



Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Bulletin 51

Division of Building Safety and Inspection for 2015 I Codes

The legislature recognizes that carbon monoxide poses a serious threat. According to national statistics from the centers for disease control, carbon monoxide kills more than five hundred people and accounts for an estimated twenty thousand emergency department visits annually. Specifically, Washington State has experienced the dire effects of carbon monoxide poisoning. In the storms that struck Washington in December 2006, it was estimated that over one thousand people in the state were seen at hospital emergency rooms with symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, and eight people reportedly died of carbon monoxide exposure. It is the intent of the legislature to implement policies to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

The major sources of carbon monoxide in homes and apartments are fossil fuel burning boilers, furnaces, water heaters, fireplaces and parking garages. CO is very dangerous because it is colorless, odorless, tasteless, and non-irritating. CO poisoning can be fatal. The warning signs of CO poisoning are headaches, dizziness, tiredness and nausea. **If you feel that you are suffering from the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning or that your home may have a CO leak, immediately open all the windows, remove yourself from your home and call the Fire Department.**

The purpose of this bulletin is to notify industry of the new code requirements regulating Carbon Monoxide Alarms in Single-Family Residences regulated by the International Residential Code and the Group R occupancies regulated by the International Building Code. The following code requirements came into effect **April 1, 2012**. Pierce County will be reviewing plans to include the following for code compliance and if not shown will be red lined. Permits issued from Base Plans will be required to meet the current code.

WAC 51-51-0315 International Residential Code

SECTION R315 – CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS.

R315.1 General. Carbon monoxide alarms shall comply with R315.

R315.2.1 New Construction. For new construction, an approved carbon monoxide alarm shall be installed outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms in dwelling units and on each level of the dwelling and in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

R315.2.2 Alterations, repairs, and additions. Existing dwellings shall be equipped with carbon monoxide alarms in accordance with Section R315.2.1. An inspection will occur when alterations, repairs or additions requiring a permit occur, or when one or more sleeping rooms are added or created.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. Work involving only the exterior surfaces of dwellings, such as the replacement of roofing or siding, or the addition or replacement of windows or doors, or the addition of a porch or deck, or electrical permits, are exempt from the inspection requirements of this section.

2. Installation, alteration or repairs of nonfuel burning plumbing or mechanical systems are exempt from the inspection requirements of this section.
3. Owner-occupied single-family residences legally occupied before July 26, 2009. RCW 19.27.530 (2)(b).

Question: *When I have my electric water heater or furnace replaced with an electric water heater or furnace, am I required to install the Carbon Monoxide Alarm?*

Answer: *No-R515.2.2 Exception 2. Exempts the requirement of installing the Carbon Monoxide Detector when changing out an appliance and replacing it with an electric appliance.*

Question: *Will my plumber or furnace installer be responsible for the installation of the Carbon Monoxide Alarm?*

Answer: *You will need to discuss that with your contractor. It would be the homeowner's responsibility to make sure the Carbon Monoxide Alarms are installed prior to the final inspection request.*

Note: *When you call for your final inspection on the Plumbing or Mechanical permit(s) the building inspector will inspect the installation of the water heater/furnace and other fuel burning appliances and inspect for the proper installation of the Carbon Monoxide Alarms.*

**WAC 51-50-0908 International Building Code
Chapter 9 – Fire protection systems.**

SECTION 915 – CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTION.

[F] 915.1 General. Carbon monoxide detection shall be installed in new buildings in accordance with Sections 915.1.1 through 915.6. Carbon monoxide detection shall be installed in existing building in accordance with Chapter 11 of the International Fire Code.