



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Move Over, it's the Law

Kent, Wash – February 27, 2018 – It seems like every month we read or hear about a police or fire department vehicle that has been struck by a motorist while the police officer or firefighters are stopped on the freeway rendering aid.

When it happens, it affects the emergency responders, the person who was already receiving assistance, the person who causes the crash, and everyone who is now part of the traffic backup.

It doesn't have to happen, and there are laws regarding how motorists should react when they approach or are approached by emergency vehicles that are using their emergency lights and sirens.

Washington State traffic law 46.61.212 addresses vehicles approaching an emergency zone by requiring them to slow down and to change lanes away from the incident, if possible.

The statute also says that you can't drive in the emergency zone at a speed higher than the posted speed limit.

The person violating RCW 46.61.212 "*...must be assessed a monetary penalty equal to twice the penalty assessed under RCW 46.63.110. This penalty may not be waived, reduced, or suspended.*"

Washington State traffic law RCW 46.61.210 requires that "...the driver of every other vehicle shall yield the right of way and shall immediately drive to a position parallel to, and as close as possible to, the right-hand edge or curb of the roadway clear of any intersection and shall stop and remain in such position until the authorized emergency vehicle has passed, except when otherwise directed by a police officer."

Emergency responders are taught to pass on the left side. This means that they are often forced to move into on-coming traffic lanes, but lights and sirens make them highly visible to everyone, reducing the risk. If private vehicles mistakenly try to move left to avoid a fire engine or police car, they will increase the chance of a crash. Keep in mind that a Puget Sound RFA fire engine weighs in excess of 40,000 pounds while the average car weighs approximately 3,000 pounds.

Keeping lanes clear for emergency vehicles is crucial for everyone's safety. Delays while responding can affect the outcome for someone who has called 9-1-1 for an injury, illness, or police matter.

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