

Carbon Monoxide Alarm Requirements

Effective July 1, 2011, a new law may help prevent senseless carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning in the home. CO is formed from the incomplete burning of any flame-fueled (i.e., not electric) device including ranges, flame ovens, clothes dryers, furnaces, fireplaces, grills, space heaters, vehicles, and water heaters. Carbon monoxide can be dangerous – when inhaled, it passes from the lungs into the hemoglobin molecules of red blood cells. The result is that the body becomes oxygen-starved, which can lead to tissue damage and death.

Many reported cases of carbon monoxide poisoning say that while victims are aware they are not well, they become so disoriented that they are not able to save themselves by leaving the building or calling for assistance. Carbon monoxide alarms are designed to alert residents before exposure to CO causes a health hazard.

Per California Senate Bill 183, beginning July 1, 2011, all existing single family homes must have carbon monoxide alarms. All other types of residences (apartments, condominiums, etc.) will need carbon monoxide alarms beginning January 1, 2013. The law does not designate local fire departments as enforcing agencies.

The new requirements apply if ANY of the following are present within a home:

- Attached garage
- Natural gas or propane furnace and/or natural gas range and/or oven, or
- Gas or wood-burning fireplace.

For existing homes, the CO alarms may be battery powered. At a minimum, CO alarms are required:

- **Outside of each sleeping area or bedroom and**
- **On each level of the home**

New California Building Code Requirements Beginning January 1, 2011, the California Building Code has similar requirements for all new homes and for existing homes undergoing alterations and repairs requiring building permits. Further information about specific requirements is available as follows:

- For new homes or homes undergoing remodel, contact your local building department.
- For homes being sold or purchased, contact your real estate agent.
- For questions regarding an existing home or mobile/manufactured home, contact Shawn Huff of the State of California Housing and Community Development Department at (916) 327-2816.

Double Protection: Carbon Monoxide Alarms AND Smoke Alarms:

In addition to carbon monoxide alarms, every home needs smoke alarm protection.

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, in every sleeping area, and in the hallway leading to every sleeping area. Replace smoke alarms every ten years or sooner if they don't respond properly when tested.
- Inspect smoke alarms by testing them once a month and replacing the batteries every six months or according to manufacturer's recommendations.

- Protect your family by developing a home escape plan. Draw a floor plan of your home showing two ways out of every room and an outside meeting place. Practice your plan by having home fire drills at least twice a year.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends installing both ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms or using combination alarms that utilize both smoke detection technologies.

- For a list of CO alarms currently approved by the Office of the State Fire Marshal, visit the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection website at http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/licensinglistings/licenselistings_bml_searchcotest.php. Select 5276 (Carbon Monoxide Alarms) from the "Category" dropdown list and hit the "Search" button.



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