



Emergency Vehicles

JAN 2021

LENGTH 2–5 minutes

TO PREPARE Read the background information.

BACKGROUND

- Emergency personnel risk their lives every day to help people in a time of need.
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), discussing the proper protocol of driving when an emergency vehicle is approaching improves responder safety, keeps traffic flowing as smoothly as possible, and prevents the occurrence of a crash.

DISCUSSION

- Emergency personnel risk their lives every day to help people in a time of need.
- Think about the last time you were in the situation where emergency vehicles were approaching or involved in responding to an emergency. While you were in your vehicle at an intersection, the light turns green and you hear sirens. You look in your rear-view mirror and see flashing lights and an ambulance approaching.



What should you do when you see emergency vehicles approaching?

- Check your mirrors, slow down and avoid slamming on your brakes.
- Yield the right of way.
- If you are already in the middle of the intersection, stay where you are unless you can pull to the right.



What should you do if the emergency vehicles are approaching from the OPPOSITE direction, or on your left or your right?

- Remain where you are until the emergency vehicle passes safely. You have no idea if they are proceeding down the road or are planning on turning into a driveway or intersection right in front of you.



Do you know what the Move Over/Slow Down Law requires?

- Drivers must move over a lane or reduce their speed to 20 mph below the posted limit when they see flashing blue or amber lights on a DOT vehicle, emergency vehicle, or tow truck stopped on the roadside or shoulder.
- Fines for failure to do so can be pretty high—so pay attention!



Some volunteer service vehicles (that are privately owned) respond to emergencies, displaying a green or blue light. How should you respond to these vehicles?

- If you can do so safely, you should yield as a courtesy and give them room to do their job.
- **A flashing blue light** indicates a volunteer fire fighter responding to an emergency call.
- **A flashing green light** indicates a volunteer ambulance service member responding to an emergency call.
- **A flashing amber light** indicates a hazard vehicle engaged in a hazardous operation, such as a tow-truck or a utility company vehicle.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

- What happens to ambulance chasers? Meaning, people who decide to follow emergency vehicles through traffic?
 - Drivers who follow emergency vehicles through traffic can be fined or worse.
- Stay at least 500 feet behind any moving emergency vehicle that has its lights on or is sounding a siren.

SUMMARY

- Follow your state laws. You are required to yield to emergency vehicles that are operating their emergency lights and sirens.
- Stay alert, make no sudden moves, and figure out what you will do next.
- Remember, you should never stop somewhere if there isn't enough room for you to do so safely, and you should never follow an emergency vehicle or try to pass one if they have their lights and sirens activated.