

"Move Over" Law to Include Utilities

Written by Steve Frank

Sunday, 05 September 2010 06:41

In July, North Carolina lawmakers expanded the state's 'move over law' to include electric utility vehicles restoring power on the sides of roadways. The 'move over law' requires motorists to slow down and cautiously approach emergency vehicles with flashing lights, moving over one lane when possible. Beginning in December, the law will encompass electric utility vehicles that are stopped, with amber lights flashing, on roadway shoulders. The expanded law protects electric utility workers as they work to maintain power lines or restore power in local communities and along North Carolina's highways. "Cooperative line crews are trained, highly skilled professionals who work in difficult—often potentially dangerous—situations and weather conditions to make sure we all receive safe and reliable power," said Renee Whitener, director of public relations.

"In our Blue Ridge operations room, line technicians have a wall of photos displayed of children, wives and loved ones—families they're working hard to go home safely to at the end of the day. Blue Ridge Electric also wants them to go home whole at the end of every day so we appreciate everyone who drives with special care around our workers," she added. "The new law could help prevent a needless accident by keeping us all more focused on safety as we share the roadways," Whitener said.

While Blue Ridge Electric has a dedicated right of way program to protect power lines from large trees, strong storms like some that moved through our state during the summer can often send trees and limbs crashing to the ground, sometimes affecting electric facilities. Severe winter weather is even more common in Blue Ridge Electric's service area, and line technicians must work during all hours of the night or day to restore electricity when ice and snow damage power lines.

Although the law does not take effect until December 1, residents are encouraged to begin the practice of moving over and slowing down if they see an electric utility vehicle. This will help protect the safety of not only the workers, but also the drivers. In Blue Ridge Electric's service area where severe winter weather typically causes more issues, this will help drivers become accustomed to "thinking safety" and moving over for line workers well before ice or snow typically arrive and the new law takes effect.