance and fuel costs. We subsequently purchased a used ambulance and routinely began sending it on emergency medical calls with ALS vehicles. Now, when the two vehicles arrive on the scene, the patient is evaluated and the most appropriate mode of transport is decided. The two-tiered system has reduced the instances in which a fire engine is dispatched in addition to reducing reliance on mutual aid. We are confident this system is an improved model for reliable, cost-effective services to the community.



KEEP AN EYE ON THE SKY

Spring weather is best described as “unpredictable.” The return of warmer temperatures can fuel flooding, thunderstorms and tornadoes. To help prepare for the worst weather Spring has to offer, the Westerville Division of Fire recommends the following:

BEFORE THE STORM:

- Review your homeowner’s insurance policy and become familiar with the terms of coverage. Remember, damage caused by flooding is not typically covered.
- Pick a safe location where family members and pets are to gather during a severe weather event. This should be a basement or an interior room on the lowest floor with no windows. Plan evacuation routes in the event of a flood.
- Inspect your sump pump to verify it is in working condition. Consider installing a battery-operated backup in case of a power failure.
- Clear debris from gutters and downspouts to direct water away from your house.
- Create safety kits with drinking water, canned food, a manual can opener, first aid supplies, blankets, a battery-operated radio and flashlights.
- Have a plan to protect your pets, including food, leashes, collars and identification.

DURING THE STORM:

- When a tornado warning is issued, immediately gather household members and pets, and take shelter in the predetermined safety location.
- If you are in your vehicle without immediate access to shelter, remain in the car with your seatbelt on. Move your head down below the windows and cover your head with your hands and a blanket or coat. If you can safely get to an area that is lower than the level of the roadway, leave your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.

If you have any questions about emergency preparation, please contact us at (614) 901-6600.

Division NEWS



Staff Announcements

Paris Smith-Higbie was sworn in as Chief Fire Marshal at the Westerville City Council meeting on January 21. Paris has been with the Fire Division since 1985. As Chief Fire Marshal, he will lead the Division’s Fire Prevention Bureau.



Firefighter/Medic **Tom Ullom** received the CME Federal Credit Union/Sunny 95 Radio Hometown Heroes Award for his commitment to community service and dedication to the residents of Westerville and Blendon Township.

Battalion Chief **Jim Marra** was awarded the Westerville Sunrise Rotary’s Service Above Self Award last November. Marra received the award for his leadership of the Division’s CPR program.

Emergency Alerts

Residents may now register their contact information and preferences via a new website portal by the Westerville Emergency Communications Division. Commonly known as the “reverse 9-1-1” system, this site is the first opportunity residents have had to self-select and update their contact information.

Visit <https://westerville.onthealert.com> or the City website (westerville.org) to securely register a mobile phone number, activate text messaging capabilities and assign a home address for local/neighborhood preferences to receive emergency alert notifications.

Alerts from this system are based on true emergencies, such as disaster notifications, public safety information and/or alerts pertaining to missing children, hazardous spills and major power outages. Content is provided by voice message or text, depending on the preferences selected during registration. Subscribers’ information will not be utilized or accessed for any other purpose.

People who work in Westerville but do not live in the city or parents who have children in the Westerville City School District may also use the system.

Change Your Clock **Change Your Battery**

Daylight Savings Time begins Sunday, March 9. Make a habit of changing and testing the batteries in smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors when setting clocks ahead for the season.



GET SOCIAL WITH WESTERVILLE

