
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;



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- 1 (6) Whether the use of lights or sirens is necessary for
2 responses that are not time-sensitive;
- 3 (7) Whether driving an emergency response vehicle using
4 lights and sirens is more dangerous for the driver or
5 the public than driving without using lights and
6 sirens;
- 7 (8) Whether time-critical patients or victims can be
8 identified to justify the use of lights and sirens at
9 the time of dispatch in response to a 911 call;
- 10 (9) Whether there has ever been a lawsuit filed in the
11 United States or Canada based upon an emergency
12 response vehicle responding without using lights and
13 sirens when the use of the lights and sirens would
14 have been appropriate;
- 15 (10) Whether the public expects the use of lights and
16 sirens for emergency response vehicles; and
- 17 (11) Whether it is common for a caller to request the
18 services of an emergency response vehicle without the
19 use of lights or sirens.
- 20 (b) In 1994, the National Association of Emergency Medical
21 Services Physicians, together with the National Association of



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1 State Emergency Medical Services Directors, published official
2 practice-setting recommendations as follows:

3 (1) Emergency medical services medical directors should
4 participate directly in the development of policies
5 governing emergency medical-vehicle response, patient
6 transport, and the use of warning lights and sirens;

7 (2) The use of lights and sirens during an emergency
8 response and during patient transport should be based
9 on standardized protocols that take into account
10 situational and patient problem assessments;

11 (3) Emergency medical services agencies should use an
12 emergency medical-dispatch priority reference system
13 that has been developed in conjunction with and
14 approved by the emergency medical services medical
15 director to determine which requests for pre-hospital
16 medical care require the use of warning lights and
17 sirens;

18 (4) Except for suspected life-threatening, time-critical
19 cases or cases involving multiple patients, response
20 by more than one emergency medical vehicle using
21 lights and sirens usually is unnecessary;



1 (5) The use of emergency warning lights and sirens should
2 be limited to emergency responses and emergency-
3 transport situations; and

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

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

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

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

16 (3) Recommend rules on the appropriate use of lights and
17 sirens by emergency response vehicles for adoption by
18 the relevant agencies.

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



1 "§321- Emergency response vehicle noise task force. (a)

2 There is established an emergency response vehicle noise task
3 force within the department of health for administrative
4 purposes, as provided in section 26-35, to examine the use and
5 effectiveness of lights and sirens by emergency response
6 vehicles. The task force shall:

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

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

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

17 (b) The task force shall consist of nineteen members to be
18 appointed in the manner and to serve for the terms provided in
19 section 26-34; provided that the members shall be:

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



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- 1 (2) A neighborhood board member representing the public,
2 to be appointed from a list of three nominees provided
3 by the president of the senate;
- 4 (3) A resident of a neighbor island representing the
5 public, to be appointed from a list of three nominees
6 provided by the speaker of the house of
7 representatives;
- 8 (4) A representative of a level II trauma center;
- 9 (5) A representative from the police department of each
10 county;
- 11 (6) A representative from the fire department of each
12 county;
- 13 (7) A representative of the state emergency medical
14 services advisory committee;
- 15 (8) A representative of emergency medical service
16 personnel from each county, each to be appointed from
17 a list of three nominees provided by the director of
18 health;
- 19 (9) A representative of the blind community, to be
20 appointed from a list of three nominees provided by
21 the director of health; and



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Report Title:

Emergency Response Vehicle Noise Task Force; Department of Health

Description:

Establishes an emergency response vehicle noise task force to determine the impact of 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.

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