

# **WASHINGTON TRAFFIC LAWS**

## **“EMERGENCY VEHICLE”**

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## **RCW 46.61.035**

### **Authorized emergency vehicles.**

(1) The driver of an authorized **emergency vehicle**, when responding to an emergency call or when in the pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may exercise the privileges set forth in this section, but subject to the conditions herein stated.

(2) The driver of an authorized **emergency vehicle** may:

(a) Park or stand, irrespective of the provisions of this chapter;

(b) Proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation;

(c) Exceed the maximum speed limits so long as he does not endanger life or property;

(d) Disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

(3) The exemptions herein granted to an authorized **emergency vehicle** shall apply only when such vehicle is making use of visual signals meeting the requirements of RCW [46.37.190](#), except that: (a) An authorized **emergency vehicle** operated as a police vehicle need not be equipped with or display a red light visible from in front of the vehicle; (b) authorized emergency vehicles shall use audible signals when necessary to warn others of the emergency nature of the situation but in no case shall they be required to use audible signals while parked or standing.

(4) The foregoing provisions shall not relieve the driver of an authorized **emergency vehicle** from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such provisions protect the driver from the consequences of his reckless disregard for the safety of others.

[1969 c 23 § 1; 1965 ex.s. c 155 § 6.]

## **RCW 46.37.670**

### **Signal preemption devices--Prohibited--Exceptions.**

(1) Signal preemption devices shall not be installed or used on or with any vehicle other than an **emergency vehicle** authorized by the state patrol, a publicly owned law enforcement or **emergency vehicle**, a department of transportation, city, or county maintenance vehicle, or a public transit vehicle.

(2) This section does not apply to any of the following:

- (a) A law enforcement agency and law enforcement personnel in the course of providing law enforcement services;
- (b) A fire station or a fire fighter in the course of providing fire prevention or fire extinguishing services;
- (c) An emergency medical service or ambulance in the course of providing emergency medical transportation or ambulance services;
- (d) An operator, passenger, or owner of an authorized **emergency vehicle** in the course of his or her emergency duties;
- (e) Department of transportation, city, or county maintenance personnel while performing maintenance;
- (f) Public transit personnel in the performance of their duties. However, public transit personnel operating a signal preemption device shall have second degree priority to law enforcement personnel, fire fighters, emergency medical personnel, and other authorized **emergency vehicle** personnel, when simultaneously approaching the same traffic control signal;
- (g) A mail or package delivery service or employee or agent of a mail or package delivery service in the course of shipping or delivering a signal preemption device;
- (h) An employee or agent of a signal preemption device manufacturer or retailer in the course of his or her employment in providing, selling, manufacturing, or transporting a signal preemption device to an individual or agency described in this subsection.

[2005 c 183 § 2.]

**NOTES:**

**Reviser's note:** 2005 c 183 directed that this section be added to chapter [46.61](#) RCW, but codification in chapter [46.37](#) RCW appears more appropriate.

**RCW 46.37.194**

**Authorized emergency vehicles -- State patrol authority, maintenance, and applicant and driver screening.**

The state patrol may make rules and regulations relating to authorized emergency vehicles and shall test and approve sirens and **emergency vehicle** lamps to be used on such vehicles. The equipment and standards review unit shall require a record check of all applicants and drivers for an authorized **emergency vehicle** permit through the Washington state patrol criminal identification section pursuant to RCW [10.97.050](#) and through the federal bureau

of investigation before issuing an authorized **emergency vehicle** permit. The record check shall include a fingerprint check using a complete Washington state criminal identification fingerprint card. When necessary, applicants and drivers may be employed on a conditional basis pending completion of the investigation. Pursuant to RCW [43.43.742](#), the applicant, driver, or employer shall pay costs associated with the record check.

[2006 c 27 § 1; 1987 c 330 § 711; 1961 c 12 § [46.37.194](#). Prior: 1957 c 66 § 3.]

