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Department of Permits, Licenses, and Inspections Information Bulletin

Smoke Alarm and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Requirements in Existing Dwellings	Date: February 22, 2016
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For the purpose of protection of public health, safety and welfare in all existing structures, the City of Pittsburgh has adopted the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC 2003), International Fire Code (IFC 2003), and the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC). This bulletin is intended to clarify the minimum requirements for smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms in existing dwellings. Additional requirements may apply to new construction, or for existing fire protection systems which were installed to a higher standard.

When are Smoke and Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms required?

- Smoke alarms are required in all existing dwellings. This includes all single family, two family, multiple-family buildings, and all dwellings located in mixed-use buildings.
- Carbon Monoxide alarms are required in one- or two- family dwelling units undergoing renovations and in each apartment of multi-family dwellings, that have attached garages or where fuel-fired appliances exist (such as coal, kerosene, oil, wood, or fuel gas).

Do alarms need to be hard-wired and interconnected?

- New alarms installed in existing dwellings are permitted to be solely battery operated and are not required to be interconnected.
- Existing hard-wired and interconnected alarms are to be maintained as originally installed.

Where are the Smoke Alarms required to be located?

- On the ceiling or wall outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms.
- In each room used for sleeping purposes.
- In each story within a dwelling unit, including basements and cellars but not including crawl spaces and uninhabitable attics.

Where are Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms required to be located?

- Centrally located outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms.

When do Inspectors need to enter a dwelling to inspect?

- PLI Inspectors will not enter dwellings to inspect for smoke or CO alarms for existing, legal occupancies.
- Applications for exterior work permits or accessory structures, and which do not affect the legal use of existing dwellings, will not require an interior inspection for smoke and CO alarms.
- When an application is made for interior renovations, a change in use, or for a new Certificate of Occupancy for dwellings, PLI Inspectors will perform inspections to verify code compliance; this will include inspection for all required smoke and CO alarms.
- It is the responsibility of the Owner to provide and maintain all required smoke and CO alarms, regardless of whether an inspection takes place or not.

Specific Requirements:

Smoke alarms are to be listed per UL 217. Installation is to comply with NFPA 72, and the manufacturer's specific instructions.

Carbon monoxide (CO) alarms are to be listed per UL 2034. Installation is to comply with manufacturer's specific instructions.