

DID YOU KNOW???

COLORED AND FLASHING LIGHTS HAVE RESTRICTED USE

During the large snowstorm of November 20 and 21, I saw a pick-up truck with a trailer containing a snow blower parked on the side of the road while the driver was snow blowing a customer's driveway. The vehicle was parked on the wrong side of the road, which is a violation of vehicle and traffic law (VTL) in itself, but furthermore, the light bar on the truck was displaying flashing amber and white lights. Flashing amber lights on a hazard vehicle, including pick-up trucks while in the act of plowing, are legal, but flashing white lights are not. Flashing white lights are only allowed on authorized emergency vehicles. NYS VTL, section 101, defines authorized emergency vehicles as; ambulance, police, correction, fire, civil defense, emergency ambulance service, blood delivery, county emergency response, sanitation patrol, hazardous materials emergency vehicle, and ordnance disposal vehicle of the armed forces of the US.

Red lights and certain white lights

NYS VTL, section 375(41) regulates what colored lights, if any, are allowed on which vehicles. One or more red or combination red and white lights, or one white light which must be a revolving, rotating, flashing, oscillating or constantly moving light, may be affixed to an authorized emergency vehicle, as described above, only when such vehicle is engaged in an emergency operation. However, a fire vehicle may display the red and/or white flashing lights while returning from an alarm or fire or other emergency.

Amber lights

Amber lights are reserved under section 375(41)(3) of VTL for hazard vehicles, which are defined in section 117-a as every vehicle owned and operated or leased by a utility, whether public or private, used in the construction, maintenance and repair of its facilities. It also includes vehicles equipped or designed for the towing or pushing of disabled vehicles, trash and garbage pickup vehicles, and every vehicle engaged in highway maintenance or in ice and snow removal where such operation involves the use of a public highway. It also includes rural letter carriers while performing their duties.

The temporary affixing and display of an amber light to be used as a warning on a disabled motor vehicle or on a motor vehicle while it is stopped on a highway while engaged in an operation which would restrict, impede or interfere with the normal flow of traffic is allowed under this section.

Blue lights

One blue light may be affixed to any motor vehicle owned by a volunteer member of a fire department, provided such volunteer firefighter has been authorized in writing to do so by the chief of the fire department of which he is a member. This authorization may be revoked at any time.

One or more blue lights or combination blue and red lights or combination blue, red and white lights may be affixed to a police vehicle, fire vehicle, ambulance, emergency ambulance service vehicle, and county emergency medical services vehicle for rear protection only.

Before affixing any colored or flashing light to your vehicle, be sure it is allowed under vehicle and traffic law. Also be certain when its use is allowed as well.