



WATERTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Nicole's Bill Signed Into Law

In January of 2005, seven year old Nicole Garofalo of Plymouth, MA died as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning in her home. A deadly amount of carbon monoxide accumulated in Nicole's home as a result of a blocked vent on the home's heating system. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is produced when fuels burn. These fuels include natural gas, which is used in homes for water heaters and furnaces. It is also produced by automobiles and can build up inside garages whether attached or detached from a house. Unwitting victims of carbon monoxide poisoning often report flu like symptoms such as headache, dizziness, fatigue, nausea and vomiting. Carbon monoxide is truly a silent and deadly killer.

Last winter, more than 2,700 carbon monoxide related incidents were reported to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Across the United States, approximately 200 people die of carbon monoxide poisoning annually. These facts and the tragic death of young Nicole have spurred the Massachusetts Legislature to enact Nicole's Bill into Law, Chapter 123 of the Acts of 2005. The law requires that every dwelling, building or structure including those owned by the Commonwealth, occupied in whole or in part for residential purposes and that (1) contain fossil fuel burning equipment or (2) incorporate closed parking within its structure, be equipped by the owner with approved carbon monoxide alarms in conformance with the requirements of the Board of Fire Prevention Regulations (BFPR). Some highlights of the law include:

- Landlords must inspect, maintain, and replace, if necessary, required CO alarms at the beginning of any rental period.
- The Department of Public Health is required to adopt and enforce this requirement on landlords as part of the State Sanitary code.
- Every affected residential dwelling, building or structure shall be inspected by the fire department upon sale or transfer.
- Fees for separate or joint inspecting of CO alarms and smoke detectors are \$50.00 for single-family homes or units (i.e. condo), \$100.00 for 2-family dwellings, \$150.00 for 3-6 unit dwellings and \$500.00 for 6 or more unit buildings.
- The effective date of compliance is January 1, 2007, for all hardwired occupancies and March 31, 2006, for all non-hardwired occupancies.