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SENATE BILL NO. 516

Offered January 11, 2006

Prefiled January 11, 2006

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 46.2-920 and 46.2-1061 of the Code of Virginia, relating to exemption of certain vehicles operating in emergency situations from certain traffic laws.

 Patron—Puckett

 Referred to Committee on Transportation

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That §§ 46.2-920 and 46.2-1061 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 46.2-920. Certain vehicles exempt from regulations in certain situations; exceptions and additional requirements.

A. The driver of any emergency vehicle, when such vehicle is being used in the performance of public services, and when such vehicle is operated under emergency conditions, may, without subjecting himself to criminal prosecution:

1. Disregard speed limits, while having due regard for safety of persons and property;
2. Proceed past any steady or flashing red signal, traffic light, stop sign, or device indicating moving traffic shall stop if the speed of the vehicle is sufficiently reduced to enable it to pass a signal, traffic light, or device with due regard to the safety of persons and property;
3. Park or stop notwithstanding the other provisions of this chapter;
4. Disregard regulations governing a direction of movement of vehicles turning in specified directions so long as the operator does not endanger life or property;
5. Pass or overtake, with due regard to the safety of persons and property, another vehicle at any intersection;

6. Pass or overtake with due regard to the safety of persons and property, while en route to an emergency, stopped or slow-moving vehicles, by going to the left of the stopped or slow-moving vehicle either in a no-passing zone or by crossing the highway centerline; or

7. Pass or overtake with due regard to the safety of persons and property, while en route to an emergency, stopped or slow-moving vehicles, by going off the paved or main traveled portion of the roadway on the right. Notwithstanding other provisions of this section, vehicles exempted in this instance will not be required to sound a siren or any device to give automatically intermittent signals.

B. The exemptions granted to emergency vehicles by subsection A of this section shall apply only when the operator of such vehicle displays a flashing, blinking, or alternating emergency light or lights as provided in §§ 46.2-1022 and 46.2-1023 and sounds a siren, exhaust whistle, or air horn designed to give automatically intermittent signals, as may be reasonably necessary, and, only when there is in force and effect for such vehicle either (i) standard motor vehicle liability insurance covering injury or death to any person in the sum of at least \$100,000 because of bodily injury to or death of one person in any one accident and, subject to the limit for one person, to a limit of \$300,000 because of bodily injury to or death of two or more persons in any one accident, and to a limit of \$20,000 because of injury to or destruction of property of others in any one accident or (ii) a certificate of self-insurance issued pursuant to § 46.2-368. Such exemptions shall not, however, protect the operator of any such vehicle from criminal prosecution for conduct constituting reckless disregard of the safety of persons and property. Nothing in this section shall release the operator of any such vehicle from civil liability for failure to use reasonable care in such operation.

C. For the purposes of this section, the term "emergency vehicle" shall mean:

1. Any law-enforcement vehicle operated by or under the direction of a federal, state, or local law-enforcement officer (i) in the chase or apprehension of violators of the law or persons charged with or suspected of any such violation or (ii) in response to an emergency call;
2. Any regional detention center vehicle operated by or under the direction of a correctional officer responding to an emergency call or operating in an emergency situation;
3. Any vehicle used to fight fire, including publicly owned state forest warden vehicles, when traveling in response to a fire alarm or emergency call;
4. Any ambulance, rescue, or life-saving vehicle designed or used for the principal purpose of supplying resuscitation or emergency relief where human life is endangered;
5. Any Department of Emergency Management vehicle or Office of Emergency Medical Services vehicle, when responding to an emergency call or operating in an emergency situation;
6. Any Department of Corrections vehicle designated by the Director of the Department of

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59 Corrections, when (i) responding to an emergency call at a correctional facility, (ii) participating in a
60 drug-related investigation, (iii) pursuing escapees from a correctional facility, or (iv) responding to a
61 request for assistance from a law-enforcement officer; ~~and~~

62 7. Any vehicle authorized to be equipped with alternating, blinking, or flashing red or red and white
63 secondary warning lights under the provisions of § 46.2-1029.2; *and*

64 8. *Any vehicle authorized by § 46.2-1024 to be equipped with flashing or steady-burning red or red*
65 *and white warning lights and authorized by § 46.2-1061 to be equipped with a siren or exhaust whistle.*

66 D. Any law-enforcement vehicle operated by or under the direction of a federal, state, or local
67 law-enforcement officer may disregard speed limits, while having due regard for safety of persons and
68 property, (i) in testing the accuracy of speedometers of such vehicles, (ii) in testing the accuracy of
69 speed measuring devices specified in § 46.2-882, or (iii) in following another vehicle for the purpose of
70 determining its speed.

71 E. A Department of Environmental Quality vehicle, while en route to an emergency and with due
72 regard to the safety of persons and property, may overtake and pass stopped or slow-moving vehicles by
73 going off the paved or main traveled portion of the highway on the right or on the left. These
74 Department of Environmental Quality vehicles shall not be required to sound a siren or any device to
75 give automatically intermittent signals, but shall display red or red and white warning lights when
76 performing such maneuvers.

77 § 46.2-1061. Sirens, exhaust whistles, and air horns on emergency vehicles.

78 Every law-enforcement vehicle, every vehicle authorized to be equipped with warning lights pursuant
79 to §§ 46.2-1022 ~~and~~, 46.2-1023, *and 46.2-1024* shall be equipped with a siren, exhaust whistle, or air
80 horn designed to give automatically intermittent signals. Such devices shall be of types not prohibited by
81 the Superintendent.