Do you know what it means if you see a car with a flashing green light in its window? The flashing green lights you might see in the front window of vehicles means that those drivers are volunteer firefighters on their way to an emergency. If you see a car with a flashing green light, please be courteous and yield the right of way. When you see a flashing green light in your rear-view mirror, pull over.

The South Bruce Peninsula Fire Department is comprised of 56 volunteer firefighters. The department is based out of two fire stations, one station in Wiarton and the other station in Sauble Beach. When an emergency occurs, our volunteer firefighters are paged. They respond immediately by activating the flashing green lights on their personal vehicles and driving to their designated fire station as quickly and safely as possible. Seconds count in a fire or rescue situation, and time lost en route from traffic can make the difference.

Of the 465 fire departments in Ontario 434 departments are staffed by over 19,000 volunteer firefighters. To help the public identify these firefighters responding in their own vehicle, the Ministry of Transportation amended the Highway Traffic Act over 20 years ago to allow volunteer firefighters responding to emergencies to use a flashing green light. When you see a vehicle with the tell-tale flashing green light activated I urge you to please pull over and let our volunteers pass. We could be heading to your home or cottage.

The green lights have been effective in my opinion. There is a challenge, especially in high tourist season, because people are less likely to have a green light catch their eye. Although green lights have been used for over 20 years throughout Ontario, we still encounter challenges and we continue to see that our community is unsure what it means. The green lights don’t allow volunteer firefighters to bend the rules of the road… It’s just to say, ‘Hey, if you wouldn't mind driving over to the side of the road and let us pass.’

We ask that everyone who drives in South Bruce Peninsula to support our firefighters by being courteous and yielding the right of way to them when their green lights are flashing in response to an emergency. Seconds count!

Yours in fire safety,

Daniel Robinson,
Town of South Bruce Peninsula,
Manager of Emergency Services