

CARBON MONOXIDE DEVICE (ALARM) – IT’S THE LAW

BUT NOT FOR ALL by R. E. “SKYS” Sykes

There seems to be a lot of confusion about the new requirement for Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms. Hopefully this article will clarify the new law. The mechanism for the implementation of the new state requirement was created by the passage of California State Senate Bill No. 183 in 2010 making it a state law. California is currently the only state that requires CO alarms. It is not a federal law or a building code requirement for existing dwellings.

Senate Bill No. 183, chapter 19 states:

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 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 the manufacturer’s instruction, if it is technically feasible to do so.

Simply stated, ***the new requirement applies to single family dwellings beginning July 1, 2011*** unless the dwelling is all electric and does not have a wood burning fireplace or attached garage. ***Multi-family dwellings, i.e. condos, townhouses, and apartments do not have to meet the new requirement until January 1, 2013.***

The number and location is not specific, but most manufacturers recommend at least one on each level of a living space including basements. Generally they can be installed where smoke detectors are located in hallways. Additional alarms can be installed in each sleeping room for additional protection. See manufacturers recommended locations with enclosed installation instructions. There are battery operated alarms, electric alarms, alarms that can be plugged in and combination smoke and CO alarms. Enforcement of the new law is by the State and local Fire Marshals, not by the local building departments. San Diego Building Code Enforcement will refer you to the Fire Marshal with any questions. The current Realtor Agent’s Inspection Disclosure Form (TDS) includes Carbon Monoxide Device on the item checklist.