

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5635

As of January 24, 2022

Title: An act relating to safety measures for tow truck operators and vehicles.

Brief Description: Addressing safety measures for tow truck operators and vehicles.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, J., Hunt, Lovick and Stanford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/25/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows tow trucks to operate rear facing blue lights for use only at the scene of an emergency or accident.
- Allows tow trucks to use red lights when reentering the roadway from the scene of an emergency or accident for a reasonable distance to reach operating speed.
- Requires drivers to reduce speed on high- speed highways to 50 miles per hour or less if unable to move over when approaching an emergency or work zone.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Under current law, tow trucks must be identified by an intermittent or revolving red light capable of 360 degree visibility at a distance of 500 feet under normal atmospheric conditions. The red light may be used only at the scene of an emergency or accident.

An emergency or work zone is defined as the adjacent lanes of the roadway 200 feet before

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and after:

- a stationary authorized emergency vehicle using audible or visual signals, or both;
- a tow truck using visual red lights;
- other vehicles providing roadside assistance using warning lights with 360 degree visibility;
- a police vehicle properly and lawfully displaying a flashing, blinking, or alternating emergency light or lights; or
- a stationary or slow moving highway construction vehicle, highway maintenance vehicle, solid waste vehicle, or utility service vehicle using flashing lights or warning lights with 360 degree visibility.

Drivers approaching an emergency or work zone must proceed with caution and, if the opportunity exists, with due regard for safety and traffic conditions, yield the right-of-way by making a lane change or moving away from the lane or shoulder occupied by an emergency or work zone vehicle. If approaching the emergency or work zone on a highway having less than four lanes, the driver must also reduce the speed of the vehicle. If changing lanes or moving away would be unsafe, the driver must proceed with due caution and reduce the speed of the vehicle to at least 10 miles per hour below the posted speed limit.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): Tow trucks may operate rear facing blue lights for use only at the scene of an emergency or accident. Tow trucks may use red lights when reentering the roadway from the scene of an emergency or accident for a reasonable distance to reach operating speed from the scene. The combination of red and blue lights may be used only at the scene of an emergency or accident.

Drivers must reduce their speed to 50 miles per hour or less on a highway with a speed limit exceeding 60 miles per hour if unable to move over when approaching an emergency or work zone.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.