November 14, 2019

EMS Personnel and Agencies:

We have received questions regarding the use of lights and sirens by EMS agencies conducting interfacility transfers. The purpose of this document is to provide clarification on this subject as it relates specifically to a transfer operational declaration.

Idaho Code §49-910A and §49-956 restricts the use of flashing red lights and sirens to only those approved emergency or police vehicles during a response to an actual emergency.

§49-910A (2) ... vehicles belonging to, or operated by EMS personnel certified or otherwise recognized by the EMS bureau of the Idaho department of health and welfare while in the performance of emergency medical services, ambulances, designated emergency vehicles described herein, ... may display red flashing lights or red lenses or globes which are visible from the front of the vehicle.

§49-956 (4) Any authorized emergency vehicle may be equipped with a siren, whistle, or bell, capable of emitting sound audible under normal conditions from a distance of not less than five hundred (500) feet and of a type approved by the director, but the siren shall not be used except when the vehicle is operated in response to an emergency call or in the immediate pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law, in which the latter events the driver of the vehicle shall sound the siren when reasonably necessary to warn pedestrians and other drivers of the approach.

By comparing Idaho Code §49-910A and §49-956 to the types of transfers authorized under a transfer operational declaration, there are limited situations wherein the use of lights and siren during a transfer would be warranted and legal.

Please feel free to contact our office with any concerns or questions at (208) 334-4000.

Sincerely,

Wayne Denny, MA
Bureau Chief
Idaho Bureau of EMS and Preparedness

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