

GN 6-55 Supplementary Support Vehicles

Guidance to fire departments to ensure the safe use of Supplementary Support Vehicles (motorized snow vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, utility vehicles etc.)

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Background

Fire Departments are being required to respond to emergencies involving long distances and limited access from public highways and private laneways. Many Fire Departments have purchased and are utilizing a variety of Supplementary Support Vehicles (SSV's) to meet the needs of their community. When purchasing any new equipment, the employer is required to ensure the equipment is operated safely and operated within the appropriate legislation whether it be federal, provincial and/or municipal. SSV's also need to be maintained and operated in accordance with the recommendations of the manufacturer. The employer must ensure the operator has received the appropriate training for that particular SSV.

Depending on the particular SSV, there may be specific provincial legislation that guides how and where that SSV may be operated. An example is when the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act (MSVA) was first passed, the MSVA allowed all roads to be open to the public to operate the SSV, unless the Municipality declared all or certain road(s) to be closed within their jurisdiction.

However, when the Off Road Vehicles Act (ORVA) became legislation in 1990, the Act declared all public roads were deemed closed unless opened by the municipality having jurisdiction.

Concerns/hazards

Firefighter injuries and deaths have occurred during the operation of SSV's due to the nature of off-site operations in unknown environments. Many of these tragic incidents involve either the limited skill level of the operator, the inability to understand the limitations of the SSV, and failure to understand how the immediate environment/terrain can adversely affect the safe operation of the SSV. Consideration of the environment has to be a priority in deciding whether the SSV should be deployed in the operation or consider another means of rescue. Examples of the environment/terrain could include, but are not limited to, snow, ice thickness, slope and ground composition and obstructions whether they are natural or person made.

Actions for employers

Employers must:

- Ensure all SSV's are in compliance with all federal, provincial and local legislation. This would include, but not be limited to, the employer ensuring:
 - The operator is permitted to operate the particular SSV
 - The SSV is fully equipped with all legislated Personal Safety Equipment
 - All local legislation has been amended to permit the safe operation of the SSV within the jurisdiction
- Develop a separate Fire Department Standard Operating Guideline and provide instruction and training on the operations for each type of SSV.

Employers should:

- Use a Risk Needs Analysis (Community Risk Assessment) to determine the need and the appropriate SSV(s) for their community.
- Develop a training course (preferably through a recognized driver course) or employ a third party to operate a recognized driver course which each operator must successfully complete. Note: Many manufactures do provide operator courses for their SSV or the Volunteer Firefighter Insurance Service [VFIS] offers training on how to prepare an operator's course.

- Upon completion of the course, the operator is allowed further time to become more familiar with the SSV to better develop their skill level and appreciate the limitations of the SSV.
- Ensure operators have proper training regarding the trailering of the vehicle to and from the scene. This training can be included in the operator's driver training course or could be separate.
- Ensure the legislated or manufacturer's recommended PPE for the SSV is obtained and fits the operator and the operator has been trained to properly use the PPE and is explained any limitations of the PPE. The PPE should also be appropriate of the environment or terrain (i.e.: PFD/Floating suits or Dry suits when operating on ice).
- Develop a maintenance program for the SSV as recommended by the Manufacturer.

Considerations:

- The employer should ensure that any modification/alteration stays within compliance of the manufacturer's specifications or in consultation with the manufacturer.

Applicable regulations and acts

Read:

- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

Section 25 (1) An employer shall ensure that,

- (a) the equipment, materials and protective devices as prescribed are provided;
- (b) the equipment, materials and protective devices provided by the employer are maintained in good condition;
- (c) the measures and procedures prescribed are carried out in the workplace;
- (d) the equipment, materials and protective devices provided by the employer are used as prescribed
- clause 25(2)(h) for taking every precaution reasonable to protect workers
- Duties of workers
- 28 (1) A worker shall,
- (a) work in compliance with the provisions of this Act and the regulations;

- (b) use or wear the equipment, protective devices or clothing that the worker's employer requires to be used or worn;

Applicable standards

- NFPA 1451 – Standard for a Fire and Emergency Service Vehicle Operations and training Program
 - NFPA 1192 – Standard on Recreational Vehicles
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Related

[Highway Traffic Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.8 \(O. Reg 316/03\)](#)

[Motorized Snow Vehicles Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.44](#)

[Off-Road Vehicles Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.4](#)

[GN 6-7: Driving Skills for Emergency Apparatus Response](#)
