

October 28, 2005

New law makes Alberta roads safer for emergency and construction workers

Edmonton... A new law requiring drivers to slow down when passing emergency vehicles and tow trucks comes into effect October 31.

The new law, which doubles the fines for speeders, will make roads safer for police officers, firefighters, ambulance workers, tow truck operators and construction workers, as well as motorists.

"Every year, emergency and construction workers are injured and sometimes killed on Alberta's roads and highways - and for every one of those incidents, there are probably at least as many near-misses," said Dr. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. "This new law will protect these people who put themselves in harm's way for our benefit."

Under the new law, motorists must slow down to 60 kilometres per hour, **or less** if the posted speed limit is lower, when passing emergency vehicles or tow trucks stopped with their lights flashing. In construction zones, motorists must observe the posted speed limit. Fines for speeding past emergency vehicles and through construction sites where workers are present will be doubled.

"We expect that this new law and stiff fines will deter people from speeding in these areas," said Richard Magnus, MLA for Calgary-North Hill, who sponsored the new law. "This is all about slowing down for the safety of all workers. These people are trying to save other people's lives while looking out for their own safety. We should be looking out for their safety as well."

An advertising campaign is currently running across Alberta to raise awareness of the new law.

The new law is part of Bill 39, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005, which was passed during the Legislature's 2005 spring session. Other amendments include changes to laws concerning driving without insurance, seizure of vehicles involved in racing, use of evidence from a vehicle's "black box" in legal proceedings, and reporting of unsafe drivers. Bill 39 may be viewed at www.assembly.ab.ca.

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Backgrounder and questions and answers attached Media enquiries may be directed to:

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(780) 415-1841

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

Backgrounder

October 28 2005

Proclamation of the *Traffic Safety Amendment Act*

Emergency Vehicles and Construction Zones

- Motorists must slow to 60 kilometres per hour, **or less** if the posted speed is lower, when passing emergency vehicles or tow trucks stopped with their lights flashing. Fines for speeding in these areas will be double the regular amount.
- Emergency vehicles include fire, police, ambulance, tow trucks, and a vehicle used by a gas disconnection unit of a public utility or a designated emergency response unit.
- If there are two or more traffic lanes in the same direction as the emergency vehicle or tow truck, passing vehicles need only slow down in the lane immediately beside the stopped emergency vehicle. Vehicles traveling in other lanes, including oncoming lanes, may maintain their speed but should proceed with caution.
- In construction zones, motorists must observe the posted speed. When workers are present, fines for speeding in these areas will be doubled. This is where workers are on or near the road, operating heavy equipment, directing traffic, or using hand tools within the construction zone. Drivers need to look out for workers who could be less visible behind construction equipment.

Insurance

- The fine for a first offence of driving without insurance remains at \$2,500 to \$10,000. Jail time for not paying the fine increases to 45 days from 30.
- For a second offence, the range of fines doubles to between \$5,000 and \$20,000. Jail time remains at 60 days to six months for those failing to pay the fine.
- A person driving a stolen vehicle can now be charged with driving an uninsured vehicle.

Other:

- Police can seize, for 24 hours, a vehicle that is used for racing or driving on a bet or a wager where public safety is at risk.
- Off-highway vehicles are allowed to cross a highway by the route that is the safest, if the shortest and most direct route is not the safest.
- Evidence from a vehicle's black box recorder can be introduced by affidavit in legal proceedings.
- A person reporting an unsafe driver in good faith cannot be identified to the driver without consent

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Q. What would some of the fines be if they are doubled?

Speed	Demerit	Fine Range
1-15 km over	2	\$57 - 89, includes surcharge (\$114-178) doubled
16-30 km over	3	\$103-177, includes surcharge (\$206-354) doubled
31-50 km over	4	\$187-351, includes surcharge (\$374-702) doubled
Over 50 km over	6	Mandatory Court appearance. Fines are at the discretion of the Court.

Q. Why don't demerits doubled for these offences?

There are no offences under the *Traffic Safety Act* that double demerits and it was not considered as part of these changes.

Q. If I get a photo radar ticket under this legislation is the fine doubled?

Yes

Q. Will double fines for speeding apply when motorists are passing snowplows or graders?

While these are considered highway maintenance vehicles, double fines will apply only if they are operating in work areas identified by construction zone signage.

Q. Why are signs to reduce speed located so many kilometres before you get to a construction zone?

Posting speed reduction signs through construction zones is at the discretion of the construction contractor and project engineer. Signs often are placed several kilometres in front of the actual construction zone to allow larger vehicles more time to slow down. The location of signs also depends on the type of construction activity.

Q. Why should I slow down for construction zones when there is no work being done?

Even if it seems there is no activity in a construction zone, there may be other less obvious hazards such as loose gravel chips and uneven pavement that can be dangerous and cause damage to vehicles travelling at high speeds. Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation urges motorists to obey all signs and slow down when going through construction zones.

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