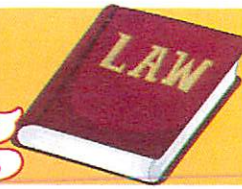




Around Our Town... Legally Speaking



Don't Wreck a Life: Move Over or Slow Down to Pass Parked Emergency Vehicles



When an authorized emergency vehicle making use of any visual signals... **is parked**, the driver of every other vehicle, as soon as it is safe:

(i) When driving on an interstate highway or other highway **with two (2) or more lanes** traveling in the direction of the emergency vehicle, **shall merge into the lane farthest from the emergency vehicle...** (Emphasis added.)

Everyone who drives a car knows that when an emergency vehicle is approaching

with its sirens and/or lights on, one must pull over and stop as close as possible to the right-hand edge of the road until the emergency vehicle passes. (Wyoming Statute § 31-5-224.) However, some Wyoming drivers may not realize there are two additional and equally important sections to that law. The second section reads as follows:

This means that drivers on a four-lane divided interstate, or on a highway that has a passing lane (making it 3 lanes for a short distance), should pull over into the lane farthest from the parked emergency vehicle, whether that is left or right. Note: *drivers should NOT pull over into the lane of oncoming traffic, or onto the shoulder.* Drivers should only merge into the lane farthest from the emergency vehicle if there is more than one lane going in the same direction.

Here's the third part of the statute:

(ii) When driving on a two (2) lane road, [the driver] shall slow to a speed that is twenty (20) miles per hour less than the posted speed limit...

Again, drivers on a two-lane highway or road should NOT leave their lane of travel.

However, drivers should slow down to 20 miles per hour less than the posted speed limit to pass the emergency vehicle. (If you can slow down even more – *safely* – that might be even better.)

The reason for these rules of the road? Wyoming emergency personnel (police, troopers, fire fighters, EMTs, and tow truck drivers, to name a few) are at severe risk of injury when they are parked on or along the road, highway or interstate. Whether the emergency worker is inside or outside the vehicle, s/he is defenseless.

Earlier this year, a highway trooper was injured near Midwest when a driver ran into the back of his parked patrol car. The trooper was sitting inside the car, which was parked in the left lane of traffic (the passing lane of the highway). The trooper had his flashing lights on, and even had cones out behind his car directing traffic to merge into the right-hand lane of travel. However, the liable party was driving in the left/passing lane, and rammed into the trooper's parked vehicle at about 65 MPH. Fortunately, neither party was badly injured.

Failure to comply with the law can result

in a \$220 citation, and don't mistakenly think you are anonymous because you are just passing by the scene. These days, most police vehicles are equipped with hi-def video cameras that can capture your license plate number if you pass too closely or too quickly. Officers may be able to track down and ticket careless drivers.

When driving, be sure to look ahead to recognize potential hazards on the road – including parked emergency vehicles. **DON'T WRECK A LIFE.**

Nothing in this article should be construed as legal advice. You must consult with an attorney for the application of the law to your specific circumstances.

The Wyoming State Bar does not certify any lawyer as a specialist or expert. Anyone considering a lawyer should independently investigate the lawyer's credentials and ability, and not rely upon advertisements or self-proclaimed expertise.

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