

Lights and Sirens



We all share the responsibility of knowing and practicing proper driving behaviors. One of the most important "rules of the road" deals with yielding the right of way to emergency vehicles.

Each day, emergency vehicles respond to urgent requests from the public. The call may be for a person that has stopped breathing, a fire alarm, or a car accident. It is the concern of all Emergency Services that response time for services be minimized. Precious minutes lost while enroute to an emergency, could be the difference between life and death.

With the advent of new sound-proof cars, high-decibel stereo systems, cell phones, and unfortunately, drivers who simply don't care about anyone but themselves, the idea of getting to an emergency scene fast is very difficult. Many times we are often faced with drivers who can't see or hear us. This creates an incredibly frustrating situation for the emergency vehicle driver, as they weave their way through traffic.

All drivers must know their responsibilities when approached by an emergency vehicle with its red lights flashing or siren sounding.

What Drivers Should Do:

- Remain calm.
- Don't panic!
- Pull to the right and come to a stop.
- When on a high-speed road or when there is no room to stop, slow down as much as possible.
- When in the left lane, pull over into the right lane as the traffic in the lane to your right moves over.
- If you cannot move to the right because of an obstacle such as a car to your right, simply stop.
- Your prompt action will let the driver of the emergency vehicle know what you are doing; it will allow the driver to anticipate where to drive.
- When an emergency vehicle approaches you from behind while you are stationary at an intersection stop sign or red light, do not move unless you can pull to the right.

What Drivers Should NOT Do:

- Don't stop in the middle lane when there is room to pull to the right.
- Don't pull to the left in the center lane or left turn lane.
- Don't drive through a red light or stop sign when an emergency vehicle approaches from behind.
- Don't turn quickly to the left into a driveway or street.
- Don't race ahead to get through a green light or turn before the emergency vehicle gets there.
- Don't disregard the presence of the emergency vehicle by continuing to drive.

Heavy Rush Hour Traffic

In heavy traffic, motorists in the right hand lane must pull as close to the curb as possible with motorists in the left hand lane pulling as close as possible to them. The law states that traffic in both directions must pull to the right and stop. When they do, there is room for the emergency vehicle to pass safely.

Turning Left In Front Of Emergency Vehicles

Motorists are obligated by law to check what is happening behind them before making a left turn. Left turns must always be aborted if an emergency vehicle is approaching from behind. The motorist should usually proceed straight through the intersection, then pull to the right and stop. The motorist must abort the left turn, by pulling to the right and stopping, being sure, of course, not to block the intersection.

Blocking An Intersection

When motorists see an emergency vehicle approaching, they pull to the right and stop before they get to the intersection. They do not turn or go until they are sure all emergency vehicles have passed. Traffic in both directions must yield to an emergency vehicle. This is critical at intersections. Motorists should pull to the right and stop before they get to the intersection--and must always yield to an oncoming emergency vehicle making a left turn.

Emergency Vehicles Leaving Their Stations

The law requires you to pull to the right and yield to an emergency vehicle, even before it gets on the road. Be alert. When you see that a fire truck or ambulance is coming out of its station, pull to the right and stop.

Pedestrians

Pedestrians are also required to get out of the way for an emergency vehicle. If, as a pedestrian, you are already on the road, get off the road as soon as possible. If you are about to cross and you see or hear an emergency vehicle approaching, don't go on the road--stay on the sidewalk until the emergency vehicle has passed.(625 ILCS 5/) Illinois Vehicle Code.