

By Carolyn Lee

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As of Sunday, motorists in Nebraska are required to move over a lane when approaching stopped emergency vehicles with flashing lights providing service on high-speed, multi-lane roadways.

After determining it is safe, drivers traveling in the lane adjacent to the area where emergency service is being provided must move over to create a clear lane of traffic.

Emergency vehicles include tow service trucks, law enforcement units, fire and rescue vehicles, State Patrol motorist assist units, and Department of Roads vehicles.

If motorists are unable to move over due to road or weather conditions, or traffic congestion, they must slow down and maintain a safe speed while passing the emergency vehicles.

Penalties for violating the law may include a \$100 fine for a first offense. Subsequent offenses can result in fines of up to \$500 and/or up to seven days in jail.

The law doesn't pertain to two-lane roads such as Highways 6 and 61, according to Chase County Sheriff's Deputy Bill Whitlow.

"It's really geared toward four-lane roads like the Interstate," he noted.

Whitlow said that in Chase County, if emergency vehicles are stopped on a road, traffic is usually rerouted, or the road is closed.

State Patrol Trooper Dan Thompson said even though the law doesn't apply to Chase County roads, "Slow down or pull over around (emergency vehicles). That would be greatly appreciated."

Thompson said upon occasion, people don't give emergency vehicles and their operators enough room.

Law for press members

Effective Nov. 24, 2008, the U.S. Department of Transportation now requires all newspaper employees covering an accident or other stories along right-of-ways on federal highways to wear orange or lime vests.

The law was enacted to improve visibility and therefore reduce the likelihood of injury. It is not limited to temporary traffic control areas.