



Town of Georgia
First Response Standard
Operating Guidelines

Approved 11 November 2019

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Acronyms

AEMT:	Advanced Emergency Medical Technician
ALS:	Advanced Life Support
BLS:	Basic Life Support
DICO:	Designated Infection Control Officer
EMR:	Emergency Medical Responder
EMS:	Emergency Medical Services
EMT:	Emergency Medical Technician
GFD:	Georgia Fire Department
GFR:	Georgia First Response
LOA:	Leave of Absence
NREMT:	National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians

1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

1.1 Relationships Other Policies

1.1.1 This document serves as Georgia First Response's (also called the "Department" and/or "GFR" within this document) Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) and will govern the day-to-day operations of Georgia First Response. This document has been developed by the Chief and Assistant Chief of Georgia First Response in consultation with the Officers of Georgia First Response, the members/employees (terms used interchangeably throughout this document) of Georgia First Response and has been approved by the Town of Georgia Selectboard. The actions of personnel will be guided by these SOGs, the Town of Georgia's policies (including applicable provisions of the Town of Georgia Personnel Policies and Rules Handbook, hereafter "Town Personnel Policy"), and other written documents specific to GFR. In the event that there is a conflict between the Town's policies and Georgia First Response's SOGs, the Town of Georgia policy shall govern.

1.2 Organization

- 1.2.1 Georgia First Response is a municipally based department that works closely with the Georgia Fire Department and the Georgia Selectboard.
- 1.2.2 There is no limit to the number of active members as long as there is sufficient equipment to outfit all responders with the State of Vermont required first responder equipment, radios, and jump bags.

1.3 Chain of Command

- 1.3.1 Georgia First Response is a hierarchical department of the Town of Georgia that operates in accordance with the principals of chain of command, with ultimate authority and oversight of the Department in the Selectboard, operational authority in the Chief, and other authority in the Officers. Chain of command provides for: delegation of authority, by rank, to members who are accountable for carrying out the policies of the Department and of the Town; channels of communication; assignment of responsibilities; and coordination of efforts. The chain of command will be followed by each member of the Department for both administrative purposes and in the field during a call.

2 PERSONNEL

2.1 Officers

- 2.1.1 Georgia First Response has five (5) officer positions including Chief, Assistant Chief, Training Officer, Secretary, and Equipment Officer. Additionally, there is a designated Infection Control Officer.
- 2.1.2 GFR active members in good standing shall hold officer elections once a year to nominate and vote on officer positions, which results are then presented to the Chief for consideration and for sharing with the Selectboard. The Chief shall make recommendations to the Selectboard for the positions of Assistant Chief, Training Officer, Secretary, and Equipment Officer. The Selectboard shall consider the Chief's and the GFR members' recommendations for officer appointments but it shall retain authority and discretion for selecting, appointing, and removing Officers pursuant to the Town Personnel Policy.

2.2 Chief

- 2.2.1 The Chief of Georgia First Response shall have charge of and responsibility for the overall operation of Georgia First Response and shall assure compliance with all relevant Town rules, policies and guidelines as applicable to the Department, as well as applicable State of Vermont and District 1 codes and statutes. The Chief shall serve as the primary liaison between the Town Administrator, Selectboard, Georgia Fire Department, EMS District 1, and the members of Georgia First Response. The Chief's responsibilities include:
- 2.2.1.1 Planning and implementing policies.
 - 2.2.1.2 Oversight of training of Department employees.
 - 2.2.1.3 Ensuring that Department personnel and equipment are adequate and appropriate.
 - 2.2.1.4 Preparing and managing the annual budget.
 - 2.2.1.5 Overall leadership and management.
 - 2.2.1.6 Act as the primary representative at EMS District 1 Board Meetings.
 - 2.2.1.7 Management and supervision of subordinate officers.
- 2.2.2 The Chief shall have the power to delegate any portion of his or her responsibilities to any other employee, as he or she deems necessary, but the Chief shall retain overall responsibility for Department operations. The Chief shall have the authority to issue any lawful general or specific orders, orally or in writing, to ensure the safe and effective operation of the Department and its personnel. General orders shall usually be reduced to writing, in a manner that is clear, concise, dated, and maintained in a binder at the Fire Department. Failure to comply with a lawful order of the Chief shall provide a basis for discipline under the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy.

