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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Pull to the right when you see an emergency vehicle

Sycamore, IL. March 1, 2017 – Illinois law requires motorists to pull to the right and slow down to a stop, if possible, until emergency vehicles have passed. This is applicable for emergency vehicles approaching from behind and coming toward you.

One of the largest challenges for emergency responders is traveling down the roadway. Road conditions, traffic flow and pedestrians are the hazards that exist when emergency personnel are trying to reach a destination. The biggest danger for first responders is when drivers are unaware of approaching emergency vehicles and they panic. This only creates a stressful situation for the responders and delays an adequate response to those requesting service.

Drivers who stop in the middle of an intersection or in the left lane only complicate the circumstances when other vehicles have done their best to pull to the right. This leaves a dangerous situation for the responders who have to drive through a narrow opening or approach oncoming traffic. Emergency responders are aware of the “surprise” effect that takes place when drivers notice an emergency vehicle approach and continue to drive with extreme caution.

Always be aware of your surroundings when driving. Train yourself to instinctively pull to the right at the sound/sight of emergency vehicles. Here are a few tips to help you remember some do’s and don’ts when you see an emergency vehicle.

Do’s:

- Remain calm
- Don’t panic
- Pull to the right and come to a complete stop, if possible.
- 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 traffic 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; this will allow the driver to anticipate where to maneuver.
- 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.
- On a 4-lane highway or street without barriers, both sides should pull to the right. The emergency vehicle may have to turn into oncoming traffic.

Don'ts:

- Don't stop in the middle of the lane when there is room to pull to the right.
- NEVER MOVE TO THE LEFT! Emergency vehicle drivers are professionally trained and use this lane as their "escape".
- 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, roadway or restaurant.
- 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

Remember, emergency vehicles make frequent, unpredicted stops. Don't follow closely behind an emergency vehicle when it passes. When approaching an emergency scene such as a traffic accident, given the responders some room to work safely. Practice "Scotts Law" which states you must yield and change lanes when approaching an emergency scene. Illinois law prohibits photography and the use of cellular devices within 500 feet of an emergency scene, except certain circumstances. If firehose is blocking the roadway, it is strictly prohibited to drive over the hose line.

The state of Illinois is continuing to protect emergency responders by enforcing penalties for drivers to do not follow the rules of the road. Possible penalties include:

- Fines up to \$10,000
- 90-day to 2-year driver's license suspension

For more information on roadway safety, please contact the Sycamore Fire Department at (815) 895-4514, or visit us on Facebook at City of Sycamore Fire Department for occasional postings.