

Lights & Sirens



4 Simple Messages

When driving, it is important to be aware of what is happening around you. This is called “situational awareness”. Situational awareness is defined as seeing what is happening around you (Perception), understanding what it means (Comprehension), and what is going to happen depending on what actions you do or don’t do (Projection).

Look and listen

Be aware that having your radio or loud music and air-conditioning on may impair your ability to hear approaching sirens.

When emergency vehicles approach intersections against a red light, they will stop to ensure it is safe to proceed. Do not proceed until after the emergency vehicle has moved on.

Stay calm

If you can’t move out of the way safely, remain calm and wait until you can. Do not make any sudden or unplanned movements. DO NOT brake suddenly!

Merge left

Emergency response vehicles will attempt to pass vehicles on the right wherever possible.

Work with other drivers to create space for emergency vehicles to pass. Use your indicator to signal to other drivers what you intend to do.

Don’t damage your vehicle to move out of the way.

Stay alert

Never put yourself in danger. **Never, ever** go through railway stop lights or boom-gates. Emergency response vehicles won’t.

Be aware there could be more than one emergency vehicle responding to the same incident from various directions.



LOOK
AND
LISTEN



STAY
CALM



MERGE
LEFT



STAY
ALERT

What's so special about emergency vehicles?

Emergency response vehicles (ERVs) are driven by police, firefighters and paramedics. All **emergency response vehicles** using lights and sirens are responding to an emergency. They **NEVER** practise with their lights and/or sirens on.

Traffic regulations state that drivers must give way to, or move out of the path of, emergency vehicles using lights and sirens **as soon as it is safe to do so**.



Emergency response vehicles are required to use lights and/or sirens when responding to a priority incident. This signifies to other road users that these vehicles are no longer driving under standard traffic rules and allows them to exceed speed limits and proceed through red lights and stop signs, when safe to do so. Additional driving codes provide **emergency response vehicles** with further guidelines (e.g. pausing before proceeding through traffic lights).

Time lost on the way to an emergency could result in loss of life. Give way to emergency vehicles when it is safe to do so!

For more information...
Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Road Rules) Regulation 2009, Section 78 and 79.

Situations

At no stage should the actions you take put yourself or others in jeopardy.

The following pages outline situations emergency response workers have been asked about. It is important to note that the solutions provided are a guide only. Each situation will have factors that cannot be included (e.g. the actions of other drivers or road conditions).

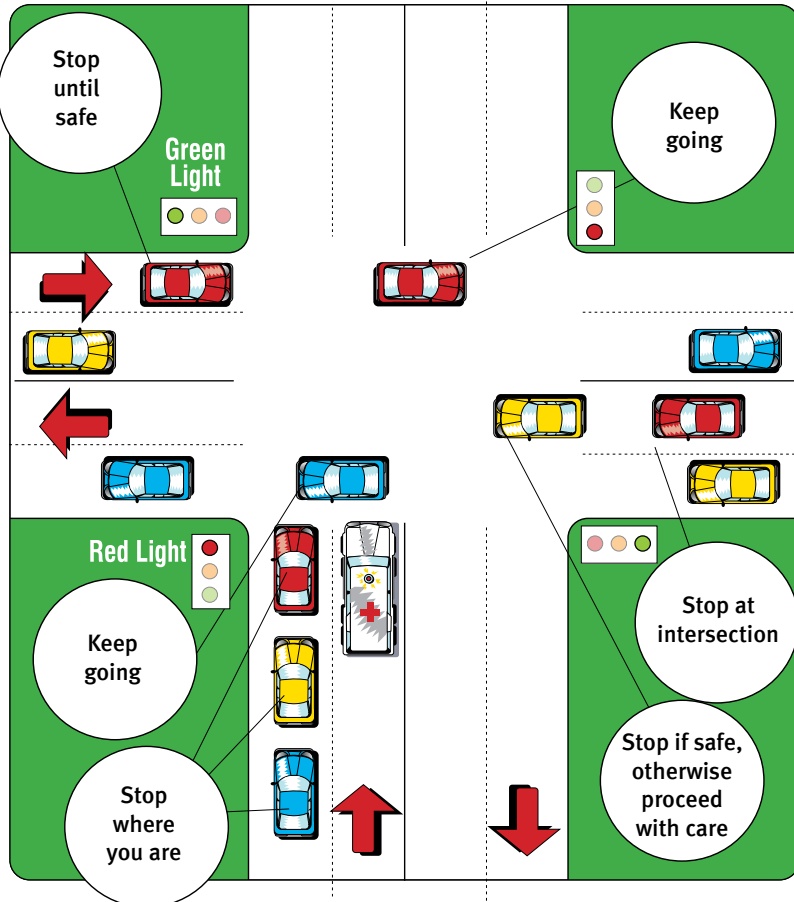
If you are looking for a particular situation, select from the following to go directly to the relevant page.

