



Substitute House Bill No. 5460

Public Act No. 26-144

AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE FIRE PROTECTION.

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

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Entity" has the same meaning as provided in section 20-474 of the general statutes;

(2) "Fire protection" means the prevention and suppression of fires, the investigation of the origin and cause of fires, the response to hazardous materials incidents and technical rescues;

(3) "Municipality" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-148 of the general statutes;

(4) "District or subdivision" includes any entity or subdivision of a municipality with a responsibility for fire protection services pursuant to statute, charter or ordinance; and

(5) "National Emergency Response Information System" means the national data system developed or designated by the United States Fire Administration, or its successor system, for the collection, reporting and analysis of fire and emergency incident data.

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(b) On or before July 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, each fire protection entity responsible for providing fire protection services within one or more of the geographic areas of a municipality shall register with such municipality. Such registration shall include, but need not be limited to, the demographic information of the geographic area served by such entity and the name and contact information of such entity. Such entity shall file amendments to the registration reporting any material change to the information contained in such registration not later than thirty days after the entity knows or should know of such material change.

(c) Each municipality shall enter such registration and the demographic and contact information related to such entities in the National Emergency Response Information System. The municipality shall maintain and review such demographic and contact information not less than annually.

(d) On or before July 1, 2027, each municipality shall establish a local fire protection plan and submit such plan to the chief elected officer, legislative body and emergency management director of such municipality. Each municipality may submit such plan to the State Fire Administrator, unless the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control requires the submission of such plan to the State Fire Administrator pursuant to subsection (b) of section 7-323l, in which case such plan shall be submitted in the form and manner specified by the commission. Such plan shall include, but need not be limited to:

(1) A general statement of how fire protection services are provided within the municipality;

(2) A disclosure of the districts or subdivisions responsible for fire protection services throughout all geographic areas within the municipality;

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(3) The name of each fire protection entity responsible for providing fire protection services within one or more of the geographic areas of such municipality;

(4) A description of any written agreements or contracts between the municipality and the entities that provide fire protection services to the municipality;

(5) An identification of the specific geographic boundaries of the areas within the municipality that are served by each entity that provides fire protection services to the municipality;

(6) The name of the person, including, but not limited to, the fire chief, responsible for each fire protection entity that provides fire protection services to the municipality;

(7) A description of the fire protection performance standards to which the municipality adheres, including, but not limited to, response times, minimum fireground staffing levels and apparatus requirements;

(8) A description of the process used for collecting and tracking personnel and response data, including, but not limited to, any software used; and

(9) A description of any mutual aid agreements to which the municipality is a party.

(e) If, pursuant to the provisions of subsection (b) of section 7-323l of the general statutes, as amended by this act, the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control establishes a standardized protocol, the State Fire Administrator shall, not less than once every five years, review and assign a rating to each local fire protection plan submitted to the State Fire Administrator pursuant to subsection (c) of this section in accordance with such standardized protocol. The State Fire Administrator (1) may require any municipality whose local fire

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protection plan is assigned an unsatisfactory rating to submit a performance improvement plan not later than ninety days after the assignment of such unsatisfactory rating, and (2) shall assist such municipality with the development of such performance improvement plan.

(f) On and after July 1, 2032, and every five years thereafter, each municipality shall review, and revise as needed, its local fire protection plan and may communicate any substantial changes to such plan to the State Fire Administrator.

Sec. 2. Section 7-323l of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

(a) The commission shall:

(1) Recommend minimum standards of education and physical condition for candidates for any firefighter position;

(2) Recommend minimum standards for firefighter safety and emergency response protocols. Such standards and protocols shall address, but need not be limited to, operational safety strategies used during fire suppression operations, hazardous materials mitigation and technical rescue operations and methods for ensuring the health and wellness of fire service personnel;

[(2)] (3) Establish standards for fire service training and education programs, and develop and conduct an examination program to certify those fire service personnel who satisfactorily demonstrate their ability to meet the requirements of the fire service training and education program standards;

[(3)] (4) Establish an optional fire service training and education program that provides information relative to the blue envelopes

