# Did YOU know?

# The Big Squeeze

**Many minor collisions result from apparatus simply not fitting through the chosen route.**

What is the real objective? Do I really need to get my unit through the tight spot or will we be okay stopping and walking? Can we find another route? Is this a true emergency or can we spend some time taking another route?

Do I know the trouble spots in my response district? Do I know alternative streets that will get me through the area? Do the trouble spots change based upon the time of day or day of the week? Is there anything I can do to fix a trouble spot, i.e. reporting illegal parking, contacting MDOT about signs or trees overhanging the road, or contacting zoning about construction zones that make streets impassable.

Safely navigating tight areas should involve crew resource management. Is everyone on the rig working together to clear the obstacle? Consider stopping to place spotters on foot to guide the apparatus through obstacles. Apparatus operators must be patient enough to let the spotters do their job and proceed slowly enough to react to spotter signals. Worst case—the driver gets out and looks for themselves. Spotters need to be constantly vigilant for other traffic and never place themselves between the moving apparatus and a fixed object.

Bad weather and darkness are sometimes contributing factors to collisions with fixed objects. Use your scene lighting to temporarily illuminate the area, but be cautious about traveling with scene lights blinding other motorists. Keeping your windows defogged and using the mirror heaters can help improve visibility when rain, fog, or snow are factors. Clean windows defog more quickly.

A key to dealing with tight spots is improving your "look ahead" distance. The sooner you can identify an upcoming obstacle the better you can decide how to manage it. Some ways to manage tight areas:

**Put spotters out around the vehicle to guide the driver**.

**Crowd or change lanes until you move past an obstacle**. This requires the driver to know what is going on around the vehicle and have complete situational awareness. Do not run other vehicles out of their lane, but sometimes you just have to use two lanes to get through or make a turn.

**Drive at speeds appropriate for the obstacles**. The driver must have enough time to identify obstacles, decide options, and execute their maneuver. Sometimes you just have to slow down!

**The best visibility for the driver is always down the driver's side of the apparatus**. If the situation is going to make for a tight fit on both sides of the unit, keep the driver's side of the apparatus as close as reasonable to the fixed objects to ensure the maximum clearance on the passenger side. While maintaining vigilance to the direction of travel use the mirrors to watch clearances as fixed objects are passed.