



## **Testimony of Kidde before the Public Safety & Security Committee**

Regarding Senate Bill 1012, An Act Concerning Smoke Alarms In Residential Buildings

**March 3, 2015**

Kidde, part of UTC Building & Industrial Systems headquartered in Farmington, Connecticut, appreciates the opportunity to offer the following comments in support of Senate Bill 1012. Kidde is a leading innovator and manufacturer of residential fire safety products, including carbon monoxide and smoke alarms for both residential and commercial applications.

Smoke alarms, which have been widely required in homes by states since the late 1970s, reduce 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) three out of every five home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms-.

Sixty-five percent of US residents have only battery operated smoke alarms installed in their home, according to the latest American Housing Survey. Power source issues are the leading reasons why smoke alarms fail to operate in home fires. The NFPA reports that between 2007-2011, 71% of smoke alarms failed to sound in home fires because the batteries were missing, disconnected or discharged. NFPA also found that no smoke alarms were present in 37% of the home fire deaths.

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 concerns of 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 saving 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, nine states and seven metropolitan cities have passed laws requiring battery smoke alarms to be powered by nonreplaceable, nonremovable batteries that can power the alarm for a minimum of 10 years.

These laws along with the fire prevention efforts of our great fire departments are working to drive down fire deaths. California and Maryland each saw a dramatic decrease in home fire fatalities of 26% and 17% respectively just one year after their 10 year smoke alarm laws took effect. Similar results have been seen in Milwaukee, which saw a 75% decrease and Philadelphia with a 33% decrease.

This downward trend in fire deaths tracks closely to data from the Oregon State Fire Marshal where they have seen 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. This data evidences that installation of 10 year, tamper resistant smoke alarms is resulting in more working smoke alarms in homes.

In closing, Kidde commends Senator Larson and the members of the Committee for elevating the need for homes to be equipped with working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms that are properly installed and maintained play a vital role in reducing fire deaths and injuries. According to the NFPA, having a working smoke alarm cuts the chances of dying in a reported fire in half. We urge your support of Senate Bill 1012, as its implementation will help save Connecticut lives. 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.