2.3 Assistant Chief

- 2.3.1 The Assistant Chief fulfills the Chief's functions in his/her absence or unavailability and acts as a liaison to the Georgia Town Administrator and Selectboard. The Assistant Chief's responsibilities include:
 - 2.3.1.1 Assisting the Chief in conducting the affairs of Georgia First Response.
 - 2.3.1.2 Assisting with the development of the annual budget.
 - 2.3.1.3 Ensures coordination of activities within Georgia First Response.
 - 2.3.1.4 Plans, promotes, and develops goals and objectives for the Department.
 - 2.3.1.5 Facilitates the development of Department personnel.
- 2.3.2 The Assistant Chief shall perform such other duties as are reasonably assigned by the Chief. The Assistant Chief shall not have the authority to delay, overrule or contravene a written order of the Chief to be executed in his or her absence. In the event that the Assistant Chief is unclear regarding a written order of the Chief, he or she shall immediately seek clarification thereof.

2.4 Training Officer

- 2.4.1 The Training Officer directs, plans, organizes, evaluates, and coordinates trainings for Georgia First Response members. The Training Officer is responsible for:
 - 2.4.1.1 Ensuring that every member meets state and national certification requirements.
 - 2.4.1.2 Monitoring and evaluating the competency of all Department members.
 - 2.4.1.3 Ensures members meet the state's EMS credentialing requirements.
 - 2.4.1.4 Implementing and assuring continued compliance with the training requirements as outlined by the NREMT, Vermont, and EMS District 1.
 - 2.4.1.5 Representing Georgia First Response and acting as a liaison with other jurisdictions for training.
 - 2.4.1.6 Developing and implementing a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program.
 - 2.4.1.7 Involvement in investigations and remediation training involving GFR members.
 - 2.4.1.8 Maintaining training records of all individuals within the Department.
 - 2.4.1.9 Recommending specific courses to enable Department employees and others to further their knowledge of EMS.
 - 2.4.1.10 Acts as the alternate for EMS District 1 board meetings.
- 2.4.2 The Training Officer shall perform such other duties as are reasonably assigned by the Chief.

2.5 Secretary

- 2.5.1 The Secretary's primary responsibilities include administrative and secretarial support activities to coordinate, maintain, and assist flow and documentation of information for Georgia First Response. The Secretary is responsible for:
 - 2.5.1.1 Keeping an accurate and detailed record and roll of Department employees.
 - 2.5.1.2 Assisting the Officers on Department correspondence.
 - 2.5.1.3 Keeping the minutes of Department meetings, including attendance at meetings.

2.5.1.4 Keeping accurate records of the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of all employees.

2.5.1.5 Such other duties as are reasonably assigned by the Chief.

2.6 Equipment Officer

2.6.1 The Equipment Officer manages EMS supplies, equipment specifications, and distribution and retrieval of equipment to/from GFR members. He/she acts as a liaison to manufacturers for continued maintenance on equipment and to Georgia Town Offices for supply ordering. He/she is responsible for ensuring Georgia First Response meets the state's required first responder equipment list.

2.7 Designated Infection Control Officer (DICO)

2.7.1 The DICO is appointed by the Chief and is responsible for:

2.7.1.1 Evaluation of possible exposure events.

2.7.1.2 Documentation of the exposure follow-up process.

2.7.1.3 Consultation with medical facilities following an exposure.

2.7.1.4 Monitoring laws, regulations, and guidelines for infection control compliance.

2.7.1.5 Education of Department members regarding infection control practices.

2.7.1.6 Data collection.

2.8 Response Personnel

2.8.1 Response personnel are GFR members that respond to emergencies to provide medical interventions and care. To serve as response personnel, a member must be either an Active Member in Good Standing (see Section 3.4) or a Probationary Member in good standing with NREMT, the state, and the district including maintenance of current and valid certifications. Response personnel consist of GFR members that are available to respond to a call when dispatched; there are no set "duty crews".