**NOTES:**

**Construction -- Application of rules -- Severability -- 1987 c 330:** See notes following RCW [28B.12.050](#).

**RCW 46.37.195**

**Sale of **emergency vehicle** lighting equipment restricted.**

A public agency shall not sell or give **emergency vehicle** lighting equipment or other equipment to a person who may not lawfully operate the lighting equipment or other equipment on the public streets and highways.

[1990 c 94 § 2.]

**NOTES:**

**Legislative finding -- 1990 c 94:** "The legislature declares that public agencies should not engage in activity that leads or abets a person to engage in conduct that is not lawful. The legislature finds that some public agencies sell **emergency vehicle** lighting equipment at public auctions to persons who may not lawfully use the equipment. The legislature further finds that this practice misleads well-intentioned citizens and also benefits malevolent individuals." [1990 c 94 § 1.]

**RCW 46.61.210**

**Operation of vehicles on approach of emergency vehicles.**

(1) Upon the immediate approach of an authorized **emergency vehicle** making use of audible and visual signals meeting the requirements of RCW [46.37.190](#), or of a police vehicle properly and lawfully making use of an audible signal only 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.

(2) This section shall not operate to relieve the driver of an authorized **emergency vehicle** from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway.

[1965 ex.s. c 155 § 32.]

**NOTES:**

**Rules of court:**Monetary penalty schedule -- IRLJ 6.2.

**RCW 46.61.212**

**Approaching stationary **emergency vehicle**.**

The driver of any motor vehicle, upon approaching a stationary authorized **emergency vehicle** that is making use of audible and/or visual signals meeting the requirements of RCW [46.37.190](#) or of a police vehicle properly and lawfully displaying a flashing, blinking, or alternating emergency light or lights, shall:

(1) On a highway having at least four lanes, at least two of which are intended for traffic proceeding in the same direction as the approaching vehicle, proceed with caution and, if reasonable, with due regard for safety and traffic conditions, yield the right of way by making a lane change or moving away from the lane or shoulder occupied by the stationary authorized **emergency vehicle** or police vehicle; or

(2) If changing lanes or moving away would be unreasonable or unsafe, proceed with due caution and reduce the speed of the vehicle.

[2005 c 413 § 1.]

**RCW 46.61.264**

**Pedestrians yield to emergency vehicles.**

(1) Upon the immediate approach of an authorized **emergency vehicle** making use of an audible signal meeting the requirements of RCW [46.37.380](#) subsection (4) and visual signals meeting the requirements of RCW [46.37.190](#), or of a police vehicle meeting the requirements of RCW [46.61.035](#) subsection (3), every pedestrian shall yield the right of way to the authorized **emergency vehicle**.

(2) This section shall not relieve the driver of an authorized **emergency vehicle** from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway nor from the duty to exercise due care to avoid colliding with any pedestrian.

[1975 c 62 § 42.]

**NOTES:**

**Rules of court:**Monetary penalty schedule -- IRLJ 6.2.

**Severability -- 1975 c 62:** See note following RCW [36.75.010](#).

**RCW 46.04.040**

**Authorized **emergency vehicle**.**

"Authorized **emergency vehicle**" means any vehicle of any fire department, police department, sheriff's office, coroner, prosecuting attorney, Washington state patrol, ambulance service, public or private, which need not be classified, registered or authorized by the state patrol, or any other vehicle authorized in writing by the state patrol.

[1987 c 330 § 701; 1961 c 12 § [46.04.040](#). Prior: 1959 c 49 § 5; 1953 c 40 § 1; prior: (i) 1943 c 153 § 1, part; 1937 c 188 § 1, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 § 6312-1, part. (ii) 1937 c 189 § 1, part; RRS § 6360-1, part.]

**NOTES:**

**Construction -- Application of rules -- Severability -- 1987 c 330:** See notes following RCW [28B.12.050](#).