

Senate Fiscal Agency
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

Telephone: (517) 373-5383
Fax: (517) 373-1986
TDD: (517) 373-0543

Senate Bill 814 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Senator George A. McManus, Jr.
Committee: Transportation and Tourism

Date Completed: 5-5-98

RATIONALE

Flashing, rotating, or oscillating amber lights must be activated in circumstances in which warning lights are required for public safety. Under the Michigan Vehicle Code, the following vehicles may be equipped with flashing, rotating, or oscillating amber lights: State, county, or municipal vehicles engaged in the removal of ice, snow, or other materials; vehicles used for cleanup of environmental spills or emergency response action; vehicles engaged in highway repair or maintenance; vehicles operated by a peace officer, rural letter carrier, newspaper deliverer, or a private security guard; vehicles used in escorting or transporting an oversize load; vehicles owned by the National Guard; and motor vehicles used in towing an implement of husbandry. In addition, the Code allows hearses or funeral coaches, public utility service vehicles, refuse collectors and haulers, and automobile service cars or wreckers to be equipped with flashing, rotating, or oscillating amber lights.

Under the Code, a motor vehicle forming part of a funeral procession, when going to a place of burial, has the right of way over all vehicles, except emergency vehicles, at a street or highway intersection (MCL 257.654). Since a funeral procession requires special traffic considerations, some people believe that all vehicles in a funeral procession, not just the hearse or funeral coach, should be distinguished from other vehicles by flashing, rotating, or oscillating purple or amber lights.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to provide that a vehicle engaged in leading or escorting a funeral procession or any vehicle that was part of a funeral procession could be equipped with flashing, rotating, or oscillating purple or amber lights, which could not be activated except during a funeral procession. The bill would delete

the current provision under which a hearse or funeral coach may be equipped with flashing, rotating, or oscillating amber lights.

MCL 257.698

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

The bill would allow all vehicles in the funeral procession to be equipped with flashing, rotating, or oscillating purple or amber lights to provide adequate warning to approaching drivers. Apparently, some funeral processions can contain up to 50 cars and are capable of causing traffic safety problems. The bill would create public awareness regarding the meaning of flashing, rotating, or oscillating purple lights and the unique traffic regulations concerning funeral processions.

Response: Drivers are aware of the actions required for flashing, rotating, or oscillating amber (yield) and red or blue lights (stop). Drivers would not know the meaning of or the actions required for flashing, rotating, or oscillating purple lights.

Legislative Analyst: N. Nagata

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: E. Limbs

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.