
BACKGROUND

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

REGULATION PROTECTS EMERGENCY WORKERS' SAFETY

A new regulation under the Motor Vehicle Act will better protect the safety of police officers, fire and ambulance personnel, tow truck operators, special provincial constables, conservation officers and park rangers who are working outside their emergency vehicles on B.C. roads.

The act already requires drivers to yield the right of way to approaching emergency vehicles that have their lights and siren on. Drivers who fail to yield to a moving emergency vehicle face a fine and three penalty points. The fine, including a 15 per cent victim surcharge, is \$84 if paid within 30 days or \$109 if paid thereafter.

Beginning June 1, the act will also require drivers to slow to prescribed maximum speeds when approaching, from either direction, a stopped emergency vehicle that's on or beside an undivided highway and has its lights flashing. (If the highway is divided – for example, by a concrete median – vehicles travelling in the opposite direction are not required to slow.) In addition, drivers travelling in a lane containing or adjacent to a stopped emergency vehicle must move into another lane to pass, if it is safe to do so and a police officer has not directed them to do otherwise. This will give emergency workers as much space as possible.

The penalty for not slowing to the designated speed, not moving over if it is safe to do so, or both, will be a fine and three penalty points. The higher fine for the new infraction reflects the greater risk of injury or death for emergency personnel who may be working outside their vehicle.

This change was requested and is strongly supported by many stakeholders, who were consulted over more than two years. They include the Office of the Fire Commissioner and Fire Chiefs' Association of B.C., BC Ambulance Service, BC Association of Chiefs of Police, ICBC, BCAA, the Ministry of Transportation's Commercial Vehicle Safety Enforcement Branch and the Police Services Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

To build driver awareness of the new regulation, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure has designed a strategy to identify the best locations for "slow down, move over" signs. Existing electronic signs that currently display road conditions may also be used. Five other provinces have passed "slow down, move over" laws. Most don't specify a speed, but require drivers to slow and proceed with caution.

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