



Blue Light Best Practices for Volunteer Emergency Responders

Many communities are serviced by volunteer fire departments, first aid or rescue squads. Volunteer members of those departments often utilize personal vehicles, which may be equipped with blue courtesy lights. It is important for the safety of both volunteer personnel and the general public that rules and regulations pertaining to 'blue lights' are understood and followed.

New Jersey Title 39 (N.J.S.A. 39:3-54.12) provides the specific regulations for the use of blue warning lights. Responders are permitted to utilize blue warning lights only if the applicant is **an active member in good standing** of a volunteer fire company, first aid or rescue squad, or a county or municipal Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and whose official duties include responding to a fire or emergency call. The blue light may be used **only** when the vehicle is being operated in response to an emergency.

The requesting member shall complete an application for a blue light permit through the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission. The application must be approved from the **Mayor or Chief Executive Officer of the governing body of the municipality being served by the volunteer department.** *The Safety Director recommends the Mayor or CEO first consult with the local Police Chief on the responder's application.*

The permit must be in possession of the operator when the blue light(s) are operated and must be produced upon the request of any law enforcement official. Permits are valid for four (4) years from the date of issuance and are non-transferable. When the volunteer ceases to be an active member in good standing of a volunteer agency the permit must be surrendered to the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission within ten (10) days.

Emergency warning lights may be removable or may be permanently attached. They shall be flashing or revolving, or of the blue light bar type. Lights must be equipped with a blue lens and controlled by a switch installed inside the vehicle. Light elements shall be shielded from the direct view of the driver.

No more than two emergency warning lights shall be installed on a vehicle. If one light is used, it shall be installed 1) in the center of the roof of the vehicle, or 2) on the front of the vehicle so that the top of the emergency warning light is no higher than the top of the vehicle's headlights, or 3) in the center of the dashboard, or 4) a low profile light bar of the strobe, halogen, or incandescent type. If two lights are used, they may be placed on the windshield columns on each side of the vehicle where spotlights are normally mounted, or on either side of the roof at the front of the vehicle directly back of the top of the windshield. Under no circumstances may one light be placed on the roof and one on the windshield column in the spotlight position.

- **Alternating flashing or strobe headlights are prohibited.**
- **Audible devices are not permitted.**

Prior to permitting a new member of a volunteer response agency to display a blue light, an officer of the agency must educate the member on the rights and responsibilities of using a blue light. A sample acknowledgment form is provided on page 2. Emergency personnel who are operating their vehicle with a blue light shall follow all traffic laws. That includes but is not limited to laws regarding speed, stopping at stop signs and red lights, and lanes of travel.

Further information can be found in the *Fire Service Reference Booklet 5*;

<https://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dfs/publications/publication/booklet5.pdf>

This bulletin is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046.

Authorization for the Use of a Blue Warning Light

Name of Organization

I, (print name) _____, accept the rights and responsibilities of using a blue emergency warning light and the permit issued to me. Specifically, I understand:

- It is understood, I must remain an active member in good standing of a volunteer fire company, first aid or rescue squad, or a county or municipal Office of Emergency Management volunteer whose official duties include responding to a fire or emergency call to utilize a blue emergency warning light.
- The use of a blue emergency warning light shall **only** be used when the vehicle is being operated in response to an emergency.
- The use of a blue emergency warning light does not extend privileges beyond that of than any other motorist. All rules and regulations governed under Title 39-Motor Vehicles and Traffic Regulations shall be followed. This includes but not limited to speeding, stopping at stop signs and red lights, using proper lanes of travel, and yielding when required. I may not pass a stopped school bus.
- I will not use a blue emergency warning light when non-department members, including spouse, children, and friend, are in the vehicle.
- A blue emergency warning light ‘requests’ other motorists to grant me right of way. If a motorist does not or cannot yield right of way, I will follow at a safe distance.
- A blue emergency warning light still requires me to operate my personal vehicle with ‘due regard.’ Due regard is defined as *“appropriate carefulness, which is the degree of care that a prudent person would exercise”*.
- I accept responsibility for my actions and behaviors when using a blue emergency warning light and accept liability and legalities from my actions.
- If for any reason, I cease to be an active response member of the **(insert name of organization)**, I will return my blue light permit to the N.J. Motor Vehicle Commission within 10 days as required by law.

Please initial:

_____ I have been **given an opportunity to review** the relevant sections of Title 39 and the Division of Fire Safety Booklet 5

_____ I have been given a chance to ask questions or for clarifications of a senior officer of the **(insert name of organization)**.

Signature of Member _____ Date _____

Name & Rank of Officer _____

Signature of Officer _____ Date _____