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designed pursuant to section 14-11j and yellow envelopes designed pursuant to section 14-11l and techniques for the handling of incidents, such as wandering, that involve juveniles and adults with autism spectrum disorder, cognitive impairment or nonverbal learning disorder, provided the curriculum for such techniques is made available at no cost from (A) institutions of higher education, health care professionals or advocacy organizations that are concerned with juveniles and adults with autism spectrum disorder, cognitive impairment or nonverbal learning disorder, or (B) collaborations of such institutions, professionals or organizations;

[(4)] (5) Conduct fire fighting training and education programs designed to assist firefighters in developing and maintaining their skills and keeping abreast of technological advances in fire suppression, fire protection, fire prevention and related fields;

[(5)] (6) Recommend standards for promotion to the various ranks of fire departments;

[(6)] (7) Be authorized, with the approval of the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, to apply for, receive and distribute any state, federal or private funds or contributions available for training and education of fire fighting personnel;

[(7)] (8) Recommend that the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection approve or reject the establishment of, or, when appropriate, suspend or revoke the approval of, regional fire schools in accordance with section 7-323u;

[(8)] (9) Advise the Division of Fire Services Administration within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection on the management of the Statewide Fire Service Disaster Response Plan;

[(9)] (10) Implement the recommendations of the study of the fire service authorized pursuant to subdivision (36) of subsection (b) of

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section 41 of public act 23-204; and

[(10)] (11) Submit to the Governor, the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety and security, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, and the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection an annual report (A) relating to the activities, recommendations and accomplishments of the commission, and (B) making recommendations on the funding necessary for the operation of, the maintenance of and capital improvements to the state fire school and regional fire schools.

(b) The commission may:

(1) [recommend] Recommend, and the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection may adopt, regulations in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 as necessary to implement the provisions of this section;

(2) Require municipalities to submit local fire protection plans, and any revisions to such plans, to the State Fire Administrator;

(3) Establish, in coordination with the State Fire Administrator, a (A) standardized protocol by which the State Fire Administrator shall review, not less than once every five years, local fire protection plans and assign a rating to such plan based on such standardized protocol, and (B) standardized classification system by which the State Fire Administrator may evaluate and grade the operational performance of the fire protection services provided by each municipality or fire district. In establishing such standardized classification system, the commission shall consider nationally recognized standards, including, but not limited to, standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association and the Center for Public Safety Excellence; and

(4) Require the submission of operational data by each fire protection entity in the state and specify the form and manner of such submission.

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The commissioner shall submit such requirement to the State Fire Administrator for adoption.

Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section, "municipality" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-148 of the general statutes.

(b) In the event fire protection services in a municipality are discontinued or interrupted, including, but not limited to, the dissolution or cessation of operations of any fire department, fire district or fire company, the municipality shall take such actions as necessary to ensure the continuation and uninterrupted provision of fire protection services within its territorial limits, except as otherwise provided by special act or municipal charter. Such actions may include, but need not be limited to, the establishment or operation of a municipal fire department, the entering into of contracts or agreements for fire protection services, the designation of a temporary or permanent provider or participation in a mutual aid or regional fire service arrangement.

Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) As used in this section and sections 5 and 6 of this act:

(1) "Fire protection" has the same meaning as provided in section 1 of this act; and

(2) "Municipality" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-148 of the general statutes.

(b) There is established within the Division of Fire Services Administration within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection a program to be known as "Connecticut Fire". The purpose of the Connecticut Fire program shall be to establish a framework for the state to provide administrative and operational assistance to municipalities or fire authorities that choose to receive such

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assistance. The program shall include, but not be limited to, provisions for resident firefighters to staff and augment volunteer fire departments and fire districts with paid personnel while preserving the local autonomy and command structures of fire protection services.

(c) The State Fire Administrator shall oversee the Connecticut Fire program. Upon approval of the framework for the Connecticut Fire program by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control pursuant to section 6 of this act, the State Fire Administrator may include in a budget request for the subsequent fiscal year the cost of implementing such framework. Upon the inclusion of appropriations for said program in an approved state budget, the State Fire Administrator shall, within available appropriations, implement such framework.

(d) The Connecticut Fire program may utilize the facilities and equipment of the Connecticut Fire Academy, the Forestry Division of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the regional fire schools to achieve the objectives of the program.

Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Upon implementation of the Connecticut Fire program by the State Fire Administrator pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of this act, the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management shall administer a Connecticut Fire grant program. Pursuant to said grant program, the secretary shall provide grants-in-aid to municipalities that participate in the Connecticut Fire program to incentivize the regionalization of fire protection services and the sharing of fire protection resources among municipalities. A municipality may submit an application for a grant under this subsection in a form and manner prescribed by the secretary.

(b) Not later than the start of the subsequent fiscal year after awarding the first grant under the Connecticut Fire grant program, the secretary shall submit a report on the grant program to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of

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matters relating to public safety and security in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes. Such report shall include, but need not be limited to, an accounting of the grants paid pursuant to the program, a description of each grant awarded under the program and an evaluation of the success of the program and the fire protection services funded under this section.

Sec. 6. (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Comptroller shall establish a working group to develop the administrative, operational, fiscal and personnel framework for the Connecticut Fire program, established pursuant to section 4 of this act.

(b) The working group shall include, but need not be limited to:

(1) The Comptroller, or the Comptroller's designee;

(2) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the secretary's designee;

(3) The Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, or the commissioner's designee;

(4) The State Fire Administrator, or the administrator's designee;

(5) The chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, or their designees;

(6) Three members of the Joint Council of Connecticut Fire Service Organizations, who shall be appointed by the joint council;

(7) The executive director of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities if such executive director agrees to participate in the working group, or the executive director's designee; and

(8) The executive director of the Council of Small Towns if such executive director agrees to participate in the working group, or the

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executive director's designee.

(c) The Comptroller shall: (1) Schedule the first meeting of the working group, which shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section; and (2) select two cochairpersons from among the members of the working group.

(d) Not later than September 1, 2027, the Comptroller shall submit the recommended framework for the Connecticut Fire program developed by the working group to the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. The Comptroller may terminate the working group on the date that the commission approves such framework pursuant to subsection (e) of this section or January 1, 2028, whichever is later.

(e) Not later than January 1, 2028, the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control shall (1) review the working group's recommended framework for the Connecticut Fire program, (2) approve such framework, with or without modifications, and (3) submit the approved framework to the State Fire Administrator.

Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The State Fire Administrator shall coordinate with the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to establish fire service regions within the state that match the emergency preparedness regions established by said division. The State Fire Administrator shall appoint, subject to confirmation by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, a regional fire coordinator for each such region. In any region where a recognized regional fire chiefs' organization exists, such organization may submit to the State Fire Administrator recommendations for candidates for regional fire coordinator for such region.

(b) Each regional fire coordinator shall serve in a voluntary, nonsalaried capacity as a liaison between the Division of Fire Services

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Administration within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and the local fire departments within the region served by such regional fire coordinator for the purposes of facilitating the Connecticut Fire program established pursuant to section 4 of this act and coordinating fire protection resources through such region. For the purposes of this subsection, "fire protection" has the same meaning as provided in section 1 of this act.

(c) The State Fire Administrator may submit a plan to the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection to transition the position of regional fire coordinator to a salaried employee position. Upon approval of such plan, the commissioner may include such position in the estimates of expenditure requirements in accordance with the provisions of section 4-77 of the general statutes.

Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, in coordination with the office of the Comptroller, shall, within the availability of appropriations approved for such purpose, establish and maintain a system for collecting computer-aided dispatch data pursuant to the provisions of subsection (f) of section 28-25b of the general statutes, as amended by this act. The department shall aggregate such data and monitor information regarding emergency services requests managed by fire departments and emergency medical services providers.

