



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 466**

January Session, 2019

House Bill No. 5658

*House of Representatives, April 8, 2019*

The Committee on Public Safety and Security reported through REP. VERRENGIA of the 20th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the bill ought to pass.

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RED AND BLUE LIGHTS ON VEHICLES OPERATED BY POLICE OFFICERS.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 14-96q of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2019*):

3 (a) A permit is required for the use of colored or flashing lights on  
4 all motor vehicles or equipment specified in this section except: (1)  
5 Motor vehicles not registered in this state used for transporting or  
6 escorting any vehicle or load, or combinations thereof, which is either  
7 oversize or overweight, or both, when operating under a permit issued  
8 by the Commissioner of Transportation pursuant to section 14-270; or  
9 (2) motor vehicles or equipment that are (A) equipped with lights in  
10 accordance with this section, (B) owned or leased by the federal  
11 government, the state of Connecticut, or any other state,  
12 commonwealth or local municipality, and (C) registered to such  
13 governmental entity. When used in this section the term "flashing"

14 shall be considered to include the term "revolving".

15 (b) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, or such other person  
16 specifically identified in this section, is authorized to issue permits for  
17 the use of colored or flashing lights on vehicles in accordance with this  
18 section, at the commissioner's or such person's discretion. Any person,  
19 firm or corporation other than the state or any metropolitan district,  
20 town, city or borough shall pay an annual permit fee of twenty dollars  
21 to the commissioner for each such vehicle. Such fee shall apply only to  
22 permits issued by the commissioner.

23 (c) A blue light or lights, including flashing blue lights, but not  
24 including a steady blue illuminated light visible from the front of a  
25 vehicle, may be used on a motor vehicle operated by an active member  
26 of a volunteer fire department or company or an active member of an  
27 organized civil preparedness auxiliary fire company who has been  
28 issued a permit by the chief executive officer of such department or  
29 company to use such a light while on the way to or at the scene of a  
30 fire or other emergency requiring such member's services. Such permit  
31 shall be on a form provided by the commissioner and may be revoked  
32 by such chief executive officer or successor. The chief executive officer  
33 of each volunteer fire department or company or organized civil  
34 preparedness auxiliary fire company shall keep on file, on forms  
35 provided by the commissioner, the names and addresses of members  
36 who have been authorized to use flashing blue lights as provided in  
37 this subsection. Such listing shall also designate the registration  
38 number of the motor vehicle on which authorized flashing blue lights  
39 are to be used.

40 (d) A green light or lights, including flashing green lights, may be  
41 used on a motor vehicle operated by an active member of a volunteer  
42 ambulance association or company who has been issued a permit by  
43 the chief executive officer of such association or company to use such a  
44 light, while on the way to or at the scene of an emergency requiring  
45 such member's services. Such permit shall be on a form provided by  
46 the commissioner and may be revoked by such chief executive officer

47 or successor. The chief executive officer of each volunteer ambulance  
48 association or company shall keep on file, on forms provided by the  
49 commissioner, the names and addresses of members who have been  
50 authorized to use flashing green lights as provided in this subsection.  
51 Such listing shall also designate the registration number of the vehicle  
52 on which the authorized flashing green lights are to be used.

53 (e) The commissioner may issue a permit for a red light or lights,  
54 including flashing red lights, but not including a steady red  
55 illuminated light visible from the front of a vehicle, which may be used  
56 on a motor vehicle or equipment (1) used by paid fire chiefs and their  
57 deputies and assistants, up to a total of five individuals per  
58 department, (2) used by volunteer fire chiefs and their deputies and  
59 assistants, up to a total of five individuals per department, (3) used by  
60 members of the fire police on a stationary vehicle as a warning signal  
61 during traffic directing operations at the scene of a fire or emergency,  
62 (4) used by chief executive officers of emergency medical service  
63 organizations, as defined in section 19a-175, the first or second  
64 deputies, or if there are no deputies, the first or second assistants, of  
65 such an organization that is a municipal or volunteer or licensed  
66 organization, (5) used by local fire marshals, or (6) used by directors of  
67 emergency management.

