

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 926 (Senator Gladden)
Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Vehicles of Public Service Companies - Use of Yellow and Amber Lights

This bill authorizes the vehicles of public service companies (whether or not they are designated as “service vehicles”) to be equipped with or display yellow or amber lights or signal devices. The yellow or amber lights on these vehicles may be flashed, oscillated, or otherwise used only in the course of official duties, to indicate to the public that the vehicle is slow moving or is otherwise impeding traffic.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill’s requirements can be implemented by the Public Service Commission and the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) and enforced by the Department of State Police with existing resources.

Local Effect: Enforcement can be handled with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: “Service vehicle” means a vehicle of a federal, State, or local agency; a public service company; or a person performing a governmental function under a contract with a federal, State, or local government, that is designated by MVA as a service vehicle.

Service vehicles, rural letter carrier vehicles, slow moving farm vehicles, and tow trucks are authorized to be equipped with or display yellow or amber lights or signal devices. The yellow or amber lights so permitted may be flashed or oscillated or otherwise used only in the course of official duties, to indicate to the public that the vehicle is slow moving or is impeding traffic.

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 (as noted above), or a school vehicle.

Every vehicle on a highway in the State must display lighted lamps and illuminating devices as specified for the class of vehicle, at any time when persons and vehicles on the highway are not clearly discernible at a distance of 1,000 feet ahead due to unfavorable atmospheric conditions or insufficient light. An exception applies to parked vehicles. Stoplights, turn signals, and other signaling devices are also exempt from this general requirement due to different and specific lighting requirements which are set forth in the Maryland Vehicle Law. During the times when lighted lamps or illuminating devices are required to be operational on motor vehicles, any lighted lamp or illuminating device that projects a beam of light with an intensity greater than 300 candlepower must be directed so that no part of the high-intensity portion of the beam strikes the level of roadway where the vehicle stands at a distance of more than 75 feet from the vehicle. This requirement does not apply to headlamps, spot lamps, auxiliary lamps, flashing turn signals, emergency vehicle and service vehicle warning lamps, and school vehicle warning lamps.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 582 (Delegate Barkley) - Environmental Matters.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 2, 2012
mc/ljm

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