

New law designed to help protect police and medics on roadsides

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, between 1993 and 2002, 111 police officers were accidentally killed by passing motorists while performing their duties on the side of a highway.

In Oregon, 12 police officers have been killed in this way between the years mentioned.

In an effort to help protect police officers from these accidental deaths, the 2003 Oregon Legislature enacted a new law, in effect January 1, which requires motorists to maintain a

safe speed and/or distance from police or other emergency vehicles.

The offense of "Failure to Maintain Safe Distance from an Emergency Vehicle or Ambulance" occurs if a person operating a motor vehicle approaches an emergency vehicle or ambulance that is stopped and is displaying warning lights, and the person:

1. On a highway having two or more lanes for traffic in a single direction, fails to:

(a) Change lanes to a lane

not adjacent to that of the emergency vehicle or ambulance; or

(b) Reduce speed, if making a lane change is unsafe.

2. On a two direction, two-lane highway, fails to reduce the speed of the motor vehicle.

Failure to maintain a safe distance from an emergency vehicle or ambulance is a Class B traffic violation which carries a standard bail of \$237.00

All Troopers have stories of near-misses from motorists driving by while the Troopers

are on the side of the highway. Some have had to jump onto the hood of a stopped vehicle to avoid being struck. Two years ago, a State Trooper and a Reserve Police Officer in Salem were killed by a passing motorist. An OSP Sergeant was struck by the same vehicle and remains in a semi-conscious state.

Oregon State Police Troopers will aggressively enforce this new law, so use caution when approaching emergency vehicles stopped along our

highways. Being in a hurry for one reason or another and accidentally killing an officer or medic is the kind of long-lived memory that no one wants.



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