

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2016 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 635

(Senator Zirkin)

Judicial Proceedings

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**Vehicle Laws - Flashing Lights - Community-Based Emergency Response  
Vehicles**

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This bill authorizes a participant in a citizens on patrol group or other community watch group, when permitted by specified law enforcement agencies, to display one or more red and white flashing lights while on patrol if the group (1) has been active for at least one year; (2) has at least 25 active members; (3) uses a communications system, including an emergency hotline that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, a dispatch service, and two-way radio transmissions; (4) responds to emergency situations in the community; (5) requires members to wear a uniform while on duty; and (6) uses vehicles while on patrol in the community. A law enforcement agency may require signage on the vehicle which identifies the group conducting the patrol while the authorized red and white flashing lights are displayed.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The change is procedural/technical in nature and does not directly affect governmental finances.

**Local Effect:** Enforcement can be handled with existing resources. No effect on revenues.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** A participant in a citizens on patrol group or other community watch group, or security guard agency, may display on a vehicle while on patrol in the community or on the property that the agency is responsible for patrolling, one or more amber flashing lights.

In the case of a citizens on patrol group or other community watch group, the amber flashing lights may only be displayed if allowed by a law enforcement agency designated by the governing body of the applicable county or municipal corporation; they must be extinguished at the request of a uniformed law enforcement officer. Moreover, the law enforcement agency may require that a sign meeting specifications set by the agency appear on the vehicle that identifies the group conducting the patrol while the amber flashing light is displayed.

Otherwise, a person may not drive or move any vehicle or equipment on any highway that is equipped with or displays a light or signal device designed to emit an oscillating, rotating, blinking, or other type of light emission, unless designated and authorized by the Motor Vehicle Administrator, or as specified in the Maryland Vehicle Law. The prohibition against flashing lights does not apply to an emergency vehicle, under circumstances specified in the Maryland Vehicle Law, a service vehicle, or a school vehicle. A violation is a misdemeanor, and the maximum penalty is a \$500 fine. The prepayment penalty is \$60.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts), Department of State Police, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 22, 2016  
md/kdm

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