



CHAPTER 20
ARTICLE 3 - MOTOR VEHICLE ACT OF 1937

N.C.G.S. § 20-158.

Vehicle control signs and signals.

SOURCE General Statutes of North Carolina, as published by the General Assembly	LAST AMENDMENT IN THIS TEXT S.L. 2023-63, s. 3.1 — twenty-first act in the lineage	RETRIEVED 21 September 2026, 01:26 UTC	SOURCE FINGERPRINT 545544ced97948952d85458d - 98f85c83de43f1d3742d4e58 - 6b85390ef06073b5
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- § 20-158(a)

The Department of Transportation, with reference to State highways, and local authorities, with reference to highways under their jurisdiction, are hereby authorized to control vehicles:

(1)

At intersections, by erecting or installing stop signs requiring vehicles to come to a complete stop at the entrance to that portion of the intersection designated as the main traveled or through highway. Stop signs may also be erected at three or more entrances to an intersection.

(2)

At appropriate places other than intersections, by erecting or installing stop signs requiring vehicles to come to a complete stop.

(3)

At intersections and other appropriate places, by erecting or installing steady-beam traffic signals and other traffic control devices, signs, or signals. All steady-beam traffic signals emitting alternate red and green lights shall be arranged so that the red light in vertical-arranged signal faces shall appear above, and in horizontal-arranged signal faces shall appear to the left of all yellow and green lights.

(4)

At intersections and other appropriate places, by erecting or installing flashing red or yellow lights.

§ 20-158(b)

Control of Vehicles at Intersections. -

INFRACTION

- (1) When a stop sign has been erected or installed at an intersection, it shall be unlawful for the driver of any vehicle to fail to stop in obedience thereto and yield the right-of-way to vehicles operating on the designated main-traveled or through highway. When stop signs have been erected at three or more entrances to an intersection, the driver, after stopping in obedience thereto, may proceed with caution.
- (2)
 - a. When a traffic signal is emitting a steady red circular light controlling traffic approaching an intersection, an approaching vehicle facing the red light shall come to a stop and shall not enter the intersection. After coming to a complete stop and unless prohibited by an appropriate sign, that approaching vehicle may make a right turn.
 - b. Any vehicle that turns right under this subdivision shall yield the right-of-way to:
 1. Other traffic and pedestrians using the intersection; and
 2. Pedestrians who are moving towards the intersection, who are in reasonably close proximity to the intersection, and who are preparing to cross in front of the traffic that is required to stop at the red light.
 - c. Failure to yield to a pedestrian under this subdivision shall be an infraction, and the court may assess a penalty of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500.00) and not less than one hundred dollars (\$100.00).
 - d. Repealed by Session Laws 2014-58, s. 4, effective July 7, 2014.
- (2a) When a traffic signal is emitting a steady yellow circular light on a traffic signal controlling traffic approaching an intersection or a steady yellow arrow light on a traffic signal controlling traffic turning at an intersection, vehicles facing the yellow light are warned that the related green light is being terminated or a red light will be immediately forthcoming. When the traffic signal is emitting a steady green light, vehicles may proceed with due care through the intersection subject to the rights of pedestrians and other vehicles as may otherwise be provided by law.
- (3) When a flashing red light has been erected or installed at an intersection, approaching vehicles facing the red light shall stop and yield the right-of-way to vehicles in or approaching the intersection. The right to proceed shall be subject to the rules applicable to making a stop at a stop sign.

- (4) When a flashing yellow light has been erected or installed at an intersection, approaching vehicles facing the yellow flashing light may proceed through the intersection with caution, yielding the right-of-way to vehicles in or approaching the intersection.
- (5) When a stop sign, traffic signal, flashing light, or other traffic-control device authorized by subsection (a) of this section requires a vehicle to stop at an intersection, the driver shall stop (i) at an appropriately marked stop line, or if none, (ii) before entering a marked crosswalk, or if none, (iii) before entering the intersection at the point nearest the intersecting street where the driver has a view of approaching traffic on the intersecting street.
- (6) When a traffic signal is not illuminated due to a power outage or other malfunction, vehicles shall approach the intersection and proceed through the intersection as though such intersection is controlled by a stop sign on all approaches to the intersection. This subdivision shall not apply if the movement of traffic at the intersection is being directed by a law enforcement officer, another authorized person, or another type of traffic control device.