Sec. 9. Subsection (f) of section 28-25b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(f) [On and after January 1, 2001, each] Each public safety answering point and regional emergency telecommunications center shall submit to the division, on a quarterly basis, a report of all 9-1-1 calls for services received through the enhanced 9-1-1 service and the next generation 9-1-1 telecommunication system by the public safety answering point or

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regional emergency telecommunications center. Such report shall include, but not be limited to, the following information: (1) The number of 9-1-1 calls during the reporting quarter; [and] (2) for each such call, the elapsed time period from the time the call was received to the time the call was answered, and the elapsed time period from the time the call was answered to the time the call was transferred or terminated, expressed in time ranges or fractile response times; and (3) any other information requested by the division for inclusion in the system established and maintained by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection pursuant to the provisions of section 8 of this act. The information required under this subsection shall be produced using data generated from a computer-aided dispatch system if a public safety answering point or regional emergency telecommunications center utilizes such system, and may be submitted in any written or electronic form selected by such public safety answering point or regional emergency telecommunications center and approved by the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, provided the commissioner shall take into consideration the needs of such public safety answering point or regional emergency telecommunications center in approving such written or electronic form. On a quarterly basis, the division shall make such information available to the public and [shall post such information on its Internet web site] input such information in the system established pursuant to section 8 of this act.

Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The office of the Comptroller, in coordination with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, shall study the feasibility of centralizing within one state agency access to all public benefits available to firefighters, including, but not limited to, claims related to the firefighters cancer relief account established pursuant to section 7-313h of the general statutes, claims related to the Fallen Hero Fund established pursuant to section 3-122a of the general statutes, injury claims, workers' compensation claims and disability claims. Such access

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to benefits through one state agency shall include, but need not be limited to, such state agency making eligibility determinations, receiving applications and disseminating information for such benefits.

(b) Not later than July 1 2027, the Comptroller shall submit, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety and security a report on the results of the study conducted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

Sec. 11. Subsection (b) of section 7-323o of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(b) The Division of Fire Services Administration shall:

(1) Administer federal funds and grants allocated to the fire services of the state;

(2) Provide technical assistance and guidance to fire fighting forces of any state or municipal agency;

(3) Develop a centralized information and audiovisual library regarding fire prevention and control;

(4) Accumulate, disseminate and analyze fire prevention data;

(5) Recommend specifications of fire service materials and equipment and assist in the purchasing thereof;

(6) Assist in mutual aid coordination;

(7) Coordinate fire programs with those of the other states;

(8) Assist in communications coordination;

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- (9) Establish and maintain a fire service information program;
- (10) Review and approve the purchase of fire apparatus or equipment at state institutions, facilities and properties;
- (11) Recommend and provide reports on revisions to statutes relating to firefighter training and fire prevention and control;
- (12) Advise and assist the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control regarding legislative proposals;
- (13) Encourage the expansion and improvement of existing regional firefighter training facilities in cooperation with the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control;
- (14) Administer the state fire school and regional fire schools;
- (15) Administer certification examinations, testing procedures and reciprocity recognition for credentials in the fire service disciplines;
- (16) Manage the Statewide Fire Service Disaster Response Plan, with the advice of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control; [and]
- (17) Make recommendations to the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection pertaining to the operational funding of the state fire school and regional fire schools; and
- (18) Not later than July 1, 2027, establish, and annually thereafter update as needed, a registry identifying the fire chief for each municipality and fire district in the state.

Sec. 12. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than July 1, 2027, the office of the Comptroller, in coordination with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, shall establish and maintain a registry of all career and volunteer firefighters in the state, for the

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purpose of verifying such firefighters' training, credentials and benefit eligibility.

Sec. 13. Section 14-96q of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

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

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

(c) A [flashing] blue light or lights, including flashing blue lights, may be used on a motor vehicle operated by an active member of a volunteer fire department or company or an active member of an organized civil preparedness auxiliary fire company who has been issued a permit by the chief executive officer of such department or company to use such a [flashing] blue light or lights while on the way to or at the scene of a fire

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or other emergency requiring such member's services. Such permit shall be on a form provided by the commissioner and may be revoked by such chief executive officer or such chief executive officer's successor. The chief executive officer of each volunteer fire department or company or organized civil preparedness auxiliary fire company shall keep on file, on forms provided by the commissioner, the names and addresses of members who have been authorized to use a [flashing] blue light or lights as provided in this subsection. Such listing shall also designate the registration number of the motor vehicle on which an authorized [a flashing] blue light or lights are to be used.

