

By: Vasut

H.B. No. 2616

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

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;

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

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

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

SECTION 2. Chapter [547](#), Transportation Code, is amended by adding Subchapter L-1 to read as follows:

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

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

(b) A medical examiner vehicle may be equipped with either:  
(1) mounted signal lamps that comply with the requirements of Section [547.702\(c\)](#); or  
(2) a signal lamp that is temporarily attached to the vehicle roof and flashes red and blue lights visible at a distance 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.