

# Tow Truck Warning Light Colors in Other States

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## Issue

Provide information on (1) the color of tow truck warning lights allowed in northeastern states and (2) states that allow light colors other than amber or yellow.

## Warning Light Colors

In order to warn passing drivers and protect tow truck operators while they prepare a vehicle for towing, tow trucks are typically equipped with warning lights that provide intermittent light (flashing, rotating, etc.). The color of these lights is generally regulated at the state level, and state laws typically specify the color or colors different types of vehicles are permitted or required to display. Tow trucks are most commonly permitted to use amber or yellow lights so that they are not confused with police cruisers or other emergency vehicles. But advocates for the towing industry have expressed concern that drivers do not slow down for amber or yellow lights and have sought changes in state laws to allow tow trucks to use other colors like blue, red, or green, which they contend are more visible and more likely to cause drivers to change behavior.

Most northeastern states allow or require only amber or yellow lights, but two states also allow blue lights (New York and Pennsylvania) and one allows green (Maine). Table 1 lists the color of warning lights allowed or required in northeastern states and provides further detail on the laws' requirements.

At least sixteen states allow or require tow trucks to have warning lights in colors other than amber or yellow. Table 2 lists the states, the light colors, and additional information about the law's

requirements. Red is the most common non-amber color authorized or required (12 states), and eleven states allow or require blue lights.

**Table 1: Tow Truck Warning Light Colors in Northeastern States**

State	Light Colors	More Information
Connecticut	Amber and Yellow	Tow trucks may use yellow or amber steady or flashing lights ( <a href="#">CGS § 14-96q(f)</a> )
Delaware	Amber	Tow trucks must have amber rotating or strobe lights meeting visibility requirements ( <a href="#">2 Del. Admin. Code 1301-3.2.4.2</a> )
Maine	Amber and Green	Tow trucks must have flashing amber lights meeting statutory visibility requirements. They may also have green lights but may use them only in specific circumstances. ( <a href="#">Me. Stat. tit. 19 § 2054</a> )
Maryland	Amber or Yellow	Tow trucks may have yellow or amber lights and may display flashing amber lights at an accident scene or while towing a vehicle ( <a href="#">Md. Code, Transportation, §§ 22-218 (c)(6) &amp; -218.2</a> )
Massachusetts	Amber	Tow trucks may have flashing, rotating, or oscillating amber lights, and they may not use other colored lights ( <a href="#">540 Mass. Code Regs. § 22.06</a> )
New Hampshire	Amber	Requires tow trucks to have at least one rotating or flashing amber light meeting visibility requirements ( <a href="#">N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 266:109</a> )
New Jersey	Amber	Tow trucks may use flashing amber lights under certain circumstances ( <a href="#">N.J. Admin. Code § 13:24-4.1</a> )
New York	Amber and Blue	Hazard vehicles (which include tow trucks) must display amber lights meeting certain visibility criteria under certain circumstances; tow trucks, specifically, may also have blue lights (displayed for rear projection only), but they may only display them in conjunction with the amber lights ( <a href="#">NY Veh. &amp; Traf. § 375</a> )
Pennsylvania	Blue, White, and Yellow	Tow trucks may have flashing or revolving yellow, white, and/or blue lights but may use them only in specific circumstances (e.g., when stationary on the side of the road while responding to a disabled vehicle) ( <a href="#">75 PA Cons Stat § 4572.1</a> )

**Table 1 (continued)**

State	Light Colors	More Information
Rhode Island	Amber	Tow trucks may have forward viewing or rotating amber lights and may use flashing amber lights under certain circumstances ( <a href="#">R.I. Gen. Laws § 31-24-31(b)(2)</a> )
Vermont	Amber	Tow trucks must have amber signal lamps meeting visibility requirements ( <a href="#">23 V.S.A. § 1252</a> )

