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Radcliff 'Crash Tax' upsets drivers

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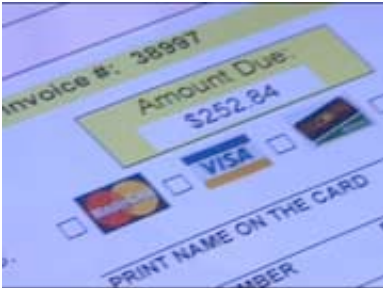
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RADCLIFF, KY (WAVE) - If you drive through the city of Radcliff and get into an accident, you may have to pay the tab for police and fire service at the scene. It is a new trend several small cities across the country are adopting and that is drawing a lot of controversy.

"They were stopped at a red light or something and my son wasn't paying attention," said Vine Grove resident Kim Kimbrough.



Two weeks ago, her teenage son accidentally ran his 1996 Saturn into the back of a moving truck near 31W and the Joe Prather Highway. A passerby called police.

"The policeman came, did a great job, helped my son and directed traffic when the tow truck got there," said Kimbrough.



Since the moving van had no damage, Kimbrough gave the tow company the crumpled car for parts in lieu of a towing fee and accepted the loss instead of making an insurance claim. It was all over until Wednesday when Kimbrough got a surprise in the mail - a bill for \$252.00 from the city of Radcliff for police services.

"It was a shock," Kimbrough said. "At first you get angry and you're like, 'what is going on?'"

What is going on is a new ordinance in the city of Radcliff that took effect in July to help cover rising emergency services costs. Radcliff City Administrator Steve Barno tells WAVE 3 their ordinance is modeled after one in Erlanger, KY. Any driver who causes an accident, and lives outside of the city, is charged for police and fire services. The city sends the bill to a cost recovery service that then bills the driver's insurance. But in Kimbrough's case, she never made a claim so she has to pay.

"We're short officers, were not filling spots, we're short firefighters we're not filling spots and we've let people go because we're on a pretty tight budget," Barno said.

According to Barno, more than half of the accidents in Radcliff are caused by people who do not live there. He says Radcliff taxpayers should not have to foot the bill. But Kimbrough maintains everyone is watching their dollars and police protection is not something you should have to pay extra for.

"You go to call the cops and you've got to think do I have that money in my budget?" she questioned.

Since the law took effect in Radcliff, there have been 99 claims, but only four paid so far. The

city has collected more than \$1,800 in fees.

Critics believe these kind of laws will drive up insurance rates. While some insurance companies will pay the fee, many carriers will not and instead bounce the fee back to the driver.



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