



## ***SOUTH CAROLINA STATE FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION***

The South Carolina State Firefighters' Association (the Association) is dedicated to advocating for firefighter safety and well-being. Roadway safety has always been a priority for the Association as South Carolina roadways are becoming more and more dangerous. In today's modern times, the Association is finding that many different variables cause our highways to be unsafe as emergency workers respond to and mitigate incidents on South Carolina roadways. An overall lack of attentive driving to include distracted drivers, whether with cell phone usage; loud music/conversations in the vehicle; impaired driving; and/or excessive speeds have contributed to unsafe roadways. Unfortunately, law enforcement is being called upon to do more with less staffing which may contribute to the increased dangers on roadways. All these factors must be considered.

Further, there is a lack of understanding of state statute Emergency Scene Management [Section 56-5-1538](#), more commonly known as "SC Move-Over Law," which is designed to encourage motorists approaching an emergency scene to slow down or move over. Currently, the move-over law lacks real consequences for drivers who violate the law. Law enforcement has found it difficult to enforce the move-over law without specific language addressing the allowable speed limit considered to meet the slow down portion of the statute. Additionally, a lack of strength of penalties for not slowing down and/or moving over while approaching an emergency scene should be addressed.

The Association has always believed that roadway safety is one of our biggest threats for injuries and line of duty deaths for first responders and roadway workers. The fire service has improved its techniques in blocking roadways/lanes and protecting our first responders on emergency scenes; however, more and more equipment is being damaged which is very costly to local fire departments, which leads us to finding additional methods for ensuring these vehicles are best seen.

Recently, the issue of placing blue lights on fire apparatus has been the topic of conversation around the state by several fire chiefs. The thought process is that if an approaching motorist sees a blue light, they will automatically reduce speed, a natural reaction to avoiding an expensive speeding ticket.

The Association feels this is more than just a change in fire apparatus lighting. Other issues may exist like how roadways are blocked, how roadways are shut down, how advance messaging is conducted, how a work zone is defined and how far back should it be, how emergency vehicles are marked and the interaction between the markings and lights, etc.

The Association continues to have conversations about the use of blue lights on fire apparatus. We have reviewed research regarding emergency response lighting and the effects on the

emergency scene. The question comes back that if blue lights on vehicles are the answer, there should be no law enforcement officers, or their vehicles struck on the roadways. The Association is aware of incidents involving law enforcement vehicles that have been struck on roadways while blue lights were in operation, but we are unable to provide statistical data to this fact. Additionally, the Association is aware of at least one fire apparatus that was hit on an emergency scene while blue lights were in operation.

Also, it has been brought to our attention that several fire departments have placed and/or purchased fire apparatus with blue lights installed. It is the understanding and belief of the Association that the use of blue lights on fire apparatus places departments in jeopardy of violating state statute ([Section 56-5-4700\(C\)](#)). *We recommend that these fire departments should discuss with their governing bodies and/or attorneys to ensure that they are following the above referenced state statute.*

However, this leads us to the conclusion that it would be more advantageous to approach this issue comprehensively, as opposed to singularly, by reviewing and recommending best practices in protecting our first responders and emergency vehicles. Whatever we do, we should take the proper steps and collaborate with our partners, working side-by-side to provide safer work zones while working in and around South Carolina roadway emergency incidents.

It is recommended that the Executive Director communicate with our first responder partners to develop a statewide coalition to conduct a comprehensive review of roadway safety during emergency operations. The study could address the need for changes in legislation, regulations, standards and guidelines, policy, best practices, public awareness, etc.

Therefore, it is the opinion of the Executive Committee that the South Carolina State Firefighters' Association, to fulfill its mission, should assume the lead to advocate, educate, and create a culture of safety during emergency operations on South Carolina roadways.

Respectfully,



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South Carolina State Firefighters' Association



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