

Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue

Policies and Operating Guidelines

Policy:	EMERGENCY ACCESS POLICY	
Number	Effective Date	Approved and Issued:
4001	8/28/02	8/28/02

1.0 REFERENCE

23 CFR Part 650 Subpart C – *Code of Federal Regulations - Bridge, Structures, and Hydraulics - National Bridge Inspection Standards*
AASHTO *Manual for Condition Evaluation and Load and Resistance Factor Rating (LRFR) of Highway Bridges*
NCHRP Report 350 – *Recommended Procedures for the Safety Performance Evaluation of Highway Features*
Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways
AASHTO *Guidelines for Geometric Design of Very Low-Volume Local Roads (ADT ≤ 400)*
International Code Council *International Fire Code*
Cowlitz County Ordinance #99-207
RCW 52.12.031 Subsection 6) *Revised Code of Washington*

2.0 POLICY

2.1 Personnel and equipment of Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue, hereinafter referred to as the District, in response to calls for service, are in many instances required to gain access to the scene of the emergency by traversing privately owned access routes. Frequently, the access routes include privately constructed roadways, driveways and bridges that have not been constructed or maintained in accordance with state or county standards, nor designed by a licensed engineer. While the Board of Commissioners of the District recognizes the District's responsibility to provide emergency services throughout the District, it also recognizes its responsibility to use reasonable means to protect District personnel and equipment from unreasonable risks that could result in injury to persons or damage to property. In order to provide reasonable protection to District personnel and equipment responding in all parts of the District, it is the policy of the District to impose the following requirements and conditions:

2.1.1 In order to receive unimpaired response from the District, property owners shall ensure that access roads and privately owned bridges used for vehicular access to private property meet the following:

2.1.1.1 Access roads shall be either asphalt, concrete, or gravel.

2.1.1.2 Bridges shall be inspected according to the standards set forth in 23 CFR Part 650 Subpart C. The team leader shall meet the requirements set forth in this standard and the inspection and inspection procedures shall meet the requirements of the standard. All bridges shall be inspected every 60 months and all reports from the inspections shall be transmitted to the District within 2 months of the inspection.

- 2.1.1.3 Bridges shall be load rated in accordance with the requirements of the *AASHTO Manual for Condition Evaluation and Load and Resistance Factor Rating (LRFR) of Highway Bridges* and shall be able to carry legal loads. It is not permissible to increase a bridge's load carrying capacity by eliminating impact factors and/or specifying decreased speeds on the bridge. Section 8 and Appendix D.6.1 of the Manual are not adopted and shall not be used to load rate bridges. The person performing the load rating shall meet the requirements of 23 CFR 650 Subpart C. The bridge load rating shall reflect the current condition of the bridge and shall be updated as the condition of the bridge changes.
- 2.1.1.4 Bridge decks shall have either an asphalt or concrete wearing surface where subject to vehicle traffic. Steel and timber bridge decks coated with a durable, skid resistant coating on the wearing surface may be acceptable, subject to District approval on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.1.1.5 Bridges shall have barriers meeting the requirements of NCHRP 350 Test Level 1.
- 2.1.1.6 The minimum vertical clearance above roadways and bridges shall be 13 feet 6 inches.
- 2.1.1.7 Access roads and bridges shall have a minimum width of 14 feet between barriers or obstructions. Bridges less than 20 feet in length that are straight and have at least 40 feet of straight approach on each end of the bridge may have a minimum width of 10 feet between barriers. Bridges less than 20 feet in width shall have a turnout area, as specified in this section, within sight distance of the bridge. Access roads less than 20 feet in width and longer than 500 feet in length shall have vehicle turnout areas every 500 feet, that are a minimum of 20 feet in width and 60 feet in length. Access roads longer than 150 feet shall have a dedicated turnaround area at the end that meets the specifications listed in Appendix D of the International Fire Code.
- 2.1.1.8 Access roads and bridges shall have a centerline horizontal curvature radius verses road width not less than specified in table 2.1.1.8 and a maximum superelevation of 6 percent; vertical profiles shall be designed for a minimum stopping sight distance of 115 feet. Access roads and bridges shall have a maximum grade of 12 percent for gravel surfaces and 15 percent for paved surfaces. Unless otherwise approved by the District, access roads shall be designed to meet the requirements of *AASHTO Guidelines for Geometric Design of Very Low-Volume Local Roads (ADT ≤ 400)* for Rural Minor Access Roads.