3 MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Appointment

3.1.1 Appointment to Georgia First Response shall be open to any person who is at least eighteen (18) years of age and either (1) a resident of the Town of Georgia or (2) an individual employed in the Town of Georgia. All prospective GFR members shall make written application for appointment to the Chief. All appointments to Georgia First Response are subject to approval by the Town of Georgia Selectboard.

3.2 Residency Requirement

3.2.1 Any Department employee who no longer meets the geographic residential/employment requirement of section 3.1 may be exempted from that requirement by approval of the Chief who shall consider the member's new geographic location in determining whether to approve an exemption.

3.3 Probationary Member

- 3.3.1 All new members are placed on a 180-day probationary period as required by the Town's Personnel Policy. In certain cases, the 180-day probationary period may be extended by recommendation of the Chief to the Selectboard. The probationary period shall not be less than 180 days. There are currently no limits on the number of probationary members the Department may have at one time.
- 3.3.2 The Chief may place an employee who has completed his/her initial probationary period on probation if the employee is not in good standing (See Section 3.4). An employee may also be placed on probationary status due to committing a protocol deviation which results in the District Medical Advisor, GFR Training Officer, and/or state deeming that a remediation plan needs to be completed.

3.4 Active Member in Good Standing

- 3.4.1 In order to be an active member in good standing, an employee must meet all of the following conditions:
 - 3.4.1.1 Satisfactory completion of initial hiring probationary period.
 - 3.4.1.2 Meets the minimum GFR business meeting attendance requirements.
 - 3.4.1.3 Responds to a minimum of 10% of calls in a 6-month period.
 - 3.4.1.4 Is current with training necessary to maintain national, state and district certifications.
 - 3.4.1.5 Is in good standing with NREMT, the state, and the district, including maintenance of current and valid certifications and timely completion of mandatory EMS protocol updates.
- 3.4.2 Active members that fail to comply with meeting requirements shall be subject to disciplinary action. An employee returning from an approved leave of absence without pay (LOA) shall have six (6) months from the date of return to satisfy all active member in good standing criteria.

4 PERSONNEL POLICIES

- 4.1.1 All Georgia First Response employees are subject to applicable provisions of the Town of Georgia's Personnel Policy, as amended from time to time as last amended May 22, 2017.

4.1 Leave of Absence Without Pay (LOA)

- 4.1.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.

4.2 Discipline

- 4.2.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.

4.3 Suspension

- 4.3.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.

4.4 Termination

- 4.4.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.

4.5 Appeal of Suspension or Termination

- 4.5.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.

4.6 Separation from the Department

- 4.6.1 Individuals who choose to discontinue service with the Department are responsible for the following:

- 4.6.1.1 Notifying the Chief as soon as possible.
- 4.6.1.2 Advise the Secretary and Town Administrator of change of address and phone number (if applicable).
- 4.6.1.3 Return of key fob and any other administrative items that may have been issued.
- 4.6.1.4 Arrange with Equipment Officer for inspection and return of all gear, uniforms, duty clothes, pager, charger, portable radio, and all other equipment.
- 4.6.1.5 The Department will:
- 4.6.1.6 Remove the individual from the roster, organization chart, e-mail distribution list, and any other personnel-related forms.
- 4.6.1.7 Deactivate their key fob.
- 4.6.1.8 Deactivate Active 911 and/or any other Department subscriptions.
- 4.6.2 A separated member may be allowed to retain his/her car plate and Department ID at the discretion of the Chief for commemorative purposes only. Any active use of such items by a former member shall result in immediate forfeiture of possession requiring prompt return of the items to the Department.

