

# What to Do When Lights and Sirens Approach

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.

## First let's look at what we SHOULD do.

- 👍 Remain calm and move your vehicle appropriately, as noted below. Don't panic!
- 👍 You can't go wrong by pulling to the right and coming to a stop. That's the general rule in all cases. When you are in the right lane, pull onto the right shoulder if there is room and stop or at least slow way down if you are on an open high-speed road.
- 👍 When you are in the left lane and traffic in the right lane is moving onto the shoulder, move right into their lane.
- 👍 If you cannot go right because of an obstacle, such as a car in the right lane when you're in the left lane, the next best thing is to stop. The driver of an emergency vehicle can then anticipate where to move his vehicle. If you are continuing to travel, someone else might not see the response vehicle or respond inappropriately. If you are moving, you are at risk of collision.
- 👍 When you are at an intersection with a stop sign or red light and a response vehicle is coming up behind you, stay where you are if you cannot pull to the right.
- 👍 If you are on a one-way street, pulling to the right is still best, but sometimes, due to traffic, you may pull to the left curb and yield the middle lane(s). This is one appropriate exception to the "pull right" rule.



## Here are things that happen every day that drivers should NOT do.

- 👎 Stopping in the middle of the lane when there is room to pull right.
- 👎 Pulling to the left in the center yellow lane or left turn lane.
- 👎 Driving through a red light or stop sign when an emergency vehicle approaches from behind.
- 👎 Making a left turn quickly to a driveway or street.
- 👎 Racing ahead to get through a green light or turn before the response vehicle gets there.
- 👎 Disregarding and continuing to travel despite the response vehicle.

Those who drive fire apparatus and ambulances are thoroughly trained and tested. They are taught first to drive with due regard for the



safety of others. Their intent is never to force other drivers off the road. This supersedes a natural desire to get where they are going very fast to help the victims of a car accident or a drowning child or fight a fire. Drivers of emergency vehicles know that they cannot help anyone if they don't get there! Generally, emergency drivers will move left, since obviously other drivers are supposed to move right. Sometimes, due to traffic conditions, they may have to travel in opposing



lanes. This is why it is so important for drivers to respect response vehicles by moving out of the way and stopping. That will provide the space needed and ideally give an escape route if something goes wrong.

When you or someone you care about needs the help of an emergency responder, you will be thankful for the drivers who didn't impede response and allowed their safe and prompt arrival.