

State Fire Marshal Coan & Chief Robert P. Bellavance Announce Requirements for Residential Carbon Monoxide Alarms

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Chief Robert P. Bellavance wish to inform homeowners that as of March 31, 2006, carbon monoxide alarms are required in all residences with potential sources of carbon monoxide. The vast majority of homes will not be required to install hard-wired systems although, where hard-wired systems are required by regulation, the deadline is January 1, 2007. The Board of Fire Prevention Regulations (BFPR) 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."

Chief Bellavance said, "The fire service urged passage of this legislation and the Mansfield Fire Department stands ready to educate and assist homeowners meet the new requirement for carbon monoxide alarms. Please call us at 508-261-7492."

Coan added, "Consumers should work with their local fire departments to educate themselves carefully, because not every CO alarm on the shelf at the local hardware store will bring your home into compliance with these regulations."

Consumer Information

The Department of Fire Services is distributing *A Consumer's Guide to Requirements for Residential Carbon Monoxide Alarms*. This guide and information about the regulations can be obtained from local fire departments and 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: www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/464.pdf.

General Requirements

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. On levels with sleeping areas the alarms must be placed within ten feet of the bedroom doors. The regulations allow the following options for CO alarms:

- ◆ Battery operated with battery monitoring; or
- ◆ Plug-ins with battery back-up; or
- ◆ Hard-wired with battery backup; or
- ◆ Low voltage system; or

- ◆ Wireless, or
- ◆ Qualified combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarm.

Acceptable Combination Alarms

Acceptable combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarms must have simulated voice and tone alarms that clearly distinguish between the two types of emergencies. The State Building Code mandates that only photoelectric smoke alarms are permitted within twenty feet of a bathroom or kitchen. Consumers are urged to check with the local fire department on whether a specific alarm meets the code requirements.

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.

Enforcement

Fire departments are currently required to inspect smoke alarms when homes are being sold and transferred. Starting March 31, 2006 (or January 1, 2007 where hard-wired alarms are required) fire departments will now inspect all residences upon sale and transfer for carbon monoxide alarms.