- [An emergency response vehicle using lights and sirens is approaching a red light.](#)
- [Traffic at red lights.](#)
- [Peak hour traffic.](#)
- [You are the first car at a set of lights, surrounded by other vehicles, with an emergency vehicle approaching from behind in your lane.](#)
- [Drivers immediately following behind an emergency vehicle.](#)
- [A pedestrian using earphones to listen to music steps out between parked cars.](#)
- [A driver, seeing a fire truck behind them, slams on the brakes.](#)
- [Multiple emergency response vehicles are approaching the same intersection from different directions.](#)
- [The intersection is grid-locked during peak hour traffic.](#)
- [**Emergency response vehicles** turning in traffic at a non-signalised intersection \(emergency response vehicle wants to turn across your path\), what do you do?](#)
- [**Emergency response vehicles** is approaching with lights only – what action do you take?](#)
- [A fire truck is approaching from behind with lights and sirens but as they get closer, they turn off the lights and sirens.](#)
- [A car crash has occurred and emergency vehicles are taking up space stopping normal traffic flow.](#)

Situation: An emergency response vehicle using lights and sirens is approaching a red light.

Solution: Give way to emergency response vehicles when you can do so safely. Check your mirrors and ensure a safe braking distance for the vehicle behind.

Emergency response vehicles may approach red lights or stop signs cautiously. They are not giving way to you. They are ensuring it is safe to proceed. Do not proceed until after the emergency vehicle has moved on. Always check for other emergency response vehicles.

