

Use of Headlights

A question has been asked about the requirements for the use of headlights. This is a good question since our daylight hours will begin to get shorter as the fall and winter months approach. The Tennessee code requires headlights on motor vehicles and stipulates when the headlights are to be illuminated. Most questions about headlights can be found in TCA 55-9-406. The code stipulates that motorcycles are to have the headlights on at all times while being operated. This is a pretty clear requirement and does not need further clarification. A motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle has some other requirements. A motor vehicle must have two headlights, one on each side of the vehicle. The code indicates that the headlights must be on 1/2 hour after sunset up until 1/2 hour before sunrise. This requirement obviously will vary depending on the time of year and the daily sunrise and sunset. Another requirement for headlights is that other than the timeframe mentioned, in instances of fog, smoke, rain, or diminished visibility the headlights are to be turned on. Additionally and often asked, is what about during the rain. The code indicates that if the windshield wipers are used constantly, then the headlights are to be on.

Many vehicles now have accessories that permit for sensors to turn the headlights on when visibility diminishes, an automatic setting that turns the headlights on whenever the vehicle is turned on, or vehicles that will turn the headlights on when the windshield wipers are in a constant use mode. However, if your vehicle does not have these options, then you should be aware of the code requirements. Each driver should inspect their vehicles to ensure the headlights, taillights, and brake lights are in good operating condition. Any questions you would like to see addressed may be directed to Chief Paul Blackwell at (931) 455-0530 or pblackwell@tullahomatin.gov.