

Assembly Bill No. 56

CHAPTER 475

An act to add Article 7 (commencing with Section 32080) to Chapter 1 of Part 19 of Division 1 of Title 1 of the Education Code, relating to school facilities.

[Approved by Governor October 2, 2013. Filed with
Secretary of State October 2, 2013.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 56, Weber. School facilities: carbon monoxide devices.

Existing law, the Leroy F. Greene School Facilities Act of 1998, requires certain new school facilities construction projects that require the approval of the Department of General Services, as specified, to include an automatic fire detection, alarm, and sprinkler system.

Existing law requires an owner of a dwelling unit intended for human occupancy to install a carbon monoxide device, as specified, in each existing dwelling unit having a fossil fuel burning heater or appliance, a fireplace, or an attached garage.

Existing law, the California Building Standards Law, requires the California Building Standards Commission to approve or adopt proposed building standards that are submitted by state agencies during an 18-month code adoption cycle.

This bill would require, by July 1, 2015, the State Fire Marshal to propose for adoption by the commission, appropriate standards for the installation of carbon monoxide devices in public and private school buildings that meet specified criteria.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) (1) Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas produced when fuel, such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal, is burned. Carbon monoxide can cause harmful health effects by reducing the delivery of oxygen to the body's organs, such as the heart, brain, and tissues. The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. Long-term breathing of carbon monoxide can affect the memory, brain function, behavior, and cognition. According to the American Medical Association, carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States. Gas furnaces and other fuel-burning appliances are common sources of carbon monoxide poisoning.

(2) The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that each year more than 400 Americans die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning, more than 20,000 visit the emergency room, and more than 4,000 are hospitalized due to carbon monoxide poisoning. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, a person cannot see or smell carbon monoxide. At high levels, carbon monoxide can kill a person in minutes.

(3) The State Air Resources Board estimates that every year carbon monoxide accounts for between 30 and 40 avoidable deaths, possibly thousands of avoidable illnesses, and between 175 and 700 avoidable emergency room and hospital visits.

(4) There are well-documented chronic health effects of acute carbon monoxide poisoning and prolonged exposure to carbon monoxide, including, but not limited to, lethargy, headaches, concentration problems, amnesia, psychosis, Parkinson's disease, memory impairment, and personality alterations.

(b) In an analysis conducted by the National Fire Protection Association of nonfire carbon monoxide incidents reported for the year 2005, 250 carbon monoxide incidents were reported nationwide in educational facilities. Of these, 150 incidents occurred in school buildings used for preschool, kindergarten, or grades 1 to 12, inclusive.

(c) (1) On December 3, 2012, Finch Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia, was evacuated after firefighters discovered a carbon monoxide leak from the school's furnace. Firefighters responded to the school after reports came in that people at the school were unconscious. Although no one was found unconscious, firefighters found people sickened and, in total, 43 students and 10 adults were taken to the local hospital.

(2) The firefighters detected high and unsafe levels of carbon monoxide near a furnace, and detected up to 1,700 parts per million of carbon monoxide in other areas, a very high level of the gas.

(3) The State of Georgia did not require school facilities to have, and Finch Elementary School did not have, carbon monoxide detectors. Two states, Maryland and Connecticut, have passed legislation requiring carbon monoxide detectors in school facilities.

(d) Senate Bill 183 of the 2009–10 Regular Session (Chapter 19 of the Statutes of 2010) requires a dwelling unit that is intended for human occupancy and that has a fossil fuel burning heater or appliance, a fireplace, or an attached garage to have a carbon monoxide alarm, as specified.

(e) Because carbon monoxide affects individuals differently and symptoms of exposure can mimic symptoms of common ailments such as the influenza virus, it is difficult to quantify the exact number of carbon monoxide incidents in school buildings and it is highly probable that the number of carbon monoxide incidents is underreported. Additionally, the number of carbon monoxide incidents in schools will likely rise in future years as school buildings and their infrastructure become outdated over time. Carbon monoxide devices provide a vital, highly effective, and low-cost protection against carbon monoxide poisoning and these devices should be

made available to every school in California to help prevent students from being exposed to the effects of carbon monoxide.

SEC. 2. Article 7 (commencing with Section 32080) is added to Chapter 1 of Part 19 of Division 1 of Title 1 of the Education Code, to read:

Article 7. Carbon Monoxide Devices

32080. For purposes of this article, “fossil fuel” has the same meaning as defined in Section 13262 of the Health and Safety Code.

32081. (a) By July 1, 2015, the State Fire Marshal shall propose for adoption by the California Building Standards Commission, for the commission’s next triennial code adoption cycle, appropriate standards for the installation of carbon monoxide devices in school buildings. The proposed building standards shall require carbon monoxide devices to be installed in public and private school buildings that meet all of the following criteria:

(1) The school building is constructed pursuant to the 2016 California Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations), or any amendments to the California Building Standards Code which follow.

(2) The school building is used for educational purposes for kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive.

(3) A fossil fuel burning furnace is located inside the school building.

(b) A private or public school that uses a school building for educational purposes for kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, that was built before the adoption of the 2016 California Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations), and has a fossil fuel burning furnace located inside the school building is encouraged to have a carbon monoxide device installed in the building.