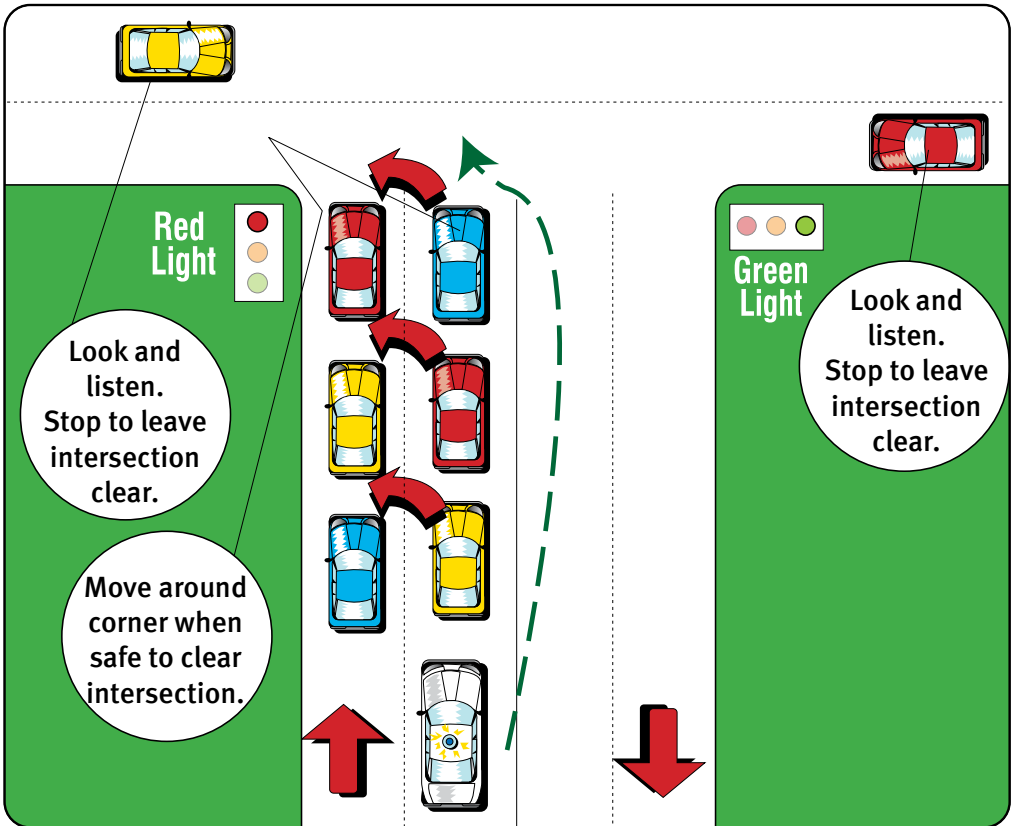


Situation: Traffic at red lights.

Solution: Traffic in the right lane should merge left or proceed through the red light **only if it is safe to do so.**

Emergency response vehicles will use the wrong side of the road if they need to. If you see an emergency vehicle approaching on the wrong side of the road, slow down and merge left.

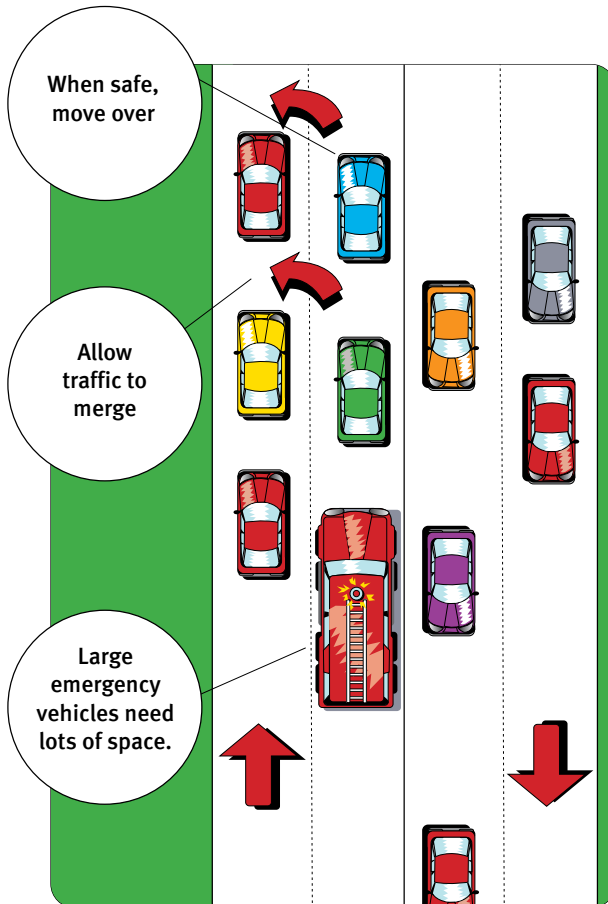
Emergency vehicles with lights and sirens are not giving way to you when they slow down at interesections. They are ensuring it is safe to proceed. Do not proceed until after the emergency vehicle has moved on.



Situation: Peak hour traffic.

Solution: Don't stop. Keep moving. Slow down and merge left when safe to do so.

It is important to help other vehicles get out of the way of emergency response vehicles. Allow vehicles to merge in front of you if they are indicating their intention to do so.

