Understanding North Carolina’s New Carbon Monoxide Requirements

Overview:

In response to tragic deaths in hotel properties from carbon monoxide poisoning earlier this year, the 2013 General Assembly passed legislation which requires carbon monoxide detectors in all hotels, both existing and new construction, in North Carolina (ratified House Bill 74, Section 19).

Deadline to Install:

The new requirement will go into effect on October 1, 2013. Properties without detectors in the appropriate locations on or after that date will be deemed non-compliant.

Where to install:

Lodging establishments must install carbon monoxide detectors in any enclosed space having a fossil fuel burning appliance, heater or fireplace and in any room that shares a common wall, ceiling or floor with an enclosed space with a fossil fuel burning appliance, heater or fireplace. The law does not require the detectors to be integrated into the lodging property’s fire alarm panel.

Common examples of these appliances include water heaters and gas appliances in the hotel kitchen. A national carbon monoxide regulation expert estimated that most mid-size hotels average 2-3 carbon monoxide sources. Other examples of fossil fuels found in hotels include bottled propane gas and piped natural gas.

There is no statutory language mandating that detectors be installed any specific height. They can be installed on the floor, ceilings or anywhere in between. Check the manufacturer’s instructions for additional information as it pertains to your particular detector.

Detector Specifications:

The carbon monoxide detectors must be listed by a nationally recognized testing laboratory that is OSHA approved to test and certify to American National Standards Institute/Underwriters Laboratories Standards ANSI/UL2034 or ANSI/UL2075.

The detector’s labeling and packaging should specify whether it meets these qualifications, and the majority of carbon monoxide detectors sold in reputable retail outlets in the United States will comply, however occasionally non-compliant knock-off detectors are found in certain American discount stores. Lodging operators are advised to carefully inspect the packaging for the ANSI/UL2034 of ANSI/UL2075 markings and to retain the manufacturers’ instructions for inspection purposes.
Carbon monoxide detectors can be electrical with battery back-up or plug-in with battery back-up and can also be combined with smoke detectors so long as the smoke detector complies with the above mentioned requirements and is also compliant with ANSI/UL217.

If you elect to use a plug-in detector with battery back-up, these detectors will comply with the law on October 1 of this year, but will likely only be deemed compliant through October 1, 2014. The Building Code Council and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services will be studying the regulation of plug-in detectors and will issue guidance next April on whether they will continue to be compliant after October 1, 2014.

Electrical detectors with battery back-up will be compliant through 2014 and also thereafter. They can be wired into the wall or ceiling, but there is no requirement that the detectors be hardwired into the hotel’s life safety panel.

For many properties, simply replacing your existing smoke detectors in rooms that are subject to the new carbon monoxide detector requirement with dual smoke and carbon monoxide detectors is probably the easiest means of compliance. These joint smoke and carbon monoxide detectors will be compliant before October 1, 2014 and thereafter.

All detectors must be installed in accordance with either the standard of the National Fire Protection Association or the minimum protection designated by the manufacturer’s instructions.

**Enforcement:**

The law will be enforced by your Local Health Department inspector during your hotel’s annual inspection.

*Please contact the NCRLA office if you have any questions about this new requirement. NCRLA has relationships with the leading experts on this regulation at the Department of Insurance, within state fire marshal leadership and within the state and local health departments. Please contact Whitney Christensen at wchristensen@ncrla.org or (919) 844-0098 and she will answer your compliance connections or will connect you with your local fire marshals, who have agreed to answer any questions hoteliers might have about the new requirements.*