



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Rawlings-Blake

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Investigative Hearing - Non-Emergency Response Policy

FOR the purpose of requesting the Chief, Baltimore City Fire Department to explore the feasibility of establishing a Non-Emergency Response Policy to reduce the risk of injuries and death to citizens and emergency response personnel from vehicle collisions and to report the findings to the City Council within 90 days of passage of this Resolution.

Recitals

In Fire Apparatus and Emergency Equipment Magazine, August 2006, it is reported that an increasing number of firefighters in the United States are being killed while responding to or returning from emergencies. According to the National Fire Protection Association, more firefighters were killed during 2003 and 2004 while responding to or returning from emergencies than any other type of duty. In 2003, vehicle collisions claimed the lives of 53 civilians and fire service members. Of these, 70% occurred during an emergency response, according to the National Highway Safety Administration. In 2002, more than 50% of civilian and firefighter fatalities in vehicle collisions occurred while en route or returning from emergency scenes.

Early December 2007, Baltimore City fire Truck 27 responding to an emergency call, collided with a sport utility vehicle at a Northwest Baltimore intersection, killing all 3 occupants of the SUV. The accident occurred as firefighters were responding to a report of smoke that was later determined to be from a pot of food left on the stove, in a hallway of an apartment building. Truck 27 was the 3rd of 4 fire department vehicles responding in an emergency response call that later turned out to be a situation not requiring such level of deployment.

The triple fatality accident in the City highlighted the danger of emergency vehicles responding at a high rate of speed, a situation that has been addressed by Fire and Rescue companies in 2 nearby counties. Anne Arundel County has adopted a system to determine the level of gravity of a call for emergency intervention and to gauge the response accordingly. Whereas in the past all calls initiated an emergency response, now calls are graded by an officer in the field who informs other units of the level of response needed. The system, which has been in place in Anne Arundel County for 3 years and was recently adopted by Howard County, is expected to reduce the number of accidents involving responding emergency vehicles.

The Non-Emergency Response Policy utilizes a graded response to each call. The calls are categorized as "Hot", "Warm", or "Cold". "Hot" responses are those where all units respond under emergency conditions. "Warm" responses are those that require a split response in which first-due unit(s) respond under emergency conditions, and all other units respond under non-emergency conditions. "Cold" responses require everyone to respond under non-emergency conditions.

Currently, the Baltimore City Fire Department does not employ a system for differentiating between emergencies, responding to each call with an equal urgency and emergency. The Non-Emergency Response Policy may not completely address emergency response situations that can exist in an urban setting. In an attempt to foster enhanced communications and bolster the resources of the Fire Fighters who dedicate themselves to protecting our City, the "Hot", "Warm", " Cold" response system may serve as an alternative to the present emergency response policy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Chief, Baltimore City Fire Department is requested to explore the feasibility of establishing a Non-Emergency Response Policy to reduce the risk of injuries and death to citizens and emergency response personnel from vehicle collisions and to report the findings to the City Council within 90 days of passage of this Resolution.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Chief, Baltimore City Fire Department, the Director of Finance, the Risk Management Officer, Office of Risk Management, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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