68 (f) The commissioner may issue a permit for a yellow or amber light  
69 or lights, including flashing yellow or amber lights, which may be  
70 used on motor vehicles or equipment that are (1) specified in  
71 subsection (e) of this section, (2) maintenance vehicles as defined in  
72 section 14-1, or (3) vehicles transporting or escorting any vehicle or  
73 load or combinations thereof, which is or are either oversize or  
74 overweight, or both, and being operated or traveling under a permit  
75 issued by the Commissioner of Transportation pursuant to section 14-  
76 270. A yellow or amber light or lights, including flashing yellow or  
77 amber lights, may be used without obtaining a permit from the  
78 Commissioner of Motor Vehicles on wreckers registered pursuant to  
79 section 14-66, on vehicles of carriers in rural mail delivery service or on  
80 vehicles operated by construction inspectors employed by the state of

81 Connecticut, authorized by the Commissioner of Transportation, used  
82 during the performance of inspections on behalf of the state. The  
83 Commissioner of Transportation shall maintain a list of such  
84 authorized construction inspectors, including the name and address of  
85 each inspector and the registration number for each vehicle on which  
86 the lights are to be used.

87 (g) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles may issue a permit for a  
88 white light or lights, including flashing white lights, which may be  
89 used on a motor vehicle or equipment as specified in subdivision (1),  
90 (2), (4), (5) or (6) of subsection (e) of this section. A vehicle being  
91 operated by a member of a volunteer fire department or company or a  
92 volunteer emergency medical technician may use flashing white head  
93 lamps, provided such member or emergency medical technician is on  
94 the way to the scene of a fire or medical emergency and has received  
95 written authorization from the chief law enforcement officer of the  
96 municipality to use such head lamps. Such head lamps shall only be  
97 used within the municipality granting such authorization or from a  
98 personal residence or place of employment, if located in an adjoining  
99 municipality. Such authorization may be revoked for use of such head  
100 lamps in violation of this subdivision. For the purposes of this  
101 subsection, the term "flashing white lights" shall not include the  
102 simultaneous flashing of head lamps.

103 (h) The commissioner may issue a permit for emergency vehicles, as  
104 defined in subsection (a) of section 14-283, to use a blue, red, yellow, or  
105 white light or lights, including flashing lights or any combination  
106 thereof, except that the commissioner may only issue a permit for a  
107 steady blue or red illuminated light visible from the front of a vehicle  
108 for a state or local police vehicle operated by a police officer.

109 (i) The commissioner may issue a permit for ambulances, as defined  
110 in section 19a-175, which may, in addition to the flashing lights  
111 allowed in subsection (h) of this section, use flashing lights of other  
112 colors specified by federal requirements for the manufacture of an  
113 ambulance. If the commissioner issues a permit for any ambulance,

114 such permit shall be issued at the time of registration and upon each  
115 renewal of such registration.

116 (j) Use of colored and flashing lights except as authorized by this  
117 section shall be an infraction.

|   |                        |        |
|---|------------------------|--------|
| This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections: |                        |        |
| Section 1   | <i>October 1, 2019</i> | 14-96q |

**PS**      *Joint Favorable*

*The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.*

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**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:**

| <b>Agency Affected</b>       | <b>Fund-Effect</b>          | <b>FY 20 \$</b>    | <b>FY 21 \$</b>    |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Department of Motor Vehicles | TF - Potential Revenue Loss | less than \$10,000 | less than \$10,000 |

Note: TF=Transportation Fund

**Municipal Impact:** None

**Explanation**

The bill limits the use of a steady blue or red illuminated light, visible from the front of a vehicle, to state or local police vehicles operated by a police officer. To the extent there are vehicles that currently obtain this \$20 permit, there may be a potential revenue loss of less than \$10,000 to the Special Transportation Fund.

**The Out Years**

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to number of permits.

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**OLR Bill Analysis****HB 5658*****AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RED AND BLUE LIGHTS ON VEHICLES OPERATED BY POLICE OFFICERS.*****SUMMARY**

Existing law requires that motor vehicles have a permit, issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) commissioner or other authorized individuals, in order to display colored or flashing lights, subject to certain exceptions. Federal, state, or municipal government vehicles displaying lights in accordance with the law are exempt from the requirement.

This bill limits the use of a steady blue or red illuminated light, visible from the front of a vehicle, to a state or local police vehicle operated by a police officer. It does this by prohibiting (1) the DMV commissioner from issuing a permit for such a blue or red light to any vehicle, other than a state or local police vehicle and (2) other types of vehicles from displaying such lights.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2019

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 24 Nay 0 (03/19/2019)