

Know how to react when emergency vehicles approach

As the holidays have passed and the temperatures have dropped up North, we have noticed the annual return of our winter residents. Welcome back to the warmer weather!

While we may experience a larger number of residents in the town squares, restaurants and grocery stores, the primary area that we notice in public safety is on the roadways.

This becomes especially true during the response to an emergency incident.

There are some factors we notice on a regular basis. First, it appears that no matter how many lights are flashing or how much noise is generated, people ahead of the emergency vehicle often do not yield until the last minute.

New cars have been designed with more internal soundproofing, and new technology has provided better sound systems for your enjoyment.

In addition, many sound systems incorporate the use of hands-free cellphone use. These three components have done a great job of buffering all external sounds, including sirens.

There are a few simple hints that can help you modify your awareness when driving.

First, please keep your radio at a level that is comfortable to you and at a point where you are not trying to speak over the level of the radio.

One thing I do to enhance my ability to hear approaching emergency vehicles is to open



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my driver's window a crack to allow me to hear sirens at a greater distance and provide the direction from which the oncoming emergency response unit is coming.

Next, scan all your mirrors more often than normal and watch for sudden changes of traffic in front of you.

It is important to understand that crews responding to emergencies have knowledge of where they are responding and how they will get from one point to another.

The driver of the emergency vehicle has a plan of action for maneuvering through traffic.

People tend to become very nervous and at times almost panic when approached by emergency vehicles.

Florida laws state that you must pull over to the nearest curb, stop your car and wait for the emergency vehicle to pass before pulling back into the flow of traffic.

At this point, before pulling back out into traffic, take a few extra seconds to look into the mirror to make sure another emergency vehicle is not following the first one.

First-time visitors and new Florida residents may not know that the state has

enacted the "Move Over Law."

This states that if you are approaching an emergency vehicle (and this includes tow trucks that are stopped on the side of the road with their emergency lights on) you must pull over into the lane of traffic farthest from the emergency vehicle.

If you are unable to do this, slow down to 20 miles per hour less than the posted speed limit and watch for anyone stepping into the roadway. If you do not follow this law, a sizeable fine could result.

I would like to take the opportunity to remind everyone to join us for Welcome Wednesday.

Each week, residents have the opportunity to learn about ongoing projects and get all your questions answered firsthand by District departments.

You also will be able to meet District Board supervisors from your CDD and others. These sessions are held at 8 a.m. in the District Office at 984 Old Mill Run.

If you have any questions about this topic or any other questions regarding public safety, visit districtgov.org or email us at publicsafety@districtgov.org.

In addition, you always can contact the Customer Service Center at 753-4508.

See you here again next time at Our Place.

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