

ACT 16

S.B. NO. 346

A Bill for an Act Relating to Emergency Vehicles.

*Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:*

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the use of sirens by emergency vehicles can be necessary to alert other vehicles and pedestrians that an emergency vehicle is exercising its authority to disregard certain traffic laws, such as proceeding through a red light or exceeding the posted speed limit. The legislature further finds that some emergency response sectors have determined that there should be flexibility to not engage the siren in situations where it is unnecessary, such as responding at night when the streets are empty of cars and pedestrians. Further, the city and county of Honolulu has expressed in its ordinances that the siren should be used “as may be reasonably necessary”. Despite this, some emergency response sectors believe that the use of the siren is mandatory in all circumstances. The legislature notes that the unnecessary use of a siren contributes to noise pollution, especially in heavily-congested residential areas.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to provide flexibility in the use of sirens by emergency response vehicles in certain circumstances.

SECTION 2. Section 291C-26, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (c) to read as follows:

“(c) The exemptions granted in subsection (b) to an authorized emergency vehicle shall apply only when the vehicle is making use of authorized audible and visual signals~~[-except as otherwise provided by county ordinance.];~~ provided that use of an authorized audible signal shall not be required if it is not reasonably necessary under the circumstances. This subsection shall not apply to police vehicles.”

SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved April 19, 2023.)