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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 of dispatch in response to a 911 call;
- 8           (9) Whether there has ever been a lawsuit filed in the  
9           United States or Canada based upon an emergency  
10          response vehicle responding 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 communities  
7 that surround facilities for emergency response  
8 vehicles in urban and rural areas;

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

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

16 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
17 amended by adding a new section to part XVIII to be  
18 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

19 "§321- Emergency response vehicle noise task force.

20 (a) There is established an emergency response vehicle noise  
21 task force within the department for administrative purposes, as  
22 provided in section 26-35, to examine the use and effectiveness



1 of lights and sirens by emergency response vehicles. The task  
2 force shall:

3 (1) Evaluate the impact of sirens at night on communities  
4 that surround facilities for emergency response  
5 vehicles in urban and rural areas;

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

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

13 (b) The task force shall consist of ten members to be  
14 appointed in the manner and to serve for the terms provided in  
15 section 26-34; provided that the members shall be:

16 (1) The director of health or the director's designee, who  
17 shall serve as chairperson;

18 (2) A neighborhood board member representing the public,  
19 to be appointed from a list of three nominees provided  
20 by the president of the senate;

21 (3) A resident of a neighbor island representing the  
22 public, to be appointed from a list of three nominees



- 1           provided by the speaker of the house of  
2           representatives;
- 3           (4) A representative of a level II trauma center;  
4           (5) A representative from the police department of each  
5           county;
- 6           (6) A representative from the fire department of each  
7           county;
- 8           (7) A representative of the state emergency medical  
9           services advisory committee;
- 10          (8) A representative of emergency medical service  
11          personnel, to be appointed from a list of three  
12          nominees provided by the director of health;
- 13          (9) A representative of the blind community, to be  
14          appointed from a list of three nominees provided by  
15          the director of health; and
- 16          (10) A representative of the deaf community, to be  
17          appointed from a list of three nominees provided by  
18          the director of health.
- 19          (c) Members shall not be compensated but shall be  
20          reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred, including travel  
21          expenses, in carrying out their duties. The department shall



provide all necessary administrative, professional, technical,  
and clerical support required by the task force.

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

(e) The task force shall submit a written report of its  
findings and recommendations, including any necessary proposed  
state and county legislation, to the legislature and to the  
council of each county, no later than twenty days prior to the  
convening of each regular session beginning with the regular  
session of 2014."

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



**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. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

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