

Traffic Safety Newsletter



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Move Over, America!

Keep Law Enforcement and
Emergency Personnel Safe

When America's law enforcement officers pull a motorist over, they put their lives at risk. More than 160 law enforcement officers have been killed since 1999 after being struck by vehicle's along America's highways. When first responders arrive at an accident scene, they step out of their emergency vehicle and into danger. It should be common sense to provide a safety zone for these hard working men and women, but there are laws that protect them too.

"Move Over Laws" as they are generally known, require drivers to exercise due care to avoid colliding with an emergency vehicle or endangering emergency personnel. Move Over America (more information at www.moveoveramerica.com) is a partnership of the National Safety Commission, the National Sheriff's Association, the National Association of Police organizations and the American Association of State Troopers. This campaign is the first nationally coordinated effort to educate Americans about Move Over

According to a national poll by Mason Dixon Polling & Research, sponsored by the National Safety Commission:

- **71 percent** of Americans have not heard of "Move Over" laws;
- **86 percent** support enacting "Move Over" laws in all 50 states; and
- **90 percent** believe traffic stops and roadside emergencies are dangerous for law enforcement and first responders.



Laws and how these laws protect the law enforcement officers, fire fighters and emergency medical personnel who risk their lives every day.

Most states have a "Move Over Law." The only exceptions at this time are Hawaii and Washington, DC. Let's look at a few examples:

In the state of **North Carolina**, motorists are required to move over and slow down or stop if necessary to maintain a safe distance from emergency vehicles displaying flashing lights. The fine is \$250 and if the driver causes injury or death, they could face a felony charge.

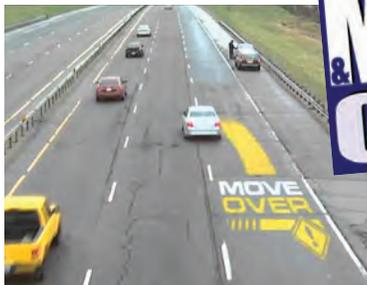
In **California**, the maximum fine is \$50. Motorists are required to either move over to a lane not adjacent to the emergency vehicles or vehicle. If not practical or safe to do so, the motorist must slow down to a reasonable speed that is safe for the existing weather, road, and vehicular or pedestrian traffic conditions or come to a complete stop.



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In the state of **Georgia** however, the fine could be up to \$500. And in **Virginia**, the first offense is treated as a traffic infraction. A subsequent violation is punishable as a class one misdemeanor and a court visit involving jail time and/or fines up to \$2,500. Virginia law states that upon approaching a stationary vehicle that is displaying a flashing, blinking, or alternating blue, red, or amber lights, drivers shall change lanes if it is safe to do so. If changing lanes would be unreasonable or unsafe, drivers must slow to at least 20 mph below the speed limit and proceed with caution.



As you can see, Move Over Laws vary depending on the state that you are traveling in. So, educate yourself. Help reduce accidents and save the lives of our emergency workers who are providing critical, high risk services in our community. Please note that in most cases, Move Over Laws also pertain to tow trucks and DOT vehicles displaying flashing lights. So, if you see flashing lights ahead, slow down and/or “Move Over, America”. It’s the law and it’s the right move. 🚗

Yielding to Emergency Vehicles

When driving on the highway, it is not unusual to observe emergency vehicles on the shoulder. They probably got there by weaving their way through traffic because no one would pull over for them. As licensed drivers, we all share the responsibility of knowing and practicing proper driving behaviors. One of the most important rules of the road deals with yielding the right of way to emergency vehicles.



- Yield the right of way and immediately drive to a position parallel to and as close as possible to the right edge or curb of the roadway and stop.
- Ensure that they are clear of any intersection and remain in stopped position until the authorized emergency vehicle has passed, unless otherwise directed by a police officer.
- If stopped at a signal and an emergency vehicle is approaching, don’t move.
- If the signal changes to green or the emergency vehicle pulls up behind, clear the intersection and then move to the right.
- If on a freeway, or divided highway, a driver doesn’t need to take any actions for emergency vehicles on the opposite side of the highway.

On America’s highways, when an emergency vehicle is approaching either from the front or the rear, drivers should do the following:

Remember, if you see one emergency vehicle approaching, be very careful before moving back into your lane. There are generally going to be several emergency vehicles responding to the same situation.



