



Testimony of Tom Sri, Kidde Residential & Commercial
Before the Public Safety & Security Committee
Regarding House Bill 5394, *An Act Concerning Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors in Residential Buildings*
March 6, 2012

Kidde Residential & Commercial, part of UTC Climate Controls & Security located in Farmington, Connecticut, appreciates the opportunity to offer the following comments in support of extending carbon monoxide poisoning protections to existing homes as provided in HB 5394. Kidde Residential and Commercial Division is the leading manufacturer of residential fire safety products, including carbon monoxide and smoke detection alarms 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 hospitals for emergency medical care.

Carbon monoxide is a by-product of incomplete combustion. Potential sources include common gas-burning appliances such as furnaces, water heaters, stoves, ovens and grills, as well as other fuel-burning devices like fireplaces, engines and generators. If any of these common appliances is installed improperly or malfunctions, carbon monoxide can build up inside a dwelling or other structure, leading to illness and death. Nearly every home in Connecticut – roughly 85% according to most recent U.S. Census data – uses some form of fossil-fuel based heating.

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.

Connecticut's legislature recognized the dangers of CO and in 2005 required that CO alarms be installed in all newly constructed homes. Today, 36 states have similar laws, and over half of these states also require that existing homes be retrofitted with CO alarms.

In 2011, during Tropical Storm Irene and the freak October snow storm, eight Connecticut residents died and hundreds were treated for CO poisoning. The storms cut power to a majority of the state's residents for many days and led many of these CO victims – some whole families – to employ generators, charcoal grills and other fuel burning appliances for household heating, cooking and to power appliances. Unfortunately, carbon monoxide poisoning isn't restricted to such emergency situations; CO poisoning is a year round problem. As an example, a few weeks ago a West Hartford family was saved when the CO alarm installed in their residence activated, warning them of the deadly gas building up in their home from gasoline-powered equipment being used without adequate safeguards by a contractor.

We hear these types of life-saving stories every week. CO alarms save lives. That's why we support the provisions of HB 5394 which extend requirements for CO alarms to existing homes. We commend Rep. Fox for his leadership on this legislation that if passed will save lives. It is worth noting that Kidde also supports H.B. 5141 sponsored by Senator Crisco and Representative Megna as this bill if also passed would ensure that smoke and CO alarms, where required, are present and properly installed in homes that are available for sale. The passage of these two bills will go a long way to preventing injuries and deaths from CO poisoning.

As stated at the beginning of this testimony, aside from manufacturing CO alarms, Kidde also manufactures smoke alarms. As such, we would like for the committee to be aware of a technical concern we have with HB 5394 as written with regards to the type of smoke detection and warning equipment which may be installed in residential dwellings. Section 1 (a)(2) as written would only allow consumers to use "photoelectric" type smoke alarms or only smoke alarm technologies that are approved by the State Fire Marshal.

Kidde manufactures several types of smoke alarms which incorporate a variety of smoke sensing technologies. This includes photoelectric and ionization sensors, also smoke alarms which combine both ionization- photoelectric sensors in one unit, and most recently, an "Intelligent Alarm" which combines an ionization sensor and a carbon monoxide sensor in one unit. Regardless of sensing technology, all smoke alarms must pass identical tests in order to obtain third-party approval and meet Underwriters Laboratories (UL) 217, the independent performance based standard to which smoke alarms are listed. All of Kidde's smoke alarms meet and are listed to this standard.

As written Section 1 (a)(2) would be a move away from the performance-based approach and could impose a prohibition on innovative technologies that could today or in the future benefit Connecticut consumers. The risk of naming which technologies are acceptable is that any new product that incorporates a prohibited technology would not be available to Connecticut residents, even if such product exceeds the existing performance standards. Further, the ability to introduce any new and innovative technology in Connecticut would be in doubt as no clear, defined standard would be set forth in Connecticut. To gain this clarification we respectfully ask the sponsor to consider an amendment to HB 5394 which would not name specific smoke detection technologies and instead recognizes nationally recognized performance based standards:

After the words "shall be" in line 43 page 2 insert: "tested and certified, pursuant to the requirements of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) as set forth in either ANSI/UL 217 or ANSI/UL 268, or successor standards, by a nationally recognized testing laboratory" in place of "of the photoelectric type or of any technology approved by the State Fire Marshall by regulation."

Thank you for your consideration of this amendment and Kidde's comments on HB 5394. We hope you will call on Kidde if we can be a resource to you in any way.