Senator Fuschillo: New Carbon Monoxide Safety Law Now in Effect

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR.   February 25, 2010

Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) is reminding residents that a new safety measure to protect them from carbon monoxide poisoning is now in effect.

The new law requires all homes to have carbon monoxide alarms. Homes built before January 1, 2008, are permitted to have battery-powered carbon monoxide alarms, while homes built after this date are required to have the alarms hard-wired into the building. Previously, only homes built or bought after July 30, 2002 were required to have these devices installed. Contractors are also required to install a carbon monoxide alarm when replacing a hot water tank or furnace if the home is not equipped with an alarm.

In addition, at least one carbon monoxide alarm must be installed on the lowest floor of the home which has a sleeping area. The alarm must be clearly audible in all sleeping areas.

Carbon monoxide is a highly toxic gas which can kill within minutes, depending on the levels in the air. Any type of burning fuel produces carbon monoxide, including oil, natural gas, and wood. A malfunctioning home fuel-burning system can cause carbon monoxide to reach unsafe levels.

Since carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless, and tasteless, it is virtually impossible to detect without an alarm. Carbon monoxide detectors sound an alarm when the air contains unsafe levels of carbon monoxide, alerting families to get out of the house and call for help. Inhaling carbon monoxide at dangerous levels can lead to damage to the nervous system, breathing difficulties, cardiac trauma, brain damage, coma, and death. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning resemble those of the flu and can include dizziness, fatigue, weakness, throbbing headache, nausea, vomiting, irregular breathing, sleepiness and confusion.

The law is named Amanda's Law after Amanda Hansen of West Seneca, New York, a sixteen year old girl who died while sleeping at a friend's house due to a carbon monoxide leak from a defective boiler.

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