WINTER STORAGE

Not everyone rides all year. In fact, the majority of motorcyclists store their motorcycles during winter, as riding can be nearly impossible in some parts of the world. However, there is more to storing a bike than just throwing a tarp over it and letting it sit for four months. Storing your bike properly will keep it running better and longer, and will save you time and money when spring comes and you get back out on the road.

First, **give the bike a detailed cleaning**, including tires, instrument panel, and engine. Make sure the cleaners used are meant for motorcycles, as some that are fine for cars can cause corrosion on bikes. Avoid pressure washers, as these are so powerful that they can distort seals and electrical switches, and can even peel off paint! Just use a few rags and an old toothbrush, and get all the gunk and grime off. When you're done, give it a good wax and polish.

Plugging your muffler with steel wool will save you a lot of trouble come spring. Mice, chipmunks, and other critters may try to build a nest in the muffler. These unwanted guests have been known to crawl all the way into the cylinders. It's not a pretty picture when you turn on your bike while something is crawling around inside it.

It may seem counter-intuitive, but **always store your bike with a full tank of gas**. Air pockets in the tank can develop condensation and rust the lining. A fuel stabilizer can prevent the gas from getting stale. Add some while the tank is low, then top off with regular fuel. Run your bike for a few minutes to distribute the additive throughout the system, then top off once more to fill the tank.

Oil, fluids, and filters should be changed before storage. During the fluid changes, check for any leaks or blockages — it's best to take care

of them now. While you're at it, coat your cylinders with less than a tablespoon of oil to protect them from moisture.

An automatic battery charger will keep you from having a dead battery when spring rolls around. With a good charging system (one which will not overcharge the battery) you won't need to remove the battery from the motorcycle, unless you are storing your bike somewhere away from a power outlet. Even then, there are solar chargers on the market that can take care of that problem. In the final account, this will save you money, as you won't have to invest in a new battery every year.

Using a motorcycle lift will prevent flat spots from forming on your tires, and it will take pressure off the suspension system. As with the battery charger, investing in a lift will hold off costly maintenance and tire replacements.

It is highly suggested that you store your bike indoors. If you can't, check with your local dealership to see if they can store your bike, as many will do so for a minimal cost. If



these aren't options, there are custom covers made for almost every bike for outdoor storage. If one doesn't exist for yours, look for a cover that will do as good a job as possible. Despite what some claim, there is no "One Size Fits All" bike cover. Make sure your cover will "breathe," meaning it will let moisture out without letting any back in.

Check your owner's manual to see if it has anything else to add; it is the final authority on care of your bike. Call your insurance company to see if they offer reduced rates for winter storage, it may save you money. Above all, do what is best for your bike so that when the weather warms up you can take it right back on the road and shake out the winter chill. 🏍️



Controlled and Uncontrolled Intersections:

Negotiating the Motorcyclist's Most Common Traffic Hazard

An intersection is the area where two roadways meet, join or merge. Any place where traffic crosses another motorist's path of travel can be called an intersection, including driveways, side roads, entrances to stores, gas stations, etc... For motorcyclists there is no ideal lane positioning approach that works for all intersections. Every intersection is different for a motorcycle rider. Every motor vehicle is operated by an individual who will often behave in an unexpected manner.

Many factors affect the choices a rider makes at an intersection: first is whether or not it is a controlled intersection. Signs and signals indicating correct behavior are present in controlled intersections, but uncontrolled intersections bring different problems. Other highway users, roadway conditions, rain, fog, and darkness can all play a role in rider reactions. No two intersections are the same, but all require 360 degree situational awareness. Intersections present the greatest common traffic hazard to motorcyclists. Motorcyclists must recognize that risk exists in almost any situation, and do everything they can to minimize it.

Wearing brightly colored Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can help motorists see motorcyclists. Other ways to be more visible are lane positioning or a side-to-side weave within the lane, but ultimately there is no guarantee that a rider will be seen.

Seeing hazards is a matter of awareness and practice. Scanning and predicting are habits that can be developed by any rider. When riding, a motorcyclist can use 'what if..' to help improve responses. "What if the driver fails to see me and pulls out...?" "What if

the car in the next lane comes over into my lane...? What will I do?" Playing the 'What if' game creates a habit of preparing for common traffic problems in advance, which is key to dealing with those problems. An old motorcyclist expression is: "Ride like you're invisible." Assume the other person **does not see you** and prepare accordingly.

