



6160

**Testimony of Kidde Fire Safety
Before the Public Safety & Security Committee**
Regarding House Bill 6160, An Act Requiring Working Smoke And Carbon Monoxide
Detectors In All Residential Buildings And Private Dwellings At The Time Title Is
Transferred.

February 21, 2013

Kidde Fire Safety, part of UTC Climate Controls & Security headquartered in Farmington, Connecticut, appreciates the opportunity to offer the following comments in support of extending carbon monoxide poisoning protections to existing homes at the time the title is transferred as provided in HB 6160. Kidde Fire Safety is the leading innovator and manufacturer of residential fire safety products, including carbon monoxide and smoke 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 are 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, 44 states have similar laws, and 18 of these states also require that existing homes have CO alarms which are readily available at local retailers.

Carbon monoxide poisoning has impacted the lives of Connecticut residents in recent years. Most notably, hundreds were treated and another eight died from CO poisoning during Tropical Storm Irene and the October snow storm in 2011. More recently fire departments and emergency rooms across Connecticut reported numerous cases of CO exposures during Hurricane Sandy and the blizzard of just a couple of weeks ago. During all these storms, thousands of homes were without power causing individuals

and 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 limited to just emergency weather events – it can occur at any time. That is why it is so important that families in Connecticut have working CO alarms to save lives. We support the provisions of HB 6160 that extend requirements for CO alarms to existing homes at the time the title is transferred. We commend Rep. Fox for his leadership on this legislation that will save lives.

In addition to manufacturing CO alarms, Kidde also manufactures smoke alarms, which have been widely required in homes by states since the late 1970's, reducing fire deaths by half. Smoke alarms that are properly installed and maintained play a vital role in reducing fire deaths and injuries. Yet according to the latest research by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) most fire deaths today - over two-thirds - happen in homes where no smoke alarms or no working alarms are present.

Power source issues are the leading reasons why smoke alarms fail to operate in home fires. Sixty-five (65%) of US residents have [only] battery operated smoke alarms in their home, according to the latest American Housing Survey. NFPA has found that 50% of these battery alarms failed to sound in home fires between 2005-2009 because the batteries were missing or disconnected. Another 23% of these alarms failed due to dead batteries.

Advancements have led to smoke alarms that today prevent consumer tampering and can power the alarm for a minimum of 10 years. These 10-year, tamper resistant smoke alarms directly address the disablement and failed maintenance by consumers, and do so in a cost effective way.

By sealing the batteries into the unit's housing and circuitry, manufacturers are able to make these alarms tamper resistant. Further, the battery cells utilized in these alarms provide a minimum of 10 years of operation, which is consistent with the recommended service life of smoke alarms as well as NFPA 72 - the national smoke alarm guidance standard.

These 10-year, tamper-resistant smoke alarms are also very affordable. The average 10-year, tamper resistant smoke alarm costs between \$16-20 – roughly \$5 more than a traditional battery operated smoke alarm. But since the alarm's battery does not need to be replaced twice a year – around daylight savings time for example – homeowners can save between \$40-60 in battery replacement cost over the life of the alarm.

As these alarms have become more available and affordable, lawmakers across the US have begun requiring the replacement of existing battery-operated smoke alarms with these more maintenance-free alarms. To date, California, Louisiana, Michigan, North Carolina and Oregon have passed laws requiring the use of 10-year tamper-resistant battery smoke alarms, and since the beginning of 2013, five additional state legislatures now have bills pending.

Recent evidence suggests that the installation of 10-year, tamper-resistant smoke alarms is resulting in more working smoke alarms in homes. In 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) completed a 10-year evaluation of its smoke

alarm installation program where alarms with long-life lithium batteries were installed in US homes. The CDC concluded that nearly 80% of the alarms with the original long-life lithium batteries were still functional. Further, Oregon State Fire Marshal data suggests a 37% decline in alarm failures due to dead or missing batteries since 1999 when the state began requiring that battery-operated smoke alarms be sold with 10-year batteries. And just last year, researchers from the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy concluded that more widespread use of the new 10-year lithium battery smoke alarms would make it easier for residents to keep their homes and families protected.

In closing, Kidde commends Rep. Fox and the members of the Public Safety Committee for your efforts to elevate fire and life safety matters, and for recognizing the need for homes to be properly protected from fire and carbon monoxide. We urge your support of HB 6160, as its implementation will ensure more of Connecticut's residents will be better protected. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on these important safety issues. We hope you will call on Kidde if we can be a resource to you in any way.