**Table 2: States That Allow or Require Warning Lights in Colors Other Than Amber and Yellow**

State	Light colors	More Information
Iowa	Amber, Blue, Red, and White	Tow trucks may be designated as emergency vehicles, and emergency vehicles may have red, blue, and white lights; Towing and recovery vehicles may also have flashing amber lights ( <a href="#">Iowa Code §§ 321.423, 321.424, &amp; 321.451</a> )
Kansas	Blue, Red, and White	Tow trucks are considered emergency vehicles and must display red flashing lights or flashing red and white or red and blue lights in combination that meet visibility requirements ( <a href="#">Kan. Stat. Ann. §§ 8-2010 &amp; 8-1720</a> )
Maine	Amber and Green	Tow trucks must have flashing amber lights meeting statutory visibility requirements. They may also have green lights but may use them only in specific circumstances. ( <a href="#">Me. Stat. tit. 19 § 2054 (2)(C)</a> )
Minnesota	Amber and Red	Tow trucks must have flashing or intermittent red and amber lights meeting visibility requirements ( <a href="#">Minn. Stat. § 168B.16</a> )
Missouri	Blue and Red	Tow trucks are considered emergency vehicles when performing emergency services and must have red or blue lights meeting certain visibility requirements ( <a href="#">Mo. Rev. Stat. §§ 304.022 &amp; 307.175</a> )
Montana	Amber and Red	Tow trucks must have flashing amber or flashing red lights, or both, that meet visibility requirements ( <a href="#">Mont. Code Ann. § 61-9-416</a> )
Nebraska	Blue and Red	Tow trucks may get a permit to use rotating or flashing red lights or red lights in combination with blue lights when performing services at an accident ( <a href="#">Neb. Rev. Stat. § 60-6.233 (2)</a> )

Table 2 (continued)

State	Light colors	More Information
New Mexico	Any color other than red	Tow trucks may display flashing lights in any color other than red while standing on a highway or removing a vehicle from a highway ( <a href="#">N.M. Stat. § 66-3-835</a> )
New York	Amber and Blue	Hazard vehicles (which include tow trucks) must display amber lights meeting certain visibility criteria under certain circumstances; tow trucks, specifically, may also have blue lights (displayed for rear projection only), but they may only display them in conjunction with the amber lights ( <a href="#">NY Veh. &amp; Traf. § 375</a> )
Oklahoma	Amber, Blue, and Red	Tow trucks must have a flashing or rotating amber light meeting visibility requirements and may additionally have a red or blue, or red and blue, flashing light to use only at emergency scenes ( <a href="#">Okla. Admin. Code § 595:25-5-2</a> )
Oregon	Amber and Red	Tow trucks must have red or amber warning lights that flash or otherwise provide intermittent light ( <a href="#">Or. Rev. Stat. § 816.280 (1)(b)</a> )
Pennsylvania	Blue, White, and Yellow	Tow trucks may have flashing or revolving yellow, white, and/or blue lights but may use them only in specific circumstances (e.g., when stationary on the side of the road while responding to a disabled vehicle) ( <a href="#">75 PA Cons Stat § 4572.1</a> )
Texas	Amber, Blue, and Red	Tow trucks must have amber warning lights and may have flashing red and blue lights for use only at accident scenes or disabled vehicles ( <a href="#">Tex. Transp. Code § 574.305</a> & <a href="#">Texas DOT lighting standards</a> )
Washington	Blue and Red	Emergency tow trucks must have an intermittent or revolving red light meeting visibility requirements and use it at the emergency scene ( <a href="#">Wash. Rev. Code § 46.37.196</a> ); Starting July 23, 2023, emergency tow trucks may also use rear-facing blue lights at an emergency scene and may use the red lights when reentering traffic from the emergency scene ( <a href="#">2023 SB 5032</a> )

Table 2 (continued)

State	Light colors	More Information
Wisconsin	Amber and Red	Tow trucks must have flashing or rotating lights meeting visibility requirements in (1) amber and (2) red, which may be used only when standing on the highway preparing to tow a vehicle or when servicing a disabled vehicle ( <a href="#">Wis. Stat. Ann. § 347.26 (6)</a> )
Wyoming	Amber, Blue, Red, and White	Tow trucks are considered emergency vehicles while at the scene of an accident or disabled vehicle. They must have at least (1) one red light, or a combination of red and blue lights, which may be used at emergency scenes, and (2) two amber lights. They may also have flashing white and amber lights. The lights must meet specified visibility requirements. ( <a href="#">Wyo. Stat. Ann. §§ 31-5-102 (a)(ii)(C); 31-5-928 (g); 045-0004-1 Wyo. Code R. § 6 (c)</a> )

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