
Local Government Committee

HB 2401

Brief Description: Promoting fire safety with long-life smoke detection devices.

Sponsors: Representatives Takko, Johnson, Fitzgibbon, Ryu, Van De Wege and Tarleton.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates new requirements for all smoke alarms, with specified exceptions.
- Requires all smoke alarms that are solely battery powered to contain a nonremovable battery capable of powering the alarm for a minimum of 10 years, beginning July 1, 2016.
- Requires all smoke alarms or combination smoke alarms to display a manufacture date and a space for a written date of installation, and to have a hush feature, beginning on July 1, 2016.
- Requires smoke alarms in all existing occupancies to be upgraded to comply with the new requirements upon the occurrence of certain specified events.
- Directs the State Building Code Council to update codes regarding solely battery powered smoke alarms in existing.

Hearing Date: 1/23/14

Staff: Michaela Murdock (786-7289).

Background:

Smoke Detection Devices.

Smoke detection devices (smoke alarms) are self-contained alarms for detecting visible or invisible particles of combustion, and may also detect carbon monoxide. A smoke alarm's primary power source may be: (1) a commercial light and power source available in the dwelling unit and connected to the alarm by splice leads or a cord and plug arrangement; or (2) an integral battery or batteries. In dwelling units built or manufactured after 1980, smoke alarms

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must receive their primary power from the building wiring when such wiring is served from a commercial source.

Smoke alarms must be installed inside all dwelling units: (1) occupied by persons other than the owner; or (2) built or manufactured in this state. Smoke alarms must be designed, manufactured, and installed inside dwelling units in conformance with nationally accepted standards and the rules and regulations promulgated by the chief of the Washington State Patrol through the director of Fire Protection. Additional requirements and standards for smoke alarms and other fire protection systems are contained in the state building code as adopted and maintained by the State Building Code Council.

Installation of smoke alarms is the responsibility of the builder or manufacturer of a new dwelling unit and the owner of a dwelling unit occupied by persons other than the owner. Also, owners must ensure that a device is operational following the vacancy of a tenant and before the occupancy of the next tenant. Maintenance of smoke alarms, including replacement of batteries, is the responsibility of tenants, who must maintain the device as specified by the manufacturer. Failure to comply with these requirements is punishable by a fine of not more than \$200.

The State Building Code Council.

The State Building Code Council (Council) is comprised of members appointed by the Governor, and is responsible for the adoption, maintenance, and amendment of the codes enumerated in the State Building Code Act, which include the building code, residential code, and fire code.

Summary of Bill:

New requirements are established for all smoke alarms (excluding certain specified types):

- All smoke alarms that are solely battery powered, including combination smoke alarms, must contain a nonreplaceable, nonremovable battery capable of powering the alarm for a minimum of 10 years, beginning July 1, 2016.
- All smoke alarms or combination smoke alarms must display a manufacture date and a space for a written date of installation, and must have a hush feature, beginning on July 1, 2016.
- Smoke alarms in all existing occupancies must be upgraded to comply with the new requirements upon the occurrence of a specified event: (1) When a smoke alarm exceeds 10 years from the date of manufacture; (2) when the smoke alarm fails to respond to operability tests or otherwise malfunctions; or (3) when there is a change of ownership or a change of tenant in a residential unit.

The Council is directed to update all necessary and relevant codes regarding solely battery powered smoke alarms in existing occupancies to be consistent with statute in the next code cycle.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 2014.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.