HB 849

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Enrolled - Revised

House Bill 849 (Delegate Sample-Hughes, *et al.*)
Environment and Transportation Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Public Safety - Rental Dwelling Units - Carbon Monoxide Alarms

This bill requires a "rental dwelling unit" to have a "carbon monoxide alarm" installed outside and in the immediate vicinity of each separate "sleeping area" and on every level of the rental dwelling unit, including the basement, by April 1, 2018.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: Local expenditures may increase minimally to conduct outreach, enforce the bill, and install carbon monoxide alarms in any locally owned/operated rental dwelling units. Ongoing local expenditures may increase minimally as a result of potential increased fire and rescue service calls. Local revenues may increase minimally to the extent the bill results in any additional inspection fees. Overall, the bill is not anticipated to have a significant impact on local finances, however.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal. The bill may result in increased costs for building contractors and/or subcontractors, housing developers that are considered small businesses, and landlords to install carbon monoxide alarms in accordance with the bill's requirements. Any impact depends on the number of units and their specific floorplans, but is not anticipated to be significant.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Under the bill, "rental dwelling unit" is defined as a room or group of rooms that form a single independent habitable rental unit for permanent occupation by one or more individuals that has living facilities with permanent provisions for living,

sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation. A "rental dwelling unit" does not include an area not used for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, or sanitation (such as an unfinished basement); a unit within a hotel, motel, or similar seasonal or transient facility; an area which is secured and inaccessible to occupants; or a unit which is not offered for rent.

"Sleeping area" is defined as a space that includes one or more sleeping rooms and a hall or common area immediately adjacent to any sleeping room. A "sleeping room" is an enclosed room with a bed arranged to be used as a bedroom.

Current Law: A "carbon monoxide alarm" is a device that (1) senses carbon monoxide; (2) when sensing carbon monoxide, is capable of emitting a distinct and audible sound; (3) is listed and carries the listing of a nationally recognized testing laboratory approved by the Office of the State Fire Marshal; and (4) is wired into an alternating current (AC) powerline with secondary battery backup; is battery-powered, sealed, tamper resistant, and using a long-life battery that has a life of not less than 10 years; or is connected to an on-site control unit that monitors the carbon monoxide alarm remotely so that a responsible party is alerted when the device activates the alarm signal and receives its primary power from a battery or the control unit.

A carbon monoxide alarm may be combined with a smoke alarm if the combined device complies with, among other things, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI)/Underwriters Laboratories (UL) standards 217 and 2034 or ANSI/UL 268 and 2075.

Chapter 401 of 2007 requires a carbon monoxide alarm to be installed in a central location outside of each sleeping area within a dwelling newly constructed on or after January 1, 2008. Chapter 151 of 2015 requires carbon monoxide alarms be installed in hotels and lodging or rooming houses by April 1, 2017. If there is a centralized alarm system that is capable of emitting a distinct and audible sound to warn all occupants, the owner of the dwelling may install a carbon monoxide alarm within 25 feet of any carbon monoxide-producing fixture and equipment. Except as part of routine maintenance, a person may not render a carbon monoxide alarm inoperable.

Background: Carbon monoxide is an odorless, tasteless, invisible gas. Carbon monoxide results from the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, such as wood, kerosene, gasoline, charcoal, propane, natural gas, and oil. In the home, carbon monoxide is formed from incomplete combustion from any flame-fueled (*i.e.*, not electric) device, including ranges, ovens, clothes dryers, furnaces, fireplaces, grills, space heaters, vehicles, and water heaters. Furnaces and water heaters may be sources of carbon monoxide, but if they are vented properly, the carbon monoxide escapes to the outside air. Open flames, such as from ovens and ranges, are the most common source of carbon monoxide in the home.

Carbon monoxide detectors trigger an alarm based on an accumulation of carbon monoxide over time. Carbon monoxide can do harm with high levels of exposure in a short period of time, or with lower levels over a long period of time. High levels of carbon monoxide exposure can result in death. Detectors require a continuous power supply. Models are available that offer back-up battery power. Plug-in alarms are also available.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 182 (Senator Mathias, *et al.*) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of State Police, Maryland Municipal League, Department of Legislative Services

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