§ 20-158(c)

INFRACTION

Control of Vehicles at Places other than Intersections. -

- (1) When a stop sign has been erected or installed at a place other than an intersection, it shall be unlawful for the driver of any vehicle to fail to stop in obedience thereto and yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and other vehicles.
- (2) When a traffic signal has been erected or installed at a place other than an intersection, and is emitting a steady red light, vehicles facing the red light shall come to a complete stop. When the traffic signal is emitting a steady yellow light, vehicles facing the light shall be warned that a red light will be immediately forthcoming and that vehicles may not proceed through such a red light. When the traffic signal is emitting a steady green light, vehicles may proceed subject to the rights of pedestrians and other vehicles as may otherwise be provided by law.
- (3) When a flashing red light has been erected or installed at a place other than an intersection, approaching vehicles facing the light shall stop and yield the right-of-way to pedestrians or other vehicles.
- (4) When a flashing yellow light has been erected or installed at a place other than an intersection, approaching vehicles facing the light may proceed with caution, yielding the right-of-way to pedestrians and other vehicles.

- (5) When a traffic signal, stop sign, or other traffic control device authorized by subsection (a) requires a vehicle to stop at a place other than an intersection, the driver shall stop at an appropriately marked stop line, or if none, before entering a marked crosswalk, or if none, before proceeding past the traffic control device.
- (6) When a ramp meter is displaying a circular red display, vehicles facing the red light must stop. When a ramp meter is displaying a circular green display, a vehicle may proceed for each lane of traffic facing the meter. When the display is dark or not emitting a red or green display, a vehicle may proceed without stopping. A violation of this subdivision is an infraction. No drivers license points or insurance surcharge shall be assessed as a result of a violation of this subdivision.

§ 20-158(d) No failure to stop as required by the provisions of this section shall be considered negligence or contributory negligence per se in any action at law for injury to person or property, but the facts relating to such failure to stop may be considered with the other facts in the case in determining whether a party was guilty of negligence or contributory negligence.

§ 20-158(e) Defense. - It shall be a defense to a violation of sub-subdivision (b)(2)a. of this section if the operator of a motorcycle, as defined in G.S. 20-4.01(27)h., or the operator of farm equipment or machinery, shows all of the following:

- (1) The operator brought the motorcycle or farm equipment or machinery to a complete stop at the intersection or stop bar where a steady red light was being emitted in the direction of the operator.
- (2) The intersection is controlled by a vehicle actuated traffic signal using an inductive loop to activate the traffic signal.
- (3) No other vehicle that was entitled to have the right-of-way under applicable law was sitting at, traveling through, or approaching the intersection.
- (4) No pedestrians were attempting to cross at or near the intersection.
- (5) The motorcycle or farm equipment or machinery operator who received the citation waited a minimum of three minutes at the intersection or stop bar where the steady red light was being emitted in the direction of the operator before entering the intersection.

APPARATUS FOLLOWS — DERIVED, NOT ENACTED

Amendment lineage

A horizontal timeline representing the 20th century, spanning from 1937 to 2023. The timeline is marked with vertical tick marks at irregular intervals, indicating specific years. The years 1937, 1980, and 2023 are explicitly labeled at the beginning, middle, and end of the timeline, respectively.

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APPARATUS II
1 AUTHORITY

Authorities referenced

Every G.S. cross-reference appearing in the text of this section, in order of first appearance. Nothing is characterized; the operative language is quoted from the section itself.

REFERENCE	APPEARS IN	OPERATIVE LANGUAGE IN THIS SECTION
G.S. 20-4.01(27)	(e)	"of a motorcycle, as defined in"

APPARATUS III

Citation

FULL SECTION

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-158 (2023).

PINPOINT

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-158(a) (2023).

Pinpoint keys are set in the left margin of the text rather than line numbers: subsection designators are stable across editions and paper sizes, line numbers are not.

COLOPHON

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HISTORY PARENTHETICAL, AS PRINTED BY THE STATE

(1937, c. 407, s. 120; 1941, c. 83; 1949, c. 583, s. 2; 1955, c. 384, s. 1; c. 913, s. 7; 1957, c. 65, s. 11; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; c. 1191; c. 1330, s. 22; 1975, c. 1; 1977, c. 464, s. 34; 1979, c. 298, s. 1; 1989, c. 285; 2004-141, ss. 1, 2; 2004-172, ss. 2, 5; 2006-264, s. 6; 2007-260, s. 1; 2007-360, ss. 2, 3; 2014-58, ss. 4, 10(b); 2017-102, s. 5.2(b); 2023-63, s. 3.1.)

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