

**Department of Legislative Services**  
2010 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Bill 49  
Judicial Proceedings

(Senator Colburn)

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**Vehicle Laws - Vehicle Approaching Emergency or Police Vehicle - Duty to  
Change Lane or Slow Down**

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This bill establishes the duties of drivers when approaching from the rear a stopped, standing, or parked emergency or police vehicle using signals. Violators are guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a maximum fine of \$500 upon conviction.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Minimal general fund revenue increase from the penalty provision applicable to this offense under the Maryland Vehicle Law. Enforcement can be handled with existing resources.

**Local Effect:** None. Enforcement can be handled with existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The bill requires, except as otherwise directed by a police officer, a driver if approaching from the rear an emergency or police vehicle that is stopped, standing, or parked on a highway and using any visual signal to take the following actions as soon as it is safe:

- vacate the lane closest to the emergency or police vehicle if the driver's vehicle is on a highway with two or more lanes of traffic moving in the direction that the emergency or police vehicle is facing; or
- reduce the speed of the vehicle to a speed that is sufficient to ensure the safety of police officers or emergency services personnel in the vicinity of the emergency

or police vehicle if the driver's vehicle is traveling on a highway with only one lane of traffic moving in the direction that the emergency or police vehicle is facing, and the posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour or greater.

A violation of this provision is a misdemeanor subject to a maximum fine of \$500.

**Current Law:** On the immediate approach of an emergency vehicle using authorized audible and visual signals or of a police vehicle lawfully using an audible signal, the driver of every other vehicle, unless otherwise directed by a police officer, must first, yield the right-of-way; second, drive immediately to a position parallel to and as close as possible to the edge or curb of the roadway, clear of any intersection; and third, stop and stay in that position until the emergency vehicle has passed.

When proceeding in the same direction as an emergency or police vehicle using authorized audible and visual signals, or a police vehicle using an authorized audible signal, a driver may not pass that vehicle unless the emergency vehicle has stopped or unless otherwise directed by a police officer. The driver of an emergency vehicle has the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons.

A violation of these provisions requires the assessment of one point against the driving record and is a misdemeanor, punishable by a penalty of up to \$500. The District Court has established a prepayment penalty of \$110 if the violation does not contribute to an accident. However, if the violation does contribute to an accident, the prepayment penalty increases to \$150, and if serious bodily injury or death results from the accident, the District Court assesses a penalty of \$750. Also, if the offense contributes to an accident, three points must be assessed against the driving record.

**State Revenues:** The District Court advises that, in calendar 2009, 930 people were convicted for violating provisions for the operation of vehicles on the approach of emergency vehicles. The number of convictions under the bill cannot be reliably estimated but is expected to be minimal.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** HB 989 of 2009 and HB 622 of 2009, both similar bills, each received an unfavorable report from the House Environmental Matters Committee. HB 255 and HB 1263 of 2008 each received an unfavorable report from the House Environmental Matters Committee. SB 454, the cross file of HB 255, received an unfavorable report from the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. HB 131 of 2008 was heard in the House Environmental Matters Committee but received no further action. In 2007, SB 517/HB 671 each received unfavorable reports from the Senate Judicial

Proceedings Committee and the House Environmental Matters Committee, respectively. Similar bills were also introduced in the 2003 through 2005 legislative sessions.

**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 5, 2010  
mam/ljm

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