

FOLLOWING TOO CLOSELY. G.S. 20-152(a).

The motor vehicle law provides that the operator of a vehicle shall not follow another vehicle more closely than is reasonable and prudent,¹ having due regard for the speed of such vehicles and the traffic upon and the condition of the highway.

The law does not fix any specific distance at which one vehicle may lawfully follow another. However, what is reasonable and prudent depends upon the circumstances, and the operator must take into consideration such things as the locality, road and weather conditions, other traffic on the highway, the characteristics of the vehicle being driven as well as those of the vehicle ahead, the relative speed of the two vehicles, and the ability of the operator to control and stop the vehicle should an emergency require it. Thus, the space between the vehicles is determined according to what is reasonable and prudent, and the space should be sufficient to enable the operator of the vehicle behind to avoid danger in case of a sudden stop or decrease in speed by the vehicle ahead under circumstances which should reasonably be anticipated by the operator of the vehicle behind.²

A violation of this law is negligence within itself.

¹Prior to Jan. 1, 1975, G.S. 20-152(a) provided that the "driver of a motor vehicle shall not follow another vehicle more closely than is reasonable and prudent with regard for the safety of others." The 1973 amendment deleted the words regarding "the safety of others."

²Beanblossom v. Thomas, 266 N.C. 181, 146 S.E.2d 36 (1966); Burnett v. Corbett, 264 N.C. 341, 141 S.E.2d 468 (1965); Ratliff v. Power Co., 268 N.C. 605, 151 S.E.2d 641 (1966); Scher v. Antonucci, 77 N.C. App. 810, 336 S.E.2d 434 (1985).

