



Testimony in Support of H.B. 5326

An Act Requiring the Presence of Carbon Monoxide Detectors in All Public School Buildings

Joint Committee on Public Safety and Security

February 15, 2011

UTC Fire & Security ("UTCFS") located in Farmington, Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to offer the following comments in support of HB 5326. Through a portfolio of industry-leading brands, UTCFS delivers a full-range of fire safety and security solutions worldwide, including developing and manufacturing carbon monoxide alarms and detectors for both residential and commercial applications.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas, and the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CO poisoning claims more than 400 lives a year, and sends more than 20,000 to the emergency room.

Carbon monoxide is a by-product of incomplete combustion. Potential sources include common gas-burning appliances such as a furnace, water heater, stove, oven and grill, as well as other fuel-burning devices like fireplaces, engines and generators. If such devices are improperly installed or malfunction, carbon monoxide can build up inside a dwelling, leading to illness or even death. Nearly every home in Connecticut – roughly 85% according to US Census data – uses some form of fossil-fuel based heating. Many of these devices are also found in our schools.

Because you can't see, smell or taste carbon monoxide, you may not even realize that you are being poisoned. Initial symptoms mimic the flu, and include headache and nausea. The ONLY safe way to detect this deadly gas is with a working carbon monoxide alarm.

In 2005, Connecticut's legislature recognized the dangers of CO and required CO alarms be installed in all newly constructed homes. Today, 33 states have similar laws, over half of which also require CO alarms in existing homes.

Over the past few months, Connecticut families have endured severe cold temperatures and record snowfall. Unfortunately, CO poisonings most often occur during colder weather, and are a particular risk during a storm. The media has reported on dozens of residents poisoned by carbon monoxide since the beginning of the year, including a furnace leak at an elementary school in Waterbury that sent 40 children, a teacher and a custodian to the hospital. Thankfully, no one was severely injured.

Also in the past few months, the media has reported on people who were saved because of a working CO alarm, including an incident in Fairfield earlier this month. Snowdrifts had blocked the woman's furnace vent. Thankfully, she had a working CO alarm, awoke to its beeping, and was able to get herself and her dogs out of the home. Without that alarm, the ending may have been much worse.

We at UTCFS see these types of life-saving stories every week. CO alarms save lives. We support H.B. 5326 and commend the bill's sponsor Representative Ritter, as well as Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and the members of this committee for your consistent leadership in advancing public policy designed to promote the safety of Connecticut's residents. This bill will further protect our children along with the teachers and staff of our public schools from The Silent Killer. It's a protection they cannot receive any other way – the only safe way to detect CO is with a working detector. I hope you will call on us at UTCFS if we can be a resource to you in any way. Thank you for your consideration.