

DID YOU KNOW???

FLASHING YELLOW LEFT TURN ARROWS COMING

Just when you thought you knew everything about traffic signals, here comes a relatively new signal that motorists should be aware of and understand its meaning – a yellow flashing left turn arrow. The New York State Department of Transportation is now using flashing yellow left turn arrows at select intersections. These arrows have been used successfully in other states and are approved by the Federal Highway Administration.

The reason that NYS DOT is modifying some intersection signals by introducing the flashing yellow arrow is that it's safer. In a national study conducted by the Transportation Research Board as part of the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, drivers made fewer mistakes when turning left with a flashing yellow arrow than with a green ball signal.

Here's how it works. Take the intersection of W. Main St. and Finney Blvd. in Malone. If you are proceeding west on W. Main St. and intend to turn left onto Finney Blvd., after the ball red signal, you get a green left turn arrow. At this point, the green arrow means that you may cautiously enter the intersection to make the indicated left turn. Oncoming vehicles in the opposing direction have a red signal (unless they are also turning to their left) and pedestrians have a "don't walk" signal. However, if the queue of left turning vehicles is too long to make the left turn in the allotted time, the left turn green arrow is replaced by a yellow left turn arrow and then it too turns off, under the existing setup.

At this point, west-facing motorists have a ball green, as does opposing eastbound traffic. Like any intersection without turning arrows, you may still make a left turn as long as it is safe to do so – remember opposing traffic also has a green signal. Thus you must yield to opposing traffic and pedestrians. This is the condition where drivers may see the flashing left turn yellow signal in the near future. It basically means that you may still turn left when it is safe to do so, but it reinforces the need to do so with caution. Drivers attempting to make a left turn during the flashing yellow phase must yield to both oncoming traffic and pedestrians.

NYS DOT has already modified the signal at the intersection of Route 190 (Military Turnpike) and Route 374 just west of Plattsburgh. Another signal with the flashing yellow left turn arrow is the intersection of Route 3 and Main St. in Saranac Lake. Route 37 and Route 420 in Massena will have the upgrade this fall. Other intersections throughout the North Country may see the new signal in the next year or two. Look forward to it – it improves the safety of the intersection.

For more information on traffic law and traffic safety, visit the Traffic Safety Board web site at: www.franklincony.org and go to Traffic Safety Board under "Departments". Visit us on Facebook as well. You may also contact me by email at: d Werner151@verizon.net or call me at 483-1882.