

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Rules

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BILL: SB 1158

INTRODUCER Senators Bradley and Trumbull

SUBJECT: Lights Displayed on Fire Department Vehicles

DATE: February 13, 2024

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Shutes</u>	<u>Vickers</u>	<u>TR</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	<u>Hackett</u>	<u>Ryon</u>	<u>CA</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
3.	<u>Shutes</u>	<u>Twogood</u>	<u>RC</u>	<b>Pre-meeting</b>

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## I. Summary:

SB 1158 allows government-owned fire department vehicles, excluding vehicles of a fire patrol or volunteer fire departments, to display blue lights, in addition to red or red and white lights, as long as the vehicles meet the following criteria:

- Have a gross weight of 24,000 pounds or more;
- Are authorized in writing by the fire chief of the governmental agency; and
- Show or display the blue lights only on the rear of the government-owned fire department vehicle.

The bill may have indeterminate fiscal impact on local governments.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

## II. Present Situation:

### Show or Display of Blue Lights on Florida Vehicles or Equipment

Under current Florida law, vehicles of a fire department and fire patrol, including vehicles of volunteer firefighters, may show or display red or red and white lights.<sup>1</sup> Florida does not currently allow the use of blue lights on fire department vehicles.

Florida law expressly prohibits any vehicle or equipment, except police vehicles, to show or display blue lights, with the exception that vehicles owned, operated, or leased by the Department of Corrections or any county correctional agency may show or display blue lights when responding to emergencies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 316.2397(3), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 316.2397(2), F.S.

Additionally, under Florida law, it is generally prohibited for *non-government* owned vehicles or vessels to use any flashing or rotating blue light unless such person is a law enforcement officer employed by a federal, state, county, or city law enforcement agency or is appointed by the Governor.<sup>3</sup>

### **Visibility of Red and Blue Lights on Emergency Vehicles**

At least 16 states in the United States allow fire department vehicles to display blue emergency warning lights.<sup>4</sup> Studies have shown that blue<sup>5</sup> and red emergency lights are rated as the most visible colors<sup>6</sup>, with red lights being most visible in the daytime and blue lights being most visible at night.<sup>7</sup> Such studies recommend that emergency vehicles use a combination of red and blue lights to maximize visibility under all ambient lighting conditions.<sup>8</sup>

### **Standard Fire Engine Weight**

A standard fire engine typically weighs within a 20,000 to 40,000-pound range.<sup>9</sup>

## **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

This bill allows government-owned fire department vehicles, excluding vehicles of a fire patrol or volunteer fire departments, to display blue lights, in addition to red or red and white lights, as long as the vehicles meet the following criteria:

- Have a gross weight of 24,000 pounds or more;
- Are authorized in writing by the fire chief of the governmental agency; and
- Show or display the blue lights only on the rear of the government-owned fire department vehicle.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

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<sup>3</sup> Section 843.081(2), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> See Guardian Angel, *State Statutes Emergency Vehicle Lights Guide*, <https://www.guardianangeldevices.com/state-statutes/> (last visited January 12, 2024). See also Henry Cesari, *Here's the color of Police and Fire Truck Lights in Every State*, MotorBiscuit (Oct. 16, 2023), <https://www.motorbiscuit.com/heres-the-color-of-police-and-fire-truck-lights-in-every-state/> (last visited January 12, 2024).

<sup>5</sup> Michael J. Flannigan, Daniel F. Blower, and Joel M. Devonshire, *Effects of Warning Lamp Color and Intensity on Driver Vision*, (Oct. 2008), <https://www.sae.org/standardsdev/tsb/cooperative/warninglamp0810.pdf>, pp. 38-39 (last visited January 12, 2024). The study was supported by Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Fire Administration, and the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Emergency Responder Safety Institute, *New Study of Driver Perception of Emergency Warning Lights and Retroreflective Markings Commissioned by The Emergency Responder Safety Institute Yields Surprising Findings*, (Jan. 2022), <https://www.respondersafety.com/news/news/2022/01/new-study-of-driver-perception-of-emergency-warning-lights-and-retroreflective-markings-commissioned-by-the-emergency-responder-safety-institute-yields-surprising-findings/#> (last visited January 12, 2024).

<sup>7</sup> Justice Technology Information Center, *Law Enforcement Vehicle Lighting and Reflectivity Studies: An Overview*, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/nlectc/253106.pdf>, p.8 (last visited January 12, 2024).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Simon Burge, *How Much Does a Fire Truck Weigh?*, International Fire and Safety Journal (Aug. 1, 2023), <https://internationalfireandsafetyjournal.com/how-much-does-a-fire-truck-weigh/#:~:text=The%20range%20in%20weight%20is,%202C000%20to%2040%2C000%2Dpound%20range> (last visited January 12, 2024).

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

## A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

## B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

## C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

## D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

## E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

## A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

## B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

## C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill may have an indeterminate fiscal impact on fire departments that voluntarily elect to retrofit their vehicles to display blue lights on the rear of qualified vehicles.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 316.2397 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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