

Rep. Shankland: Honored By Portage County EMS Association for authoring roadside responder safety law

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PLOVER- State Representative Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) joined members of the Portage County EMS Association last night at the association's annual awards banquet in Plover. She was honored with the President Award in recognition of her bipartisan efforts to introduce and pass [2021 Wisconsin Act 115](#) into law.

Act 115, which Governor Tony Evers signed into law at the Amherst Fire District in December 2021, achieves all of the following:

1. Creates a new "emergency response zone" and strengthens penalties for traffic violations like reckless driving in areas where emergency or roadside response vehicles are present and personnel are at risk from traffic.
2. Bans cell phone use while driving within the area of an incident and mirrors the penalties for speeding, cell phone use, and other infractions in a construction zone in that area.
3. Requires the DOT to educate the public about these changes and the risks associated with failing to move over and reduce speed, or using cell phones, in emergency response areas.

Representative Katrina Shankland released the following statement in response:

"Our first responders are our heroes, and we owe them our deep and enduring

gratitude for the tireless work they do every day to keep our communities safe and healthy. I am honored to receive the President Award from the Portage County EMS Association in recognition of our work together to author and pass Act 115 into law. Our local EMS providers and all first responders deserve the stronger protections afforded under this new law to ensure they make it home safely.

“The road to enacting Act 115 first began in Portage County, with the advocacy of Amherst Fire District Fire Chief Victor Voss and Assistant Fire Chief Brian Swan. After several years of diligent work, strategic advocacy, and bipartisan collaboration, it was a joy to celebrate our bill being signed into law at the Amherst Fire District in December. I was glad to champion this legislation with the support of a statewide bipartisan coalition of legislators, firefighters, EMS, law enforcement, line workers, tow truck drivers, and more. I’m proud that as a result of our work together, Wisconsin has a new law that will help protect our first responders and other roadside workers and ensure that everyone comes home safe.

“Our new law is a powerful example of what can happen when we come together to work hard and get results so the next generation can be a little better protected than the ones before them. The people who put their lives on the line to keep us safe every single day are owed our deepest thanks, humblest gratitude, and commitment to continue protecting their safety. I will keep working hard to be their number one advocate in the Wisconsin State Legislature.”