



National Electrical Manufacturers Association

Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick
Chair, Senate Rules Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

May 10, 2017

Re: Testimony in support of SB 1062

Chair Burdick and Members of the Senate Rules Committee:

The National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) is writing to urge your support for SB 1062 which, if passed, would create a new pathway for Oregon schools to identify and address potential environmental hazards in their facilities. One of those hazards thoughtfully included in the bill is carbon monoxide detection, which is an area in which NEMA specializes.

NEMA is the association of electrical equipment manufacturers, founded in 1926 and headquartered in Rosslyn, Virginia. It represents nearly 400 electrical and medical imaging manufacturers. Our combined industries account for more than 400,000 American jobs and more than 7,000 facilities across the U.S. NEMA Fire, Life Safety, Security and Emergency Communication members manufacture fire, smoke, and carbon monoxide detection and warning equipment.

Carbon monoxide, (CO), is an invisible, colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that can make people, especially children, sick with symptoms that may seem like the flu. It can be deadly. It is because of these characteristics that CO is often called the “stealth killer.” The U.S. Center for Disease Control estimates well over 400 deaths nationally each year, and tens of thousands of emergency room visits from CO poisoning. CO emissions result from the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels. Examples of equipment that emit CO which are commonly found in schools are: water heaters, gas furnaces and gas stoves. Many schools have more than one source.

Oregon currently requires CO detection in residences and other buildings where people sleep, such as hotels. But there are no laws that require CO detection in schools, where Oregon children spend most of their time outside the home.

Events over the last few years demonstrate that children are at risk while in school. In Utah in November 2013, 44 people – students and teachers – were rushed to the hospital for treatment as a result of exposure to CO leaking from a water heater. One case was so serious that the victim had to be airlifted to Salt Lake City. In Massachusetts in March 2014 over 70 students and teachers had to evacuate a school because CO was leaking from an old boiler. 16 kindergartners were rushed to the hospital that day.

Earlier this year a tragedy at a hotel in Michigan garnered national headlines when a teenage boy died and 14 others were taken to the hospital resulting from a CO leak inside the hotel. While not at a school, this event clearly demonstrates that CO can and will take lives.

Several states have acted to pass CO detection requirements in K-12 schools: Utah, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut Colorado and Maryland. Some of these states waited until they had an emergency before they passed their law. Oregon has a chance to act – to mitigate this risk – *before* an emergency happens.

Installation requirements for CO detection in schools need not be burdensome. The requirements should: reference the appropriate product standards to ensure that the detection devices have been tested for safety and proper functionality; indicate that one detection device should be installed near each CO-emitting source; ensure that the devices receive their primary power from the school's electrical supply and secondary power from a battery; and have a realistic effective date to give the schools time to plan and budget. SB 1062 largely leaves these details up to the discretion of the Oregon Health Authority, who NEMA is prepared to work with to ensure the installation requirements are effective and reasonable.

NEMA thanks Chair Burdick, Vice-Chair Ferrioli and the Senate Rules Committee members for hearing SB 1062. NEMA is ready to assist in any way necessary to move this important bill forward. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JS Stewart', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Stewart
Manager, Government Relations
(703) 841-3245
Jonathan.stewart@nema.org