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# Carbon-monoxide detectors to be mandatory in residences

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Starting Monday, a new law will go into effect requiring carbon-monoxide detectors in nearly all New York homes, condominiums, dormitories and other residences.

"Amanda's Law" — named after a western New York teenager who died of carbon-monoxide poisoning — will change the state building code to make detectors mandatory in any residence with an attached garage or appliance that produces carbon monoxide, such as gas- or wood-powered furnaces or hot-water tanks. Previously, the devices were only required in homes built after 2002.

The law does not require detectors in houses that have only combustion-free appliances, like an electric furnace or stove. Residences built after 2008 must have a permanent detector hard-wired in.

"We believe this is an important piece of public-safety legislation. Unfortunately, far too many New Yorkers are accidentally poisoned by carbon monoxide each year," said Paul Martin, chief of the state Bureau of Fire Prevention. "It's much more prevalent than most people know."

The device must be installed on the lowest level of the house with a bedroom, ac-

ording to the law. Local governments rather than the state will handle enforcement. Code-enforcement officials can issue a fine or an appearance ticket if a home is found without a detector during normal inspections.

Violators would be fined for breaking a municipality's building code. Fines vary by location. The city of Poughkeepsie, for example, may issue a fine up to \$1,000 while the village of Cayuga, Cayuga County, may issue a fine up to \$500.

Carbon monoxide is a clear, odorless gas that is produced any time there is combustion. Dangerous levels of the gas can build up when appliances are not properly ventilated. Poisoning from the gas kills about 400 people and injures over 20,000 each year nationally, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The detectors start at around \$20 and sound an alarm when unsafe carbon-monoxide levels are detected. Most devices plug into an electric outlet and allow for a battery backup if the power supply goes out. Higher-end detectors cost upwards of \$65 and display the actual parts per million of the gas in the air.

The law is named after 16-year-old Amanda Hansen, who was killed by carbon-

monoxide poisoning in January 2009 while sleeping at a friend's house in West Seneca, Erie County.

"She just had more friends than anyone could even imagine," said Ken Hansen, Amanda's father. "We always taught her that you don't have to like everybody, but you do have to be nice to everybody, and she always did that. She just had a great heart."

About a week after her funeral, Hansen called Assemblyman Mark Schroeder, D- Buffalo, who eventually sponsored the legislation. Gov. David Paterson signed the bill last August after it passed the Legislature.

Hansen said he hopes others can learn from his story.

"I lost an amazing child over it, and we don't want another family to have to go through that," he said. "It's a killer and it's out there."

The state Firemen's Association will administer clinics and hand out between 200 and 300 free detectors at five Home Depot locations throughout the state. Those include at the Henrietta, Monroe County, location at 9 a.m. on March 6 and at the West Seneca location at 9 a.m. on March 13.

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