

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 21-195—sSB 983
Transportation Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICE VEHICLES AND AGRICULTURAL TRACTORS

SUMMARY: This act expands the state’s vulnerable user law to include people operating a (1) commercial motor vehicle equipped with a garbage compactor, detachable container, or curbside recycling body; (2) tank vehicle; (3) vehicle the U.S. government authorizes to carry mail; or (4) vehicle an express delivery carrier operates (collectively, “service vehicles”).

The act also requires a driver, when passing a service vehicle or agricultural tractor on the left, to pass at a distance of at least three feet. It does so by extending the definition of “safe distance” in the state’s passing law.

Under existing law and the act, a “tank vehicle” is a commercial motor vehicle with a permanently or temporarily attached tank designed to transport liquid or gaseous material, but not a vehicle with a portable tank that has a rated capacity of 1,000 gallons or less (CGS § 14-1(97)). Additionally, an “agricultural tractor” is a tractor or other form of non-muscular motive power used for (1) transporting, hauling, plowing, cultivating, planting, harvesting, reaping, or other agricultural purposes on a farm or other private property or (2) transporting, from one farm to another, agricultural implements and farm products, provided the tractor is not used on any public road for transporting a payload or for some other commercial purpose (CGS § 14-1(2)).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2021

VULNERABLE USER LAW

By law, a driver operating a motor vehicle on a public way faces a penalty of up to \$1,000 if he or she fails to exercise reasonable care and causes substantial bodily harm to, or the serious physical injury or death of, a “vulnerable user” who exercised reasonable care in using the public way.

The act expands the list of vulnerable users to include people operating specified service vehicles. The other vulnerable users under existing law are:

1. pedestrians;
2. highway workers;
3. people riding or driving animals;
4. people riding a bicycle, electric bicycle, or electric foot scooter;
5. skateboarders and in-line or roller skaters;
6. people riding or driving agricultural tractors;
7. people using wheelchairs or motorized chairs; and
8. people who are blind and their service animals.

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PASSING LAW

Existing law generally requires a driver of a vehicle passing another vehicle traveling in the same direction to (1) pass on the left at a safe distance and (2) not move right until safely clear of the overtaken vehicle. Prior law only specified that in the case of a vehicle overtaking and passing a person riding a bicycle, electric bicycle, or electric foot scooter, a “safe distance” is at least three feet (CGS § 14-232). The act extends this specification to passing service vehicles and agricultural tractors. Under existing law, a violation of this statute is an infraction.

By law, these requirements do not apply in situations when the driver is lawfully passing on the right or in a no-passing zone (CGS §§ 14-233 & 14-234).