4.7 Uniform Attire

- 4.7.1 Responders are expected to wear appropriate attire when responding to EMS and Fire calls for safety and identification purposes. Employees on the scene of emergencies shall be properly attired in appropriate EMS attire, unless otherwise approved by the Chief. Appropriate attire includes pants, (preferably EMS pants) work boots, a professional shirt (ideally a Department-issued shirt), or a Georgia Fire or First Response job shirt.
- 4.7.2 Employees shall wear high visibility traffic safety vests that meets American National Standards Institute 107-2004 Class 2 or higher standards as the outer most layer of clothing when working on or along a highway or roadway. When working around vehicles or aiding a patient who is entrapped, all rescue personnel shall wear a helmet, eye protection, leather gloves or extrication gloves, appropriate footwear (work boots), and a bunker coat. Employees shall wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) depending on the nature of the call and the clinical presentation of the patient.

5 MEETINGS

5.1 Business Meetings

- 5.1.1 In order to keep up to date with Department and Town information, it is important for members to attend monthly GFR business meetings. Members are required to attend a minimum of three (3) business meetings in a six (6) month period unless they have an excused absence. Excused absences are defined in section 9.3.
- 5.1.2 The Chief or Assistant Chief may call additional meetings each month to accomplish any additional needed maintenance, cleaning or organization of the station, equipment, or to convey critical information (e.g., state or district-mandated training requirements).

5.2 Training Meetings

- 5.2.1 Georgia First Response encourages each member to participate in training opportunities. Training sessions are conducted on a monthly basis at the GFD station and at AmCare.

5.3 Absences

- 5.3.1 If an employee is unable to attend a meeting, a reasonable excuse, such as illness, injury or family or work commitments, shall be given at the earliest convenience to the EMS Chief who shall cause it to be placed into the record of the meeting as an excused absence. An excused absence shall not be included in calculating the percentage of meetings made.

6 HUMAN RESOURCES

6.1 Rules of Conduct

- 6.1.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.
- 6.1.2 While on duty, all employees shall conduct themselves in a reasonable and professional manner.
- 6.1.3 If any employee becomes aware of an alleged breach of discipline, misconduct, or a violation of these Guidelines, he or she shall report the incident to the Chief or an Officer of the Department, subject to compliance with the following provisions.
- 6.1.4 During an active emergency, GFR employees shall immediately bring to the attention of the Chief or Incident Commander concerns or observations related to imminent life-safety matters.
- 6.1.5 However, except for imminent life-safety matters, no employee of the Department shall openly criticize or disparage another employee, the efficiency of the operation, or other departments during an active emergency. Instead, GFR employees are encouraged to initially report concerns regarding other employees, operations, or other departments/agencies to GFR Officers at times and locations where other members and third parties are not present.

6.2 Equal Employment and Anti-Discrimination

- 6.2.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.
- 6.2.2 At no time shall any employee engage in any conduct that is in violation of federal or state anti-discrimination or harassment laws or regulations, including but not limited to laws and regulations concerning sexual harassment.

6.3 Drugs and Alcohol

- 6.3.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.
- 6.3.2 No employee of the Department shall respond to a fire or emergency scene or operate or perform safety-related operations or maintenance on any apparatus while under the influence/impairment of alcohol and/or drugs, including prescription and non-prescription substances.

6.4 Payroll and Stipends

- 6.4.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.

6.5 EMS Certification, Course Reimbursement, and Advancement

- 6.5.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.
- 6.5.2 Certified members of GFR are required to meet a minimum number of continuing education hours to maintain certification. It is the responsibility of employees to complete such minimum continuing education requirements, to ensure that EMS courses attended provide the required National Continuing Education Components (NCCP) and state and local continuing education requirements, and to track and document required hours.