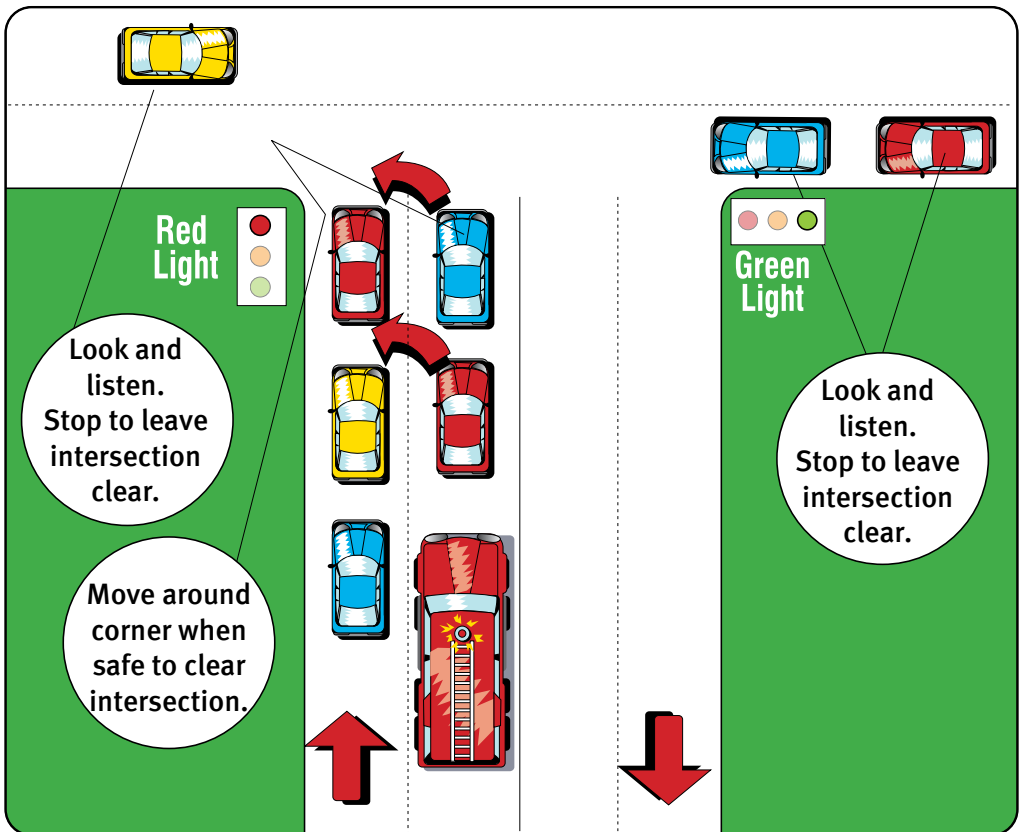


Situation: You are the first car at a set of lights, surrounded by other vehicles, with an emergency vehicle approaching from behind in your lane.

Solution: Move in front of the vehicle to your left. This may involve entering the intersection slightly. Only do so, if safe.

*Providing you can do so safely and justify your action, you will not get a ticket if it's necessary to break traffic rules (e.g. proceed through a red traffic light) to give way to an emergency vehicle. **However, it must be safe to do so.***

