

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
First Regular Session

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SENATE

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S. No. 701

INTRODUCED BY HON. MANUEL B. VILLAR JR.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The institutionalization of the use of "emergency lines" in other parts of the world has greatly prevented unauthorized persons from loitering around an area which are undergoing operations by the Police, Fire, Medical and Rescue organizations. It has facilitated smooth operation within and around the cordoned area through radial control and management of people and space.

The purpose of the emergency line is to cordon off an area where Police, Fire, Medical and Rescue organizations are operating.


In the case of the Police, the use of this mechanism serves to preserve the crime scene. Police officers within the area are required to clearly display their police badges should they be officers on duty, prevent other crimes that may occur in the area, protect bystanders and limit access by unauthorized personnel such as, but not limited to, bystanders, officers not on duty, newspaper reporters and photographers.

For the Fire Department, the use thereof will give ample freedom of movement to ensure the best possible means of controlling or extinguishing fire; prevent criminals from carting away fire equipment; and prevent looting and loitering. But more than these, the line may serve as indicator of a specific area where injured persons may be placed for easy access by medical personnel.

For Medical and Rescue Organizations, the use of the line would make ensure that the victim has enough room to breath and for the medics to stabilize the victim's condition through first aid application without undue interference and disruption. The line would also help prevent the loss of the victim's personal belongings and valuable rescue equipment.

In these times, there is an urgent need to effectively manage emergency situations in the country. Our long response times during earthquakes, fires, floods, collapse of buildings and other calamities are but manifestations of our ill-prepared emergency response management. With this simple line, interference would be lessened and thereby enhance rescue and emergency operations among concerned agencies.

Passage of this measure is urgently requested.


MANUEL B. VILLAR, JR.

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**AN ACT PRESCRIBING THE USE OF THE POLICE, FIRE OR RESCUE/DISASTER
LINE AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS THEREOF**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION. 1. Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Police, Fire or Rescue/Disaster Line Act of 2004.”

SEC. 2. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms are hereby defined as follows:

- (a) Crime Scene – The place where the crime is committed and the immediate vicinity where forensic evidence may be searched or found.
- (b) Forensic Evidence – The physical evidence requiring forensic examination and evaluation before it can be used as evidence in court or in any judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding.
- (c) Scene of Crime Operations (SOCO) – The mandated functions and activities of police forensic personnel such as the scientific collection, handling, preservation and processing of evidence in the crime scene.
- (d) Scene of Crime Operations Team (SOCO Team) – The forensic evidence response team engaged in the evidence collection process who should be the only persons allowed to enter the crime scene in order to prevent the destruction, alteration or contamination of evidence. The team is composed of forensic specialists/experts including the forensic photographer, evidence custodian, among others.

SEC. 3. *Line Specifications.* – There shall be established a police, fire or rescue/disaster line which is three-inch (3”) wide, of yellow plastic material and of unlimited length to be used to cordon off the crime scene or a designated area during police, fire or rescue/disaster operations. The plastic should be made of tough quality lightweight material, with a neon-light effect for visibility. The following shall be inscripted in black paint on the line:

- (A) For the Police Line:

“POLICE LINE....DO NOT CROSS....BAWAL TUMAWID.... UNDER PAIN OF PENALTY FOR VIOLATION THEREOF....”

(B) For Fire Line:

“FIRE LINE....DO NOT CROSS....BAWAL TUMAWID.... UNDER PAIN OF PENALTY FOR VIOLATION THEREOF....”

(C) For Rescue/Disaster Line:

“RESCUE LINE....DO NOT CROSS....BAWAL TUMAWID.... UNDER PAIN OF PENALTY FOR VIOLATION THEREOF....”

SEC. 4. *Purposes of the Police, Fire or Rescue/Disaster Line.* – A three (3)-meter radius from the site of the operations corresponding to the perimeter area where a crime incident or disaster occurred shall be cordoned off by the emergency police, fire or rescue/disaster line. In furtherance thereto, the line shall have the following purposes:

(A) For police investigative bodies –

- (1) To preserve vital protected forensic evidence in the crime scene;
- (2) To allow freedom of movement for the SOCO team;
- (3) To protect bystanders from stray bullets in case of a firefight between the police and the criminal elements; and
- (4) To observe standard operating procedures (SOPs) or protocol in the proper recording, collection, preservation and handling of evidence from the crime scene by the SOCO team.

(B) For firefighters –

- (1) To prevent potential looters from loitering around the fire scene;
- (2) To allow freedom of movement for the firefighters and their firefighting equipment; and
- (3) To protect onlookers from being physically hurt.

(C) For medical/disaster rescue teams –

- (1) To ensure that the victim has enough room to breathe and is not unnecessarily affected by the overcrowding;
- (2) To allow freedom of movement for medical/rescue teams; and
- (3) To prevent potential looters from loitering around the area.

SEC. 5. *Penalty Clause.* – Any unauthorized person who shall cross the police, fire or rescue/disaster line shall be immediately arrested for the act of obstruction of justice and shall be punished with a fine of not less than Five thousand pesos (P5,000.00) or imprisonment of not less than six (6) months or both, such fine and imprisonment at the discretion of the court: *Provided, however,* That any unauthorized person who, without having to cross a police, fire or rescue/disaster line, refuses to leave the vicinity of the crime scene when ordered to do so shall be immediately imposed a fine of Three hundred pesos (P300.00) by the duty officer.

If the offender is an unauthorized police, military or law enforcement person who is not part of the SOCO team, he/she shall be promptly arrested and charged both administratively and criminally for violation of this Act.

A higher penalty should be imposed for violation of any of the prohibited acts hereof, if the violation produces harm, damage or serious consequence in the investigation or conduct of police, fire or rescue/disaster operation.

SEC. 6. *Information Campaign.* – The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) in coordination with the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), private business enterprises and government and non-government organizations shall formulate and implement a public information campaign on the establishment and use of police, fire or rescue/disaster line.

SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the approval of this Act, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SEC. 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any part or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, the other parts or provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, orders, rules or regulations which are inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby amended or repealed accordingly.

SEC. 10. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,