

The Use of Turn Signals

I have been asked by a few people to provide some information on the need for the use of turn signals when operating a vehicle. Although this may seem minor, the use of signals are mandated by the state law and are important for the safe operation of vehicles and orderly movement on our roadways. There are three state statutes that address the use of signals. For the purpose of this topic I will only address the Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) 55-8-143, *Signals for Turns*. The statute indicates that a signal shall be given when a driver intends to start from the side of the road or curb, stop or turn, or partly turn from a direct line. The signal should be given continuously for no less than 50 feet before stopping, turning, partly turning, or materially altering the course of the vehicle (such as a lane change).

Many of us can recall as children being taught the hand and arm signals to use when riding our bicycles. Those same hand/arm signals still apply and are addressed in the TCA. Of course there is an alternative to the hand/arm signals - an electrical signal, or a blinker. The approved hand/arm signals are as follows: for a left turn the arm is horizontally extended straight from and level with the shoulder; a right turn signal involves the arm extended upward; and a stop signal is the arm extended downward. There is an exception to the use of hand/arm signals. A vehicle with a distance of more than 24 inches from the top center of the steering wheel post to the left outside limit of the body or load; or the distance from the steering post to the rear limit of the body or load exceeds 14 feet, shall have electrical turn signals. This would be due to not being able to see hand/arm signals because of the size of the load.

The use of a signal is not an optional item. The statute demands that drivers use signals to show their intended route of travel and to make opposing traffic aware of your intentions. We have probably all witnessed those instances where someone makes a turn without using a signal and get frustrated. Not using a signal could result in a citation for "failure to signal" and a possible fine of \$126 in the City Court. So please use your signals, it takes very little effort, and could prevent a traffic accident. Remember the old saying, "be a courteous driver." If you have any questions about this or other Police operations please contact me at (931) 455-0530 or pblackwell@tullahomatan.gov.