

Position Statement on the use of Blue Lights- BASICS Executive Council- reaffirmed 13 Nov 2003

The use of blue lights by police, fire, ambulance, mines rescue, coastguard, blood transfusion personnel and also vehicles registered as ambulances, such as those belonging to voluntary aid societies or private ambulance services is strictly controlled by law.

Only vehicles carrying registered medical practitioners proceeding to an emergency are permitted to use green flashing beacons.

The only circumstances under which BASICS Immediate Care Practitioner should use blue lights are when **ALL** of the following circumstances pertain.

1. The Immediate Care Practitioner has a formal pre-arranged relationship with the Ambulance Service calling him out.
2. The request for assistance has come directly from the Ambulance Service Control to assist the Ambulance Service itself in the execution of its duties.
3. The emergency service calling out a BASICS Immediate Care Practitioner specifically requires the special extended and **currently** accredited skills of the Immediate Care Practitioner.
4. That the Immediate Care Practitioner has undergone appropriate advanced driver training as designated by the tasking ambulance service taking into account

The Driving Standards Agency document entitled Core Competencies for drivers responding to emergencies using audible & visual warning devices .

The Department of Health letter September 2001 Training and core competencies for drivers of all emergency vehicles under "blue light" conditions.

5. That the advanced driving skills are periodically reassessed and reaccredited as determined by the tasking ambulance service.

In summary, the accredited driving skills must be current, and the accredited extended Immediate Care Practitioner skills must be current and the reason for the call is to assist the Ambulance Service itself in the execution of its duties.

The term practitioner only includes a Registered Medical Practitioner, Registered Nurse or IHCD ("State Registered") Paramedic

Appendices

Appendix 1

September 2001

To: NHS Trust and Health
Authority Chief Executives

Dear Colleague,

TRAINING AND CORE COMPETENCIES FOR DRIVERS OF ALL EMERGENCY VEHICLES UNDER “BLUE LIGHT” CONDITIONS

In 1998, the Department of Health engaged the Ambulance Service Association (ASA) to work with the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) to determine and define a set of core competencies that should be applicable to **all** those who drive **any** emergency vehicle under “blue light” conditions.

This action followed an investigation by the Health Service Commissioner into the tragic death of a member of the public who was hit by an ambulance driving at speed using blue lights and working on contract to the NHS.

The core competencies developed by the DSA have now been accepted and endorsed by the ASA, the Police Service, the Fire Service and Ministry of Defence. The DSA will now approach other blue light users, including private sector ambulance companies, to secure their acceptance.

As a next step, the ASA is now considering what, if any, changes, need to be made to the national driving course syllabus for NHS Ambulance staff which is already well established.

Following his investigation, the Health Service Commissioner specifically recommended to the Secretary of State for Health that all NHS organisations who employ or engage drivers to drive under emergency conditions must ensure that they have undertaken adequate specialist driver training.

The Department of Health strongly supports the view that all drivers who will operate under “blue light” conditions must possess the necessary skills. I would ask you, therefore, to:

- familiarise yourself with the core competencies which have been developed (copies are available from the ASA website, whose address is www.asa.net.uk);
- have effective arrangements in place which ensure that existing and new drivers employed by your organisation to drive under “blue light” conditions and drivers working for any contractor employed by your organisation to drive vehicles under emergency “blue light” conditions, have undertaken training which is in line with the new core competencies;

- make sure that adequate documentation and monitoring arrangements are in place for any such arrangements.

Any enquiries about this letter should be addressed to Karl Blackshaw on 0113 254 5212. Yours sincerely

Gerard Hetherington
Winter & Emergency Services Team

Copies:

Hilary Bainbridge, Director of Investigations, Office for the Health Service Commissioner.

Richard Diment, Chief Executive, ASA.

Carolyn Heaney, Complaints & Clinical Negligence Policy Unit.

Bruce Harris, Audit Commission.