Table 2.1.1.8

Table of Minimum Roadway and Bridge Width for Various Roadway Curvatures

Center Line Radius of Road	Radius greater than or equal to 40 feet	Radius greater than or equal to 50 feet	Radius greater than or equal to 70 feet
Minimum Width	16 feet or Greater	15 feet	14 feet

2.1.1.9 Gates securing access roads shall comply with all of the following:

- 1 The minimum clear gate width shall be 14 feet but in no case shall it reduce existing road width.
- 2 Gates that are less than 20 feet in width shall have a turnout area as specified in section 2.1.1.7 within sight distance of the gate.
- 3 Gates shall be of the swinging or sliding type.
- 4 Gates shall be designed to allow manual operation by one person.
- 5 Gate components shall be maintained in an operative condition at all times and replaced or repaired when defective.
- 6 Electric gates shall be equipped with a means of opening the gate by fire district personnel for emergency access. Emergency opening devices shall be approved by the District.
- 7 Manual opening gates shall not be locked with a padlock or chain and padlock unless they are capable of being opened by means of manually operated forcible entry tools or equipped with a key lock box.
- 8 Locking device specifications shall be submitted for approval by the District.

2.1.1.10 Engineering reports are required for all new or existing private bridges. Furthermore, the District may require an engineering report for any new or existing private access road that it believes does not meet the criteria for unimpaired response established by this policy. Engineering reports shall be prepared by a licensed engineer registered to practice in the State of Washington, and approved by the District as qualified to prepare the necessary report. The report shall address the adequacy of the access road and/or bridge as it pertains to this policy. If the property owner fails to submit the required reports, all property owners utilizing the access road and/or bridge shall jointly be responsible for ensuring that the required reports are submitted to the District in order to receive unimpaired response from the District.

2.1.1.11 To receive unimpaired emergency services, access roads and bridges shall be available for inspection by the District or its agents without special permission from the property owner(s). (Reference RCW 52.12.031 Subsection 6)

- 2.1.2 In the event access roads and bridges do not meet the above criteria, access shall be considered impaired and subject to reduced or impaired response from the District as follows:
- 2.1.2.1 When an access road or bridge does not meet the width, grade, curvature, surfacing, turnout, or turnaround requirements of this policy, it shall be the District's discretion whether or not its personnel and equipment will use the road and/or bridge. This decision will generally be made by the District in advance of any response; however, if such a decision has not been made at the time of a response, it shall be the Duty Chief's or Company Officer's discretion to determine what apparatus and equipment, if any, will use the road or bridge.
 - 2.1.2.2 When a private bridge has not been inspected or load rated, District vehicles shall not use the bridge without the approval of the Duty Chief.
 - 2.1.2.3 All bridges load rated to a capacity less than the legal limit shall have the maximum weight limits of the bridge conspicuously posted adjacent to the bridge using Sign Type R12-5 as defined in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways*. District vehicles exceeding the posted load limits shall not be permitted to cross such bridges.
- 2.1.3 In the event the District discovers an access road or bridge that has become unsafe or unusable, District vehicles shall not be permitted to travel on such access road or bridge.
- 2.1.4 In the event that District personnel become aware of any unsafe or unposted access roads or bridges, the District shall make a reasonable effort to notify the reputed owners and residents of all improved properties served by such access road or bridge, in writing of such fact as soon as is reasonably possible. A copy of the notification will be forwarded to Cowlitz County Building and Planning.
- 2.1.5 Regardless of prior inspections and determinations, weather conditions or other ambient factors may result in an access road or bridge being determined to be unsafe for District access at the time of a District response.
- 2.1.6 Any new access road intended to serve 3 or more parcels or dwelling units or any commercial business shall meet the requirements of Cowlitz County Ordinance #99-207.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

See SOG 2001.

Bridge: Any structure creating an opening in the roadway prism that allows another feature to cross below the road (excluding pipe culverts 6 feet or less in diameter with at least 2 feet of cover) that is used for emergency vehicle access.

Access Road: Any privately-owned road or driveway serving one or more properties that provides emergency vehicle access to a facility, building or portion thereof.

Barrier: A structure or assembly that is designed to keep a vehicle on the driving surface of a bridge or other elevated driving surface.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

NA

5.0 GUIDELINES

NA

6.0 ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

NA

7.0 APPENDIX

Letter to Residents

Letter to Cowlitz County Building & Planning Department