

Principles for Model Natural Gas Detector Legislation

Now more than ever, natural gas fuels American homes. According to the American Gas Association, over 75 million households use natural gas for at least one household appliance and 80% of these households have two or more natural gas appliances.

As natural gas becomes more ubiquitous in American homes, regulation is needed to ensure that homeowners remain safe. There is a natural gas incident or explosion every 40 hours in the United States, but these events are preventable.

Both New York City and Maine already have laws mandating the use of natural gas detectors in certain buildings and residences. In recent years numerous other states have considered similar requirements, including New Jersey, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Illinois. Like a smoke alarm, natural gas detectors are increasingly viewed as a fundamental component of safety in the built environment. Importantly, fiscal analyses of these measures have concluded that there is little to no cost to the state to enact this regulation.

Key components of model natural gas detector legislation include:

- Every dwelling, building, or structure, including those owned or operated by the state, occupied in whole or part for residential purposes, that contains combustible gas (including but not limited to propane and natural gas) burning equipment including, but not limited to, a furnace, boiler, water heater, fireplace or any other apparatus, appliance, or device that burns combustible gas shall be equipped by the owner with working, approved combustible gas detection alarms in conformance with the standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).
- Landlords or building superintendents shall be required to install either approved monitored battery-powered alarms or approved electrical wiring alarms in conformance with NFPA standards. These alarms must be operational at the beginning of any rental period and landlords or buildings superintendents must maintain these alarms, including replacing batteries or other needs, annually thereafter to ensure their operability.
- Every dwelling, building or structure, occupied in whole or in part for residential purposes that has combustible gas, shall, upon sale or transfer of such dwelling, building or structure, be inspected by the head of the fire department for compliance with these standards.
- The state building code may impose stricter combustible gas alarm requirements for new construction or dwellings, buildings, or structures substantially renovated so as to constitute the equivalent of new construction. Every such dwelling building or structure, occupied in whole or in part for residential purposes, shall, upon sale or transfer of such dwelling, building or structure, be for compliance with the combustible gas alarm requirements of the state building code in effect on the date of the issuance of the relevant building permit.