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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EMERGENCY RESPONSE VEHICLES.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

- 1           SECTION 1.   **Findings and purpose.**   (a)   The legislature  
2   finds that a review of procedures for emergency response  
3   vehicles is necessary to address issues of current concern to  
4   the public.   Specifically, the issues that have been raised are:
- 5           (1)   Whether emergency response vehicle sirens are audible  
6                by motorists;
- 7           (2)   Whether motorists can see emergency response vehicle  
8                flashing lights;
- 9           (3)   Whether motorists give low priority to moving out of  
10               the way of emergency response vehicles or even ignore  
11               them;
- 12           (4)   Whether emergency response vehicle lights and sirens  
13                are effective warning devices;
- 14           (5)   Whether traveling with lights and sirens decreases  
15                emergency response vehicle response and transport  
16                times, thus saving lives;
- 17           (6)   Whether the use of lights or sirens is necessary for  
18                responses that are not time-sensitive;



- 1           (7) Whether driving an emergency response vehicle using  
2           lights and sirens is more dangerous for the driver or  
3           the public than driving without using lights and  
4           sirens;
- 5           (8) Whether time-critical patients or victims can be  
6           identified to justify the use of lights and sirens at  
7           the time and dispatch of a 911 call;
- 8           (9) Whether there has ever been a lawsuit filed in the  
9           United States or Canada complaining that an emergency  
10          response vehicle responded without using lights and  
11          sirens when the use of the lights and sirens would  
12          have been appropriate;
- 13          (10) Whether the public expects the use of lights and  
14          sirens for emergency response vehicles; and
- 15          (11) Whether it is common for a caller to request the  
16          services of an emergency response vehicle without the  
17          use of lights or sirens.
- 18          (b) In 1994, the National Association of Emergency Medical  
19          Services Physicians, together with the National Association of  
20          State Emergency Medical Services Directors, published official  
21          practice-setting recommendations as follows:



- 1           (1) Emergency medical services medical directors should  
2           participate directly in the development of policies  
3           governing emergency medical-vehicle response, patient  
4           transport, and the use of warning lights and sirens;
- 5           (2) The use of lights and sirens during an emergency  
6           response and during patient transport should be based  
7           on standardized protocols that take into account  
8           situational and patient problem assessments;
- 9           (3) Emergency medical services agencies should use an  
10          emergency medical-dispatch priority reference system  
11          that has been developed in conjunction with and  
12          approved by the emergency medical services medical  
13          director to determine which requests for pre-hospital  
14          medical care require the use of warning lights and  
15          sirens;
- 16          (4) Except for suspected life-threatening, time-critical  
17          cases or cases involving multiple patients, response  
18          by more than one emergency medical vehicle using  
19          lights and sirens usually is unnecessary;
- 20          (5) The use of emergency warning lights and sirens should  
21          be limited to emergency responses and emergency-  
22          transport situations; and



1 (6) Scientific studies evaluating the effectiveness of  
2 warning lights and sirens under specific situations  
3 should be conducted and validated.

4 (c) The purpose of this Act is to establish an emergency  
5 response vehicle noise task force to:

6 (1) Evaluate the impact of sirens at night on surrounding  
7 communities in urban and rural areas;

8 (2) Evaluate the relative effectiveness of utilizing  
9 lights alone compared to using lights and sirens at  
10 night in enhancing the safety of first responders and  
11 the public; and

12 (3) Recommend rules on the appropriate use of lights and  
13 sirens by emergency response vehicles for adoption by  
14 the relevant agencies.

15 **SECTION 2. Emergency response vehicle noise task force.**

16 (a) There is created an emergency response vehicle noise task  
17 force within the department of health to examine the use and  
18 effectiveness of lights and sirens by emergency response  
19 vehicles. The task force shall:

20 (1) Evaluate the impact of sirens at night on surrounding  
21 communities in urban and rural areas;



- 1           (2) Evaluate the relative effectiveness of utilizing
- 2           lights alone compared to using lights and sirens at
- 3           night in enhancing the safety of first responders and
- 4           the public; and
- 5           (3) Recommend rules on the appropriate use of lights and
- 6           sirens by emergency response vehicles for adoption by
- 7           the relevant agencies.
- 8           (b) The task force shall consist of:
- 9           (1) The director of health or designee, who shall serve as
- 10           chairperson;
- 11           (2) A neighborhood board member representing the public,
- 12           to be appointed for a four-year term by the president
- 13           of the senate;
- 14           (3) A resident of a neighbor island representing the
- 15           public, to be appointed for a four-year term by the
- 16           speaker of the house of representatives;
- 17           (4) A representative of a level II trauma center;
- 18           (5) A representative from each of the police departments
- 19           of the counties of Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui and the
- 20           city and county of Honolulu;



1 (6) A representative from each of the fire departments of  
2 the counties of Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui and the city  
3 and county of Honolulu;

4 (7) A representative of the state emergency medical  
5 services advisory committee;

6 (8) A representative of emergency medical service  
7 personnel, to be appointed by the director of health;

8 (9) A representative of the blind community, to be  
9 appointed by the director of health; and

10 (10) A representative of the deaf community, to be  
11 appointed by the director of health.

12 (c) Members shall not be compensated but shall be  
13 reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred, including travel  
14 expenses, in carrying out their duties. The department of  
15 health shall provide all necessary administrative, professional,  
16 technical, and clerical support required by the task force.

17 (d) The task force shall meet at least biannually,  
18 beginning in 2013.

19 (e) The task force shall submit a written report of its  
20 findings and recommendations, including any necessary proposed  
21 state and county legislation, to the legislature and to the  
22 council of each county, no later than twenty days prior to the



1 convening of each regular session beginning with the regular  
2 session of 2014.

3 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.



**Report Title:**

Emergency Response Vehicle Noise Task Force

**Description:**

Establishes an emergency response vehicle noise task force to determine the impact of the emergency response vehicle sirens in terms of excessive noise, the effect on public safety, and the relative effectiveness of the use of emergency lights instead of the use of sirens at night. (SD1)

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