- 6.5.3 Georgia First Response may pay for courses that advance a member's certification level or a course that furthers the member's EMS education through reimbursement following successful completion of the course, subject to the following conditions:
- 6.5.4 Prior approval by the Chief, Training Officer, and the Town Selectboard.
- 6.5.5 Serve twelve (12) months or more on Georgia First Response following completion of the course for which sponsorship is provided.
- 6.5.6 For the twelve (12) months of active duty prior to the beginning of the course, the member must meet all shift, training and call response duties and must have been the subject of no disciplinary action.
- 6.5.7 Within two months of completion of a course, the Member must provide a receipt or other documentation evidencing payment and written evidence of satisfactory completion.
- 6.5.8 Courses may include EMT and AEMT courses, as well as specialized training courses (e.g., NAEMT courses). In determining whether to support payment for a member's EMS education, the factors the Chief shall consider will include but not be limited to:
 - 6.5.8.1 The member's longevity with GFR.
 - 6.5.8.2 The member's attendance record and demonstrated commitment level.
 - 6.5.8.3 The member's skills and knowledge at his/her current level of training.
- 6.5.9 Georgia First Response will usually pay for and sponsor a member for an EMT or AEMT course only once, even if the member does not successfully complete the course or obtain Vermont licensure. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis in the discretion of the Chief and the Selectboard.
- 6.5.10 EMS providers shall have at least 6 months of experience with a 911 EMS provider service, at their respective levels, prior to being considered for advancement onto the next provider level, up to the AEMT level.

6.6 NREMT Reimbursement

- 6.6.1 The Department will reimburse bi-annual fees associated with maintaining NREMT certification for the provider levels of Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), and Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT) for members who (1) are certified providers in good standing with GFR and (2) are not on LOA longer than six (6) months at the time reimbursement is requested.

6.7 Injury

- 6.7.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Injury Reporting, Medical Treatment & Incident Review Policy, dated 10.28.19.

6.8 Computer Usage

- 6.8.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.

6.9 Tobacco Use and Smoking

- 6.9.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.

6.10 Station Use

- 6.10.1 Refer to the Town of Georgia Personnel Policy – May 2017.

7 OPERATIONS

7.1 State Protocols

- 7.1.1 Georgia First Response falls under the jurisdiction of the State of Vermont and must adhere to the most current state EMS protocols. Members are expected to complete and remain up to date with necessary state-specific training requirements for protocol updates to be in good standing with the Department.

7.2 District Protocols

- 7.2.1 Georgia First Response falls under the jurisdiction and medical direction of Vermont EMS District 1. In the event that District 1 protocols are more restrictive than the state protocols, employees must adhere to the most restrictive of the two protocols. All medications and procedures will be used in accordance to District 1 protocols.

7.3 MCI Plan

- 7.3.1 Georgia First Response members will abide with the most current Vermont EMS District 1 MCI protocol.

7.4 Documentation

7.4.1 Run Form

- 7.4.1.1 Georgia First Response employees shall make a complete and accurate report of call information on an Electronic Patient Care Report (“ePCR”) for every call, regardless of the final disposition of the call. Such reporting shall be completed according to current GFR, District, and state rules and shall be completed as soon as possible after an incident. GFR employees shall complete ePCRs in the state-provided system, SIREN.

7.4.2 Exposure

- 7.4.2.1 Employees exposed to a potentially infectious substance shall notify the Designated Infection Control Officer (DICO) and must complete the Exposure Report Form. The DICO will provide any further instruction to such an employee and will also document the incident.

8 RESPONSE

8.1 Lights and Sirens

- 8.1.1 Response to an emergency call does not exempt anyone from safe driving standards. Therefore, caution and obedience of all traffic laws must be adhered to during any response.
- 8.1.2 Emergency warning devices (lights and sirens) on a personal vehicle may be utilized by members responding to Code 3 calls. The use of hazard or four-way flashers and/or vehicle horns is not a substitute for emergency warning devices, and their use in lieu thereof is prohibited. Staff members whose vehicles are not equipped with emergency warning devices shall proceed Code 2 with the normal flow of traffic.
- 8.1.3 Any staff member responding to the scene using lights and sirens on his/her personal vehicle must have an Individual Light Permit (aka a “Red Light Permit”) authorized by the Chief. The permit must be issued and stored in the vehicle being used, prior to the use of any lights or sirens. A permit is only good for responding to calls for the Department that has authorized the permit.

