Nicole’s Law requires the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in residential property

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Chief Keith Hoyle wish to inform residents that as of March 31, 2006, carbon monoxide alarms are required in all residences with potential sources of carbon monoxide. The Board of Fire Prevention Regulations recently passed emergency regulations to implement the law known as “Nicole’s Law”.

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan said, “Each year we see the devastating effects of carbon monoxide poisoning. Many of these incidents are avoidable with early detection and warning as provided through this new law.”

Carbon monoxide is associated with 500 unintentional non-fire-related deaths each year. Approximately 60 percent of these deaths are from motor vehicle exhaust, and approximately 40 percent are associated with consumer products. Several incidents of carbon monoxide poisoning have been the result of equipment failures, poor maintenance or problems with venting of appliances.

Consumer Information
The Department of Fire Services has prepared A Consumer’s Guide to Requirements for Residential Carbon Monoxide Alarms. This guide and information about the regulations can be obtained at either fire station or on the DFS website at http://www.mass.gov/dfs/osfm/pubed/firesafetytopics/carbon_monoxide_safety.htm.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission also has information in both English and Spanish on common sources of carbon monoxide in the home and recognizing the symptoms of CO poisoning in a pamphlet called The Invisible Killer at http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/464.pdf.

General Requirements
The majority of homes will not be required to install hard-wired systems. Where hard-wired systems are required by regulation, the deadline is January 1, 2007.

For most residential buildings with fossil fuel burning equipment or enclosed parking areas, the new regulations require carbon monoxide alarms on every level of the home or dwelling unit including habitable portions of basements and attics and within ten feet of the bedroom doors.

Principles for location, one and two family dwelling units
The regulations do not specify exactly where carbon monoxide detectors are to be located on each level, except for near sleeping areas. Carbon monoxide detectors are required in habitable (used and furnished for living purposes) portions of buildings. The recommended locations of carbon monoxide detectors should consider...

-Sources of carbon monoxide
-Areas of collection/concentration of carbon monoxide
-Areas near where people like to sleep
-Areas of potential carbon monoxide concentration where people will remain for extended periods of time
-Detectors must be located away from areas of high humidity
-Detectors must be located so furniture or draperies do not interfere with air flow to the detector
-Detectors must be located away from air conditioners, supply air registers or other ventilation that might interfere with air entering the detector
-Detectors must be located away interferences such as electronic remote controls and fluorescent lights
-Detectors must be no closer than 15 - 25 feet from a fuel burning appliance.

Detectors exposed to frequent small amounts carbon monoxide tend to fail prematurely. Detectors must be a fixed installation, securely mounted to the wall or ceiling. Combination smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, must meet the installation requirements for both types of detectors. Reference to the manufacturer’s instructions for installation and information about the type of detector (combination, plug-in, battery powered) you purchased.
Suggested Detector Locations

Level with bedrooms
   Must be within 10’ of the bedroom door

Basement
   -Not closer than 20’ to a fossil fuel burning appliance to avoid exposure to small amounts of carbon monoxide that could shorten sensor life
   -Near the stairway leading to the floor above
   -The gas code also requires a hard wired detector with battery backup be installed near the space where the heater is located when a sidewall vent gas appliance is installed

Property with attached garage
   -Between door to garage and living space (close to source)
   -In the living space (area of possible concentration)

Living level, no bedrooms
   -Not closer than 20’ to a source of carbon monoxide (avoid exposure to small amounts of carbon monoxide)
   -In the living space (area of possible concentration)
   -Near the stairway leading to the floor above

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

The regulations allow the following options for CO alarms...
   -Battery operated with battery monitoring
   -Plug-ins with battery back-up
   -Hard-wired with battery backup
   -Low voltage system
   -Wireless
   -Combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarm

Combination Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors
Acceptable combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarms must have simulated voice and tone alarms that clearly distinguish between the tow types of emergencies. The State Building Code mandates that only photoelectric smoke alarms are permitted within twenty feet of a bathroom or kitchen.

Alternative Compliance Option
Owners of larger buildings with centralized or minimal sources of carbon monoxide may wish to consider the alternative compliance option contained in the regulation.

Inspections
Fire departments are required to inspect smoke alarms when homes are being sold or transferred. Starting March 31, 2006 the Fire Department will now inspect all residences upon sale or transfer for carbon monoxide alarms and the smoke detectors. A Certificate of Compliance is issued by the Fire Department.

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