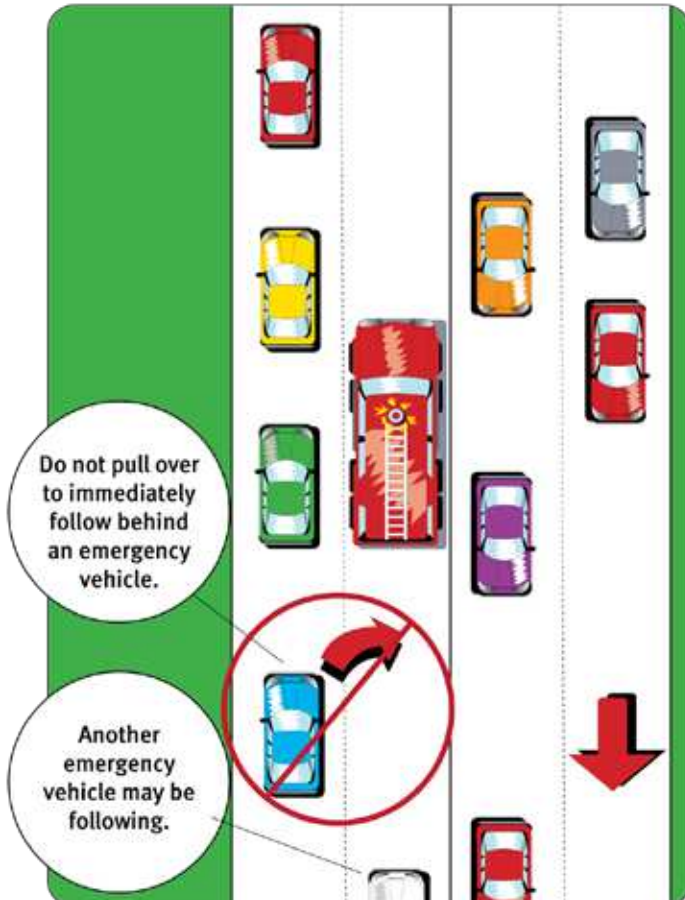
Emergency vehicles with lights and sirens are not giving way to you when they slow down at interesectoins. They are ensuring it is safe to proceed. Do not proceed until after the emergency vehicle has moved on.



Situation: Drivers immediately following behind an emergency vehicle.

Solution: Do not immediately follow an emergency vehicle. They may make sudden movements or take evasive actions that following vehicles may not be able to react effectively to.

Drivers must be aware that more than one emergency vehicle may be passing. Quickly pulling out to follow an emergency response vehicle may cause a crash with emergency or other vehicles.



Situation: A pedestrian using earphones to listen to music steps out between parked cars.

Solution: Pedestrians also need to be aware of their environment. Near misses with emergency response vehicles is only one factor of concern. Listening to music or using your phone can distract you from what is going on around you.

An increasing number of pedestrians are experiencing near misses with emergency response vehicles. They may also cause traffic collisions when drivers swerve to avoid them. Stop if you need to use your phone. Do not have the volume so loud that you can't hear the traffic and the voices of those around you.



Situation: A driver, seeing a fire truck behind them, slams on the brakes.

Solution: Don't do this. An emergency response vehicle travelling at speed may be unable to stop in time for drivers who make unexpected moves.

There are a number of factors which influence the stopping distance of a vehicle. These include:

- *weight of vehicle*
- *speed vehicle is travelling*
- *type of vehicle*
- *braking system in vehicle*
- *age of vehicle*
- *road surface*
- *weather*
- *traffic conditions*



The larger the
vehicle

+



The higher the
speed

=



the need
for a greater
stopping
distance.

