Emergency responders must pay tolls on the Thruway

ALBANY – Ambulance or fire vehicles responding to an emergency on the Thruway must now pay tolls on the way to the incident.

Thruway Department of Maintenance and Operations Deputy Director H. McCarthy Gipson has written to emergency service providers who respond to Thruway incidents that a new law requires the Authority to issue refunds for tolls incurred on the superhighway by ambulance or fire vehicles in emergency operations.

Ulster County Fire Coordinator Charles Muntz said it could slow down responses.

"If the fire department in their jurisdiction has the Thruway running through the jurisdiction and they respond out there for severe motor vehicle accident or hazmat incident and they call a neighboring department that does not cover the Thruway, they are going to be expected, the way I read it, to pay also on the return," he said.

Gipson wrote the emergency service providers that “to assist with more efficient incident response times and enhanced safety,” those responders should use E-ZPass only toll lanes when available. "In instances when an E-ZPass only lane is not available, the vehicle should proceed through a staffed lane and pick up a toll ticket or pay the toll collector the required toll and ask for a cash receipt."

"The Thruway Authority does not charge emergency vehicles," according to Thruway spokesman R.W. Groneman, who issued a statement Tuesday afternoon. "In a rare instance where a toll is inadvertently charged, this law establishes a reimbursement procedure."

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