



**Y**ear after year, a leading cause of on-duty firefighter deaths is vehicle crashes. This should be among the most preventable types of death for all emergency responders.

What can be done?

### Selection and Training

Establish and implement a selection process that will determine the most qualified personnel to drive emergency vehicles, as well as those who are allowed to respond in their own vehicles.

Ensure that adequate training is provided to all personnel who drive emergency vehicles. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1002, *Standard for Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications* specifies the job performance requirements for firefighters who drive and operate fire apparatus. In addition, NFPA 1451, *Standard for a Fire and Emergency Services Vehicle Operations Training Program* establishes minimum requirements in this area.

For personal vehicles, an emergency vehicle operators course detailing relevant safety procedures and your state law/motor vehicle code related to personal vehicle response should be provided.

### Seat Belts

There is absolutely no reason why anyone driving or riding as a passenger in any fire department vehicle or responding in a personal vehicle should not be wearing a seat belt.

### Slow Down

Slower means safer in any fire department vehicle or while responding in a personal vehicle. A good safety guideline is to not exceed the posted speed limit. Drive even slower when road conditions or visibility is poor, such as in the snow and other hazardous weather.

### Stop

Always stop at intersections with a negative right of way. Proceed through these intersections and railroad crossings only after coming to a complete stop and when you are sure that other vehicles have stopped and given you the right of way.

Never assume that another vehicle is aware of your presence. Vehicles have noise insulation, powerful radios and air conditioning, which lessen the effectiveness of horns and sirens. Dark, tinted windows may also impact the ability of drivers to see emergency lights.

For more information on best practices and recommendations to prevent vehicle crashes, visit the U.S. Fire Administration's website at [http://www.usfa.fema.gov/operations/ops\\_vehicle.html](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/operations/ops_vehicle.html).



Firefighter wearing a seat belt. (Photo by Ron Moore, courtesy of Prosper (Texas) Fire Rescue)