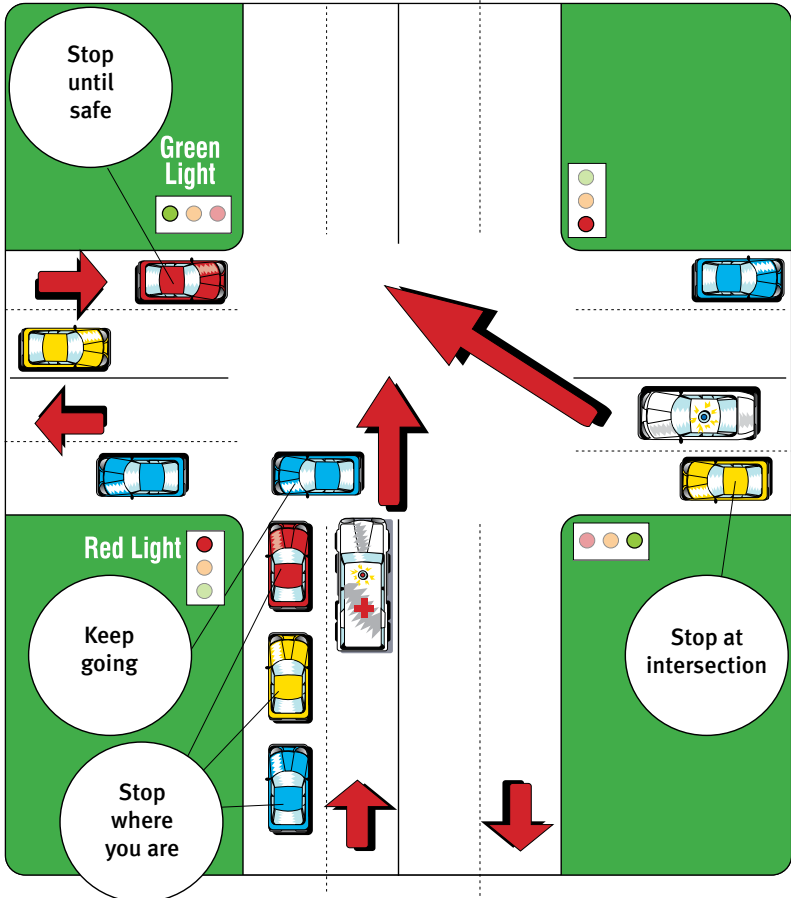
Did you know...

The average fire truck weighs 17 tonnes. This is 10 times the weight of a standard car.

Situation: Multiple emergency response vehicles are approaching the same intersection from different directions.

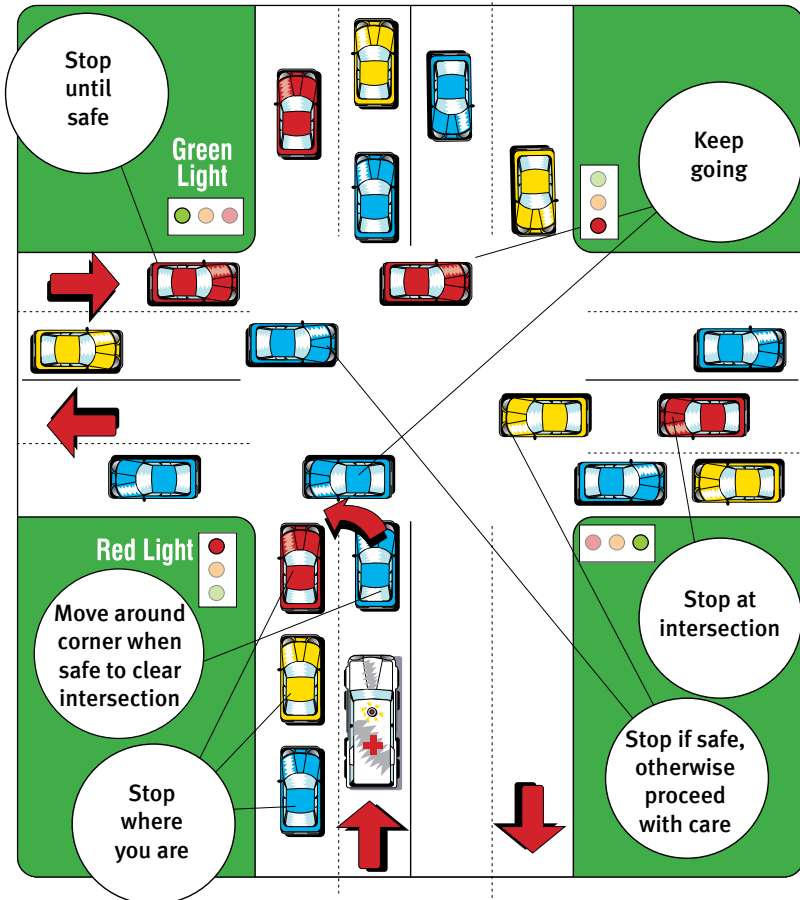
Solution: If safe to do so, merge left to allow emergency response vehicles clear passage. Stop clear of the intersection. Remain where you are until all emergency response vehicles have safely passed.

