

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 509 (Delegate Acevero)
Health and Government Operations

9-1-1 Specialists - Classification as First Responders

This bill establishes a statutory definition for the term “first responder” in Title 1, Subtitle 3 of the Public Safety Article (that relates to Maryland’s 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone System) and establishes the intent of the General Assembly that jurisdictions employing 9-1-1 specialists appropriately classify those specialists *as first responders* in recognition of the training, knowledge, and skills that they possess and demonstrate in answering and handling requests for emergency assistance.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: Currently available information suggests that there are nearly 1,500 9-1-1 specialists in the State, most, if not all, of whom are employed by local governments. Nevertheless, classifying these individuals as first responders in State law, and establishing the General Assembly’s intent that jurisdictions employing these individuals also do so, is not anticipated to materially affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “First responder” means an employee of a State or local public safety agency that provides emergency response services. It includes (1) a firefighter; (2) a paramedic; (3) an emergency medical technician; (4) a rescue squad member; (5) a member of the Office of the State Fire Marshal; (6) a member of a volunteer fire or rescue company who is a covered employee under workers’ compensation law;

(7) an individual who is licensed or certified by the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Board; and (8) a 9-1-1 specialist.

Current Law: Current law establishes a finding of the General Assembly that 9-1-1 specialists are key members of the team of public safety personnel responding to requests from the public for emergency assistance. Further, it is the intent of the General Assembly that jurisdictions employing 9-1-1 specialists:

- appropriately classify 9-1-1 specialists in recognition of the training, knowledge, and skills that 9-1-1 specialists possess and demonstrate in answering and handling requests for emergency assistance; and
- compensate 9-1-1 specialists in a manner that (1) reflects their membership in the team of public safety personnel answering and responding to requests for emergency assistance and (2) is commensurate with the training, knowledge, and skills they possess.

The term “first responder” is used sparsely throughout State law.

There are two references to “first responders” in the Health-General Article. The first defines a “first responder” as a firefighter, emergency medical technician, rescue squad member, law enforcement officer, correctional officer or sworn member of the State Fire Marshal’s office. These individuals must be notified through specified procedures when a postmortem examination of an individual who died at the scene of an emergency or during transport finds that the first responder may have been exposed to a contagious disease or virus. The second reference to “first responders” in the Health-General Article defines a “first responder” as an individual who is licensed by the EMS Board and provides services to an individual before the individual is admitted to a hospital. These provisions generally relate to actions that must be taken when a first responder, among others, may have been exposed to HIV.

Also, in the Criminal Law Article, a person may not intentionally cause physical injury to another if the person knows or has reason to know that the other is a firefighter, emergency medical technical, a rescue squad member, or any other first responder engaged in providing emergency medical care or rescue services. Violators are guilty of the felony of second-degree assault and on conviction, subject to imprisonment for up to 10 years and/or a maximum fine of \$5,000.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Montgomery and Prince George's counties; City of Bowie; Department of Legislative Services

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