



Protect Your Family from Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

California Law on Carbon Monoxide Detector Requirements

In May 2010 the state of California enacted a law requiring home owners to install carbon monoxide detectors in their homes. According to the California Air Resources Board, 30 to 40 people die each year from carbon monoxide poisoning. The senate bill, also known as the Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act, states that those deaths were avoidable. According to the bill, the California law will help prevent further deaths and increase awareness.

Timelines

Although the bill was signed into law in 2010, California residents must have carbon monoxide detectors in their homes as of July 1, 2011. This timeline applies only to single-family homes that have appliances that burn fossil fuels or homes that have attached garages or fireplaces. For all other types of housing, such as apartments and hotels, detectors should be in place as of January 1, 2013. Types of fossil fuel include wood, gas and oil.

Detector

According to the senate bill, the detector must sound an audible warning once carbon monoxide is detected. It also must be powered by a battery, or if it is plugged in, have a battery for a backup. The detector also must be certified by national testing labs, such as the Underwriters Laboratories. The packaging on the carbon monoxide detector will state this. If the CO detector is also a smoke detector, it must still meet the above standards and must sound an alarm that is different than the smoke alarm. Carbon monoxide detectors typically can be purchased for about \$20 and up.

Exemptions

Although the law targets units that are occupied by humans, the law exempts state and local government property, as well as property owned by the University of California Regents. The law requires local jurisdictions to comply; however, they may amend their current ordinances to fall more in line with the law.

Fines

California law states that anyone who does not comply with the law may face a \$200 fine. However, residents will receive a notice of 30 days to correct any violations before they will be fined.

Placement

Proper placement of a carbon monoxide (CO) detector is important. If you are installing only one carbon monoxide detector, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends it be located near the sleeping area, where it can wake you if you are asleep. Additional detectors on every level and in every bedroom of a home provides extra protection against carbon monoxide poisoning.

Homeowners should remember not to install carbon monoxide detectors directly above or beside fuel-burning appliances, as appliances may emit a small amount of carbon monoxide upon start-up. A detector should not be placed within fifteen feet of heating or cooking appliances or in or near very humid areas such as bathrooms. When considering where to place a carbon monoxide detector, keep in mind that although carbon monoxide is roughly the same weight as air (carbon monoxide's specific gravity is 0.9657, as stated by the EPA; the National Resource Council lists the specific gravity of air as one), it may be contained in warm air coming from combustion appliances such as home heating equipment. If this is the case, carbon monoxide will rise with the warmer air. Installation locations vary by manufacturer. Manufacturers' recommendations differ to a certain degree based on research conducted with each one's specific detector. Therefore, make sure to read the provided installation manual for each detector before installing.



The International Association of Fire Chiefs recommend a carbon monoxide detector on every floor of your home, including the basement. A detector should be located within 10 feet of each bedroom door and there should be one near or over any attached garage. Each detector should be replaced every five to six years.

CO detectors do not serve as smoke detectors and vice versa. However, dual smoke/CO detectors are also sold. Smoke detectors detect the smoke generated by flaming or smoldering fires, whereas CO detectors can alarm people about faulty fuel burning devices to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide is produced from incomplete combustion of fossil fuels. In the home CO can be formed, for example, by open flames, space heaters, water heaters, blocked chimneys or running a car inside a garage.

California Health and Safety Code Section 17926

(a) An owner of a dwelling unit intended for human occupancy shall install a carbon monoxide device, approved and listed by the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 13263, in each existing dwelling unit having a fossil fuel burning heater or appliance, fireplace, or an attached garage, within the earliest applicable time period as follows:

(1) For all existing single-family dwelling units intended for human occupancy on or before July 1, 2011.

(2) For all other existing dwelling units intended for human occupancy on or before January 1, 2013.

(b) With respect to the number and placement of carbon monoxide devices, an owner shall install the devices in a manner consistent with building standards applicable to new construction for the relevant type of occupancy or with the manufacturer's instructions, if it is technically feasible to do so.

(c) (1) Notwithstanding Section 17995, and except as provided in paragraph (2), a violation of this section is an infraction punishable by a maximum fine of two hundred dollars (\$200) for each offense.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), a property owner shall receive a 30-day notice to correct. If an owner receiving notice fails to correct within that time period, the owner may be assessed the fine pursuant to paragraph (2).

(d) No transfer of title shall be invalidated on the basis of a failure to comply with this section, and the exclusive remedy for the failure to comply with this section is an award of actual damages not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100), exclusive of any court costs and attorney's fees. This subdivision is not intended to affect any duties, rights, or remedies otherwise available at law.

(e) A local ordinance requiring carbon monoxide devices may be enacted or amended if the ordinance is consistent with this chapter.