

July 2009 Newsletter

First Responders by Doug Brown

NEW RULES OF THE ROAD PROTECT EMERGENCY WORKERS' SAFETY

First Responders are emergency workers as well. Please slow down if you come across our vehicles with our four way flashers operating.

The Province will enhance the safety of emergency workers by requiring drivers to slow down and move over when passing parked emergency vehicles that have their lights flashing, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General John van Dongen and Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Kevin Falcon announced today.

“We’re doing this for emergency workers who are out there, working to save lives on our roads in all kinds of conditions,” said van Dongen. “Too often, these workers face near-misses, injury or even death – directly due to the carelessness of passing drivers.”

“Between 2001 and 2007, 21 emergency workers were injured or killed on B.C. roads – 12 of them at the roadside,” said Falcon. “We’re joining other jurisdictions by fining those who don’t slow down and, where they safely can, move over, so emergency workers don’t pay with their lives for doing their jobs.”

Beginning June 1, drivers must slow to 70 km/h on highways where the speed limit is 80 km/h or higher, and to 40 km/h where the limit is below 80 km/h, when approaching a stopped emergency vehicle that has its lights flashing. If there is another lane going in the same direction, drivers must also move into that lane if it is safe to do so.

“My colleagues and I want motorists to consider not only the new penalty, but the safety of all emergency workers as they drive past an incident,” said Supt. Norm Gaumont, RCMP B.C. Traffic Services. “In situations where every second counts, everyone benefits from safe, focused emergency services personnel.”

The requirements will apply to drivers passing police, fire, ambulance and towing vehicles, as well as vehicles used by commercial vehicle safety and enforcement personnel, passenger vehicle inspectors, conservation officers, park rangers, and special provincial constables employed in the Ministry of Forests and Range.

Those found in contravention will face a fine and three penalty points against their licence. The fine, including a 15 per cent victim surcharge, is \$148 if paid within 30 days or \$173 thereafter. Currently, five provinces and 40 U.S. states have similar requirements. An existing penalty remains in place for failing to yield to a moving emergency vehicle.

We are currently accepting applications from those that would like to get involved in the First Responders for classes that start in the Fall. You are invited to attend any of our practices to meet those of us involved and get a feel for what we do. For more information call Sherri at 250-833-2586 or Doug at 250-675-3920