



## USE OF FLASHING LIGHTS BY FIRE POLICE

By: Veronica Rose, Chief Analyst

### ISSUE

When are fire police officers responding to an emergency authorized to use flashing lights? Can a municipality restrict when they use their lights in emergencies?

### SUMMARY

Neither the statutes nor case law addresses the question of fire police officers' use of lights in responding to emergencies. But the statute that authorizes the appointment of these officers gives the appointing authority (the municipal fire chief) sole power to designate their powers and duties. Some appointees may be firefighters, and a separate law authorizes firefighters to use flashing lights in responding to emergencies. But the law does not say whether municipalities may restrict their use of the lights.

### WHO ARE FIRE POLICE OFFICERS?

The law authorizes municipal fire chiefs, within available appropriations, to appoint "fire department members or other persons," as they deem necessary, to be fire police officers ([CGS § 7-313a](#)).

Such officers have the powers and perform the duties designated to them and authorized by their appointing authority. Their powers and duties include controlling and regulating traffic during fire drills or fire calls or at other times while serving with their fire department or providing assistance (mutual aid) to another department ([CGS § 7-313a](#)).

Fire police officers are not "police officers" as defined in [CGS § 7-294a](#), and they are not "firefighters" as defined in [CGS § 7-323j](#), although the fire chief may appoint firefighters as fire police officers.



## **USE OF FLASHING LIGHTS**

The law limits who may use flashing or revolving lights on vehicles. Among those who may do so are firefighters, as described below. It allows fire police officers to use red lights, including flashing red lights, on a stationary vehicle as a warning signal during traffic-directing operations at the scene of a fire or emergency, under a permit issued by the motor vehicles commissioner ([CGS § 14-96q\(e\)](#)).

[CGS Section 14-96q\(c\)](#) allows active volunteer firefighters on the way to or at the scene of a fire or other emergency requiring their services to use flashing blue lights on motor vehicles they are operating. To do so, they must obtain a permit from the chief executive officer of their volunteer fire department or company.

[CGS Section 14-96q\(e\)](#) allows paid and volunteer fire chiefs and their deputies and assistants (up to five individuals per department) to use flashing red lights on vehicles, under a permit issued by the motor vehicles commissioner ([CGS § 14-96q\(e\)](#)).

The commissioner may also issue permits that allow volunteer fire department members on route to a fire scene to use flashing white head lamps on the vehicles they are operating, provided they have obtained written authorization from the chief law enforcement officer of the municipality to do so. The headlamps may be used only in the municipality that grants the authorization or from a personal residence or place of employment, if located in an adjoining municipality ([CGS 14-96q\(g\)](#)). The commissioner may also issue a permit for flashing white head lamps to fire chiefs and their deputies and assistants to be used under these same circumstances ([CGS 14-96q\(g\)](#)).

VR:cmg