

USE YOUR CITY OR FIRE DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

<DATE>

Give Emergency Vehicles the Right of Way

By: _____, position/rank

Each day, fire fighters, police officers, paramedics and other emergency personnel respond to calls for help. Emergency personnel are required by state law to complete annual training on the proper way to respond to calls using lights and siren, and you, as a citizen, can help make the emergency response of fire apparatus, ambulances and police vehicles safer, but first, a short quiz.

You are driving in your car and you hear a siren. Checking the rear view mirror, you see a fire engine, ambulance, police car or other emergency vehicle approaching. Quick, what do you do?

- a.) Immediately slam on the brakes and stop
- b.) Slow down and keep watching as the emergency vehicle gets closer and closer
- c.) Slow down and then finally stop without changing lanes
- d.) Weave from one lane to the other as you try to decide what to do
- e.) Speed up and try to outrun the emergency vehicle
- f.) Slow down and let the emergency vehicle pass, then speed up and follow it
- g.) Pull to the right and stop

If you picked the last answer, pull to the right and stop, you are correct. Unfortunately, most drivers pick one of the other choices.

The Tennessee Driver's Handbook states:

Tennessee law requires that upon the immediate approach of an emergency vehicle all traffic meeting or being overtaken must YIELD the right-of-way and shall immediately drive to a position parallel to, and as close as possible to the right hand edge or curb of the roadway clear of any intersection and stop. Remain in that stopped position until the emergency vehicle has passed or you have been directed to move by a police officer. Proceed with caution. There may be other emergency vehicles coming.

Roads in and around <NAME OF COMMUNITY> are more crowded than ever before, and many drivers are not reacting safely when an emergency vehicle approaches. From the cab of the fire engine, our fire fighters have witnessed drivers stopping when a fire truck or ambulance approaches rather than pulling over to the right side of the road. Other drivers

weave back and forth indecisively, or follow the fire engine through an intersection to beat the traffic light.

All of these are unsafe practices that endanger the driver committing the improper act, any passengers in their car, other drivers in the area, and emergency personnel on the responding vehicles.

Another mistake drivers make is not looking out for a second emergency vehicle. After the first one goes by, they pull back onto the road and block additional emergency vehicles.

It is important to remember the reason an emergency vehicle is using its lights and siren is because someone has an emergency and has placed a call for help. The call could be for a person having a heart attack, a fire in a home or business, or a police emergency.

Tennessee has had a "move over" law as part of the "Failure to Yield to Emergency Vehicles Law." Tennessee Code Annotated 55-8-132 requires motorists to move over into the adjacent lane of traffic, when safe to do so, or to slow down for emergency vehicles if it is not safe to move over. The law includes fire apparatus, police vehicles, recovery vehicles, highway maintenance vehicles, or utility service vehicles for which motorists are required to either slow down or move over.

The law's intent is to establish a safety zone to protect police, firefighters, other emergency personnel, and utility workers.

The penalty for violating the "Move Over Law" in Tennessee is a maximum fine of up to \$500 and possibly up to 30 days in jail.

Emergency personnel are trained to respond quickly and safely using the vehicle's emergency warnings lights and siren, but they need your help. So the next time you are driving and see an emergency vehicle approaching, give us a brake! Help us get there faster by pulling over to the right and bringing your vehicle to a complete stop. If we are stopped on the side of the road, move over and help make our job safer.

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