

Date of Hearing: 06/22/2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

SB 962 (Archuleta) – As Amended May 14, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: Emergency vehicles: blue warning lights

SUMMARY: Authorizes the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to install a blue warning light on an emergency vehicle operated by a parole officer and authorizes parole officers to operate vehicles with these lights if they complete a four-hour training course on the operation of emergency vehicles. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires a parole officer operating an emergency vehicle with a blue warning light to complete a four-hour classroom training course on the operation of emergency vehicles that is certified by the Commission on Correctional Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).
- 2) Upon an appropriation from the Legislature, permits CDCR to install a blue warning light on an emergency vehicle operated by a parole officer.
- 3) Provides that this does not expand the existing authority of a parole officer to conduct a high-speed vehicle pursuit, nor does it change any existing training requirements for a high-speed vehicle pursuit.
- 4) States this shall be known as and may be cited as the Agent Joshue Byrd Memorial Act.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes specified peace officers employed by the following public safety agencies in the performance of their duties, to display a steady or flashing blue warning light visible from the front, sides, or rear of their authorized emergency vehicle:
 - a) Sheriffs, undersheriffs, deputy sheriffs, chiefs of police, chiefs or directors of consolidated municipal public safety agencies that perform police functions, police officers, harbor police, chief executive of public safety agencies, marshals or deputy marshals of superior courts, port wardens, and district attorney inspectors or investigators;
 - b) California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers, University of California police, California State University police, correctional officers, members of the Office of Internal Affairs at the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department of Fish and Game employees, Department of Parks and Recreation employees, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection employees, and marshals and police appointed by the Board of Directors of the California Exposition and State Fair;
 - c) The chief and coordinators of the Law Enforcement Branch of the Office of Emergency Services;
 - d) Park rangers;
 - e) Community college police and school district police;

- f) Bay Area Rapid Transit District police, transit district peace officers, airport law enforcement; railroad police;
 - g) Legislative sergeants-at-arms;
 - h) Members of the California National Guard; and,
 - i) Probation officers. (Vehicle Code section (VEH) 25258)
- 2) Provides that any law enforcement agency vehicle driven by a peace officer, including parole officers, in the performance of their duties is an “authorized emergency vehicle.” (VEH 165.)
 - 3) Defines “parole officer” and limits the extent of their authority as follows:
 - a) To conditions of parole, probation, mandatory supervision, or post release community supervision by any person in this state on parole, probation, mandatory supervision, or post release community supervision;
 - b) To the escape of any inmate or ward from a state or local institution;
 - c) To the transportation of persons on parole, probation, mandatory supervision, or post release community supervision;
 - d) To violations of any penal provisions of law which are discovered while performing the usual or authorized duties of the officer's employment; and,
 - e) To the rendering of mutual aid to any other law enforcement agency. (Penal Code section (PEN) 830.5)
 - 4) Creates the Commission on Correctional Peace Officer Standards and Training to establish standards for the training and professional development of rank-and-file state correctional peace officers, as well as first-line and second-line supervisory state correctional peace officers. (PEN 13600)

FISCAL EFFECT:

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) would incur unknown, significant one-time costs, potentially as high as the low millions of dollars, if funds are appropriated and the department exercises the authority granted in this bill to install light bars on parole officer vehicles. These costs would be lower to the extent CDCR only installs light bars on a portion of its parole officer vehicles. (General Fund [GF])
- CDCR would also incur unknown one-time costs, likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars, for parole officer staff time associated with completion of the four-hour training course, and for costs associated with the provision of training through CPOST. Actual costs would depend upon how many parole officers would be directed to complete training. CDCR further estimates one-time costs in the low tens of thousands of dollars to develop the four-hour classroom training course. (GF)

COMMENTS: State law provides for special treatment of authorized emergency vehicles (AEVs). If an AEV has a red or blue siren on, surrounding traffic is required to yield the right-of-way and immediately drive to the right-hand edge or curb of any road and clear any intersection until the vehicle has passed. AEVs are allowed to be equipped with at least one steady-burning red warning lamp if engaged in police, fire and lifesaving services. Blue warning

lamps are restricted to peace officers. Drivers must change lanes or slow down when passing a stationary AEV with its sirens on. AEVs are generally exempt from most California Air Resources Board (CARB) emission regulations, such as the Clean Truck Program. AEVs are exempt from paying a toll or other charge if it is responding to an urgent or emergency call.

Parole officers have full law enforcement authority regarding the escape of any inmate or ward, as well as the tracking and apprehension of parolees who have violated their conditions or absconded. These operations often involve executing high-risk arrest warrants or conducting compliance searches alongside local police or sheriff departments. Parole officers are legally responsible for the official transportation of individuals on parole or post-release community supervision.

While parole officer vehicles are permitted to have authorized emergency vehicles with red warning lamps, more traditionally used by fire and ambulances, they are not authorized to have blue warning lamps authorized for other peace officers, including probation officers.

According to the author, “Without blue warning lights, other law enforcement officers and first responders are less likely to recognize, assist and support parole officers in the performance of their duties. This is especially important in cases where an officer is transporting someone who is suffering from a medical emergency, such as in the case of Agent Joshue Byrd. Agent Byrd was shot and killed in the line of duty on July 17, 2025. Emergency services were unable to reach the scene, and parole officer vehicles present did not have emergency lights. Agent Byrd’s colleagues were unable to quickly transport him to the ambulance’s staging or the hospital itself, and he passed away from his injuries. When something like this happens, every second counts. The Parole Officers’ branch of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA) has been asking for blue lights on their vehicles for years. CDCR has consistently denied this request because of cost. Now, CDCR has issued a new policy allowing certain parole officers to be issued amber lights on their vehicles for celebrations. This new policy begs the question: why is CDCR willing to pay for a purely ceremonial light but not one that is proven to be lifesaving?”

The California Correctional Peace Officers Association, *writing in support of this bill*, argues: “SB 962 is grounded in the tragic loss of Parole Agent Joshua Byrd, who was killed in the line of duty in July 2025. During the emergency response, the absence of vehicle recognition lights and sirens delayed fellow officers’ ability to transport Agent Byrd to emergency medical care. His death highlighted a critical gap in basic emergency response tools available to frontline parole agents. Across California, numerous peace officers - including probation officers, district attorney investigators, university police, and park rangers - already utilize blue warning lights on official vehicles. SB 962 simply provides the department with the authority to extend similar tools more broadly if deemed appropriate. CDCR itself recognized the importance of this equipment earlier this year by authorizing emergency lighting and training for certain managerial and supervisory parole personnel. Yet, rank-and-file parole agents, who are most frequently in the field and exposed to rapidly evolving situations, remain without access to this critical safety equipment.”

Previous legislation. SB 349 (Archuleta, 2025) was substantially similar to SB 962. It would have authorized parole officers to display a blue warning light from their emergency vehicles if the officer completes a certified training course on the operation of emergency vehicles. *This bill failed passage in Senate Appropriations.*

SB 1021 (Archuleta, 2024) would have authorized parole officers to display the blue warning light from their emergency vehicles if they complete a 4-hour classroom training course regarding the operation of emergency vehicles that is certified by the Standards and Training for Corrections Division of the Board of State and Community Corrections. *This bill failed passage in Senate Appropriations.*

SB 587 (Atkins, Chapter 286, Statutes 2017) authorized probation officers to display a blue warning light on their authorized emergency vehicles if the officer completes an emergency vehicle operations course certified by the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Association of Highway Patrolmen
California Correctional Peace Officers Association
Peace Officers Research Association of California

Opposition

None on file

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