

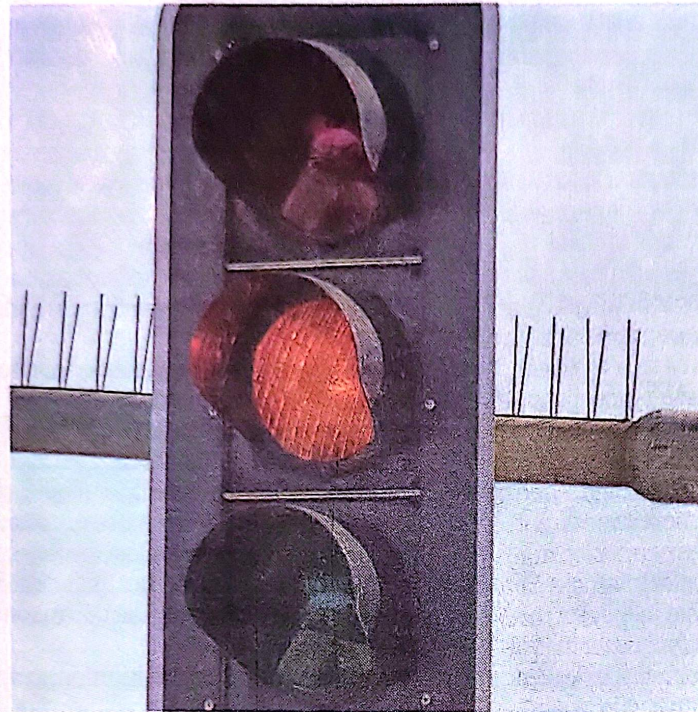
What the flashing amber traffic signal really means

If you have driven through Kampala late at night recently, you may have noticed something different at signalised junctions: traffic lights switching from the usual red, amber, green cycle to a flashing amber signal. Amber is what some of us refer to as "orange". For some motorists, this can be confusing, or even alarming. Is the traffic light faulty? Should you stop? Should you proceed? The short answer is: this is intentional, and it is safe, if you understand what it means.

Flashing amber signals are part of internationally recognised traffic management practices. Cities around the world adopt this system during low-traffic periods, typically late at night or in the early hours of the morning, when traffic volumes drop significantly. Kampala is no different with aligning with this global standard to make its road network more efficient while maintaining safety.

So, what does flashing amber mean?

A flashing amber light is a caution signal. It tells motorists to slow down, approach the junction carefully, and proceed only when it is safe to do so. Un-



like a green light, it does not give you automatic right of way. Unlike a red light, it does not require a complete stop unless conditions demand it. In simple terms: slow down, look, and go if it is safe.

Why do we use flashing amber at night?

At night, many intersections experience significantly reduced traffic. Maintaining a

full signal cycle in such conditions can lead to unnecessary delays, driver frustration, and even risky behaviour such as red-light running. Flashing amber helps to:

- Improve traffic flow where demand is low,
- Reduce unnecessary stopping and idling,
- Encourage driver attentiveness at intersections,

Maintain a level of control without over-regulating movement.

However, this flexibility comes with responsibility. The system depends heavily on driver judgment and caution. When you encounter a flashing amber light, you should:

- Reduce speed, well before reaching the junction.
- Scan all directions for other vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists
- Yield where necessary, especially to traffic already in the intersection or approaching
- Proceed cautiously, only when you are certain it is safe

As Kampala continues to modernise its traffic systems, such measures will become more common, and understanding them is key to ensuring they work as intended. Ultimately, road safety is a shared responsibility. Technology and infrastructure can guide us, but safe outcomes depend on how we respond as road users. So the next time you see a flashing amber light late at night, don't be alarmed. Take it as a reminder: slow down, stay alert, and move with care.

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