

DID YOU KNOW???

GREEN FLASHING LIGHTS FOR AMBULANCE VOLUNTEERS

In early December, a “Did You Know” article dealt with colored flashing or rotating lights, including red, white, amber, and blue lights and on what vehicles they are authorized by NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL). In that article I failed to mention the authorized use of green flashing lights, mainly because I have never seen them in Franklin County. However, I received an email from someone in the Saranac Lake area that felt the use of green lights should have been included in that article. Apparently, in the Tri-Lakes area, volunteer ambulance/rescue departments are separate from volunteer fire departments. This may also be the case in many communities, and thus knowing what a flashing green light means is important to everyone.

Section 375(41)(5) allows one green light to be affixed to any motor vehicle owned by a member of a volunteer ambulance service, the same as a blue light may be used by a volunteer member of a fire department. Where volunteer fire departments also include rescue or ambulance service, most volunteers elect to choose the blue flashing light. But, in many cases, the rescue/ambulance service is a separate entity from the fire department, and when this is the case, ambulance/rescue volunteers affix a flashing green light to their vehicle, when authorized in writing by the chief officer of such service. The use of the green light may be displayed only when the volunteer is responding to an emergency call.

As used in this section of VTL, volunteer ambulance service means a non-profit membership corporation (other than a fire corporation) operating its ambulance(s) on a non-profit basis for the convenience of the community or under a contract with a county, city, town or village.

Green flashing lights displayed on the vehicle of a member of a volunteer ambulance service, similar to blue flashing lights on volunteer firemen’s vehicles, does not mean all traffic must pull over and stop – it is only a courtesy for motorists to do so. It also does not give the volunteer the right to speed or violate any other vehicle and traffic law. However, it is in the best interest of all drivers to respect the volunteers and the life-saving duties they perform, and it behooves all of us to pull over and allow them to get to their emergency as efficiently as possible.

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 under “services”. You may also email me at: dwerner151@verizon.net