



Issue: Carbon Monoxide Detection in Lodging Establishments

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, poisonous gas that is produced by the incomplete burning of various fuels, including coal, wood, charcoal, oil, kerosene, propane, and natural gas. Because CO has no odor, color, or taste, and is otherwise undetectable by human senses, it is known as the “silent killer.” People may not realize they are being exposed to CO when they feel flu-like symptoms such as headaches, light-headedness, or nausea. In extreme cases, victims can suffer long-term mental impairment and even death. These detrimental health effects depend on the length of exposure to CO, blood concentration levels of CO, and an individual’s health condition.

Position:

NEMA supports the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in lodging establishments. Carbon monoxide detection devices should be tested and listed by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory accredited by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration to applicable product standards—ANSI/UL 2075 *Standard for Gas and Vapor Detectors and Sensors* or ANSI/UL 2034 *Standard for Single and Multiple Station Carbon Monoxide Alarms*—and be installed in accordance with NFPA 720 *Standard for Installation of Carbon Monoxide Detection (CO) and Warning Equipment* (2012), which is published by the National Fire Protection Association.

Importance:

Tragedy struck in North Carolina in 2013 when three CO-poisoning deaths occurred six weeks apart in the same hotel room. The guest room was located above an enclosed space housing a natural gas heater for the hotel’s swimming pool. Like all engine-drive equipment that burn fossil fuels, the pool heater emitted carbon monoxide. The heater room lacked required adequate ventilation. Consequently, the CO collected in the enclosed space and eventually seeped into the guest room through the A/C unit, killing two senior citizens in the first incident and an 11-year-old boy in the second incident.

In response to the North Carolina incident, the state legislature passed a law mandating CO detection equipment in each room of a lodging establishment that is adjacent to an enclosed space having a fossil fuel burning heater, appliance, or fireplace. Unlike in their own homes, hotel guests have no control over the equipment in a lodging establishment that emits CO to make sure it is running properly and that enclosed spaces are adequately ventilated. Further, lodging guests typically spend much of their time in their rooms asleep and, accordingly, are not cognizant of the symptoms that occur as a result of CO exposure. This only makes them more susceptible to severe, prolonged exposure. In light of this, lodging establishment owners have a fiduciary duty to ensure that their guests are protected from carbon monoxide by installing CO detection equipment in all guest rooms that are near a CO-emitting apparatus.

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- NEMA publishes over 600 standards, application guides, white papers, and technical papers.
- NEMA responds to codes and standards proposals of other organizations in the U.S. and around the world, facilitating the development of international and North American harmonized standards.
- NEMA was named in the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 to work with federal agencies on efforts to enhance the efficiency, sustainability, and security of the electricity grid. As part of this, NEMA has been instrumental in the Smart Grid Interoperability Panel (SGIP) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Smart Grid Federal Advisory Committee.