

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 838

(Senators Gallion and Folden)

Judicial Proceedings

Environment and Transportation

Vehicle Laws - Lighting - Privately Owned Vehicles

This bill authorizes specified officers of a volunteer fire company and the fire police of a volunteer fire company to equip their privately owned vehicles with red or *red and white* lights or signal devices, in accordance with existing provisions relating to the equipping and use of such lights and signal devices on these vehicles. Under the bill, the fire police of a volunteer fire company may also choose to equip their privately owned vehicles with *red and green* lights or signal devices.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The bill is authorizing in nature and does not directly affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: In general, a person may not drive or move on any highway any vehicle or equipment that is equipped with or displays any light or signal device designed to emit an oscillating, rotating, blinking, or other type of emission of light, except as authorized under the Maryland Vehicle Law. A violation is a misdemeanor subject to a maximum fine of \$500. The prepayment penalty assessed by the District Court is \$60.

Vehicles of city, county, State, or federal fire departments or duly constituted volunteer fire departments or rescue squads, or the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical

Services System, may be equipped with or display red and/or white lights or signal devices. In each volunteer fire company, up to five specified officers may have their privately owned vehicles equipped with red lights or signal devices, which may be displayed only while traveling to or at the scene of an emergency. (*Under the bill*, such lights or signal devices may be red or *red and white*.) Specified officers include (1) the fire chief or the highest ranking fireline officer; (2) one or more of the assistant chiefs or deputy chiefs, whichever rank is second in command; and (3) the emergency medical services commander.

In addition, the fire police of each volunteer fire company may have their privately owned vehicles equipped with red lights or signal devices designed to emit an oscillating, rotating, blinking, or other type of emission of light. (*Under the bill*, such lights or signal devices may be red, *red and white*, or *red and green*.) The lights or signal devices may be flashed or oscillated or otherwise used only while the vehicle is at the scene of an accident, flood, or other emergency to which the volunteer fire company is responding.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 1253 and SB 917 of 2023 and HB 1066 of 2022.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems; Maryland Municipal League; Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 23, 2024
rh/aad Third Reader - March 16, 2024

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