Emergency vehicles with lights and sirens are not giving way to you when they slow down at intersections. They are ensuring it is safe to proceed. Do not proceed until after the emergency vehicle has moved on.



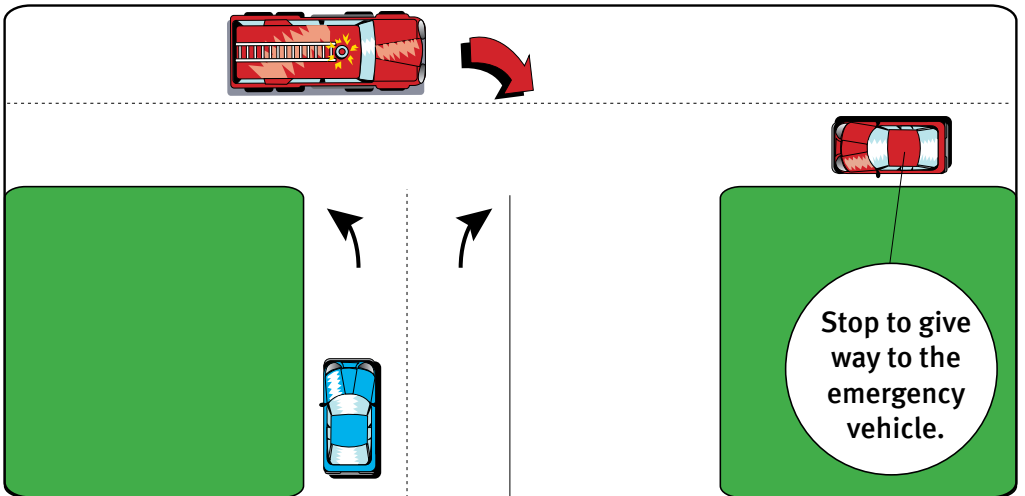
Situation: The intersection is grid-locked during peak hour traffic.

Solution: Remain calm. Merge left or move through the intersection if and when safe to do so to allow emergency response vehicle to proceed.



Situation: Emergency response vehicle turning in traffic at a non-signalised intersection (emergency response vehicle wants to turn across your path), what do you do?

Solution: When approached by an emergency response vehicle wanting to turn in front of you, stop where you are and allow the emergency response vehicle to turn. Once the emergency response vehicle has cleared your path continue on your way.



Situation: Emergency response vehicle is approaching with lights only – what action do you take?

Solution: If approached by an emergency response vehicle with lights only, respond the same as if it had both lights and sirens. Remain calm and merge to the left to allow the emergency response vehicle to proceed.

You could save a stranger's life.

Get out of the way of emergency vehicles, when it is safe to do so.



Situation: A fire truck is approaching from behind with lights and sirens but as they get closer, they turn off the lights and sirens.

Solution: No evasive action is required. Proceed at normal.

*Sometimes **emergency response vehicles** switch their lights and sirens off because they have been told via radio that a situation has been made safe.*



Situation: A car crash has occurred and emergency vehicles are taking up space stopping normal traffic flow.

Solution: The organised placement of emergency response vehicles and equipment on a roadway can create safer working conditions for emergency services personnel and other road users.

The greatest risk to emergency services personnel occurs during two phases of operations, set-up (response) and make-up (recovery). The emergency response vehicle may be used to “Block” all non-essential traffic and “Fend-off” traffic by creating a physical barrier between approaching motorists and those involved in the incident.



Remember 4 simple messages...



The information contained within this booklet is a guide only. Each situation will have factors that cannot be included (e.g. the actions of other drivers or road conditions).

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Stay calm.
- Move to the left so emergency vehicles can pass you.
- There may be more than one emergency vehicle.
- Use your indicators so other drivers know your intentions.

Produced by:
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

In partnership with
Queensland Police Service
Queensland Ambulance Service
Transport and Main Roads