EMERGENCY VEHICLE LIGHT DISCIPLINE

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) provides guidance on the use of emergency vehicle lighting. Emergency vehicle lighting is essential, especially in the initial stages of a traffic incident. However, it only warns drivers and does not provide effective traffic control. Using too many lights at an incident scene can be distracting and create confusion for approaching road users, especially at night (MUTCD 11th 6O.Ø5).

Emergency vehicle lighting can be reduced if effective traffic control has been established at a traffic incident scene. Effective traffic control is established by placing advance warning signs, cones, barrels, etc., to divert or detour traffic, allowing public safety agencies to perform their tasks on scene with minimal emergency vehicle lighting.

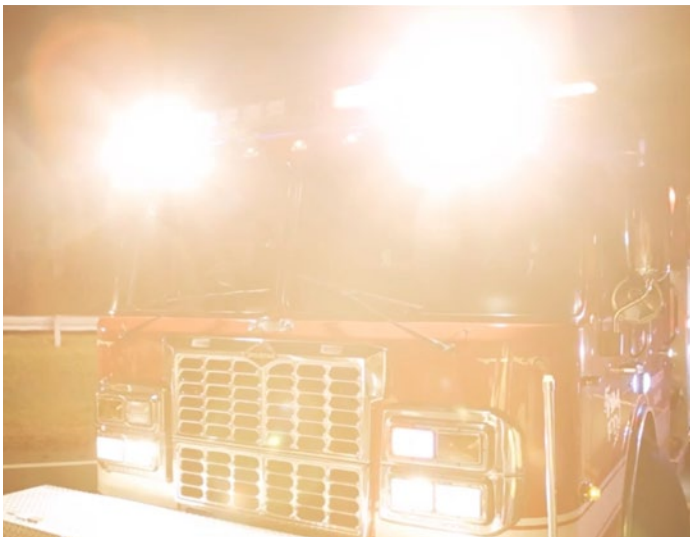
Practice S-M-A-R-T Lighting

- **S**trategic placement
- **M**eaningful messaging
- **A**utomatic features
- **R**educed pattern and intensity
- **T**iered approach (light shedding)

Learn about SMART lighting **here**.

BE SEEN, NOT BLINDING

A recent study[1] found that lower-intensity lights provided practically the same level of visibility at night as higher-intensity lights while causing less glare for drivers.



1 See "Effects of Emergency Vehicle Lighting Characteristics on Driver Perception and Behavior: Study Report" on respondersafety.com

Photo credits: Top of page from left to right: Scottsbluff Police Department, Blair Fire Department, Quality Tow
Bottom of page: Responder Safety Learning Network

WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

LED lighting technology allows responders to have more control over their vehicle lighting, including:

- **Active light color:** Governed by state law
- **Light intensity:** Auto-dim systems make this easy!
- **Flash pattern:** Light syncing technology allows multiple vehicles to display a unified flash pattern
- **Flash rate:** Higher when moving, lower when stationary

Other Application: Vehicle Mounted Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) Advanced warning messages or arrow sticks encourage drivers to slow down and move over for emergency responders.

Photo credit: Nebraska Motorist Assist Program (Autobase Corp)

GUIDANCE

- Once a scene is secured, place advanced warning signs and traffic control devices to detour traffic. With this protection in place, on-scene responders can reduce emergency vehicle lighting.
- Reduce or turn off forward-facing lighting, especially on divided roadways, to reduce distractions for oncoming drivers.
- Any floodlights or vehicle headlights that are not needed for visibility should be turned off at night.
- When multiple responder vehicles are on-scene, only the rear-most (upstream) vehicles and blocking vehicles should continue the using emergency lights after appropriate traffic control is in place.
- Emergency warning lights used at incident scenes should help drivers navigate the scene. The use of directional arrows and vehicle-mounted DMS is encouraged.

Once a scene is secured, less is more

Note: *Agencies should follow all applicable lighting standards to meet minimum lighting requirements established by local and national authorities.*

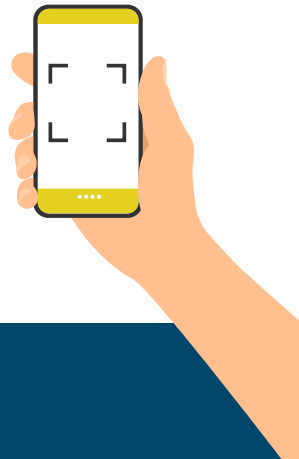
RESOURCES & TRAINING

Emergency Responder Safety Institute: Emergency Vehicles & Lighting (**respondersafety.com**)

- Training Module: **New Technologies in Emergency Vehicle Lighting**
- Training Module: **See and Be Seen: Emergency Lighting Awareness**

MUTCD 6O.Ø5 Use of Emergency-Vehicle Lighting

Scan the QR code with your phone to access resources and training!



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