

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1429 (Delegate Stukes, *et al.*)
Health and Government Operations

Commission on Responses to Serious Incidents of Inclement Weather

This bill establishes a Commission on Responses to Serious Incidents of Inclement Weather. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) must provide staff support for the commission. The commission must submit an interim report by December 31, 2010, and a final report by December 31, 2011, providing findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2010, and terminates May 31, 2012.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Given the State's fiscal difficulties, agency budgets have been constrained. Thus, even though MDOT can likely handle the staffing and reporting requirements with existing resources, limited staff resources will have to be diverted from other responsibilities. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The commission must:

- identify and develop information that should be communicated about steps the public should take to (1) prepare for serious incidents of inclement weather; and (2) manage the effects of serious incidents of inclement weather once they occur; and

- identify improvements that could be made to State and local policies and procedures to address the impact of serious incidents of inclement weather, including (1) improving response times to accidents or other public safety matters; (2) reducing traffic delays due to serious accidents; (3) reducing the occurrence of secondary incidents that result from inclement weather or public response to inclement weather; (4) enhancing public safety generally during inclement weather; and (5) engaging the public in assisting others in their community and those engaged in restoring public services.

Members of the commission may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations, as provided in the State budget.

Background: The State of Maryland received a record level of snow over the past four months. In December 2009, a storm left upwards of 20 inches of snow on much of the State. In early February 2010, two storms left as much as 50 inches of snow in some parts of the State. On February 5, 2010, the Governor issued a Declaration of Emergency in response to one of the storms, which effectively authorized the State to activate the Maryland National Guard and provide assistance to local emergency managers.

In Maryland, the Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART) program was developed as a joint effort between MDOT, the Maryland Transportation Authority, and the Maryland State Police, in cooperation with other federal, State, and local agencies. CHART's mission is to improve operations of Maryland's highway system by using real-time mapping technology to improve response time and to mitigate nonrecurring congestion, which accounts for approximately half of the State's highway traffic congestion. In fiscal 2009, CHART personnel responded to over 15,000 incidents and assisted more than 17,000 stranded motorists on Maryland roads.

The Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), which is part of the Maryland Military Department, is responsible for coordinating the State response in any major emergency or disaster. This includes supporting local governments as needed or requested, and coordinating assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal partners. MEMA manages many of the federal grants that fund a broad range of initiatives leading to enhanced protection from and responses to the full range of natural and man-made disasters which could threaten the State's citizens.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation, Office of the Governor, Department of Legislative Services

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