

AN ACT

relating to the operation of and lighting equipment for medical examiner vehicles and vehicles operated by justices of the peace in certain circumstances.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 545.156, Transportation Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 545.156. VEHICLE APPROACHED BY AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLE. (a) This section applies only to:

(1) ~~[On the immediate approach of]~~ an authorized emergency vehicle using audible and visual signals that meet the requirements of Sections 547.305 and 547.702;

(2) a medical examiner vehicle, as defined by Section 547.751, lawfully using a visual signal in accordance with that section;

(3) a vehicle operated by a justice of the peace for a purpose described by Section 547.752 and lawfully using a visual signal in accordance with that section; and

(4) ~~[, or of]~~ a police vehicle lawfully using only an audible or visual signal.

(a-1) On the immediate approach of a vehicle described by Subsection (a), an operator, unless otherwise directed by a police officer, shall:

(1) yield the right-of-way;

1 (2) immediately drive to a position parallel to and as
2 close as possible to the right-hand edge or curb of the roadway
3 clear of any intersection; and

4 (3) stop and remain standing until the authorized
5 emergency vehicle has passed.

6 (b) This section does not exempt the operator of a [~~an~~
7 ~~authorized emergency~~] vehicle described by Subsection (a) from the
8 duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using
9 the highway.

10 SECTION 2. Chapter 547, Transportation Code, is amended by
11 adding Subchapter L-1 to read as follows:

12 SUBCHAPTER L-1. ADDITIONAL LIGHTING EQUIPMENT AUTHORIZED FOR
13 MEDICAL EXAMINER VEHICLES AND VEHICLES OPERATED BY JUSTICES OF THE
14 PEACE IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES

15 Sec. 547.751. ADDITIONAL LIGHTING EQUIPMENT AUTHORIZED FOR
16 MEDICAL EXAMINER VEHICLES. (a) In this section, "medical examiner
17 vehicle" means a motor vehicle that is owned or leased by a
18 governmental entity for use by a medical examiner or an employee of
19 an office of a medical examiner in the performance of the examiner's
20 or employee's duties relating to an inquest conducted under
21 Subchapter B, Chapter 49, Code of Criminal Procedure.

22 (b) A medical examiner vehicle may be equipped with either:

23 (1) mounted signal lamps that comply with the
24 requirements of Section 547.702(c); or

25 (2) a signal lamp that is temporarily attached to the
26 vehicle roof and flashes red and blue lights visible at a distance
27 of at least 500 feet in normal sunlight.

1 (c) The operator of a medical examiner vehicle may use the
2 lighting equipment described by Subsection (b) only when:

3 (1) necessary to warn other vehicle operators or
4 pedestrians of the approach of the medical examiner vehicle; and

5 (2) operating the vehicle in the course and scope of
6 the operator's duties relating to an inquest conducted under
7 Subchapter B, Chapter 49, Code of Criminal Procedure.

8 Sec. 547.752. ADDITIONAL LIGHTING EQUIPMENT AUTHORIZED FOR
9 VEHICLES OPERATED BY JUSTICES OF THE PEACE IN CERTAIN
10 CIRCUMSTANCES. (a) A vehicle operated by a justice of the peace in
11 the course and scope of the justice's duties as a coroner under
12 Subchapter A, Chapter 49, Code of Criminal Procedure, may be
13 equipped with either:

14 (1) mounted signal lamps that comply with the
15 requirements of Section 547.702(c); or

16 (2) a signal lamp that is temporarily attached to the
17 vehicle roof and flashes red and blue lights visible at a distance
18 of at least 500 feet in normal sunlight.

19 (b) A justice of the peace may use the lighting equipment
20 described by Subsection (a) only when:

21 (1) necessary to warn other vehicle operators or
22 pedestrians of the approach of a vehicle operated by a justice of
23 the peace; and

24 (2) operating the vehicle in the course and scope of
25 the justice's duties relating to an inquest conducted under
26 Subchapter A, Chapter 49, Code of Criminal Procedure.

27 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2616 was passed by the House on May 5, 2023, by the following vote: Yeas 139, Nays 2, 2 present, not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 2616 was passed by the Senate on May 21, 2023, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: _____

Date

Governor