

Carbon monoxide detectors mandatory in Ontario homes starting Wednesday

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A new law making carbon monoxide detectors mandatory in all Ontario homes went into effect on Wednesday.

In accordance with **Bill 77**, detectors will be required near all sleeping areas in residential homes and in the service rooms (such as boiler rooms and garbage rooms) and next to sleeping areas in multi-residential units.

The new regulation updates Ontario's fire code and is based on recommendations from the fire marshal and experts from fire services, the hotel and rental housing industries, condo owners and alarm makers.

Bill 77, also known as the Hawkins-Gignac Act, is named after a Woodstock family. OPP Const. Laurie Hawkins, her husband Richard and their two children, Cassie and Jordan died in a tragic carbon monoxide leak in their home in December 2007. They did not have a carbon monoxide alarm.

Since their death, Hawkins' uncle and retired firefighter, John Gignac, has been pushing to make carbon monoxide warning devices mandatory.

"We are solaced knowing that something good has come from something so tragic, that the loss in our family is not in vain," Gignac, co-chair of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education, said in a statement.

Carbon monoxide is colorless, odorless and tasteless. On average, more than 50 people die each year from carbon monoxide poisoning in Canada, including 11 on average in Ontario.

Below are some carbon monoxide safety tips, provided by the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education:

- Install at least one CSA-6.19.01 approved carbon monoxide detector outside bedrooms. However, it is advised to install one on every floor.
- Check the expiry date of existing detector and replace any devices built before 2008. Alarms need to be replaced every 7-10 years depending on the brand.
- Have a licenced technician inspect your fuel burning appliances (re. furnace, range, fireplace, water heater) annually, to ensure they are in proper working order and vented correctly.
- For families with older parents or relatives, help them inspect their detectors.
- Replace batteries in your detector annually, or opt for models with 10-year sealed lithium batteries that never need to be changed.
- When a detector sounds, make sure everyone is out of the house and call 911. Exposure to carbon monoxide reduces a person's ability to think clearly, so don't delay clearing out.