(d) A flashing green or blue light or lights may be used on a motor vehicle operated by an active member of a volunteer ambulance association or company who has been issued a permit by the chief executive officer of such association or company to use such a light or lights, while on the way to or at the scene of an emergency requiring such member's services. Such permit shall be on a form provided by the commissioner and may be revoked by such chief executive officer or such chief executive officer's successor. The chief executive officer of each volunteer ambulance association or company shall keep on file, on forms provided by the commissioner, the names and addresses of members who have been authorized to use a flashing green or blue light or lights as provided in this subsection. Such listing shall also designate the registration number of the motor vehicle on which the authorized flashing green or blue light or lights are to be used.

(e) The commissioner may issue a permit for a [flashing] red light or lights, including flashing red lights, which may be used on a motor vehicle or equipment (1) used by paid fire chiefs and their deputies and assistants, up to a total of five individuals per department, (2) used by volunteer fire chiefs and their deputies and assistants, up to a total of five individuals per department, (3) used by members of the fire police on a stationary vehicle as a warning signal during traffic directing

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operations at the scene of a fire or emergency, (4) used by chief executive officers of emergency medical service organizations, as defined in section 19a-175, the first or second deputies, or if there are no deputies, the first or second assistants, of such an organization that is a municipal or volunteer or licensed organization, (5) used by local fire marshals, (6) used by directors of emergency management, including, but not limited to, the deputy commissioner of the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and the regional coordinators for said division, or (7) used by a constable, appointed pursuant to an ordinance authorized by section 9-185 or elected pursuant to section 9-200, on a stationary vehicle as a warning signal during traffic directing operations.

(f) The commissioner may issue a permit for a yellow or amber light or lights, including a flashing yellow or amber light or lights, which may be used on motor vehicles or equipment that are (1) specified in subsection (e) of this section, (2) maintenance vehicles, or (3) vehicles transporting or escorting any vehicle or load or combinations thereof, which is or are either oversize or overweight, or both, and being operated or traveling under a permit issued by the Commissioner of Transportation pursuant to section 14-270. A yellow or amber light or lights, including a flashing yellow or amber light or lights, may be used without obtaining a permit from the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles on wreckers registered pursuant to section 14-66, on vehicles of carriers in rural mail delivery service or on vehicles operated by construction inspectors employed by the state of Connecticut, authorized by the Commissioner of Transportation, used during the performance of inspections on behalf of the state. The Commissioner of Transportation shall maintain a list of such authorized construction inspectors, including the name and address of each inspector and the registration number for each vehicle on which the light or lights are to be used.

(g) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles may issue a permit for a

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white light or lights, including a flashing white light or lights, which may be used on a motor vehicle or equipment as specified in subdivision (1), (2), (4), (5) or (6) of subsection (e) of this section. A vehicle being operated by a member of a volunteer fire department or company or a volunteer emergency medical technician may use flashing white head lamps, provided such member or emergency medical technician is on the way to the scene of a fire or medical emergency and has received written authorization from the chief law enforcement officer of the municipality to use such head lamps. Such head lamps shall only be used within the municipality granting such authorization or from a personal residence or place of employment, if located in an adjoining municipality. Such authorization may be revoked for use of such head lamps in violation of this subdivision. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "flashing white lights" shall not include the simultaneous flashing of head lamps.

(h) The commissioner may issue a permit for emergency vehicles, as defined in subsection (a) of section 14-283, to use a blue, red, yellow, or white light or lights, including a flashing light or lights or any combination thereof. [except as provided in subsection (k) of this section.]

(i) The commissioner may issue a permit for ambulances, as defined in section 19a-175, which may, in addition to the flashing light or lights allowed in subsection (h) of this section, use flashing lights of other colors specified by federal requirements for the manufacture of an ambulance. If the commissioner issues a permit for any ambulance, such permit shall be issued at the time of registration and upon each renewal of such registration.

(j) A green, yellow or amber light or lights, including a flashing green, yellow or amber light or lights or any combination thereof, may be used on a maintenance vehicle owned and operated by the Department of Transportation.

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[(k) No person, other than a police officer or inspector of the Department of Motor Vehicles operating a state or local police vehicle, shall operate a motor vehicle displaying a steady blue or steady red illuminated light or both steady blue and steady red illuminated lights that are visible externally from the front of the vehicle.]

[(l)] (k) Use of colored and flashing lights except as authorized by this section shall be an infraction.