

## **Move Over Slow Down: A Refresher From The Washington State Patrol**

### **Local News**

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BREMERTON, Wash. - The original Move Over Law was passed in 2007 in an effort to protect emergency workers who were stopped on the highways conducting their business. Since 2007, the number of collisions involving emergency vehicles and workers has increased. In 2010, legislation was submitted and passed to amend the old law to include an "Emergency Zone." The Emergency Zone Law was passed in the aftermath of growing numbers of police, emergency technicians, tow operators, and Department of Transportation workers being killed or struck during routine traffic stops, collision/accident response, impounding/towing vehicles, and highway construction projects. **An Emergency Zone is defined as the adjacent lanes of the roadway 200 feet (10 car lengths) before and after a stationary emergency vehicle with flashing lights, a tow truck using red lights, an emergency assistance vehicle using warning lights, or any police vehicle using emergency lights.** Sgt Scott Gordon of WSP Bremerton says that a DOT worker that he knows mentioned an interesting phenomenon that the worker witnessed while working the highways. "Motorists will change lanes for troopers on traffic stops but then change right back into the other lane-even when we have DOT trucks working with warning lights ahead on the shoulder." "There seems to be some confusion with the public on what constitutes emergency vehicles" Sgt Gordon said.

"Clearly DOT vehicles working on the highways are included in the move over law" Sgt Gordon mentioned. Anyone working on or near the state highways and freeways is clearly in harm's way, the proof being the numerous rear-end patrol car collisions in the last few years. **RCW 46.61.212 Approaching stationary emergency vehicles, tow trucks, and police vehicles:** On a highway having four or more lanes yield the right-of-way by making a lane change or moving away from the lane or shoulder occupied by the stationary authorized emergency vehicle or police vehicle. On a highway having less than four lanes, proceed with caution, reduce the speed of the vehicle, and, if reasonable, yield the right-of-way by passing to the left at a safe distance and simultaneously yield the right-of-way to all vehicles traveling in the proper direction upon the highway. If changing lanes or moving away would be unreasonable or unsafe, proceed with due caution and reduce the speed of the vehicle. If a motorist is stopped by a law enforcement officer for violating the Emergency Zone Law, the driver may receive an infraction. The penalty for the infraction is a monetary fine set by the state's legislature. You can receive any of the following penalties: **Fines for exceeding the posted speed limit are doubled in Emergency Zones. Failure to move over or slow down in an Emergency Zone, the fine is doubled. Motorists could be charged with Reckless Endangerment if driving in a manner as to endanger any emergency worker. If convicted of Reckless Endangerment, you could have your driver's license suspended for 90 days.**