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AAA Northeast: Remember, Drivers — CT Has a 'Slow Down, Move Over' Law for Passing Accidents

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Since early January, there have been at least a half dozen or more near-hits or actual collisions with emergency vehicles on Connecticut's interstates.

In the wake of these incidents — the latest occurring Sunday night on I-95 in Guilford — AAA Northeast urges motorists to be aware of Connecticut's "Slow Down, Move Over" law, that requires drivers to slow down and, if possible, move over, when they see emergency vehicles parked on the road's shoulder.

— *an announcement from AAA Northeast, the American Automobile Association that includes western Connecticut, among its regions*

Since early January, there have been numerous situations in which state police officers, emergency vehicles, and tow truck drivers have faced brushes with death on Connecticut highways after they stopped to offer assistance to injured or disabled motorists.

“How many times do close calls, injuries, or fatalities have to occur before drivers understand that the law requires you to slow down?” said Fran Mayko, a AAA Northeast spokeswoman. “Emergency personnel put themselves in harm’s way daily to assist those in need. The least other drivers can do is respect their presence on roadways.”

Connecticut’s "Move Over" law was passed in 2009 in an attempt to protect drivers of emergency vehicles — tow trucks, ambulances, fire trucks, law enforcement vehicles, and state highway maintenance vehicles — who assist disabled motorists on state roads. Fines range up to \$2,500 if injuries are caused; up to \$10,000 if deaths result.

Although most publicized incidents involve state police, AAA Northeast tow truck drivers also experience near-hits daily. Last June, a AAA Northeast tow truck driver escaped injury – and death – in a violent crash involving a AAA flat-bed, a disabled SUV and the driver of a 2005 Lexus.

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According to police reports, the incident occurred after the AAA flat-bed driver responded to a night service call on I-95 in Westport. A young Lexus driver swerved from the right lane into the right shoulder and crashed into the AAA super-duty flat-bed wrecker, parked on the shoulder with its emergency lights flashing.

The impact pushed the wrecker partially over the guardrail, police reported. The heavily damaged SUV spun out and came to a rest in the center lane. Its two occupants sustained injuries. All vehicles had to be towed from the scene.

A public hearing before the Legislature's Transportation Committee is scheduled Wednesday to hear three bills calling for the strengthening and expanding of the state's existing "Slow Down, Move Over" law.

AAA Northeast is a not-for-profit auto club with 61 offices in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire and New York, providing more than 2 million local AAA members with travel, insurance, finance, and auto-related services.