



FIRE & EMS BULLETIN



BLUE LIGHT FOR VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY RESPONDERS BEST PRACTICES

Volunteer fire departments, first aid, or rescue squads serve many communities. Volunteer members of those departments often utilize personal vehicles, which may be equipped with blue courtesy lights. It is crucial for the safety of both volunteer personnel and the public that rules and regulations about 'blue lights' are followed.

New Jersey Title 39 (N.J.S.A. 39:3-54.12) provides the specific regulations for using blue warning lights. Responders are permitted to utilize blue warning lights only if the applicant is an active member in good standing of a volunteer fire company, first aid or rescue squad, or a county or municipal Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and whose official duties include responding to a fire or emergency call. The blue light may be used only when operating the vehicle in response to an emergency. [U.S. Fire Administration](#) defines a *true emergency* as a situation in which there is a high probability of death or serious injury to an individual or significant property loss, and actions by an emergency vehicle driver may reduce the seriousness of the situation.

The requesting member shall complete an application for a blue light permit through the [New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission](#). The application must be approved by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer of the municipality's governing body being served by the volunteer department.

It's recommended that a procedure be established that the Mayor or C.E.O. first consult with the local Police Chief on the responder's application and verify the applicant's good standing with leaders of the emergency agency. The permit must be in possession of the operator when the blue light(s) are in operation. Permits are valid for four (4) years from the issuance date and are non-transferable. When the volunteer ceases to be an active member in good standing of a volunteer agency, the permit must be surrendered to the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission within ten (10) days.

Emergency warning lights may be removable or may be permanently mounted. They shall be flashing or revolving, or of the blue light bar type. Lights must be equipped with a blue lens and controlled by a switch installed inside the vehicle. N.J.S.A. 39:3-54.10 gives the regulations for installing blue lights on vehicles.

- Alternating, flashing, or strobe headlights are prohibited.
- Audible devices are not permitted.

Before permitting a new member to display a blue light, the agency official must educate the member on the rights and responsibilities of using a blue light. A sample Authorization for the Use of Blue Warning Light is on page 2.

Emergency personnel operating their vehicle with a blue light shall follow all traffic laws. That includes, but is not limited to, laws regarding speed, stopping at stop signs and red lights, and proper lanes of travel. Members operating warning or courtesy lights shall drive with due regard for the safety of all persons. Due regard is defined as "appropriate carefulness, which is the degree of care that a prudent person would exercise." The driver who fails to operate with due regard is not offered any limit of immunity and is responsible for the consequences of their reckless disregard for the safety of others.

Additional information can be found in the N.J. Division of Fire Safety's [Fire Service Reference Booklet 5](#).

MSI NOW offers training for Authorized Blue Light Users, Blue Light Best Practices. We recommend that anyone authorized to use a blue light complete the training.

INSERT NAME OF AGENCY

Blue Light: Authorization for the Use

I, (print name) _____, accept the rights and responsibilities of using a blue emergency warning light and the permit issued to me. Specifically, I understand the following:

1. I must remain an active member in good standing of a volunteer fire company, first aid or rescue squad, or a county or municipal Office of Emergency Management volunteer whose official duties include responding to a fire or emergency call to utilize a blue emergency warning light.
2. A blue emergency warning light shall only be used when the vehicle is being operated in response to an emergency, that is, a situation with a high probability of death or serious injury to an individual or significant property loss, and actions by an emergency agency may reduce the seriousness of the situation.
3. Using a blue emergency warning light does not extend privileges beyond those of any other motorist. All rules and regulations governed under Title 39-Motor Vehicles and Traffic Regulations shall be followed. This includes, but is not limited to, speeding, stopping at stop signs and red lights, using proper lanes of travel, and yielding when required. I may not pass a stopped school bus.
4. I will not use a blue emergency warning light when non-department members, including spouses, children, and friends, are in the vehicle.
5. A blue emergency warning light requests that other motorists grant me right-of-way. If a motorist does not, or cannot, yield the right-of-way, I will follow at a safe distance.
6. A blue emergency warning light still requires me to operate my vehicle with 'due regard.' Due regard is defined as "appropriate carefulness, which is the degree of care that a prudent person would exercise."
7. I accept responsibility for my actions and behaviors when using a blue emergency warning light and accept liability and legalities for my actions.
8. If, for any reason, I cease to be an active response member of the (insert name of organization), I will return my blue light permit to the N.J. Motor Vehicle Commission within 10 days as required by law.

Please initial:

I have been allowed to review the relevant sections of Title 39 and the Division of Fire Safety Booklet 5.

I have been given a chance to ask questions or request clarifications from a senior officer of the **INSERT NAME OF AGENCY.**

Signature of Member _____ Date _____

Signature of Officer _____ Date _____

Name & Rank of Officer _____