

Tri County EMS Association Safety Guides



Emergency Vehicles

Here's a scenario that could happen to you during your travels: You approach an intersection, and you have the green light. Suddenly, you hear a siren and look to see an ambulance approaching the same intersection from another direction. You know the ambulance has a red light. What do you do?

According to the State of Wisconsin's Rules of the Road, section 346.19, "Upon the approach of an authorized emergency vehicle giving audible signal by siren, the operator of a vehicle shall yield the right-of-way and shall immediately drive such vehicle to a position as near as possible and parallel to the right curb on the right hand edge of the shoulder of the roadway, clear of any intersection and, unless otherwise directed by a traffic officer, shall stop and remain standing in such position until the authorized emergency vehicle has passed". Failure to yield the right-of-way to an emergency vehicle can result in a fine of no less than \$30 and no more than \$300.

When faced with a situation like the one given above, remember these tips:

- Don't panic; when the way is clear, pull as far to the right as possible, and stop your vehicle. If the way to the right is blocked, get as far right as you can and stop where you are; emergency vehicles can cross the centerline if necessary to get through congested traffic.
- Don't slam on your brakes; the vehicle behind you may not be aware of the situation, and slam into you.
- Be careful on roadsides of snow, soft sand, or gravel; abrupt stops or changes of direction may cause you to swerve back onto the road.
- Come to a complete stop, and remain stopped until the emergency vehicle has passed. Stay alert! Ambulances, fire trucks, and police cars often follow one another, so be sure the way is clear before rejoining traffic.
- Stay alert, check your mirrors every 5-7 seconds, pull over early, as soon as you see the red lights. The emergency vehicle is coming fast, do not wait until they are right behind you or it will be too late!
- DO NOT stop at the top of a hill or on a curve, the emergency vehicle can not see what is coming, this endangers every one. Stop before cresting the hill. Again, pull over earlier rather than later!

Remembering these simple ideas will allow emergency vehicles to pass by safely and get to those in need of help as soon as possible.