

§ 20-157.1. Funeral processions.

(a) As used in this section, a "funeral procession" means two or more vehicles accompanying the remains of a deceased person, or traveling to the church, chapel, or other location at which the funeral services are to be held, in which the lead vehicle is either a State or local law enforcement vehicle, other vehicle designated by a law enforcement officer or the funeral director, or the lead vehicle displays a flashing amber or purple light, sign, pennant, flag, or other insignia furnished by a funeral home indicating a funeral procession.

(b) Each vehicle in the funeral procession shall be operated with its headlights illuminated, if so equipped, and its hazard warning signal lamps illuminated, if so equipped.

(c) The operator of the lead vehicle in a funeral procession shall comply with all traffic-control signals, but when the lead vehicle in a funeral procession has progressed across an intersection in accordance with the traffic-control sign or signal, or when directed to do so by a law enforcement officer or a designee of a law enforcement officer or the funeral director, or when the lead vehicle is a law enforcement vehicle which progresses across the intersection while giving appropriate warning by light or siren, all vehicles in the funeral procession may proceed through the intersection without stopping, except that the operator of each vehicle shall exercise reasonable care towards any other vehicle or pedestrian on the highway. An operator of a vehicle that is not part of the funeral procession shall not join the funeral procession for the purpose of securing the right-of-way granted by this subsection.

(d) Operators of vehicles in a funeral procession shall drive on the right-hand side of the roadway and shall follow the vehicle ahead as closely as reasonable and prudent having due regard for speed and existing conditions.

(e) Operators of vehicles in a funeral procession shall yield the right-of-way to law enforcement vehicles, fire protection vehicles, rescue vehicles, ambulances, and other emergency vehicles giving appropriate warning signals by light or siren and shall yield the right-of-way when directed to do so by a law enforcement officer.

(f) Operators of vehicles in a funeral procession shall proceed at the posted minimum speed, except that the operator of such vehicle shall exercise reasonable care having due regard for speed and existing conditions.

(g) The operator of a vehicle proceeding in the opposite direction as a funeral procession may yield to the funeral procession. If the operator chooses to yield to the procession, the operator must do so by reducing speed, or by stopping completely off the roadway when meeting the procession or while the procession passes, so that operators of other vehicles proceeding in the opposite direction of the procession can continue to travel without leaving their lane of traffic.

(h) The operator of a vehicle proceeding in the same direction as a funeral procession shall not pass or attempt to pass the funeral procession, except that the operator of such a vehicle may pass a funeral procession when the highway has been marked for two or more lanes of moving traffic in the same direction of the funeral procession.

(i) An operator of a vehicle shall not knowingly drive between vehicles in a funeral procession by crossing their path unless directed to do so by a person authorized to direct traffic. When a funeral procession is proceeding through a steady or strobe-beam stoplight emitting a red light as permitted by subsection (c), an operator of a vehicle that is not in the funeral procession shall not enter the intersection knowing a funeral procession is in progress, even if facing a steady or strobe-beam stoplight emitting a green light, unless the operator can do so safely without crossing the path of the funeral procession.

(j) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent State or local law enforcement officers from escorting funeral processions in law enforcement vehicles.

(k) A violation of this section shall not constitute negligence per se.

- (l) To the extent that a local government unit's ordinance is in direct conflict with any part of this statute, the ordinance shall control and prevail over the conflicting part.
- (m) A violation of this section shall not be considered a moving violation for purposes of G.S. 58-36-65 or G.S. 58-36-75. (1999-441, s. 1.)