Two of the more common causes of multi-vehicle motorcycle crashes are: on-coming, left-turning vehicles; and vehicles entering the motorcyclists' path from the right. Left-turning vehicles violating the rider's right of way are the most common and dangerous. The vehicles from the right could be cars making a 'right on red,' merging traffic, and vehicles entering the roadway from driveways, parking lots, etc. Just knowing that most multi-vehicle crashes happen at intersections should change the way a rider approaches every intersection.

Intersections and Lane Position

Adjusting speed and/or changing lane position while communicating these intentions via lights and signals are thought to be appropriate ways to prepare for hazards in intersections.

A single lane of normal roadway can be visually divided into three motorcycle-sized lanes: left,

Controlled intersections have traffic lights, yield signs, stop signs or other devices or signs in order to control traffic flow.



Uncontrolled intersections have no traffic lights or signs to indicate right-of-way.



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Minimizing Risk & Hazards:

- Professional training is the single most important and reliable factor in learning to minimize or avoid hazards.
- The risk in any situation can be reduced by making good decisions as the rider moves from one situation to another.

right and middle. A rider should position himself in the portion of the lane that provides the most space cushion (time and space in which to react) from possible hazards. Since the number, location, speed and path of travel of other vehicles will vary with each controlled or uncontrolled intersection, there is no single 'best' lane position for approaching intersections. *For example:*

1. Rider is approaching an uncontrolled four way intersection. Several vehicles are approaching from the opposite direction; one has their left turn signal on. How should the rider respond? *If there are no other factors, rider should slow appropriately and move to the far right of his lane or into the right lane if multi-lane roadway. The rider should also monitor all other vehicles in the line for intentions to turn without signaling. Watching the front tire of the turning vehicle will provide some small advance warning when the other vehicle has initiated their turn. Prepare for evasive action such as swerving or braking.*
2. Rider is approaching a controlled intersection where they have a green light. A vehicle is approaching from a side street on the right where they (should) have a red light. How does the rider react? *If there are no complicating factors the rider should move to the far left of their lane or into the left lane if multi-lane roadway. Once there the rider should watch for a turn signal indicating a 'right-on-red' by the other vehicle and the rider should also look at the front wheel of the car to monitor that tire's rotation indicating continued forward movement. Prepare for evasive action such as swerving or braking.*

3. If a traffic-signal controlled intersection loses power, it should be treated as if it were a four-way stop. Always proceed with due caution.
4. Right-of-Way law varies considerably from state to state. Some spell out very clearly where right-of-way exists, other states do not recognize legal or automatic right of way. Instead those states require all motor vehicle operators to behave in the safest manner possible at all times. Never assume right of way. Always protect yourself and proceed with caution.
5. Traffic is only one concern; road conditions, construction, weather conditions, and the presence of pedestrians, animals or bicyclists all add to the need to ride with care and caution.

Conclusions

Traffic: When approaching an intersection, ALWAYS look left and right for traffic on the intersecting road, even if you have a green light. If you have to slow down for the intersection, check your mirrors for traffic behind you. When a light turns green at an intersection, look both ways for vehicles running the red light.

Speed: Since some vehicle drivers actually ARE paying attention to other operators, maintain a steady legal speed when close to or passing through intersections. A sudden acceleration or deceleration just before or at a driver's location can throw off the timing of his merge into traffic and may cause a close call. An exception to this would be if there is chance traffic may cross the intersection in front of you. If so, slow down or cover the brakes and be ready to slow quickly or stop. Be aware of pedestrians about to cross the intersection and vehicles edging into the intersection or approaching at higher speeds.

Space: Keep at least a two- to three-second distance behind the vehicle in front of you. Add time for complications such as heavy traffic or adverse roadway or environmental/weather conditions. 

This article was adapted from Motorcycle Mentorship Module 23 published by the Defense Safety Oversight Council (DSOC)

You wouldn't think of jumping
without a **parachute**...



Buckle Up
It Only Takes a Second



Regional/host commanders provide COMNAVSAFECEN-approved traffic safety training at no cost to all military and DON civilian personnel seeking on-base driving privileges. Contact your command Safety Office for availability.

