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**Family Child Care Licensing**

**POLICY STATEMENT: Carbon Monoxide Alarms**

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Fire Prevention Regulations (527 CMR 31.00) establish specific requirements regarding the type, location, maintenance and inspection of carbon monoxide alarms.

**Requirements**

All residential properties are required to have carbon monoxide alarms on every level of the residence, except for basements and attics that do not contain habitable living space. The requirement applies to all residences regardless of size 1 (single family, multi-family, apartments, condominiums, townhouses, etc.) that contain:

* fossil burning fuel equipment, such as a central heating plant, hot water heater, combustion driven generator or fire pump, or central laundry equipment, whether powered by oil, gas, wood, coal, etc.; or
* enclosed parking, whether in an attached or enclosed garage.

In rental space, the landlord must install a carbon monoxide alarm in each dwelling unit. The landlord is responsible for inspecting, testing, and maintaining the carbon monoxide alarms at least once a year or at the beginning of any rental period, such as lease renewal. Batteries must be replaced once a year.

Family Child Care providers who are tenants must report any problems with alarms to the landlord immediately and must learn to recognize the difference between the smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm.

If your landlord is not in compliance with the requirements listed above and is unwilling or failing to take corrective action, you should report the non-compliance to the local fire department.

**Allowable Carbon Monoxide Alarms**

To comply with the regulatory requirements, carbon monoxide alarms must be approved by an independent testing company 2 and be either:

* Battery-powered with battery monitoring;
* Plug-in (AC-powered) units with battery backup;
* AC primary power (hard-wired - generally involves hiring an electrician with battery backup);
* Low voltage or wireless alarms; or
* Qualified combination smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms. 3

**Location of Carbon Monoxide Alarms**

Carbon monoxide alarms are required in the following areas:

* on every level of a home or dwelling unit including the *habitabl*e portions of basements and attics;
* within ten feet of each bedroom door; and
* in living areas adjacent to garages (but not inside of the garage).

**Additional Information**

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas that cuts off oxygen to the brain and heart, and can cause neurological damage and even death. It occurs when carbon-containing fuel (gas, oil, wood, etc) is not burned completely and discharges fumes into the living area. Improper venting of gas and oil heaters and inadequate ventilation of the living space can result in carbon monoxide poisoning.

The initial symptoms of carbon monoxide include headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea, and dizziness. These systems are sometimes mistaken for the flu by parents and healthcare professionals. The danger to infants and children is especially high because they have elevated metabolic rates, causing the gas to accumulate in their bodies faster than it does in adults. As a result, children can have more serious symptoms at lower levels of carbon monoxide poisoning than adults.

If you think you or anyone in your home is exhibiting symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning or your carbon monoxide alarm is sounding, leave the building immediately and contact the fire department.

1 Alternative compliance options may be more practical for larger buildings with multiple dwelling units containing minimal or no sources of carbon monoxide inside the individual units. Owners may place the carbon monoxide alarm in the relevant areas (i.e., boiler rooms, hot water heaters, central laundry areas, enclosed parking areas, and all adjacent spaces). This carbon monoxide protection option contains requirements concerning hard-wiring or low-voltage wiring, monitoring (e.g., by an alarm company), and signal transmission.

2 Independent testing company includes the following: Underwriter's Laboratories (UL), Underwriter's Laboratory of Canada (ULC), or International Approval Service/Canadian Standards Association (IAS/CSA).

3 Combination smoke detector/carbon monoxide alarms must have simulated voice and tone alarms clearly distinguishing between the two types of emergencies.