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Drivers Stuck With Accident Bill

(Toledo, OH) --- Some local drivers have been smacked with a double-whammy in Toledo -- they were in traffic accidents, and then they were charged hundreds - sometimes thousands of dollars for emergency services.

So many Lucas County residents are getting angry with the policy that they're begging their respective city council members to change the rule. Most drivers know the shock, panic and potential for serious injury or even death that comes with a car accident. Many drivers think it's adding insult to injury when they suddenly get the bill for a rescue crew.

It happened to Rob Christie who owns Christie's Candy Store in West Toledo.

"I was in an accident downtown. It was my fault," he says.

City law allows out-of-town drivers to be billed for the time emergency services. Christie lives in Maumee.

"About four months later, I received a bill for about $1,500 dollars from the fire department," he says.

Christie says, as he sees it, he's getting taxed twice.

"We already pay taxes. Why should we pay for cleanup if we're already paying this in the first place?"

Some Toledo City Council members worry the fee might keep people from coming to the Glass City. Residents afraid if they came and got into an accident, they'd be stuck with the bill.

"We don't want to send the negative arrow at this time. We'll have a meeting today to talk about the pluses and minuses of it, and hopefully make a decision not to enforce this," says Michael Ashford, Toledo City Councilman.

If they do, officials from the Ohio Insurance Institute say it might cost all drivers more, since the bill first goes to the providers.

"What it comes down to is that the money's going to have to come from somewhere to pay these types of fees. It's going to come from the policy-holders themselves," says Mary Bonelli, OII spokesperson.

But if the city gives it up, it's hundreds of thousands of dollars emergency responders say they won't have.

"We do believe what we're doing is appropriate. We'll continue to focus on it until we're told not to do it, or they make a determination whether or not they want to alter the fee schedule or not," says Toledo Fire Chief Mike Bell.

Ashford says the next step will be to discuss the issue with the full council and the administration to see if they can eliminate the policy or at the very least get the fees reduced.

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