A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EMERGENCY RESPONSE VEHICLES.

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

SECTION 1. Findings and purpose. (a) The legislature finds that a review of procedures for emergency response vehicles is necessary to address issues of recent concern to the public. Specifically, the issues that have been raised are:

(1) Whether emergency response vehicle sirens are audible by motorists;

(2) Whether motorists can see emergency response vehicle flashing lights;

(3) Whether motorists give low priority to moving out of the way of emergency response vehicles or even ignore them;

(4) Whether emergency response vehicle lights and sirens are effective warning devices;

(5) Whether traveling with lights and sirens decreases emergency response vehicle response and transport times, thus saving lives;
(6) Whether the use of lights or sirens is necessary for responses that are not time-sensitive;

(7) Whether driving an emergency response vehicle using lights and sirens is more dangerous for the driver or the public than driving without using lights and sirens;

(8) Whether time-critical patients or victims can be identified to justify the use of lights and sirens at the time of dispatch in response to a 911 call;

(9) Whether there has ever been a lawsuit filed in the United States or Canada based upon an emergency response vehicle responding without using lights and sirens when the use of the lights and sirens would have been appropriate;

(10) Whether the public expects the use of lights and sirens for emergency response vehicles; and

(11) Whether it is common for a caller to request the services of an emergency response vehicle without the use of lights or sirens.

(b) In 1994, the National Association of Emergency Medical Services Physicians, together with the National Association of
State Emergency Medical Services Directors, published official practice-setting recommendations as follows:

1. Emergency medical services medical directors should participate directly in the development of policies governing emergency medical-vehicle response, patient transport, and the use of warning lights and sirens;

2. The use of lights and sirens during an emergency response and during patient transport should be based on standardized protocols that take into account situational and patient problem assessments;

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

4. Except for suspected life-threatening, time-critical cases or cases involving multiple patients, response by more than one emergency medical vehicle using lights and sirens usually is unnecessary;
(5) The use of emergency warning lights and sirens should be limited to emergency responses and emergency-transport situations; and

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to part XVIII to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:
§321- Emergency response vehicle noise task force.  (a)

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

1. Evaluate the impact of sirens at night on communities that surround facilities for emergency response vehicles in urban and rural areas;

2. Evaluate the relative effectiveness of utilizing lights alone compared to using lights and sirens at night in enhancing the safety of first responders, patients, and the public; and

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

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

1. The director of health or the director's designee, who shall serve as chairperson;
(2) A neighborhood board member representing the public, to be appointed from a list of three nominees provided by the president of the senate;

(3) A resident of a county other than the City and County of Honolulu representing the public, to be appointed from a list of three nominees provided by the speaker of the house of representatives;

(4) A representative of a level II trauma center;

(5) A representative from the police department of each county;

(6) A representative from the fire department of each county;

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

(8) A representative of emergency medical service personnel from each county, each to be appointed from a list of three nominees provided by the director of health;

(9) A representative of the blind community, to be appointed from a list of three nominees provided by the director of health; and
(10) A representative of the deaf community, to be appointed from a list of three nominees provided by the director of health.

(c) Members shall not be compensated but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred, including travel 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 2019.

(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 2020."

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.

INTRODUCED BY:  
JAN 23 2019
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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