

Understanding the State Law Requiring Installation of **CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS IN YOUR HOME**

There's a state law requiring the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in your home. *What do you need to know?*



In 2006, the Illinois General Assembly passed a law which requires the placement of carbon monoxide detectors in residences. This law took effect January 1, 2007.

Public Act 094-0741 mandates that every dwelling unit in Illinois must be equipped with **at least one carbon monoxide alarm** within 15 feet of every room used for sleeping purposes.

What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (also known as CO) is a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas which can cause poisoning when inhaled. Carbon monoxide is produced by the incomplete combustion of organic fossil fuels such as oil, gas, or coal.

In normal conditions, the combustion process (the addition of oxygen) will result in carbon in the fossil fuel, combining with oxygen, in the air, to produce carbon dioxide (CO₂), the same substance we exhale when we breathe.

However, if there is a lack of air for the combustion process or the heating appliance is faulty, carbon monoxide can be produced. When CO is inhaled in the body it combines with the blood, preventing it from absorbing oxygen. If a person is exposed to CO over a period, it can cause illness and even death.



Responsibilities of Landlords and Tenants

In a multi-family building where units are being rented out: Who must furnish the alarm? Who must maintain it?

The law specifies that it is the responsibility of the owner to supply and install all required alarms. So, while the owner of a multi-dwelling unit must supply and install all required alarms, the tenant is responsible for the testing and general maintenance within their unit, including the responsibility to replace any required batteries, and to notify the owner or the authorized agent in writing of any deficiencies that the tenant cannot correct.

The owner is further required to give one tenant per dwelling unit written information regarding alarm testing and maintenance and must ensure that the batteries are in operating condition at the time the tenant takes possession of a dwelling unit.



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What is the main requirement under the law?

The law mandates that **every dwelling unit must be equipped with at least one** approved carbon monoxide alarm in an operating condition within 15 feet of every room used for sleeping purposes. A dwelling unit, defined as a room or suite of rooms used for human habitation, would include a single family residence as well as each living unit of a multiple family residence and each living unit in a mixed use building.

Are there any exemptions to this requirement?

The law exempts residential units that are in buildings that: (1) do not rely on combustion of fossil fuel for heat, ventilation or hot water; and (2) are not connected in any way to a garage; and (3) are not sufficiently close to any ventilated source of carbon monoxide. Buildings that have electric heat are exempt.

Are there any specific requirements about the type of detector or alarm that must be used?

The law allows three different types of alarms to be used to meet the requirement. The alarm can be battery powered, a plug in style (with battery backup) or it can be wired into the AC power line with secondary battery backup.

The carbon monoxide alarm **must bear the label of a nationally recognized testing laboratory** and must comply with the most recent standards of the Underwriters Laboratories. Look for the "UL" symbol on the package. If you are not sure, check with the retailer and read the description and the instructions on the box containing the alarm.

Can you use one alarm system to meet state laws that mandate both a smoke detector and a carbon monoxide detector?

YES. The Carbon Monoxide alarm may be combined with the smoke detector provided that combined unit emits an alarm in a manner that clearly differentiates the hazard.

Is there a penalty if I do not install a detector?

Willful failure to install a detector is a Class B misdemeanor. Tampering with, or removing, destroying, disconnecting an alarm (except in inspection or maintenance) is a Class A misdemeanor.

Visit these web sites for more information:

Consumer Product and Safety Commission

www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/Safety-Guides/Home/Carbon-Monoxide

Illinois Department of Public Health

www.idph.state.il.us/public/hb/hbcarbon.htm

United States Environmental Protection Agency

<https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/carbon-monoxides-impact-indoor-air-quality>

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