

USE OF FLASHING BLUE LIGHTS ON MOTOR VEHICLES IN ONTARIO
ONTARIO HIGHWAY TRAFFIC ACT
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
WINTER 2007

Highway Traffic Act
(R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER H.8)

DEFINITION OF HIGHWAY

“highway” includes a common and public highway, street, avenue, parkway, driveway, square, place, bridge, viaduct or trestle, any part of which is intended for or used by the general public for the passage of vehicles and includes the area between the lateral property lines thereof; (“voie publique”)

Q1. Has Ontario’s legislation changed regarding the use of blue flashing lights on motor vehicles?

A1. Yes, Bill 203, the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act 2007, was passed on June 4th of this year. Under this new legislation, police service vehicles are permitted to use blue flashing lights in combination with red flashing lights. The combination of flashing blue and red lights will help to increase visibility and public recognition of police vehicles, and protect the safety of police officers when working on our highways. This is especially crucial when police officers are responding to emergencies where they may be required to exceed speed limits or travel through a red light.

Q2. Are snow removal vehicles still authorized to use flashing blue lights while operating on a highway, as a result of Bill 203 being passed?

A2. Yes. Blue flashing lights are still permitted to be used on road service vehicles that are being driven on a highway while performing winter maintenance activities. Road service vehicles are vehicles that are being operated by, or on behalf of a municipality, and those under contract to provide winter maintenance operations on provincial highways, when removing snow, sanding or salting or applying chemicals for snow and ice control.

Q3. Are private snow plow vehicles that are commonly used to clear snow from driveways, parking lots and commercial businesses authorized to use blue flashing lights?

A3. Legislation does not prohibit the use of blue flashing lights on private snowplow vehicles while being operated on private property. However, these vehicles are not permitted to use blue flashing lights while being driven on a highway.

Q4. Are private snowplow vehicles permitted to use blue flashing lights when turning around on a roadway, or when moving snow from one location to another?

A4. No. The use of blue flashing lights is reserved for road service vehicles when performing winter maintenance activities on a highway, such as removing snow, sanding or salting, and applying chemicals for snow and ice control.

Q5. Are private snowplow vehicles permitted to have a blue light attached to the vehicle that is not turned on, or is not producing intermittent flashes of light, when traveling from one location to the next?

A5. Yes. The legislation speaks specifically to “intermittent flashes of blue light”. In fact, if the vehicle is equipped with blue lights they can be turned on provided they are not flashing or producing intermittent flashes of blue light. This is similar to TTC buses that display a solid blue light.

Q6. Can private snowplow vehicles be equipped with flashing amber lights when traveling on a highway?

A6. Yes. The use of amber flashing lights is not regulated under the Highway Traffic Act and can be used on any vehicle while being driven on a highway. The use of amber flashing lights would have the added benefit of increasing the visibility of a private snow removal vehicle, while avoiding non-compliance of the HTA.

Q7. What is the penalty for using a blue flashing light on a vehicle that is not authorized to use one?

A7. The fine for this offence is \$85 for personal use motor vehicles and \$200 for commercial vehicles.