



Highway Division Maintenance and Operations Operational Notice

Number	Supersedes	Effective Date	Cancellation Date
MG 8 - 4	New	2/1/2013	Until Further Notice
Subject		Issuing Body	
Use of Amber Rotobeams for Maintenance Crew Response to Highway Incidents			

PURPOSE: To provide supplemental guidance to the *Maintenance Guide*, regarding the use of amber vehicle warning lights by ODOT maintenance personnel who are not operating emergency vehicles. This provides further clarification as these personnel perform activities necessary to maintaining and operating the state highway system.

BACKGROUND: ODOT maintenance vehicles have long been equipped with vehicle warning lights, commonly referred to as rotobeams. Oregon law allows for the use of these “public vehicle warning lights” for maintenance and operation of state highways, including “setting up and dismantling of advance warning systems” [ORS 811.230(b) and ORS 816.350]. Oregon law clearly prescribes the appropriate color for “public vehicle warning lights” as **amber** [ORS 816.280]. Keeping with these laws, rotobeams continue to be the primary vehicle warning lights used on ODOT maintenance vehicles. Guidance on the appropriate application and operation of rotobeams is provided through the *Maintenance Guide*, Page 6-8.

There are a large number of design options for vehicle warning lights. There is also considerable and growing pressure to incorporate into highway maintenance vehicles lighting technologies that are similar to those implemented on emergency service vehicles (e.g. light bars containing red, white or blue lighting). These factors have prompted discussions regarding the appropriate color of warning lights to be displayed on ODOT maintenance vehicles while performing maintenance and operational activities. Specifically the appropriate use of amber lights for the purpose of setting up advanced work zone warning and traffic control devices and navigating traffic queues originating from highway incidents.

GUIDANCE: “Public vehicle warning lights” commonly referred to as “rotobeams” or “amber lights” shall be used for maintenance and operation of the state highway system. These traditional uses for amber rotobeams, as described in the *Maintenance Guide*, remain unchanged. In addition amber rotobeams **shall** be used upon approaching a highway incident scene during the placement of traffic control and warning devices which establish a work zone. After placement of the initial advanced warning device(s) amber rotobeams shall be used when:

- 1) On a **Multi-Lane Divided Highway**, to travel in the same direction of traffic flow outside of the travel lane, on the shoulder, or median, for the purpose of setting up and dismantling additional advance warning and/or traffic control devices and systems used for managing the incident, or for navigating traffic queues originating from the incident.
- 2) On a **Two-lane Undivided Highway**, when the shoulder is unavailable, to travel cautiously in the opposite travel lane for the purpose of setting up advance warning traffic control devices and systems for managing highway incidents, or for navigating traffic queues originating from highway incident. If an operator deems it necessary to travel in the opposite travel lane, the operator **must** make all reasonable efforts to confirm that the lane is closed to all traffic by a flagger, law enforcement officer, or fire department personnel. Confirmation of the lane closure can be obtained via state radio, cell phone, ODOT dispatch or visually, provided site distance allows the operator a clear unobstructed view that the lane is clear.

Operators should be aware that using amber warning lights **does not** legally require other drivers to yield the right of way to ODOT vehicles. The operator of an ODOT maintenance vehicle performing either of these activities **must**:

- Proceed slowly, at a reduced speed which clearly demonstrates regard for the safety of all persons,
- Remain alert to other vehicles, pedestrians or bicyclists that may pull onto the roadway, shoulder or median.
- Be mindful of weather conditions, site distance, traffic volumes, actual urgency of the incident and any extenuating circumstances which may limit the effectiveness of rotobeam use as described above.

Disregarding select traffic laws, such as proceeding through red traffic signals or stop signs, travelling above the speed limit, or disregarding other traffic laws, is not allowed with only amber rotobeams. Only designated emergency vehicles, displaying the appropriate advanced warning devices, generally red or red and white lights, may be operated under these conditions as described in ORS 820.300.

When properly performed, the activities described above can enhance the expeditious return of highway system safety and capacity to pre-incident levels. The advancement of such cooperative, proactive, Traffic Incident Management (TIM) components thereby enhances overall scene safety for all emergency responders, ODOT personnel and motorists alike.

Refer to *ODOT Statewide Emergency Vehicle Plan* and *Fleet Manual* section 2.237 for information on the approval process and appropriate lighting for designated emergency vehicles.

Maintenance Guide