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Help Protect Those Who Protect You

The side of the road can be a dangerous place for emergency vehicles. Alaska State Trooper Mike Wery found this out when his patrol car was rear-ended while he parked on the side of the road with his emergency lights flashing, partially blocking the outside of four lanes on the Richardson Highway so a tow truck could pull a vehicle out of the ditch.

This happened in the January 2008 – about six months after what is commonly known as the “Move Over Law” went into effect. The law is designed so motorists give emergency vehicles with flashing lights on the side of the road a wide berth in an effort to make it safer for not only emergency response vehicles, but tow truck drivers on the side of the road cleaning up after a crash. The law requires vehicles to move over for parked vehicles with flashing emergency lights on roadways with two or more lanes in the same directions when possible or to noticeably slow down. AS 28.35.185 applies to emergency vehicles, ambulances, fire vehicles, law enforcement patrol cars, tow trucks picking up a vehicle, and animal control vehicles when stationary with its lights flashing.

Luckily, Wery was wearing his seat belt and besides a piece of glass in his eyebrow, wasn't injured in the crash. Wery recalled hearing the tires on the pavement after the driver slammed on his brakes.

“I could hear the screeching,” he said. “I looked in the review mirror and saw him coming at me and thought to myself, ‘Well this wasn't going to be good.’”

However, the driver that hit him was injured and the passenger was badly shaken. Wery remembers hearing her screaming after he crawled out of his passenger side door. While Alaska State Troopers have not had anyone killed after being struck by vehicles along the highway, more than 150 U.S. law enforcements officers have since 1999.

Violators of the move over law face a two-point ticket and \$150 fine. Injuries that occur because the driver fails to slow down or move over makes it a misdemeanor crime that will result in a mandatory court date.

A public service announcement released by the Department of Public Safety reminding drivers to move over and slow down when approaching sitting vehicles with emergency lights flashing can be found on YouTube at <http://youtu.be/yQgFkoPdYQk>

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