

## **The laws regarding displaying blue and green lights**

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Fire departments and ambulance companies must understand the law on displaying blue and green lights.

### Blue Lights

One blue light may be affixed to any motor vehicle owned by a volunteer member of a fire department or on a motor vehicle owned by a member of such person's family residing in the same household. A light may also be displayed on a vehicle owned by a business enterprise in which the member is employed or owns. The volunteer fireman must be authorized in writing to so affix a blue light by the chief of the fire department or company of which he is a member, which authorization shall be subject to revocation at any time by the chief who issued the same or his successor in office.

The blue light may be displayed by a volunteer fireman on a vehicle only when engaged in an emergency operation. Such written authority must be carried upon the person of the operator of the vehicle whenever such lights are displayed. The word "display" means to have turned on and lit up.

### Green Lights

One green light may be affixed to any motor vehicle owned by a member of a volunteer ambulance service, or on a motor vehicle owned by a member of such person's family. It may be displayed by a business enterprise in which he is employed or owns. Authorization to affix a green light must be in writing and signed by the chief officer of the volunteer ambulance service. The authorization given to members of their respective organization may be revoked at any time by the chief officer who issued the same or his successor in office. Such written authority must be carried upon the person of the operator of the vehicle whenever such lights are displayed. The word "display" means to have turned on and lit up.

### Additional requirements for blue and green lights

A blue or green light affixed to and displayed upon a vehicle shall comply with the following:

- Only one such light may be displayed which must be visible from in front of such vehicle.
- Such light may not be part of the headlamp system.
- No inscription may appear across the face of the lens or dome.
- Such light may be a fixed, unidirectional light, either steady or flashing, mounted in front of or behind the grille or anywhere on the vehicle, or a revolving, rotating, oscillating or constantly moving light which must be mounted above the headlamps preferably on the roof to avoid reflected glare or distraction to the operator.
- If mounted upon the dashboard inside the vehicle, a suitable cover, which may consist of paint, must be used to prevent reflected glare or distraction to the operator.
- Such light must consist of a lamp with a blue or green lens and not an uncolored lens with a blue or green bulb, except that a roof-mounted dome unit that does not include a lens, must consist of a blue or green dome and not an uncolored dome with a blue or green bulb.
- The lens of such a light must be not less than three inches nor more than six inches in diameter, except that a roof-mounted dome unit which does not include a lens must be not more than nine inches in height.

- The affixing of more than one light or lighting device or fixture whereby the lights or lamps are made to flash alternately is prohibited.

One bar light may be used, provided that:

- it has a housing not more than nine inches high
- it consists of a blue or green housing, and not an uncolored housing with blue bulbs
- all bulbs inside the housing flash on and off simultaneously
- the blue or green housing is continuous with no breaks, barriers or coverings which could give the appearance of two or more lights; and
- it is mounted on the roof of the vehicle and not on the hood, trunk or other part of the vehicle.

Lights that give off blinding flashes, such as strobe lights, are prohibited.

Some examples of prohibited lights are:

- a blue or green light on the front of the vehicle together with the same color light on the roof
- a blue or green dome light and a bar light of the same color
- a bar light divided into two or more parts by any section of another color, including white, or by any opaque material; or
- two blue or green dome lights.

A blue or green light may not be affixed to a vehicle which is entitled to have red lights affixed and one or more red lights are so affixed.

It is a violation of the Vehicle & Traffic Law to abuse these provisions. More importantly, if these provisions are violated, it might be possible for an insurance company to refuse to pay for accidents or injuries that occur while a vehicle is displaying such light during an emergency operation. Moreover, a plaintiff might be able to prove that the driver violated the law and such violation could assist the plaintiff in a victory for against the fire department, ambulance company or member.

If you have any questions about these laws, please feel free to contact Bradley M. Pinsky at (315) 428-8344.