All copies of red-light permits will be kept on file.

8.2 Motor Vehicle Accidents

- 8.2.1 Members shall consider additional resources in route to the call and confirm that the Fire Department is also responding. Members shall wear appropriate attire when responding to MVAs, as described in Section 4.7 – Uniforms. If there is any doubt as to the stability of the scene, EMTs are not to enter in or near the vehicle until the Incident Commander has declared the scene safe.
- 8.2.2 If the motor vehicle accident is on the interstate and injuries are reported, Georgia First Response members may respond directly to the scene using their own discretion.
- 8.2.3 When on the Interstate, responders shall drive in left lane when possible. If road conditions are better in the right lane, it is at the driver's discretion to stay in the right lane.
- 8.2.4 When using the U-turns to change direction, responders shall be in the left lane and use extreme caution when approaching and turning into them.

8.3 Response by Non-Members

- 8.3.1 Georgia Fire Department personnel may be utilized for medical calls in such situations where additional personnel may be needed (i.e., cardiac arrests; lift assists).
- 8.3.2 In rare circumstances (i.e., manual stabilization), bystanders may be used to assist Georgia First Response members if there is no one else available; however, bystanders must be replaced as EMTs, fire personnel, or law enforcement arrive. All bystanders are to be provided body substance isolation equipment (BSI) prior to assisting.

8.4 Fire Calls

- 8.4.1 Georgia First Response members will respond to incidents when requested to respond by the Fire Department or Central Dispatch. When approaching a fire scene, responders shall radio Fire Command on their channel to request where to stage.

8.5 Staging

- 8.5.1 Employees shall not go directly on scene of any call where weapons are involved or where a crime has occurred unless notified by dispatch that police are on scene and have secured it for entry of response personnel.

8.6 Threats to Safety

- 8.6.1 If employees arrive at any scene and find any threat to their safety, they should leave the scene as soon as possible. The dispatcher should be notified, and personnel should not return until police have arrived and the scene secured.

8.7 Crime Scenes

- 8.7.1 Employees often respond to crime scenes prior to an investigation, or where an investigation is on-going. Care should be taken to preserve the integrity of the scene and not needlessly disturb evidence. Care of injured persons, however, is the employee's primary responsibility.

8.8 Reporting Abuse

- 8.8.1 All EMS personnel are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. If an EMT even suspects child abuse, he/she must report it to the receiving hospital personnel and also directly to the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF), within 24 hours. The hotline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The phone number is 1-800-649-5285.
- 8.8.2 The hotline for Elder Abuse is 1-800-564-1612. Elder abuse should be reported within 48 hours to adult protective services.

9 EQUIPMENT

- 9.1.1 All GFR employees are responsible for maintaining their issued equipment in such a manner that it is clean, neat, organized and available for immediate use when required. Any gear damaged or soiled at an incident or training must be appropriately repaired (or turned in for repair) and/or cleaned immediately following the event. Employees are responsible for timely reporting of defects in their gear to the Equipment Officer so that it may be repaired or replaced.
- 9.1.2 At no time shall any employee alter any Department gear without written permission from the Chief.
- 9.1.3 All gear must be turned in upon resignation, suspension, termination, or extended leaves of absence. The Equipment Officer receiving such equipment shall sign for the equipment that was received. Employees will be held personally liable for any gear that is damaged or missing.
- 9.1.4 Use of personal equipment in connection with GFR activities requires prior approval of the Chief or his/her designee and may be revoked at any time. Any equipment provided by the individual member in lieu of standard issued equipment by the Department shall meet or exceed current standards for that equipment. Any use of personal equipment is at the risk of said owner, including the repair and replacement of damaged personal equipment used during Department events. Individually owned equipment must be maintained and presented the same as Department owned equipment.