

DID YOU KNOW???

FLASHING WHITE LIGHTS ILLEGAL ON MOST VEHICLES

White flashing, rotating, revolving, or oscillating lights on pickup trucks plowing driveways and parking lots is illegal. I have also observed flashing white lights on the rear of trash collection vehicles and on the rear of propane delivery trucks. It seems this unauthorized use is becoming more and more prevalent, as I am seeing more than a few cases of this in the North Country. Owners of these vehicles can purchase light bars at auto supply stores or order them on-line and apparently can customize them to display any light combination desired. The use of white strobe lights, for example, may be legal in other states but they are not in New York.

NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL) section 375 (41) (2) specifies the allowable use of white lights, other than those required on all vehicles (headlights), to be displayed only on an authorized emergency vehicle, and then only if it is a revolving, rotating flashing, oscillating or constantly moving light.

VTL section 101 describes “Authorized emergency vehicle” as ambulance, police vehicle or bicycle, correction vehicle, fire vehicle, civil defense emergency vehicle, emergency ambulance service vehicle, environmental emergency response vehicle, sanitation patrol vehicle, hazardous materials emergency vehicle and ordnance disposal vehicle of the US armed forces. Unless you are operating one of the authorized emergency vehicles, you cannot display or use any flashing, rotating, revolving, oscillating, or constantly moving white light on your vehicle.

Section 375 (41) (2) only authorizes the use of these white lights when such vehicle is engaged in an emergency operation. However, a fire vehicle is allowed such usage when returning from an alarm of fire or other emergency.

Going back to pickup trucks used for plowing operations, this is considered a “hazard vehicle” when clearing a driveway or parking lot and as such should display a flashing, rotating, revolving “amber” light under VTL section 375 (41) (3). This section further authorizes the amber lights only when the vehicle is engaged in a hazardous operation – these vehicles are not allowed to operate the flashing amber lights when traveling between jobs. Far too many plow drivers move from one house or parking lot to another while continuing to display the amber flashing or rotating lights, a ticketable offense.

Violation of any of the above sections of VTL is punishable by a fine of up to \$150 for a first offense plus surcharges and/or up to 30 days in jail.

So, if you are the owner of a pickup truck with illegal display of white lights, you should remove them as soon as possible. If you know someone that is violating the above laws, please tell him/her – they likely are not aware that they are in violation.

For more articles on traffic law and safety, go to the traffic safety board’s web site at: www.franklincony.org and click on “Traffic Safety Board” under departments then look for Did You Know articles. You may also email me at: dwerner151@verizon.net