BLUE LIGHT USERS WORKING PARTY

EXPECTATIONS DOCUMENT

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR DRIVERS RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES USING AUDIBLE & VISUAL WARNING DEVICES

A group consisting of representatives from Police, Fire, Ambulance and Ministry of Defence and led by the Driving Standards Agency (Blue light Users Working Party) have held meetings to establish the core competencies required by those drivers using blue lights and audible warning devices in emergency situations.

As a result they have now agreed a set of core competencies they consider to be the minimum necessary for any driver to be skilled in before driving a vehicle in such circumstances.

These competencies are in three elements, which includes the performance criteria and the required underpinning knowledge, as follows:

ELEMENT ONE

The ability to assess the need for an emergency response.

ELEMENT TWO

The ability to drive the vehicle safely to emergencies.

ELEMENT THREE

The ability to demonstrate the correct attitude when responding to emergencies.

ELEMENT ONE

ASSESSMENT FOR THE NEED FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Performance criteria

- Ensure the vehicle is suitable and ready for emergency response.~
- Assess the need to respond using emergency audible and visual warning devices. Display awareness of responsibilities and legal requirements when deciding upon the need for an emergency response.
- Assess the need for continued response.
- Comply with organisations instructions.

Range statements

1. All locations (urban, town/city, rural)
2. All road conditions (heavy/light traffic, motorway, built-up areas, and two-lane roads).
3. All weathers-conditions/visibility (rain, ice, snow, high wind and standing water).
4. Night/day
5. As a single task or as one of competing priorities.

Underpinning knowledge

Road Traffic Law.
Civil Law (duty of care).
Health and Safety Law.
Service policy and directives.
Highway Code.
Roadcraft.
Human aspects of Police
drivers).
Legal exemptions.
Driving (suitable for all emergency response

ELEMENT TWO

DRIVING VEHICLE SAFELY IN RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES

Performance criteria

- Warn other road users, where appropriate, through effective display and use of audible and visual emergency warning devices.
- Continually assess and adjust driving speed to that appropriate to road and traffic conditions, and the urgency of the response necessary, to ensure safety.
- Position the vehicle for advantage in respect to the position and movement of other road users.
- Show awareness and assess the likely unplanned actions of other road users.
- Show awareness, and assess the impact of the use of emergency audible and visual warning devices on others.
- Drive within the vehicle limitations.
- Correct use of legal exemptions where justified and with regard to public safety.
- Correct use of communications equipment when undertaking emergency response driving.
- Drive within the drivers personal limitations,

Range statements

1. All locations (urban, town/city, rural)
2. All road conditions (heavy/light traffic, motorway, built-up areas, and two-lane roads).
3. All weathers-conditions/visibility (rain, ice, snow, high wind and standing water).
4. Night / day
5. As a single task or as one of competing priorities.

Underpinning knowledge

Road Traffic Law.

Civil Law.

Health and Safety Law.

Service policy and directives.

Highway Code.

Roadcraft

Human aspects of Police Driving (suitable for all emergency response drivers).

Radio procedures.

Legal exemptions.

ELEMENT THREE

DRIVER ESSENTIAL ATTITUDES

Performance criteria

- Display awareness and understanding of how attitude affects behaviour and performance when driving in emergency response situations.
- Recognise and respond appropriately to fatigue and stress levels, which may affect judgement and performance.
- Recognise and show awareness of the need to place safety above all else.
- Recognise how negative attitude and emotions can effect the decision making process.
- Recognise that physiological changes can impair judgement.
- Demonstrate a calm, considered and professional manner when driving.
- Recognise that safety is paramount at all times.

Range statements

1. *All locations (urban, town/city, rural).*
2. *All road conditions (heavy/light traffic, motorway, built-up areas, and two-lane roads).*
3. *All weathers-conditions/visibility (rain, ice, snow, high wind and standing*
4. *water).*
5. *Night/day.*
6. *As a single task or as one of competing priorities.*
7. *Driving time.*

Underpinning knowledge

Road Traffic Law.
Civil Law.
Health and Safety Law.
Service policy and directives.
Highway Code.
Roadcraft.
Human aspects of Police Driving (suitable for all emergency response drivers).
Radio procedures.
Legal exemptions.